

**CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 19, 2026  
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Rachel Carson State Office  
Building, and via Teams**

**MEMBERS/ALTERNATES PRESENT:**

**In-Person:**

Chairperson Elizabeth Marx  
Joe Sherrick (for Chairperson DeFrank)  
Patrick Henderson

Jaret Gibbons  
Adam Walters (for Secretary Rick Siger)  
Jason Kelso  
Flora Cardoni  
Steven Krug  
Rep. Ben Sanchez  
Rep. Perry Stambaugh  
Terry Bossert  
Christopher Sandvig  
Marc Mondor

**Online:**

Vice Chairperson Lindsay Baxter

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Sara Innamorato, Daryl Metcalfe, Jennifer Greenburg, Zachery Smith, Meredith Seltzer (for Secretary Cindy Dunn), Kevin Warren, Paul Morris

**PA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (DEP) STAFF:**

**In-Person:** Lindsay Byron, Chris Nafe, David Althoff, Kelsey Irvine, Naimul Islam

**Online:** Megan Porta, Danielle Lewis

**INVITED GUESTS:**

Melissa Burchard; Daniel Searfoss; Andy Tubbs; Patrick Cicero; Robert Routh

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:**

**Online:** Tom Bailey; Glendon King; Kerry Campbell; Karen Dixon; Christopher Rogers; Robert Routh; Laura Legere; Jeffrey Clukey; David Drumheller; Jacob Misal; Jacob Newman; Jason Finnerty; Roy Gothie; Evan B. Franzese; Emily L. O'Brien; Matthew M. Goetz; Faith Zerbe; Cyrielle Ouedraogo

**MEETING:** The February 19, 2026, meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC or Committee) was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Chairperson Elizabeth Marx. With 12 of 21 seated members present at the start of the meeting, a quorum was established.

**MINUTES:** The December 16, 2025, meeting minutes were presented to the Committee for approval. Chairperson Marx asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Patrick

Henderson made a motion and was seconded by Mr. Joe Sherrick. No one opposed the motion. The motion to approve the minutes was carried by a voice vote and passed.

**MEETING SUMMARY: (This narrative provides a summary of the discussions that took place during the meeting. It is not a transcript of the proceedings.)**

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Tom Bailey of Allegheny County provided public comments urging the committee to publicly support the CAP and raised concerns about data center development across the commonwealth.

Written public comments were provided in full to the committee via email.

### **Presentation – Large Loads 101**

Melissa Birchard of the Georgetown Climate Center provided an overview of the rapid growth of large electrical loads, particularly data centers, and related implications for climate planning and grid reliability within the PJM Interconnection region. Dr. Birchard discussed projections that data centers could consume 6–12% of U.S. electricity by 2028, associated risks such as fossil fuel expansion and emissions lock-in, and opportunities for clean energy investment, grid innovation, and efficiency. She also reviewed state policy tools and referenced federal activity at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

#### **Discussion:**

Patrick Henderson asked for further clarification on how “clean energy” is defined in different policy contexts and whether lifecycle emissions, including upstream methane leakage and embodied carbon, are considered in planning decisions. Steve Krug also questioned whether projected efficiency gains and advanced cooling technologies at data centers could meaningfully offset rising electricity demand. Additional discussion explored the structure and scalability of community solar programs, consumer protections within virtual power plant arrangements, and concerns about diesel-based backup generation and curtailment practices. Dr. Birchard emphasized the importance of early coordination with local governments, transparent planning processes, and proactive state-level policies to manage growth while meeting climate targets.

### **Presentation – Regulatory & Policy Efforts**

Daniel Searfoorce of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission outlined the Commission’s oversight of electric distribution companies in Pennsylvania’s restructured market. He highlighted Act 45 of 2024, which expanded authority over load forecasting, large-load audits, coordination with PJM and other states, and annual reporting. He emphasized projected data center load growth and potential reliability risks from declining reserve margins by 2029.

#### **Discussion:**

Patrick Henderson expressed concern about tightening reserve margins and questioned whether sufficient new generation will be built to maintain reliability. He suggested that extended capacity price caps may weaken investment signals and discourage needed generation development. Elizabeth Marx asked about the Commission’s authority to review and assess large-load forecasts, particularly regarding potential “venue shopping” by data center developers that could inflate projections and affect transmission and capacity planning. Mr. Searfoorce

responded that while the Commission can evaluate methodologies and agreements submitted by electric distribution companies, it does not have direct authority over individual customers and does not set an official forecast. Ongoing coordination with PJM and other states was noted, along with the importance of careful analysis to balance reliability and ratepayer protection.

### **Presentation – Utility Perspective**

Andy Tubbs of the Energy Association of Pennsylvania presented the utility perspective on serving large loads while maintaining reliability and affordability. He noted representation of utilities serving approximately nine million customers statewide and emphasized the need for additional generation, system planning, and infrastructure investment. He discussed cost allocation, financial security requirements under House Bill 1834, contract flexibility, renewable mandates, dispatchable generation, and demand response.

#### **Discussion:**

Andy Tubbs emphasized the need for balanced solutions to ensure reliability while managing costs and highlighted challenges with renewable mandates in a non-vertically integrated state. Mark Mondor asked about generation proximity to large loads, and Tubbs explained that locating generation near major loads reduces transmission needs and costs. Flora Cardoni noted that solar plus battery storage is highly reliable and should be included in capacity planning alongside climate, health, and public interest considerations. Tubbs also suggested that demand response be treated as a standalone initiative outside Act 129 to allow more innovative deployment.

### **Presentation – Rate Payer Impacts**

Patrick Cicero of the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project discussed affordability challenges related to large-load growth, particularly for low-income households. He cited rising arrearages, terminations, and rate increases, noting that PJM capacity cost increases led to residential customers paying nearly \$2 billion more in 2025 than in 2024.

#### **Discussion:**

Joe Sherrick asked why low-income customer numbers fell in PECO's territory while rising elsewhere. Mr. Cicero explained this was due to utility reporting and definitions—customers who leave CAP or lose contact may no longer be counted as confirmed low-income. He noted that PECO's CAP enrollment declined during the period, and that estimated census-based numbers offer a more accurate picture.

### **Presentation – Environmental Organization Perspective**

Robert Routh of the Natural Resources Defense Council addressed the rapid expansion of data centers in Pennsylvania and the PJM region. He warned that unmanaged growth could increase emissions and costs and emphasized “additionality,” stating new large loads should drive new zero-carbon generation. He also referenced ongoing policy proceedings, including matters before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

#### **Discussion:**

Flora Cardoni, in absentia, asked Mr. Routh to expand on the role of battery storage for meeting new demands. Robert explained that storage can be built quickly, located near loads, avoids PJM interconnection delays, supports reliability like gas plants during peak hours, and offers a cost-

effective solution. The committee also noted the recent \$2 million PUC grant to study Pennsylvania's accelerated transmission and energy redevelopment.

### **DEP Updates**

Ms. Byron shared a potential technical assistance opportunity through the US Climate Alliance to support the development of the Climate Impacts Assessment. DEP is working to hire a consultant to update climate modeling and produce the status report under the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. The updated modeling will feed into the 2027 Climate Action Plan, and committee input will be sought at the April meeting, which will serve as a working session to shape early projections and strategies.

### **Next Meeting**

Ms. Elizabeth Marx reminded the committee that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, 2026, and shared a proposed agenda for that meeting.

### **New Business**

No new business was discussed.

### **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Sherrick and seconded by Ms. Elizabeth Marx, motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:03 pm.