



New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative

Meeting Minutes

April 17, 2026, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Attendees

- Andy Topinka (External)
- Ben Adams (MaGrann Associates)
- Ben Cohen (ReVireo)
- Charlotte Weigel (NEEP)
- Cornelia Wu (NEEP)
- David Hattis (Rutgers CUPR)
- Dean Potter (K Hovnanian)
- Deane Evans (NJ IT)
- Dragana Thibault (NEEP)
- Elizabeth Stanton (NJ DRC)
- Eric DeGesero (EDGE Consulting)
- Erin Sherman (RMI)
- Gahl S. Spanier (AEA Clean Energy)
- Ian Finlayson (MA DOER)
- Jason Kliwinski (Rutgers CUPR)
- Jeff Kolakowski (NJ BA)
- Jennifer Senick (Rutgers CUPR)
- Jennifer Souder (Rutgers CUPR)
- Jesse Kolodin (NJ BPU)
- Jordan Burt (AE Clinic)
- Karl Hartkopf (NJ DEP)
- Liu Liu (KEA Engineers)
- Lyle Rawlings (Advanced Solar)
- Michael Kornitas (Rutgers CUPR)
- Mike
- Mize Jamie (NJ NG)
- Nicholas Kikis (NJ AA)
- Nicole Provost (NJ DEP)
- Pamela DeLosSantos (NJ HMFA)
- Pat Miller (NJ Electrification Coaching Network)
- Paul Heitmann (NJ BPU)
- Paul Ormond (MA DOER)
- Ray Cantor (NJ BIA)
- Rebecca Lynskey (TRC)
- Robert OBrien
- Roger Marran
- Ryan Jerome (NJ NG)
- Sarah Walters (TRC)
- Skye Gruen (ACEEE)
- Thomas Butcher
- Todd Gordon (SJIU)
- William Healy (TRC)
- Yousaf Shahid (Rutgers CUPR)

1. Introduction

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) welcomed participants to the April meeting of the New Jersey Energy Code Collaborative and noted that the meeting would include three presentations. She reviewed the agenda, which included:

- Subcommittee report-outs
- Presentation from Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources on stretch codes and zero energy code pathways
- Presentation from ACEEE on pathways to net zero homes
- Presentation from NEEP on an affordability resource related to electric-ready and demand response appendices



Cornelia provided an antitrust reminder and reiterated the purpose of the Collaborative, to establish a stakeholder-guided process to develop a New Jersey Zero Energy Building Roadmap that advances increasingly efficient building energy codes and improves administration, enforcement, and compliance aligned with state energy policies and Energy Master Plan goals. She also noted that the roadmap is a living document with three concurrent pathways:

- New construction base code
- Stretch/zero energy code pathway
- Existing buildings pathway

These pathways are intended to guide New Jersey toward zero energy building codes by 2030 or sooner.

2. Subcommittee Report-Outs

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) provided a brief update on recent subcommittee activities.

For the Energy Codes for New Construction Subcommittee, she noted that the group reviewed updates on New Jersey's 2024 IECC adoption and discussed stretch and zero energy code pathways, including alignment with existing incentive programs.

For the Existing Buildings and Retrofits Subcommittee, she stated that the group discussed workforce initiatives and reviewed [NEEP's workforce roadmap findings](#), which included strong participation from New Jersey stakeholders. The group also discussed workforce shortages, training needs, and implications for energy code compliance and consistency.

For the Code Compliance and Workforce Subcommittee, she noted that Rutgers presented change-of-occupancy modeling results under the 2024 code updates and discussed implications for system performance. The group also reviewed existing building incentives and identified gaps and barriers, particularly in the multifamily sector, and highlighted case studies from the [New Jersey Green Building Manual](#).

3. Massachusetts Stretch Code and Zero Energy Code

Ian Finlayson (MA DOER) provided an overview of Massachusetts' experience transitioning from a base energy code to a stretch code and, more recently, to a specialized code designed to support net zero outcomes. He explained that Massachusetts operates under a statewide "min-max" code, where municipalities are required to adopt the state code and cannot exceed it unless additional pathways are provided. He noted that in 2008, municipalities began requesting the ability to pursue more advanced or green building approaches, which led to the development of the stretch code.

He described how adoption of the stretch code expanded significantly over time, with many municipalities opting in, and noted that today the majority of the state is covered by either the stretch code or the specialized code, with only a small portion remaining on the base IECC code.



