



NHA June Board Meeting — Comprehensive Summary & Minutes

Dates: June 23–24, 2026 | **Location:** San Diego, CA (in-person with remote participation via Teams)

Meeting type: Q2 Board Meeting / quadrennial strategic planning session

Note on the record: The in-person room audio was streamed through a single laptop, so portions of the raw transcript attribute multiple in-room speakers to one name. Speaker attributions below reflect comments that could be confidently identified; where a speaker could not be reliably distinguished, a role or "a board member" is used.

PART 1 — COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY

The June Board Meeting served as NHA's four-year strategic planning session, structured around the association's four pillars: Advocate, Connect, Inform, and Implement. Over a day and a half the board reviewed four-year progress, Q2 financials, and membership, then took action on four major items: a baseline 2027 dues increase, a technical/operational services expansion, formation of a Water Power PAC, and reaffirmation of the Hydro Academy. Day Two added the four-year strategic plan review, a policy update, a Hydropower Foundation update, and new business on pump storage tax credits.

Decisions at a glance

#	Item	Outcome
1	2027 dues increase — 3% across all member categories (CPI-aligned)	Approved (Motion by Chris Mattson, 2 nd by Mike Drain)
2	Water Power PAC — creation of a FEC-regulated, NHA-affiliated Water Power PAC	Approved (Motion by Preston Pierce, 2 nd by Eric Steimle)
3	Hydro Academy — reaffirm training as a NHA strategic priority	Approved (Motion by Preston Pierce, 2 nd by Alec Mesdag)
4	Technical/operational services expansion (26% asset-owner/developer dues increase)	Approved (Motion by Preston Pierce, 2 nd by Len Green)

Four-year progress highlights (CEO report)

- Hydropower moved from "tax orphan" to tax-preferred status; Capitol Hill engagement elevated to senator-level outreach; water power funding at historic highs.
- Clean Currents grew from ~850 to 2,000+ registrants; membership rose from 266 to an all-time high of 355 organizations; monthly engagement nearly doubled (278 to 588).
- HTC programming doubled to 24 sessions/month.
- The AI Licensing Intelligence Database (informally "HydroLID") was built and is already supporting advocacy.

Financial and membership position

- Through April: revenue projected <1% below budget, expenses <1% above; reserves near 12 months (policy range 6–12); cash ~\$800K ahead of last year; clean 2025 audit.
- Non-dues revenue projected at ~\$1.5M net for 2026.
- New members include Entergy (asset owner) and Toshiba (OEM); KPMG confirmed it is joining, with other tax/accounting firms being pursued given the new tax-credit landscape.

PART 2 — MEETING MINUTES

DAY ONE — Monday, June 23, 2026

Administrative / opening

- The antitrust and competitive-bidding policy was reviewed; NHA legal counsel (Jim Hancock) was identified as the contact for questions. Staff committed to resuming the practice of sharing this policy at the start of opening calls and program agendas.
- Emergency and safety assignments were reviewed for the in-person venue.

Safety moment (Chris Mattson)

- Presented through NHA's OPEX confidential member event-reporting system. A near-miss during spillway-gate inspection from a small barge illustrated risks from deviating from standard isolation procedures, inaccurate as-built drawings, and inadequate panel labeling.

CEO report (Malcolm Woolf)

- Reviewed four-year progress across Advocate, Connect, Inform, and Implement (see Part 1 highlights).
- **AI Licensing Intelligence Database:** Contains all FERC licenses, EAs, and NEPA documents. It enabled data-driven conversations with five cabinet agencies, including the finding that the Forest Service issues ~60% of all federal mandatory conditions while covering ~40% of hydropower facilities. Beta testing is moving to a cloud-based platform due to member firewall/size constraints; a token-based user-fee model is under consideration. Mike Drain suggested dropping "AI" from the name given negative public perception; "HydroLID" (Hydro Licensing Information Database) was offered as an alternative. A formal proposal will return to the board after the July–August beta period.
- **Leadership Circle:** Proposed to replace the CEO Council — capped at the top 40 member companies by revenue, one seat per organization, for candid peer-level executive discussion; planned to launch at Clean Currents.

