Learning, Education, and Advancement Discussion Session
Draft Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 5, 2026 | 1:00 - 4:00 PM

South Dining Room, Donovan Dining Center

Rhode Island College, 600 Mt. Pleasant Ave, Providence, RI 02908

Members of the public were able to join via Zoom

Members in Attendance: Harry Oakley, Chris Kearns, Peter Gill Case, Priscilla De La Cruz, Kurt Teichert, Sue AnderBois, Dr. Carrie Gill, Joe Garlick, Brett Feldman

Others in Attendance: Melissa Travis (virtual), Rachel Sholly, Steven Chybowski, David Augustyn, Josh Cornell, Seth Handy, Adrian Caesar, Claire Williams, Theo Smith, Sam Ross, Emily Koo (virtual), Marion Gold (virtual), Griff Keating (virtual), Annika Brindel (virtual), Lee Gresham (virtual)

1. **Call to Order**
   Chairperson Oakley called the meeting into order at 1:05 p.m.

2. **Public Comment**
   None.

3. **Introduction & Icebreaker**
   Rachel Sholly of the Council's Consultant Team welcomed the group in attendance and introduced the icebreaker.

4. **Energy Affordability & the Value of Energy Efficiency**
   a. **Presentation by ACEEE on the Value of Energy Efficiency and Affordability.**
   Annika Brindel from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy ("ACEEE") presented to the members in attendance on the value of energy efficiency; a comparative review of Rhode Island energy metrics as they relate to energy burden, energy insecurity, energy consumption, and energy efficiency; and the economic impacts of energy imports in Rhode Island.

   Some of the key ideas discussed in the presentation included:
   - Energy efficiency as a direct lever for reducing household costs and energy bills;
   - Energy efficiency as the least cost resource compared to other supply-side resources,
   - Investment by States in more comprehensive weatherization, electrification, and low-income customers have increased the savings generated from energy efficiency.

- New England has the worst low-income household energy burden of any U.S. Region.
- One-third of Rhode Island households are energy insecure.
- Rhode Island is currently ranked #12 in ACEEE's state scorecard
- Despite higher spending low-income energy efficiency measures, the energy burden on low-income communities is still three times higher than the national average.
- Rhode Island spent $1.37 billion on Energy exports in 2024.
- Rhode Island spent 10.5 % less on gas imports in 2024 which led to $80.3M less spent on gas in 2024 alone.
- Electrification would add jobs and increase economic development.

b. Council Discussion

Vice Chair Gill Case inquired about the drivers related to the State of Wisconsin relative lack of energy burden despite middling energy costs. He emphasized the need for the Council to focus on both macro- and micro- scale areas for development in energy efficiency, and he suggested the behind-the-meter peak shaving benefits of battery storage as an example of this dual focus. Further, Vice Chair Gill Case asked about the coaching that energy efficiency councils can provide concerning the subject of macro- and micro level DSM issues.

Acting Commissioner Kearns, of the Office of Energy Resources, inquired how the ACEEE evaluated gas energy efficiency measures on the state level and how implementation of IRA funded energy efficiency programs weighs into the score for the ACEEE scorecard.

Chair Oakley inquired about whether there was any causal relationship between energy affordability and the performance of energy efficiency programs. He emphasized that context was important in determining whether the health of energy efficiency programs actually led to healthier energy outcomes relative to other states. Chair Oakley and Vice Chair Gill Case discussed that seasonality and generation capacity are large driving factors in the opportunity for energy efficiency improvements.

Vice Chair Gill Case inquired about the drivers of energy affordability. In response, Annika Brindel suggested that investment in low-income communities, strategic transitions of gas infrastructure, improving building codes, developing competency in installers, and creating energy jobs with a focus on low-income communities as methods of promoting energy affordability.

c. Presentation by Rhode Island Energy on Energy Affordability in Rhode Island

Dr. Carrie Gill, Council Member and Head of Electric Regulatory Strategy at Rhode Island Energy, presented on Energy Affordability as it relates to the State of Rhode Island. Dr. Gill's presentation explored the topics of electric energy burden by municipality, the income distribution and disparity in Rhode Island, the calculation of the active low-income discount rates, and the plans to implement an enhanced low-income discount rate as result of the recent base rate docket at the Public Utilities Commission.

Some of the key ideas discussed in the presentation included:

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- Rhode Island Energy is incentivized as good neighbors and as an economic business practice to promote energy affordability for Rhode Islanders.
- Rhode Island Energy targets an energy burden of 3% or less of median household income as its affordability target. Most municipalities meet this target, but Rhode Island Energy has identified Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket as communities that would benefit from energy burden reductions.
- Rhode Island Energy uses census data and a weighted estimate provided by the US HHS Federal Poverty Limit ("FPL") in their energy burden calculations.
- Rhode Islanders that fall within 0-75% FPL have an energy burden of 20.5%.

d. Council Discussion

Council Member De La Cruz shared that people who do not qualify for Federal Poverty Limit are also increasingly struggling to pay electric bills according to the City of Providence and the United Way. Additionally, she asked how Rhode Island can incorporate energy burden targets in a way that meaningfully addresses household affordability metrics.

