

2025 Energy Connect Conference Agenda

The Verve Hotel Boston-Natick, Tapestry Collection by Hilton
1360 Worcester Street, Natick, MA 01760

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

9:00 am Pre-Function	Registration/Continental Breakfast
9:45 am Apollo Ballroom	Welcome <i>Mike Hyland, Executive Director, NEPPA</i>
10:00 am – 11:00 am Apollo Ballroom	General Session #1: Seeing Through the AI Hype: Useful Ways to Actually Use AI <i>Ryan Knight, Team Lead of Data & AI, Insource</i> <i>Learn how AI can have a practical impact on your work through real-world examples. Ryan will guide you through understanding the fundamentals of where AI can / can't help and the "Do's and Don'ts" of rolling out AI as a change process.</i>
11:00 am – 11:15 am Pre-Function	Break and Visit with Sponsors
11:15 am - 12:15 pm Apollo Ballroom	General Session #2: Tales from the Crypt: Cybersecurity Lessons Learned from Those Who Have Faced Them <i>David Ketchen, Assistant General Manager, Littleton Electric Light and Water Departments & Conor Willard, President, Evolab Technology Solutions Inc.</i> <i>This session examines the Volt Typhoon cyber-attack on Littleton Electric Light and Water Departments (LELWD), where Chinese state-sponsored hackers infiltrated the utility's IT network for over 300 days via a vulnerable FortiGate firewall. Attendees will learn about detection strategies, response efforts, and key lessons for safeguarding critical infrastructure.</i>
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm Apollo Ballroom	Lunch
1:15 pm – 2:15 pm Apollo Ballroom	General Session #3: From Politics to Power: Understanding the Forces Shaping Utility and Data Center Needs <i>Elizabeth Whitney, Managing Principal, Meguire Whitney</i> <i>This session explores how shifting political landscapes, regulatory pressures, and global energy priorities are influencing the evolving needs of utilities and data centers. Attendees will gain insight into how policy decisions, economic trends, and infrastructure demands intersect to shape strategies for reliability, sustainability, and growth. Join us to better understand the forces driving today's most critical energy and technology investments.</i>
2:15 pm – 2:30 pm Pre-Function	Break and Visit with Sponsors

Tuesday, October 21, 2025 – continued

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm Apollo Ballroom	<p>General Session #4: Utilities Unplugged! How to Navigate Changing Systems Jackie Lemmerhirt, President, Lemmerhirt Consulting and Jessica Barbier, Sales Manager, NISC</p> <p><i>This session will explore the real-world challenges utilities face when upgrading or replacing core systems. We'll highlight the benefits of leveraging technology and going paperless, share best practices that keep transitions smooth, and discuss common pitfalls to avoid so operations stay on track. Attendees will walk away with practical strategies to embrace change without disruption.</i></p>
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm Stardust Plaza	Welcome Reception

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

7:00 am Pre-Function	Registration
7:30 am – 9:00 am Apollo Ballroom	Breakfast Buffet
8:30 am Apollo Ballroom	Welcome & Opening Remarks
8:45 am – 10:15 am Apollo Ballroom	<p>General Session #5: NOW SHOWING: “Lifecycle of an Employee” by the NEPPA Players (Human Resources Best Practices Skit and Interactive Discussion) NEPPA Players: Shayleen Alfieri, Haleigh Dufour, Gabby Gauthier, Callie Knower, Angelica Medina, Jennifer Ready, Linda Seaman, Dani Taylor, Ben Thivierge</p> <p><i>The “NEPPA Players” (a team of volunteer members) will serve as actors and commentators as they bring the audience through a series of skits showing the dos and don’ts of hiring, evaluating and firing employees. This presentation will include time for discussion regarding the best way to handle these situations.</i></p>
10:15 am Pre-Function	Break and Visit with Sponsors

Free
**Professional
Headshots**

FOR CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

Define your professional image!

