



TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

The RI Energy Efficiency Technical Working Group met to discuss the upcoming 2026 Plan
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ACT ON CLIMATE COMMISSION

A special legislative commission meeting was held to study the fulfillment of the Act on Climate
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EC4 UPDATE

The EC4 and related boards met multiple times, including with the new consultant group
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UPCOMING EVENTS

RIPUC Energy Facility Citing Board Meeting - Sept 8

NEEP Workforce Development for EV Readiness - Sept 18

EBC AI's Impact on the Energy Sector Coffee Hour - Sept 18

ACEEE Energy Efficiency as a Resource Conference - Oct 8-9

MEETINGS COVERED

EC4 Full Council - 6/23

EE EWG - 6/23

EC4 Advisory Board - 6/25, 7/30

EE TWG - 6/30, 7/24

EC4 STAB - 7/10, 7/31

Act on Climate Special Legislative Commission - 7/23

GECA RI Policy Roundup - 7/28

SPOTLIGHT

HOME ENERGY RATINGS BOOST HOME SALES AND ENCOURAGE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

A new report from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) highlights the benefits of mandatory home energy rating policies, which require sellers to disclose a property's efficiency score at the time of listing. Using tools like the U.S. Department of Energy's Home Energy Score, these programs help buyers identify efficient homes, boost property values, and encourage retrofits. Case studies from Portland, Minneapolis, and Berkeley show that clear, early disclosure is key to influencing buyer decisions. (Portland homes with ratings in 2023 were found to be 10 times more likely to undergo upgrades!). ACEEE recommends that programs adopt simple, accessible scoring systems, connect homeowners to incentives and tax credits, and provide free ratings for low-income households. By doing so, cities can increase participation, reduce energy burdens, and ensure efficiency improvements reach those who need them most.

Trump administration seeks to dismantle CO2 regulations



The Trump administration has proposed overturning the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2009 "endangerment finding," the scientific and legal foundation that allows the federal government to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced the plan in Indiana, framing it as a way to end regulatory "uncertainty" for automakers while also rolling back rules on climate pollution from cars and trucks, the nation's largest source of emissions. The move, which climate advocates vow to challenge in court, comes amid record-breaking heat, flooding, and wildfires linked to climate change.

The endangerment finding, upheld repeatedly by the courts and reaffirmed in the Inflation Reduction Act,



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underpins U.S. regulations on power plants, vehicles, and methane emissions. Critics say dismantling it would gut U.S. climate policy, hinder future administrations' ability to curb emissions, and prioritize fossil fuel interests over public health and safety. Supporters, including Trump and conservative allies, argue the original finding was flawed, overstepped legal authority, and imposed costly burdens. Environmental groups warn that eliminating this cornerstone of U.S. climate action would undermine global commitments under the Paris Agreement and accelerate climate risks at home.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Technical Working Group

The Rhode Island Energy Technical Working Group met on 6/30, where members reviewed the 2024 Energy Efficiency Plan results and discussed early updates on the 2026 Plan. Questions arose about whether building codes are already factored into goals and how "right-sizing" consumer products contributed to underperformance in specific appliance categories. On the 2026 draft, members noted proposed budget cuts, concerns over emissions assumptions, and questions about regulatory cost allocations. Members expressed reservations about pausing the successful, cost-effective Home Energy Reports program before integrating advanced metering benefits, while others linked budget reductions to "right-sizing" requirements and highlighted differing statutory interpretations around cost-effectiveness. Overall, the group voiced disappointment with the 2026 Plan's direction, warning that slowing energy efficiency efforts could hinder Rhode Island's ability to meet its Act on Climate targets and ultimately increase long-term costs. They also noted that reduced goals could make performance incentives easier to achieve and sought clarity on how much of the budget reduction stems from "right-sizing" versus broader cost-cutting pressures.