Financial report

- Position through April described as excellent (figures in Part 1). Reserves elevated near 12 months due to early Clean Currents exhibit sales, expected to normalize to ~9 months by year-end. Clean 2025 audit confirmed.

Membership report (Marla Barnes)

- All-time high of 355 organizations; joiners outpacing departures. New members highlighted: Entergy (interested in shoreline management) and Toshiba (rounding out OEM coverage). Communications work across Powerhouse, Playbook, social media, and direct email credited as a driver of non-dues revenue; Jeremy Chase-Israel recognized for that effort.

MOTION 1 — 2027 dues increase (all members)

- Motion to approve a **3% dues increase** for all member categories effective 2027, aligned with CPI inflation, independent of any increases tied to new strategic programs.
- **Outcome: Approved.**

Discussion — Technical & operational services expansion (*no vote Day One*)

- Proposal: hire two staff (an administrative support position covering the technical program/HTC/asset-owner groups, and a junior technical subject-matter expert for content creation) plus technical advisors on retainer, fund in-person asset-owner group meetings, and invest in the member technical platform. Estimated ~\$588K–\$600K/year.
- Proposed funding: a **26% dues increase on asset owners and project developers only**, with the existing Deep Dive Policy Team pay-to-play surcharge eliminated; program benefits available to all members.
- Key themes:
 - **Strategic rationale:** Redirect dollars currently going to outside organizations (e.g., CEATI /CTI, EPRI) back into industry-controlled resources. Suzanne noted her organization pulled out of nearly all CEATI hydropower programs to consolidate into NHA, and credited NHA with helping secure \$26M in IRA funding.
 - **Siloing concern:** Caution against making offerings "owner-only" and excluding consultants/SMEs; existing inclusive programming (e.g., FERC D2SI sessions, seismic/risk work) cited.
 - **Rate-shock and accountability:** Concern over a ~30% combined increase for asset owners amid member cost pressures; requests for pro-forma scenarios, KPIs/business case, and phasing options. Malcolm cautioned that phasing risks under-resourcing the effort and having little to show in a year.
 - **Benchmarking:** NHA's largest asset owners pay more than the smallest APPA member; even a 26% increase (~\$20K for the largest tier) is less than one CEATI asset-owner group (~\$30K).
- Direction: This session is for strategic direction; specific staffing, allocation, and final dues figures to be set in the October–December budget cycle. Goal is to leave San Diego with a number members can use for 2027 budget planning.

MOTION 2 — Water Power PAC formation

- Proposal (Malcolm Woolf, with Matthew Allen): Create an NHA-affiliated political action committee — a legally separate, FEC-regulated segregated fund with its own board.
 - Rationale: systematic access to fundraiser circuits builds durable relationships with legislators; allows diversified utilities to direct political dollars specifically to hydropower; gives smaller members a voice they couldn't otherwise afford.
 - Mechanics: pack-to-pack contributions up to \$5,000; multi-candidate thresholds of 51 individual contributors, six months of existence, and five candidate contributions, with pack-to-pack receipts allowed from day one. Administrative costs (~\$25K/year) covered by NHA Treasury funds to preserve hard PAC dollars; members may opt out of having dues applied to PAC admin costs.
 - Governance: PAC board to overlap with Legislative Committee leadership to keep priorities aligned.
 - Support voiced by Preston Pierce, Maura Brueger, Stephanie Maggard, Erik Steimle, and Scott Hennessey (noting his company has no PAC but supporting a trade-group vehicle). Mike Drain noted his company cannot contribute and raised governance/prioritization safeguards.
- **Outcome: Approved.** Recorded as 4 abstentions (Maura Brueger, Suzanne Biddle, Chris Rousseau, Heidi Wahto) and 1 recusal (Mike Drain).