Chair Oakley initiated a discussion on whether someone could make the argument that the Council's current focus on electrification could increase energy cost and affect affordability. Council Members De La Cruz, AnderBois, and Teichert and Vice Chair Gil Case discussed with Chair Oakley the different benefits in the short term and long term that support the Council's focus on electrification including benefits for affordability, health, environment, and equity as an economic whole.

Acting Commissioner Kearns would like to see a further breakdown of the cost of average monthly electricity consumption by cost category that was included in Dr. Gill's presentation in future Council meetings

5. Heat Pumps, Rates, and Demand Side Management

a. Presentation by the Consultant Team on Regional Heat Pump and Fuel Switching Endeavors

Griff Keating of the Council's Consultant Team presented on ongoing regional efforts to promote Heat Pumps and fuel switching as well as evaluating the effectiveness of heat pump programs in the New England region. Mr. Keating detailed the efforts of Vermont with Efficiency Vermont, Maine with Efficiency Maine, Connecticut with EnergizeCT, Massachusetts with MassSave, and the New England Heat Pump Accelerator.

Some of the key takeaways from evaluations discussed by Mr. Keating included the following:

- Recent metering studies in Vermont have shown more cooling usage and less heating usage than intended, potentially detracting from progress on heating electrification.
- Maine's focus on whole home electrification has led to more fuel displacement.

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- Massachusetts customer sentiment was mixed with over 30% of whole-home heat pump customers dissatisfied with performance at low temperatures.
- Massachusetts contractors reported mixed confidence in the ability for heat pumps to meet all heating needs, which may indicate potential preference for partial displacement.

b. Council Discussion

Chair Oakley asked for Mr. Keating's opinion of how ratepayers could be persuaded to switch from non-electric heating to heating from heat pumps. Additionally, Chair Oakley inquired about the reasonableness of gas efficiency measures as an immediate solution to affordability. Mr. Keating responded that energy security and the opportunity for optimal efficiency that hybrid energy systems could provide could act as a starting place for persuading resistant ratepayers.

Chair Oakley, Council Members De La Cruz and AnderBois, and Mr. Caesar held a brief discussion on the benefits that heat pump adoption would provide despite the higher cumulative electric demand on the grid. Council Member De La Cruz and Mr. Caesar discussed the importance of savings from peak load shaving and the importance of effective rate design. Council Members De La Cruz and AnderBois shared additional sentiments regarding strategic deployment of electrification as related to affordability, environmental justice, and climate justice.

Council Member Teichert inquired about the relationship between the satisfaction of heat pumps and the design of heat pump rates.

Acting Commissioner Kearns provided an overview of the recent and upcoming opportunities for incentives within the Clean Heat RI and HOMES programs administered by OER.

c. Presentation by Rhode Island Energy on Development of the Demand Side Management Investment Proposal

Dr. Carrie Gill presented on the current development of Rhode Island Energy's planned DSM Investment proposal to provide bill credits to heat pump customers. The presentation provided a deeper dive of current draft plans for the proposal, its draft design, and what the monetary incentive could look like for heat pump customers.

Some of the key ideas discussed in the presentation included:

- The DSM proposal as a programmatic solution in the interim of a separate study that will be conducted on rate design.
- Increase in heat pump adoption can help reduce short-term volumetric rates prior to Rhode Island's summer-peaking system transitioning to a winter-peaking system. stabilize volumetric rates and reduce deliveries actuals in Rhode Island's winter-peaking system.
- The credit would be calculated in units of $/Ton/Month
- With an assumed weighted average of the portfolio of possible heat pump installs, the draft illustrative calculation of the heat pump bill credit would be about $28 per ton per month when applied to the winter months. The value of

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the credit proposed will be different because the underlying data and methodology is not yet finalized.

- Rather than a strictly equalized revenue reconciliation for all customers, the credit would go back to the participating heat pump customers in the proposed program.

d. Council Discussion

Vice Chair Gill Case inquired about whether Rhode Island Energy is aware of the size of the eligible reservoir of heat pump customers that would apply. Dr. Gill suggested that the reservoir is sized based on the KWH and revenue requirement forecasted as of November 25th, 2025, and would act as a starting data set for these customers.

Acting Commissioner Kearns inquired about plans for Rhode Island Energy to account for heat pump customers in a time-of-use rate scenario. Dr. Gill replied that Rhode Island Energy would be considering the heat pump customers in the rate design for any future time-of-use rate scenario.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Adjournment

Vice Chair Gill Case adjourned the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

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