**New York to Remove EmPower+
Low Income Energy Efficiency
Assistance Program**

New York’s flagship energy affordability program, EmPower+, is facing major funding cuts despite Governor Kathy Hochul’s public emphasis on lowering utility costs and ensuring an affordable clean energy transition. Launched in 2023, EmPower+ has provided tens of thousands of low- and moderate-income households with free or heavily subsidized energy efficiency upgrades, covering up to \$24,000 per home. The program has been widely praised for reducing bills, improving comfort, and supporting local contractors who deliver the upgrades. However, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) announced that its budget will shrink from \$220 million this year to \$80 million by 2027, a move advocates call “devastating” as families face rising energy bills. The cuts stem from reduced state and federal funding, though advocates argue alternative sources could be used to sustain the program. Critics warn the reductions threaten both household affordability and New York’s legally binding climate goals, which require significant reductions in building energy use by 2025. Clean energy groups and legislators have been urging the governor to intervene and restore support, framing EmPower+ as a critical tool for energy justice and climate progress.



**ACT ON CLIMATE
SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE
COMMISSION MEETING**

This past legislative session established a special legislative commission to study the successful implementation of the Act on Climate, which was convened for the first time on July 23. The commission consists of Senators Rogers, Zurier, McKenney, and Vargas. RIDEM Director and EC4 Chair Terry Gray gave a presentation on climate policy and planning in RI, engagement and EJ, the 2025 RI Climate Action Strategy goals, and key components of the Climate Action Strategy modelling to the commission. Senator Zurier asked about the role of natural and working lands (NWL) in late-term carbon sequestration, which Gray affirmed as vital, especially as coastal wetlands shrink due to sea level rise. Senator Rogers raised concerns about housing and solar development encroaching on NWL, and Gray confirmed these impacts are included in emissions inventories, which still rely heavily on federal EPA data.

The conversation shifted to transportation, the largest source of greenhouse gases, with Senator Vargas asking about EV incentives for municipalities. Gray explained that while the state fleet is transitioning to EVs under an executive order, municipal fleets lack similar mandates and rely on general incentives. Rogers emphasized the lack of public transit in rural areas and the strain on substations from both solar and EV infrastructure, prompting Gray to highlight ongoing grid modernization efforts. Senators McKenney and Zurier discussed EV adoption targets and legal challenges following the rollback of federal standards, with Gray noting the importance of modeling to guide strategy. Air quality monitoring and environmental justice were also addressed, and Gray confirmed active partnerships and efforts to expand air quality sensor coverage. Finally, the commission acknowledged concerns about future electricity demand from data centers and potential legal consequences for missing climate targets, reinforcing the urgency of a comprehensive and enforceable climate strategy.

EC4 Priorities

(Read more on page 5)

ESTABLISH
SHORT TERM
REVIEW
TIMELINE

DETERMINE
PLAN
PRIORITY
SECTORS

ACCELERATE
DUNSKY PLAN
REVIEW

ALLEVIATE
MIDSTREAM
DIFFICULTIES



The full EC4 met on June 23. Chair Gray announced that there was not much change to climate legislation during the past session despite the consideration of several bills. The EC4 discussed a few legislative items such as the Affordable Clean Energy Security Act, some transportation bills, and the establishment of the OER as a standalone agency.

The Council reviewed its 2025 budget, which funded a number of programs that are currently in the pre-implementation phased. The EC4 expects to receive the full RGGI allowance for the 2026 budget, and Chair Gray asked that program planning focus on meeting the Act on Climate mandates, particularly those facing federal scrutiny.

Next, Chief Resilience Officer Korieth introduced the newly appointed state resilience coordinators, each focusing on a different section of RI, and provided an update on the Coastal Resilience Plan. Finally, an attendee provided public comment that the Act on Climate predates the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), so any future loss of IRA funding should not be a barrier to Act on Climate commitments.