He emphasized that the success of the stretch code was supported by significant investment in training and technical assistance for code officials and industry stakeholders.

Ian explained that the development of the stretch and specialized codes was guided by several principles, including the use of performance-based approaches, reducing complexity where possible, and incorporating third-party testing and verification. He also noted that the state has increasingly focused on enabling electrification and supporting broader energy transition goals.

Paul Ormond (MA DOER) then described the current structure of Massachusetts' codes, explaining that both the stretch code and the specialized code are built on what he referred to as a thermal code approach. He explained that this approach prioritizes improvements to the building envelope, including air sealing, thermal bridge mitigation, and ventilation with energy recovery, in order to reduce heating and cooling loads.

He emphasized that traditional code approaches focused heavily on overall energy use intensity may overlook the importance of heating and cooling loads in driving grid impacts. He explained that by improving the building envelope and reducing heat loss, it is possible to electrify buildings without increasing peak demand on the grid, and in some cases even reduce overall grid impacts.

Paul presented data showing that adoption of these approaches has led to a significant increase in all-electric buildings in Massachusetts, with the vast majority of new construction now using heat pumps. He also noted that Passive House standards have become widely adopted in multifamily construction, even in cases where they are not required.

Eric DeGesero (EDGE Consulting) raised questions about the cost of applying these approaches in retrofit scenarios, referencing data from New York suggesting high costs for deep energy retrofits. **Paul Ormond (MA DOER)** clarified that the presentation focused on new construction and that retrofit conditions are significantly more complex. Ian Finlayson added that new construction allows for design efficiencies that are not available in retrofit situations, such as avoiding the need for separate heating systems.

Eric DeGesero (EDGE Consulting) also asked about electricity costs and when electrification becomes cost-effective, particularly given high utility rates. **Ian Finlayson (MA DOER)** responded that distribution costs are a significant component of electricity prices and that grid-friendly buildings can help reduce system costs by avoiding increases in peak demand.

Eric DeGesero (EDGE Consulting) asked about assumptions related to coefficient of performance, and **Paul Ormond (MA DOER)** clarified that the values presented reflect measured seasonal performance in new buildings.



Cornelia Wu (NEEP) clarified that the Massachusetts codes do not prohibit fossil fuels and that the high rates of electrification observed are the result of market choices within the code framework rather than a mandate.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) raised questions about occupant experience and comfort with heat pumps, noting that perceptions about comfort remain a barrier to adoption. **Ian Finlayson (MA DOER)** explained that ongoing studies are evaluating performance and customer experience, and that early findings suggest significant energy savings when buildings are constructed with high-performance envelopes. He added that comfort is generally improved with heat pumps due to more stable indoor temperatures and reduced system cycling.

Dean Potter (K Hovnanian) noted that national guidance, including recommendations for setback thermostats, may not align well with heat pump operation, and suggested that this could require further consideration as codes evolve. **Ian Finlayson (MA DOER)** responded that, in practice, many occupants adjust their usage patterns and maintain steady temperatures, resulting in improved comfort.

4. ACEEE Pathways to Net Zero Codes

Skye Gruen (ACEEE) presented an overview of a Department of Energy funded initiative to develop tiered pathways toward net zero energy codes. She explained that the framework includes three tiers that build on the 2024 IECC, with increasing levels of efficiency, electrification, and incorporation of renewable energy.

She emphasized that the codes are designed as amendments to the IECC and are intended to provide flexible pathways that states can adopt based on their specific context. She also noted that the project includes supporting materials such as cost analysis, technical guidance, and user documentation to facilitate implementation.

Skye described how different states are approaching code development, highlighting examples from Massachusetts, Colorado, Washington, and New York, each of which reflects different governance structures and policy approaches. She noted that New Jersey's structure presents unique considerations, particularly given its reliance on a statewide code, and that multiple approaches may need to be explored.

5. NEEP Affordability Resource

Charlotte Weigel (NEEP) presented an overview of a new resource under development focused on the affordability of electric-ready and demand response appendices in the 2024 IECC. She explained that the resource is intended to support jurisdictions in evaluating whether to adopt these provisions by assessing construction costs, cost-effectiveness, and potential long-term benefits.



She described the proposed methodology, which includes collecting contractor cost estimates, analyzing material costs, and incorporating existing research such as prior work conducted by Rutgers. She also noted that the analysis would consider different building types, including single-family and multifamily, and would explore how to account for impacts on renters and affordable housing.

