New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2026, 10:00 AM

Attendees

- Ahmed Chaudry (NJEDA)
- Andy Garcia (NJEDA)
- Andy Topinka (Technical Group Services, Inc.)
- Anne-Marie Peracchio (NJNG)
- Arah Schuur (Rutgers)
- Ben Adams (MaGrann Associates)
- Ben Cohen (ReVireo)
- Cathy Yuhas (NJEDA)
- Cornelia Wu (NEEP)
- David Hattis (Rutgers / CUPR)
- Deane Evans (NJIT)
- Doug McCleery (MaGrann Associates)
- Dragana Thibault (NEEP
- Elizabeth Stanton (NJDRC)
- Erin Sherman (RMI)
- Gahl S. Spanier (Association for Energy Affordability, Inc)
- Giulianna Rivera (Rutgers / CUPR)
- Ian Rayfield (NJDCA)
- Jamie Mize (NJNG)
- Jason Kliwinski (Rutgers / CUPR)
- Jeff Kolakowski (NJBA)
- Jennifer Senick (Rutgers / CUPR)
- Jennifer Souder (Rutgers / CUPR)
- Jerry Flach (Rutgers / CUPR)
- Karl Hartkopf (NJDEP)
- Kevin Nedza (NJBPU)
- Kiran Kumar Ghosh (Rutgers / CUPR)
- Kyle G. Cruz (NJHMFA)
- Liu Liu (KEA Engineers)
- Maura Caroselli (NJDRC)
- Matthew DeMarco (M&E Engineers, Inc.)
- Myrrh Caplan (Myrrh Caplan)
- Nicholas Kikis (NJAA)
- Nicole Provost (NJDEP)
- Pamela DeLosSantos (NJHMFA)
- Pat Miller (NJ Electrification Coaching Network)
- Paul Heitmann (NJBPU)
- Rebecca Lynskey (TRC)
- Robert Austin (NJDCA)
- Ryan Jerome (NJNG)
- Scott Majka (Majka & Sons, Inc.)
- Stacy Richardson (NJBPU)
- Stephanie Staub (NJCCC)
- Steve Miller (NJ Electrification Coaching Network)
- Terra Meirdeirck (NJIT)
- William Healy (TRC Companies)
- Yousaf Shahid (Rutgers / CUPR)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) opened the meeting, welcomed participants to the first New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative meeting of 2026, and wished the group a happy new year.

Cornelia reviewed the agenda, noting that materials had been shared by email earlier in the week as a reminder. She also reminded participants that AI based note taking tools are not permitted during meetings, as official meeting minutes are prepared and shared following each session. Cornelia reiterated the competition law reminder.

Cornelia reviewed the purpose of the New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative, and noted that the Zero Energy Building Roadmap is a living document and outlines three concurrent pathways: the base code path for new construction, the stretch code/zero energy code path,

and the existing buildings pathway, all designed to move New Jersey toward zero energy buildings by 2030 or sooner.

Cornelia noted that proposed amendments to the New Jersey Rehabilitation Subcode had been discussed in December' meeting and that materials shared with participants included a summary of proposed changes and a table identifying sections of Chapter 5 of the 2024 IECC that are not currently included in the Rehab Subcode.

2. NJ Rehab Subcode background

Jason Kliwinski (Rutgers / CUPR) provided an overview of the New Jersey Rehab Subcode, explaining that it governs renovations and alterations to existing residential and commercial buildings and is unique to New Jersey. He emphasized that the Rehab Subcode is not part of the ICC family of model codes, but rather a standalone technical standard developed specifically for New Jersey and now used as a national model.

Jason explained that the Rehab Subcode is designed to prioritize predictability and proportionality, requiring compliance only for the specific scope of work being undertaken rather than triggering full building upgrades. He noted that the code categorizes work into clear classifications such as renovations, alterations, and additions, and is intended to encourage reinvestment in existing buildings while maintaining safety and practicality.

Jason reviewed the process for submitting proposed amendments to the Rehab Subcode, explaining that proposals must include specific information, follow required formatting conventions, and be submitted using the Appendix 3-A form.