Advisory Board: The EC4 Advisory Board convened on June 25. The RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) announced that the EC4 Science and Technical Advisory Board (STAB) has selected Dunsky as its technical support consultant, and they have onboarded three new regional resiliency coordinators. Energy and Environmental Economics (E3) presented updates on the 2025 Climate Action Strategy including the project's status, a detailed overview of the upcoming modeling work, and actions to achieve decarbonization. E3 commented that many stakeholders were calling for a detailed rate analysis; this is beyond the scope of the current analysis, but E3 will discuss it qualitatively in their final report.

The Advisory Board discussed affordability challenges within the Residential sector and barriers to reaching affordable housing tenants and rental building landlords. The Advisory Board also discussed how the upfront costs of equipment and renovations may deter some participants and stated that it is critical to emphasize how individuals will save money through the implementation of decarbonized measures. Following the discussion with E3, there were brief updates on the design of the Advisory Board's "Climate Conversations" and a discussion of some of the relevant outcomes of the 2025 legislative session. The building decarbonization legislation did not pass in the Senate, but the original large building benchmarking bill had passed in the House.

An Advisory Board member noted that the Governor's budget proposed the benchmarking of public buildings. Additionally, another Advisory Board member cautioned that there may be an effort in future years to roll back the standards of the Renewable Energy Standard and the Act on Climate, stating that there was some preliminary

probing for this in the current session. Finally, it was announced that the extended producer responsibility study did not pass again this year.

The Advisory Board met again on July 30 where councilors discussed a range of ongoing and upcoming initiatives. The meeting began with a conversation on future outreach, where councilors debated whether engagement efforts should be handled in-house or outsourced, with no final decision reached. Councilors noted that individual agencies continue to collaborate on strategies to effectively reach constituents. In planning the Advisory Board's "Climate Conversations," members recommended focusing engagement on communities in Woonsocket, North Kingstown, West Warwick, and Westerly, while leaving room to include additional organizations. One councilor suggested adding a mechanism for the public to recommend trusted community groups for participation.

Dunsky, the EC4 Science and Technical Advisory Board's technical consultant, provided an update on its review of E3's Climate Action Strategy Evaluation model. The review will focus on key sectors such as transportation, the electric grid, buildings, industrial processes, and natural gas, emphasizing evidence-based components of these sectors. Dunsky's analysis will examine model logic, interactions, equity and land use considerations, assumptions, efficiencies, costs, and data sources, as well as policy recommendations. Recent work includes a detailed review of PATHWAYS and PLEXOS model inputs, scenario definitions, and updated resilience actions. Upcoming tasks involve gathering additional materials, clarifying project timelines, identifying priority review areas at the July 31 STAB meeting, and conducting an in-depth transportation sector analysis.

Resilience Coordinator Kim Korieth shared updates on resilience planning efforts, including the creation of "snapshot summaries" of local municipal plans that highlight focus areas and identify gaps. Outreach to municipalities has begun, with towns prompted to identify their top three priority projects. A two-page technical assistance template has been developed to support needs such as grant writing and background research. Board members discussed ways to prioritize assistance areas and the importance of maintaining a big-picture approach, ensuring that local projects address systemic climate challenges rather than isolated symptoms.

STAB: The Science and Technical Advisory Board met twice in the past few months, first on July 10 where members received updates on the forthcoming 2025 State Resilience Actions, discussed the Dunsky work plan and provided formal member introductions. Consultant ARUP completed an inventory and gap analysis, with feedback from EC4 subgroups, resilience partners, and a June stakeholder forum. The draft will be released for review in the coming weeks, with the next major effort focused on a comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment -



examining present-day and future risks (2035, 2050, 2100) from hazards such as flooding, heat, and extreme wind.

