

Commission on Fossil Fuel Workforce

Meeting Minutes

September 22, 2025

ATTENDANCE		
Member	Affiliation	Attendance
Melissa Lavinson, <i>co-chair</i>	Executive Director, Office of Energy Transformation	X
Josh Cutler, <i>co-chair</i>	Undersecretary of Labor, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development	X
Abel Vargas	President at Valley Home Insulation	X
Amy McGuire	Senior Director, Market Development at Highland Electric Fleets	X
Ana Sofia	Senior Program Director at La Colaborativa	X
Chris Sherman	Senior Vice President at Cogentrix Energy, LLC	X
Dan Leary	President of Local 369 at Utility Workers Union-America (UWUA)	
Dave Keating	International Representative at International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)	X
Frank Callahan	President, Massachusetts Building Trades Unit (MBTU)	X
Greandoll Oliva	Youth Leader in Chelsea and Community Organizer with GreenRoots	
Harry Brett	International Representative at United Association (UA)	X
Jennifer Applebaum	Managing Director of Workforce Development, MassCEC	X
John Cook	President at Springfield Technical Community College	X
Kristen Gowin	Executive Manager at National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) of Greater Boston	X
Larry Lessard	Director at Achieve Renewable Energy, LLC	X
María Belén Power	Undersecretary of Environmental Justice & Equity	Delegate Crystal Johnson
Mark Melnik	Director, Economic & Public Policy Research at UMass Donahue Institute	X
Mike Vartabedian	Assistant Directing Business Representative at International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers	
Nikki Bruno	Vice President, Clean Technologies at Eversource Energy	X
Sarah Wilkinson	Commissioner of Division of Occupational Licensure and Office of Public Safety, Executive Office of Economic Development	X
Steve Finnigan	Sub District Director at United Steelworkers (USW)	Delegate John Buonopane

Proceedings:

Co-Chair Melissa Lavinson began the meeting at 3:03pm. The meeting opened with co-chair Lavinson calling for a motion to approve the minutes and all Commission members approved the motion.

The Commission then discussed data use in the report. Commission members discussed a specific table in the report that pulls the top 30 occupations in the energy industry, with employment numbers taken from Lightcast, and occupational trends for 2030 and 2035 based on expertise of Commission members. A question was posed to the Commission as to whether to include specific data/numbers on employment levels, given that they may not be entirely comprehensive with the limited resources the Commission has. One Commission member supported the idea of including directional information rather than specific numbers, which are subject to change. Another Commission member questioned the accuracy of the employment numbers given significant changes at the federal level. A response clarified that the data is from 2024, but subject to change in 2025 based on federal impact. A Commission member noted that even rough estimates could help inform program planning. Another Commission member suggested the data should reach further back than just 2023–2024 to provide historical context. Another Commission member suggested organizing the table alphabetically by occupation and revising the job titles to be more intuitive with common job titles. It was clarified that the table is organized by highest to lowest employment numbers for each occupation and the occupation titles are taken directly from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS). Another Commission member proposed using common job titles alongside standard occupation codes (SOC) for readability. There was also a suggestion to incorporate data on open or unfilled positions to better understand workforce gaps, although the availability of such data would need to be confirmed. There was general agreement among several Commission members that while the data may never be fully comprehensive, it is directionally useful, and the inclusion of a table with data on energy workforce employment numbers could help illustrate workforce dynamics.

A follow-up question was posed to the Commission as to whether to include employment trends based on Commission expertise. One Commission member suggested including trend drivers in the report, although suggested possibly moving these findings to another section and making it clearer that they are based on Commission expertise only. Other Commission members expressed concern about presenting uncertain trends as facts, suggesting that the report instead focuses on potential drivers of those trends. It was acknowledged that some occupations listed in the table are not typical energy occupations, like customer service representatives or secretaries and administrative

assistants. The Commission discussed whether these should be included. One Commission member pointed out the importance of acknowledging roles indirectly related to energy delivery services, noting that industry changes affect the entire ecosystem. It was suggested that the report should include these occupations while also noting job transferability across industries within the trend drivers section. Another iteration of this table with employment numbers will be drafted based on feedback at this meeting and shared with the Commission for their approval.

Feedback on the draft report followed, with many members recommending that the report includes definitions of fossil fuel workers and energy workers. The Commission agreed upon the proposed definitions for fossil fuel and energy workers, with the one caveat to confirm that delivered fuels workers are included in the fossil fuels sector. A Commission member suggested reorganizing and shortening the report, stating that it felt overly academic and lacked a clear, immediate point. They recommended leading with recommendations and using appendices to provide supporting evidence. Others agreed, noting that the report's main goal is to provide actionable insights and that legislators might lose interest if key points are buried. One member responded that the executive summary, which hasn't been written yet, could address this concern by providing an upfront overview to educate legislators. The Commission generally agreed to add a comprehensive executive summary up front, with all recommendations listed, and to keep the rest of the report organized as is for supporting evidence to the executive summary.

