New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative

Energy Code for New Construction Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2026, 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Attendees

- Anne-Marie Peracchio, NJNG
- Ben Adams, MaGrann Associates
- Ben Cohen, ReVireo
- Caroselli, Maura, RPA
- Christine Liaukus, NJ IT
- Cornelia Wu, NEEP
- David Hattis, Rutgers CUPR
- Dean Potter, K Hovnanian
- Deane Evans, NJ IT
- Dragana Thibault, NEEP
- Jason Kliwinski, Rutgers CUPR
- Jeff Kolakowski, NJ BA
- Jennifer Senick, Rutgers CUPR
- Jennifer Souder, Rutgers CUPR
- Jordan Burt
- Karl Hartkopf, NJ DEP
- Kiran Ghosh, Rutgers CUPR
- Kyle G. Cruz, NJ HMFA
- Mamie W Purnell, RPA
- Nicholas Kikis, NJ Apartments Association
- Pamela DeLosSantos, NJ HMFA
- Pat Miller, NJ Electrification Coaching Network
- Ryan Richardson, NJ DOL
- Skye Gruen, ACEEE
- Stacy Richardson, BPU
- Steve Miller, NJ Electrification Coaching Network
- Valerie Diaz, ASHRAE
- William Amann, M&E Engineers, Inc.
- Yousaf Shahid, Rutgers CUPR

1. Introduction

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) welcomed participants to the third meeting of the Energy Codes for New Construction Subcommittee and reviewed the agenda, which included an update on the adoption of the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) including the 2024 IECC, a report out from the Stretch and Zero Energy Code Working Group, and a discussion on incentives and their alignment with available codes in New Jersey.

She provided an antitrust reminder and reiterated the purpose of the New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative, emphasizing its role in supporting a stakeholder-driven process to develop a Zero Energy Building Roadmap aligned with the state's Energy Master Plan. She noted that the Roadmap includes three concurrent pathways, new construction base code, stretch/zero energy code, and existing buildings, intended to guide New Jersey toward zero energy building codes by 2030 or sooner.

Cornelia provided an update on the 2024 IECC adoption process. The public comment period closed on December 19, and the next step is review by the Governor's office. Executive Order #7, issued by Governor Sherrill, established a 90-day pause on new rulemaking, temporarily delaying adoption of updates to the UCC, including the energy subcode. Under New Jersey rulemaking requirements, adoption must occur within one year of publication in the New Jersey Register, setting an October 20 deadline.

2. Stretch and Zero Energy Code Working Group Report

Jason Kliwinski (Rutgers CUPR) summarized key takeaways from the Stretch and Zero Energy Code Working Group. Relying solely on the standard ASHRAE-based code adoption cycle is unlikely to achieve zero energy goals by 2030 or 2050, prompting discussion of stretch and zero energy code pathways.

The distinction between base codes, which establish minimum energy performance levels, and stretch or zero energy codes, which exceed those minimums and typically require renewable energy contributions. He noted that current IECC appendices reference site energy rather than source energy.

Jason outlined common stretch code focus areas, including building envelope performance, air leakage, electrification, heat pumps, and renewable energy integration. He also reviewed approaches used in other states (e.g., Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont), including percentage improvements over base code, performance-based methods, and programmatic pathways such as Passive House, DOE Zero Energy Ready, and LEED Zero.

He presented an overview of New Jersey Clean Energy Program incentives, noting that current programs generally incentivize performance improvements in the range of 5–10% above code, with higher performance pathways such as Passive House achieving significantly greater improvements (40–85%).

Jason highlighted a key gap: IECC stretch code appendices require approximately 25% performance improvement, significantly higher than current incentive levels. He emphasized that aligning incentives with stretch code requirements would be necessary if such codes are adopted.

He also reviewed ERI-based compliance pathways, noting that stretch and zero energy appendices require substantially lower ERI scores and incorporate renewable energy requirements. He briefly discussed alternative frameworks such as the IGCC, ASHRAE 189.1, LEED Zero, and Architecture 2030, noting that some extend beyond energy into broader sustainability areas.

He concluded that while current incentive programs support above-code performance, they do not generally reach the performance levels required for stretch or zero energy codes, with the exception of Passive House pathways.