3. Change of Occupancy Data

Yousaf Shahid (Rutgers / CUPR) explained why change of occupancy represents a critical opportunity to address energy efficiency in existing buildings. He noted that adaptive reuse has increased significantly in recent years, driven by post-pandemic market shifts, redevelopment incentives, and zoning changes. At the same time, energy efficiency has become a core state policy objective.

Yousaf described how changes in occupancy can significantly alter building energy demands due to increased occupant loads, longer operating hours, and changes to HVAC, lighting, and service water heating systems. He explained that Chapter 5 of the 2024 IECC addresses this by introducing targeted, proportional triggers based on EUI rather than blanket upgrade requirements.

Yousaf summarized how the IECC change of occupancy provisions:

- Apply only to the portion of a building undergoing a change of use
- Rely on EUI rankings rather than occupancy labels alone
- Trigger compliance only when energy intensity increases or remains the same

Include exemptions for small areas (under 5,000 square feet) or cases where analysis demonstrates no increase in energy intensity. He walked through how these provisions apply to the building envelope, HVAC systems, service water heating, lighting, and residential

conversions, emphasizing that compliance is equipment specific and aligned with proportionality principles.
Yousaf concluded by noting that these provisions mirror the Rehab Subcode's existing philosophy of predictable and proportionate compliance, while extending it to energy performance.

4. Discussion

Erin Sherman (RMI) asked for clarification on whether the change of occupancy provisions in Chapter 5 of the 2024 IECC, specifically Section 505, would automatically be incorporated into the New Jersey Rehabilitation Subcode. **Yousaf Shahid (Rutgers / CUPR)** clarified that these provisions are not currently included in the Rehab Subcode and would require deliberate adoption to apply in New Jersey.

Jason Kliwinski (Rutgers / CUPR) responded to a question raised in the chat regarding whether existing Rehab Subcode triggers are generally followed in practice. He stated that, because these triggers are enforced through the permitting and approval process, compliance is typically achieved when work is subject to code review.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers / CUPR) noted apparent inconsistencies in publicly available information regarding deadlines for submitting proposed Rehab Subcode amendments. She referenced materials indicating both a January 31 date and timelines aligned with the ICC code adoption cycle, and asked for clarification.

Robert Austin (NJDCA) explained that the Rehab Subcode differs from the ICC family of codes in that it operates as a rolling document. He noted that while the Rehab Subcode follows a 3 year cycle aligned with UCC subcodes, proposed amendments may be submitted at any time using the Appendix 3-A process. He explained that proposals are typically bundled and reviewed by the Code Advisory Board when sufficient items are ready for consideration, rather than through a fixed annual hearing. He also noted that the Department has already submitted its current adoption documents, and that any new proposals received would be considered for future dockets depending on the Code Advisory Board's meeting schedule.

Ben Cohen (ReVireo) raised questions regarding the omission of certain HVAC related provisions from the Rehab Subcode, including heat load calculations and related requirements. He expressed concern that, without such mechanisms, it may be difficult to verify whether existing mechanical equipment can adequately serve new loads following a change of occupancy. He noted that while existing equipment may still have useful life, it may not be appropriately sized for the new use.

In response, **Robert Austin (NJDCA)** explained that the Rehab Subcode was intentionally designed to avoid triggering requirements that could discourage redevelopment. He described how requiring new mechanical equipment could lead to additional obligations, such as ductwork replacement, ceiling removal, and upgraded controls, that may not be necessary and

could significantly increase project costs. He emphasized that the Rehab Subcode's guiding principle is to avoid deterring building improvements when existing systems can continue to function safely and effectively. Robert noted, however, that code requirements can evolve, and that well supported proposals submitted to the Code Advisory Board would be evaluated on their merits.

Ben Cohen (ReVireo) asked whether proposed Rehab Subcode amendments must mirror IECC language or could be drafted independently. **Robert Austin (NJDCA)** clarified that the Rehab Subcode is not written in the same format as the ICC model codes and that its language is developed by DCA staff, often drawing from multiple technical standards rather than directly adopting IECC text.