The discussion then shifted to the role of federal government policies in the report. One Commission member felt the current language was vague and repetitive, and another agreed, recommending that the report make federal impacts clearer by adding specific caveats to relevant recommendations. A member asked for recognition of positive federal actions that could serve as potential trend drivers, noting that not all industries are equally affected by federal policies. Another member pointed out that some areas, such as nuclear energy, may even see growth. One member suggested adding a discussion on how immigration enforcement impacts workforce availability and project completion timelines. Another member suggested gathering feedback from businesses to assess likely impacts of recent federal policy changes over the next five to ten years. One member raised the recent cost increases related to H-1B visas and proposed changes to federal apprenticeship standards as areas that might require additional attention. There was agreement that the language around impact of policy at the federal government could be strengthened to better reflect the real-world consequences of federal changes. Commission co-chairs and team will take this feedback and revise the language in the report.

A question was posed to the Commission on whether to mention AI and its impact on workforce in the report. One Commission member noted both its potential to displace jobs and its energy-intensive nature, which could create new opportunities in the energy sector. However, one member expressed skepticism about whether New England would experience the same level of growth in data centers as other regions. Another Commission member reminded the group that there are several gigawatts of data center energy demand queued within the New England grid. Several Commission members agreed that AI should be flagged in the report from both the perspective of job displacement and the increase in energy demand, creating potential new jobs.

The Commission was informed that one member provided written feedback to include a subsection on manufacturing jobs within the future energy jobs section and plans to draft this section to add to the report. This section may include recommendations to the legislature on strategies to attract manufacturing to the state.

A question was posed to the Commission as to whether the group is comfortable with using data on number of fossil fuel workers from the MassCEC workforce needs assessment (2022) since the MassCEC industry report of 2024 did not publish a new number for fossil fuel workers. The Commission agreed to rely on this number of 44,191 workers in fossil fuels for the report.

A question was posed to the Commission about whether nuclear energy should be included in future energy jobs. One member noted the limited presence of nuclear energy in Massachusetts. Another Commission member pointed out that the state already has research reactors and is engaged in advanced nuclear and fusion energy development. There is also a provision in the proposed legislation by the Governor, the Energy Affordability, Independence, and Innovation Act, to eliminate the requirement for a statewide ballot question for any new nuclear facility in Massachusetts. If passed, this could remove an obstacle for nuclear energy and create jobs. It was agreed that nuclear energy should be referenced in the report, especially regarding job creation potential for small-scale reactors, advanced nuclear, and fusion energy.

The Commission then reviewed draft recommendations, beginning with expanding investment in clean energy apprenticeships. One member proposed adding pre-apprenticeship training, including basic training like digital literacy and the introduction to tools and supplies, as well as the creation of Access and Opportunity Committees (AOCs). Another Commission member clarified that the Governor signed an executive order requiring state-funded projects to include an AOC and suggested the report include a reference to this executive order. A question was raised about the need for additional

funding for clean energy apprenticeships, prompting a suggestion to identify a specific dollar amount. One Commission member noted that the unions spend an estimated \$60–\$70 million annually on apprenticeship programs.

Another recommendation focuses on required disclosure of use of labor-peace agreements, project labor agreements, collective bargaining agreements, prevailing wage, and registered apprentices for state-funded energy work. The Commission discussed where this disclosure would be documented, and if it would be made public and how. The Commission discussed ways to integrate this into existing systems, possibly during grant application processes. MassCEC was identified as a potential steward for publishing this information. The Commission agreed that this needs more thought and clarity on where to document discourses before including in the report.

Another recommendation revolved around authorizing work by the Office of Labor and Workforce Development (OLWD) and Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) to convene employers of fossil fuel workers to develop five- and ten-year outlooks for their workforce needs. Several Commission members supported including this recommendation in the report.

Another recommendation involves funding OLWD to create a one-stop-shop for all available energy apprenticeships, workforce training, and certification programs in Massachusetts. One Commission member flagged this recommendation as potentially being redundant with similar initiatives ongoing at MassCEC. This Commission member offered to draft language reflecting this existing work.

The final recommendation involves standardizing certifications for energy-related work. One Commission member familiar with occupational licensure and certification supported this recommendation, highlighting a lack of coordination among agencies and recommended that the report clarify the need to unify licensing.

The meeting concluded with a reminder for Commission members to submit any remaining recommendations or written feedback by the end of the week. The goal is to finalize the second draft of the report by October 10th for Commission review again before sending a final draft to legislative and cabinet affairs by early November.

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 PM.