Charlotte invited feedback from the group on which appendices and building types should be prioritized and how to best address affordability considerations in New Jersey.

Sarah Walters (TRC) asked whether cost-benefit analysis related to the Massachusetts approach could be made available. **Ian Finlayson (MA DOER)** responded that additional information could be shared and suggested a follow-up session to provide more detail.

Nicholas Kikis (NJ AA) stated that his organization does not support the use of stretch codes in New Jersey, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a uniform statewide construction code and expressing concern about variability across municipalities.

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) acknowledged the comment and reiterated that the Collaborative is not making decisions but is instead exploring different approaches and evaluating their potential benefits and challenges.

6. Closing

Cornelia Wu (NEEP) thanked participants and presenters and noted that subcommittee meetings would be scheduled in the coming weeks and that meeting notes would be shared publicly.

ZOOM Chat Discussion Notes

Gahl Spanier (AEA Clean Energy): Any data on the demographic (Income) of communities that adopt/don't adopt code? What have you been able to learn and do regarding the enforcement of stricter codes? Have there been tools or specific guidelines (like a HERS rater report or similar) that empowered more effective enforcement?

Nicole Provost (NJ DEP): On the COP note Eric - just came across this map yesterday that may be an interest to you/this group: [Heat Pump Economics by State](#)

Roger Marran: Cold climate heat pump field performance average COP is 2.1, and that includes spring and fall (NREL 2023). Next generation heat pumps is only slightly better.

<https://docs.nrel.gov/docs/fy23osti/84745.pdf>

Thomas Butcher: Setback is also a comfort thing. Better to sleep in a colder house. Time for setback recovery is a factor to consider.



Ian Finlayson (MA DOER): In MA we focused some of our early stretch code outreach on lower income 'Gateway Cities' and towns, so some of our earliest adopters were places like Springfield, Lowell, Holyoke that have a lot of affordable housing. We also saw that the affordable housing developers were the early adopters of Passive house in MA (in PA, and NYC) so they generally have recognized the energy affordability benefits of low and predictable utility bills.

Eric DeGesero (EDGE Consulting): Nicole I paid 27c/kWh winter 2025-2026 (pseg res. tariff) your website uses 19 c kWh.

Ben Cohen (ReVireo): Is there any discussion on renewing the 45L \$5,000 tax credit for DOE ENH?

Skye Gruen (ACEEE): Ben -- not that we have been made aware of, but we are ever hopeful!

Skye Gruen (ACEEE): [ACEEE CodeAmendment_OnePager 2-25-26.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Ian Finlayson (MA DOER): Responding to Gahl's 2nd question: On enforcement - we required HERS raters starting back in 2009 and that provides QA as part of the package. We signed an MOU with RESNET to get the final HERS ratings and we compare them with Municipal reporting to safeguard that appropriate HERS ratings are being met, and those HERS targets have gradually reduced from HERS 75 in 2010 to 65, 55, 52 and today a range from 42-48 for new construction and a higher range from 58-75 for existing building alterations, additions and change of use.

Gahl Spanier (AEA Clean Energy): Thanks Ian!

Ian Finlayson (MA DOER): Thermal code amendments don't require a stretch code. But having a stretch code allows for more policy options.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

45L – Federal Energy Efficient Home Tax Credit

ACEEE – American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy

AEA – Advanced Energy Association

COP – Coefficient of Performance

DOE – U.S. Department of Energy

DOER – Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources

ECC – Energy Code Collaborative

ENH – Energy Efficient New Homes

HERS – Home Energy Rating System

IECC – International Energy Conservation Code



K Hovnanian – K. Hovnanian Homes
MA – Massachusetts
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
NEEP – Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships
NJ – New Jersey
NJ AA – New Jersey Apartment Association
NJ BA – New Jersey Builders Association
NJ BIA – New Jersey Business & Industry Association
NJ BPU – New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
NJ DEP – New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
NJ DRC – New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel
NJ HMFA – New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
NJ IT – New Jersey Institute of Technology
NJ NG – New Jersey Natural Gas
NREL – National Renewable Energy Laboratory
NYC – New York City
PA – Pennsylvania
PSE&G – Public Service Electric & Gas
QA – Quality Assurance
RESNET – Residential Energy Services Network
RMI – Rocky Mountain Institute
SJIU – South Jersey Industries Utilities
TRC – TRC Companies, Inc.