Nicholas Kikis (NJAA) offered a broader policy perspective, distinguishing between mandate-driven approaches and incentive-based programs for achieving energy efficiency goals. He expressed concern that mandatory code requirements, particularly at change of occupancy triggers, could have unintended consequences related to affordability and reinvestment. He encouraged the Collaborative to consider incentive based strategies alongside regulatory approaches and cautioned against assuming that mandates will always produce desired outcomes.

Erin Sherman (RMI) raised a question regarding whether differences between New Jersey's treatment of existing buildings and that of neighboring states adopting the 2024 IECC could create compliance challenges for designers and retrofit professionals working across jurisdictions. **Ben Cohen (ReVireo)** responded that much existing building work is performed by smaller, localized firms, suggesting that cross state inconsistencies may not pose significant implementation challenges in practice.

Ben Cohen (ReVireo) also asked whether cost impact studies were conducted as part of the development of the 2024 IECC existing building provisions. **Robert Austin (NJDCA)** noted that while cost analyses are generally expected as part of the ICC code development process, they are often limited in detail and may present conflicting perspectives from different stakeholder groups.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers / CUPR) noted that Rutgers maintains extensive energy and cost modeling tools representing the New Jersey building stock. She explained that Rutgers could conduct New Jersey specific analyses examining capital costs, utility bill savings, payback periods, and potential impacts on building valuation related to change of occupancy scenarios, should such analysis be useful to the Collaborative. She also referenced existing literature demonstrating that higher performing buildings often achieve improved lease rates, occupancy, and resale value, particularly in jurisdictions with benchmarking and disclosure requirements.

In response to questions by **Nicholas Kikis (NJAA)** about residential market preferences and electrification, **Jennifer Senick (Rutgers / CUPR)** clarified that the discussion at hand focused on energy efficiency rather than electrification mandates. She noted that market preferences vary

by building type and tenant demographics, citing research indicating that newer multifamily developments are increasingly all electric, while preferences may differ in other market segments.

Erin Sherman (RMI) expressed interest in seeing cost effectiveness analyses of Chapter 5 of the 2024 IECC, particularly Section 505, through a New Jersey specific lens. **Jennifer Senick (Rutgers / CUPR)** indicated that Rutgers could explore such analysis incrementally, starting with priority provisions, to support data informed discussion within the Collaborative.

6. Next Steps and Closing

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) thanked Rutgers for the presentation and participants for the discussion. She noted that NEEP would follow up with scheduling for subcommittee meetings and reminded participants that they could sign up for subcommittees via the ECC website. She confirmed that meeting minutes would be posted publicly.

ZOOM Chat Discussion Notes

Robert Austin (NJDCA): Incorrect; the Rehab was submitted for proposal concurrently with the I-Codes and will be adopted at the same time.

Karl Hartkopf (DEP): Do you think that builders are following the triggers?

Great, thanks.

Gahl Spanier: I disagree I think different uses have different energy profiles and the owner should demonstrate that the existing systems are still the best for the new use

Comment

With this I agree

We should discuss

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers / CUPR): I think this is clear...that jurisdictions adopting IECC 2024 for existing buildings are bound by the change of occupancy provisions just reviewed. NJ, with the Rehab Subcode, does not automatically incorporate EE advances in the model code - to clearly answer Erin's earlier question. It sounds like, from this conversation, a code amendment proposal would need to be submitted to bring Change of Occupancy/Use and other provisions from IECC into Rehab Code.

Erin Sherman (RMI): That is what I had understood - thanks, Jennifer.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AI - Artificial Intelligence

ASHRAE - American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers
BPU / NJBPU - New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
CUPR - Center for Urban Policy Research (Rutgers University)
DCA / NJDCA - New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
DEP / NJDEP - New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
EE - Energy Efficiency
EUI - Energy Use Intensity
HVAC - Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
ICC - International Code Council
IECC - International Energy Conservation Code
NJAA - New Jersey Apartment Association
NJBA - New Jersey Builders Association
NJCCC - New Jersey Council of County Colleges
NJDRC - New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel
NJECC - New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative
NEEP - Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships
NJHMFA - New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
NJIT - New Jersey Institute of Technology
NJNG - New Jersey Natural Gas
RMI - Rocky Mountain Institute
UCC - Uniform Construction Code (New Jersey)