3. Discussion

Jason Kliwinski (Rutgers CUPR) asked whether a 25% performance improvement, as required by IECC stretch codes, is a reasonable target given current incentive levels.

Ben Adams (MaGrann Associates) noted that the highest incentive pathways under the New Jersey Clean Energy Program for residential construction (e.g., ENERGY STAR, DOE Zero Energy Ready, Passive House) reduce the gap between incentives and stretch code targets.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers) asked whether participants in incentive programs typically exceed minimum thresholds.

Ben Adams (MaGrann Associates) responded that performance varies by measure. Some measures, such as air sealing, often exceed minimum thresholds, but verification processes focus on meeting thresholds rather than tracking how far beyond they are exceeded. Additional data analysis could provide more insight.

Ben Cohen (ReVireo) shared that achieving 10–15% improvements has already proven challenging in practice, with a noticeable drop-off in participation at those levels. Increasing requirements to 25% would likely be very difficult from a market perspective.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) highlighted ongoing ICC discussions regarding the 2027 and 2030 code cycles. ICC is considering a structure with a base code and a separate zero-ready code that includes electrification and decarbonization elements. He emphasized the importance of aligning current work with future code developments. He also noted increasing emphasis on cost-effectiveness analysis in code development, including affordability concerns that influence adoption decisions across states.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) added that current proposals rely on simple payback methods, though there have been discussions about incorporating lifecycle cost analysis.

William Amann (M&E Engineers, Inc.) raised concerns that overly restrictive payback criteria could limit meaningful energy improvements if broader benefits (e.g., health impacts) are not considered.

Skye Gruen (ACEEE) explained that current proposals may limit cost-effectiveness analysis to a short-term payback period of 7 to 12 years, which could exclude measures like insulation that provide long-term benefits. She noted that this approach could reduce flexibility and limit the ability to evaluate measures comprehensively.

Jennifer Senick (Rutgers CUPR) reminded the group that New Jersey currently requires a seven-year simple payback for new construction code amendments, which may be more stringent than future ICC requirements.

Jason Kliwinski (Rutgers CUPR) discussed the importance of energy modeling in evaluating performance and cost-effectiveness. While modeling tools can incorporate lifecycle analysis, results can vary significantly depending on inputs and modelers.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) emphasized the need for independent, objective evaluation of energy savings and cost-effectiveness, suggesting that federal entities such as DOE could play a role in providing unbiased analysis.

Jason Kliwinski (Rutgers CUPR) raised the question of whether New Jersey should adopt standardized modeling methodologies or tools to improve consistency in both code compliance and program implementation.

William Amann noted that comparative modeling approaches can be manipulated depending on baseline assumptions and highlighted challenges related to defining baselines and accounting for non-regulated loads.

Ben Adams (MaGrann Associates) suggested that ERI-based modeling provides greater consistency due to standardized reference homes and oversight through RESNET, though it may not fully address lifecycle cost analysis needs. While ERI performs well across large datasets, individual building performance can vary based on occupant behavior.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) added that future IECC restructuring could place stretch code appendices within a separate expanded code, which may influence how these provisions are considered by states.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) noted that separating code documents (e.g., base vs. expanded codes) could improve clarity for code officials.

4. Closing

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) shared upcoming meetings, including the Energy Code Compliance and Workforce Subcommittee meeting and a potential rescheduling of the Existing Buildings Subcommittee meeting. She announced that the full Energy Code Collaborative meeting will take place on April 17, where subcommittees will report out and provide updates on the IECC adoption process.

Draft meeting minutes will be circulated for review prior to finalization and reminded participants that past materials and future meeting information are available on the Collaborative website.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASHRAE – American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers
DOE – U.S. Department of Energy
EDA – New Jersey Economic Development Authority
ERI – Energy Rating Index

ERV – Energy Recovery Ventilator
HFMA – New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
ICC – International Code Council
IECC – International Energy Conservation Code
IGCC – International Green Construction Code
LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
NEEP – Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships
NJ CEP – New Jersey Clean Energy Program
NJDEP – New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
UCC – Uniform Construction Code