MOTION 3 — Hydro Academy reaffirmation

- Framing (Malcolm Woolf, Marla Barnes): Strategic question of whether to continue training as a four-year priority.
 - Financials: ~\$900K invested in the Hydropower Systems Principles curriculum; ~\$560K recovered to date; ~\$340K gap; ~3-year projected breakeven; ~\$100K/year net margin. Five licenses active, two more potential (PG&E and TVA).
 - Preston Pierce advocated treating incoming license revenue as a reinvestment stream for new content rather than treating the \$900K as a sunk cost. Discussion noted barriers: virtual session sales, awareness among early-career staff, CE/PDH credits, and travel.

- **Outcome: Approved** — board reaffirmed commitment to the Hydro Academy; future investments with material budget impact will return to the board individually for approval.

Recess — Board adjourned to dinner; next-day agenda to be adjusted to move the policy Q&A ahead of the goals-and-strategies discussion.

DAY TWO — Tuesday, June 24, 2026

MOTION 4 — Technical & operational services expansion + funding

- **Motion:** Adopt the staff recommendation as written in the blue box on page 21 of the board packet — increase technical staff by the numbers/amounts in the proposal, fund the increase through asset owners (and project developers), and make program benefits available to all members.
- Discussion:
 - **Business case:** Requested clearer goals, KPIs, and a business case for a 26% impact; Chris Hayes clarified that asset-owner groups are running (a sixth, shoreline management, being added), each with a member-vetted menu of activities, and the ask is staff, in-person meeting budget, and platform investment to execute. Malcolm Woolf confirmed the two positions are essentially scoped (admin support + junior technical SME).
 - **Combined increase:** Members noted the 3% (Motion 1) plus 26% yields ~29% for asset owners; the Deep Dive surcharge elimination provides an offset. Generator-max example cited at ~\$21K/year. Asset owners are ~one-third of member organizations but ~69–70% of dues revenue; It was noted that other revenue (e.g., Clean Currents exhibitors) is provided by non- asset owners.
 - **Allocation alternatives:** Discussion of a blended approach (a smaller across-the-board increase plus a lower asset-owner increase) and of phasing (e.g., 50% in 2027, balance in 2028). The motion ultimately proceeded as written (asset owners/developers).
 - **Risk and communications:** Greatest membership-loss risk identified among mid-tier asset owners less engaged in the programs; strong member outreach, value messaging, and a sensitivity analysis recommended, with

willingness to revisit at the December meeting if there is significant pushback. Entergy specifically joined in anticipation of this programming.

- **Friendly amendment (accepted):** Remove the pay-to-play Deep Dive Policy Team from the motion (the board had not originally set up that structure; it is tactical), leaving flexibility on whether/how to replace it.
- **Outcome: Approved.** Malcolm Woolf framed the vote as a potential pivot point comparable to the Clean Currents decision. Members noted that, now approved, staff outreach on the anticipated increase should inform whether the issue is revisited in December.

Hydro Academy — prioritization discussion (*no vote; reaffirmed Day One*)

- Board input on training priorities for the next four years:
 - Remote/on-demand core curriculum maintained, with in-person training co-located at events; survey licensees on desired new content.
 - Content ideas: a "2.0" of the systems-principles modules, basic systems fundamentals, dam-safety refresher training, risk analysis woven through modules, tax-credit training (NHA already organizing a tax session at Clean Currents under the Academy), AI/drones, and micro-credentials for students.
 - Co-location preference leaned toward regional meetings (lower cost/time) over national events. Marla Barnes proposed branding a dedicated "Hydro Academy Day" (Tuesday, Sept. 22) at Clean Currents.
 - Audience expansion beyond engineers — legal, economics, marketing, and other disciplines; reaching students via the Hydropower Foundation.

Four-year strategic plan review (Advocate / Connect / Inform / Implement) (*discussion; no vote*)

- **Advocate:** Debate over "parity" language given hydropower's current tax advantage — some favored keeping "parity" to preserve future alliances, others favored removing it as outdated. Strong support for elevating licensing/relicensing and post-licensing authorization as a top priority. Malcolm Woolf to add a bullet on protecting and expanding non-federal hydropower fleet and to incorporate the PAC. State-level engagement was discussed.
- **Connect:** Continue Clean Currents, Water Power Week, regional meetings, and forums; add outward-facing social/digital channels; retain diversity-of-speakers language.