This work will overlay hazard and exposure data to evaluate risks to critical infrastructure, natural systems, and emergency management, ranking hazards from very high to very low. Forums to discuss the plan are scheduled for July 17 (community) and July 18 (municipal). Liz Stone provided EC4 updates, including onboarding a Natural and Working Lands Fellow at DEM, ongoing work on buildings and transportation in the Climate Action Plan, and forthcoming E3 modeling results with drafts in August, with presentations in September. The Climate Dashboard rollout is expected in late July or early August, which will accompany the recently released Lead by Example Dashboard.

The STAB members went on to provide formal introductions. They highlighted diverse expertise, from coastal policy and resilience to ocean science, planning data, and climate modeling, with a shared emphasis on timely input, technical support, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The meeting continued onto discussion on the Dunskey work plan. Dunskey emphasized the need for a short-term review timeline, biweekly project check-ins, clear communication protocols with E3 and other study groups, and access to key materials like the resilience plan draft and modeling inputs. Members stressed the urgency of active consultant engagement, identifying high-impact priorities (electricity, buildings, transportation, and industrial methane emissions), and ensuring materials are provided to Dunskey in advance. Public comment from EC4 Advisory Board member Emily Koo welcomed process improvements but raised concerns about consultants joining mid-stream and called for additional review of technical documents for transparency. Members left the meeting with goals to establish the project team schedule, clarify engagement protocols, and share priority documents with Dunskey.

The EC4 STAB met again on 7/31. Most of the information besides the core discussion was previously covered in the 7/30 EC4 Advisory Board meeting, which can be read above. In this meeting, councilor's discussion was focused on Dunskey's review of Climate Strategy outputs and coordination with E3. The council opted to forgo formal questioning of E3 in favor of more informal, internal discussions between E3 and Dunskey. This would avoid lengthy comment submission processes and accelerate Dunskey's review, something that the council notes is especially important as Dunskey joins the project midstream. Dunskey explains how E3 will run three scenarios through the PATHWAYS model, including a business-as-usual case, to guide sector-specific strategy recommendations.

Members raised questions about why only three scenarios were selected, the importance of key assumptions, and the potential to incorporate insights from E3's "Future of Gas" analysis.

The discussion also covered PLEXOS, the capacity expansion model used by ISO-NE, which accounts for electricity distribution and transmission infrastructure beyond statistical analysis. Members considered priorities for technical review, potential challenges in translating technical findings for stakeholder understanding, and what aspects of the process and modeling are working well. The discussion concluded with reflection on areas where STAB members may seek further support from Dunskey to advance strategy development.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY EQUITY WORKING GROUP

The Energy Efficiency Equity Working Group (EWG) met on June 23 to discuss energy efficiency equity metrics. Rhode Island Energy presented their quarterly equity metrics reporting from 2024 and solicited feedback from the EWG. In 2024, the EnergyWise Single Family program conducted nearly 14,000 energy audits and completed over 7,000 weatherization measures, with about a quarter benefiting Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. The Income Eligible Single-Family program saw a 38% increase in audits in Q4, with nearly half serving EJ areas, and weatherization jobs tripled to 488, 44% of which were in EJ communities. Multifamily efforts included 183 audits and 82 weatherization jobs, with 52% and 18% in EJ areas, respectively. The Small Business Direct Install program supported 787 businesses, 37% in EJ communities, mostly microbusinesses with low energy usage. Additionally, 281 of 613 deferrals in the income-eligible program were due to pre-weatherization barriers, primarily knob & tube wiring, mold/moisture issues, and combustion hazards.

The EWG emphasized improving equity tracking by focusing on measurable outcomes like deferrals resolved and geographic impacts. Suggestions included breaking out multifamily data by market rate vs income-eligible and tracking deferrals by region and CAP agency. Pre-weatherization barriers, especially knob and tube wiring, remain a major challenge, with CAP agencies facing funding and staffing constraints. Outreach efforts, including landlord engagement and partnerships like the one with Providence Public Library, are expanding. There was interest in case studies, better data sharing, and developing short-term reporting tools while working toward long-term data standardization. Building trust and collaboration was highlighted as essential alongside data collection.