OFFERED
10AM-3PM ON
WED, OCT 22
@ BOOTH ONSITE

Photos by Jenn



Wednesday, October 22, 2025 – continued

<p>10:30 am – 11:30 am Apollo Ballroom</p>	<p>General Session #6: Diversity Panel: Sharing Our Stories, Challenges and Finding Support/Guidance Facilitator Ben Thivierge, Sustainability & Commercial Development Specialist, Taunton Municipal Lighting Department Panelists: Ashon Avent, Commissioner at Norwich Public Utilities; Sean Martin, Senior Sales Engineer at HiReli; Jackie Pratt, General Manager at Stowe Electric Department; Ruth Slater, Energy Advisor at Braintree Electric Light Department; Catherine Vollmer, Project Manager at GreatBlue Research, Inc.</p> <p>At their core, public power utilities reflect the people and communities they serve. Join us for an engaging discussion that will explore how identity and lived experiences shape careers and foster community development within public power utilities. This discussion will emphasize the importance of diversity that extends beyond race and gender to include age, socioeconomic background, and more. Our panelists will share their insights and experiences, addressing the challenges they have faced and the innovative approaches they have taken to foster inclusive workplaces and strengthen community connections.</p>
<p>11:30 am Pre-Function</p>	<p>Break and Visit with Sponsors</p>
<p>11:45 am – 12:45 pm Apollo Ballroom</p> <p>Phoenix Room</p>	<p>Breakout Sessions</p> <p>Customer Service Track: Panel Discussion: Collective Wisdom: Sharing Best Practices in Collections Facilitator: Jennifer Ready, Customer Care Manager, Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant; Panelists: Ashley Fuller, Billing & Collections Manager, Shrewsbury Electric and Cable Operations; Penny Jones, Controller, Morrisville Water & Light; Marie McCabe, Customer Collections Representative, North Attleboro Electric Department; Christopher J. Pollart, Esq., Attorney at KP Law; Robert Weiden, Customer Service, Billing and Collections Manager, Reading Municipal Light Department</p> <p>Our panelist will discuss collections' best practices and share their experiences as they differ from system to system and state to state.</p> <p>Business Track: Re-Engaging the Hard-to-Reach Employee: Instead of Firing, Try This - Motivating Your Employees & Team members for Growth Michael Vigeant, CEO at GreatBlue Research and Ruth Slater, Energy Advisor at Braintree Electric Light Department</p> <p>Creating a motivated and growth-oriented team doesn't happen by chance. It's built through understanding, communication, and leadership. In this session, Michael Vigeant and Ruth Slater share proven ways to strengthen employee engagement, inspire renewed enthusiasm, and cultivate a workplace where every team member feels valued and invested in your organization's success. With over 30 years of experience studying employee engagement within the public power space, Michael brings a data-driven perspective grounded in real-world research. Ruth complements that insight with firsthand experience from within the industry, offering practical approaches for motivating teams and fostering collaboration. Together, they'll highlight how leaders can tap into the potential of every employee to build stronger, more connected organizations.</p>

Wednesday, October 22, 2025 - continued

12:45 pm Apollo Ballroom	Lunch and Awards Presentation
1:45 pm – 2:45 pm Apollo Ballroom	<p>General Session #7: Taking A Strategic Approach to the Use of Media and Social Media Channels Robin Schnell, Senior Counsel and Partner, Jackson, Jackson & Wagner</p> <p>When it comes to building relationships with local media and exploring the use of various social media channels, we are all at different levels of experience. Regardless of where you fall on the experience scale, taking a strategic approach can help you work smarter, not harder when communicating externally.</p>
2:45 pm Pre-Function	Break and Visit with Sponsors
3:00 pm Stardust Plaza	<p>Team Building Activity - Scavenger Hunt</p> <p>The Verve Hotel's unique design, inspired by 20th century American pop culture, will be the backdrop for our team building activity this year. Teams will race to complete challenges throughout the hotel, searching for people, places and things, before time's up. This activity is sure to be a fun and engaging way to build connections with fellow members and colleagues.</p>
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm Stardust Plaza	Happy Hour

Thursday, October 23, 2025

7:00 am Pre-Function	Registration
7:30 am – 9:00 am Apollo Ballroom	Breakfast Buffet
9:00 am – 10:00 am Apollo Ballroom	<p>General Session #8: Leading through Change: What Should be Changed, when and How to Lead Through it Josh Vanada, Leadership & Business Growth Coach</p> <p>Change is happening more than it ever has while simultaneously feeling more difficult than it ever has. Timing, attitude, and presentation have a lot to do with how effective our change management efforts will be. In this session, you'll learn what, when, and how to lead through change in ways that create effective and enduring results.</p>
10:00 am Pre-Function	Break and Visit with Sponsors

Thursday, October 23, 2025 – continued

10:15 am – 11:15 am Apollo Ballroom	<p>General Session #9: A Conversation on Key Accounts Facilitated by: Mike Hyland, Executive Director of NEPPA Panelists: Aaron Brooks, General Manager of Business Development at Groton Utilities & Michael Ford, Business Development Manager at Braintree Electric Light Department</p> <p>This session will discuss the topic of key accounts and meeting the needs of your most important VIP customers. Whether they are a large industrial load, or a politically important customer, special attention is sometimes required. Come join the discussion as to how our utilities are meeting the needs of their Key Accounts.</p>
11:15 am Pre-Function	Break and Visit with Sponsors
11:30 am – 12:30 pm Phoenix Room Apollo Ballroom	<p>Breakout Sessions</p> <p>Energy Innovation Track: Getting Pumped Up About Heat Pumps, What You Need to Know About Heat Pumps Paxton Halsall, Associate Program Manager, Decarbonization Services and Terry Bean, Residential Decarbonization Advisor, Abode Energy Management</p> <p>This session will provide an overview of heat pump technologies and share lessons learned from Abode's consultations in partnership with utilities and community-based programs across New England. Using real project data and field experience, we'll highlight adoption barriers, support strategies, and opportunities to help residents make informed choices about heat pump adoption and energy efficiency improvements.</p> <p>Business Track: Beyond Affordable and Reliable: Building Public Power One Story at a Time Holly Baird, Director of Utility Accounts and Samantha Hart, Owner/ Chief Executive Officer, Milepost</p> <p>Public power has long relied on being "affordable and reliable" but in today's competitive energy landscape, that's no longer enough. While IOUs spend millions on marketing campaigns, public power's greatest competitive advantage lies in something they can't buy authentic community connection. The "Three Stories Framework" is a practical approach that helps every staff member understand when and how to share public power's unique value proposition.</p>
12:30 pm Pre-Function	Grab and Go Lunch
1:30 pm	Adjourn