- **Inform:** Continue HTC, asset-owner peer groups, and the Hydro Academy; add hydropower "attributes" messaging (reliable, flexible, black start, zero-emission, recreation/habitat). Foundation/workforce affiliation noted.
- **Implement:** Maintain financial health, retention, and engagement; add membership growth language; staff retention reaffirmed as an ongoing priority.
- Next step: Malcolm to circulate a revised draft for an electronic vote or approval at the next meeting.

Policy Q&A

- **Legislative (Matthew Allen):** ~20 bills tracked with NHA fingerprints; two have become law and a transparency bill is one step away. NEPA, Clean Water Act, ESA, and mandatory-conditioning bills advancing; optimism that a broader permitting-reform deal could carry many provisions. Push for a hydropower-specific committee hearing. Maura Brueger and Malcolm credited strong member participation (voter voice) and the broader policy team.
- **Regulatory (Kathleen):**
 - **DOE 2.47M grants:** DOE intends to engage all awardees by year-end; progress procedurally slow at the CFO's office. Members compared notes on award letters and "agreements" with no negotiation.
 - **Tax credits / Safe Harbor table:** The hydropower Safe Harbor table is at Treasury awaiting publication; Treasury's inclination is to release hydro, geothermal, and nuclear tables together. Advocacy focused on getting the hydropower table released; Malcolm and Kathleen meeting Treasury the following week. A handbook supplement is planned for the fall.
 - **Grid reliability Executive Order:** Expected to include two to two-and-a-half paragraphs on pairing the permit to the project (possibly a fishway definition); timing late June into early July. Companion agency rulemakings would make the change durable.
 - **Section 401 final rule:** Expected imminently and likely favorable to the industry.
 - Outreach to FERC, CEBA, and affiliated trades to reinforce hydropower's reliability role.
 - **Mandatory conditioning strategy (Malcolm Woolf):** Three-tier approach — statute if possible, otherwise an executive order, otherwise agency

secretarial orders — to require mandatory conditions to relate directly to a project's effects, aiming for a durable change within this administration.

- Chuck commended the policy team's capability, citing real-time work on the FLOWS Act in Senate ENR committee.
- **Communications (Malcolm Woolf /Copeland Tucker):** A "supporters-to-champions" campaign targeting six districts (three senators, three representatives), op-eds, and grassroots visibility (e.g., a constituent question to Sen. McCormick at a Pennsylvania town hall, coordinated with American Hydro's Jason).

Hydropower Foundation update (Ashley Brooks, Del Shannon; Mark Benacquisto, board)

- New, leaner Foundation board introduced. Programs organized around direct engagement (water power clubs, e.g., new clubs at Oregon State and Western Carolina), career exposure (career expos at regional meetings and Clean Currents/ASU), social media (job round-ups, day-in-the-life content), and scholarships.
- **Funding:** DOE grant in process to expand from a \$1M grant to a ~\$3M, five-year grant (~\$600K/year); no NHA funding requested this year. Industry donations lagging (~\$14K against a ~\$60K goal). Proposed an Industry Workforce Development Advisory Group with sponsorship ("pay-to-play") to drive both engagement and donations. A C3 educational visit to Conowingo Dam for Hill staff planned for August.
- Mike Drain noted NHA's website lacks a link to the Foundation; to be added.

New business — Pumped Storage tax credits (Preston Pierce)

- Raised an opportunity to seek a Treasury interpretation of the 45/PTC "net producer of electricity" requirement (80/20 rule) so pump storage can qualify on a financial/value basis rather than net energy. KPMG indicated willingness to work with a member group; potential value cited at \$100M–\$200M in additional credits for a single project (existing pump storage/hydro, not new).
- Stephanie Maggard and Scott Hennessey supportive; Scott Hennessey urged routing through Kathleen Roberston and the tax group to present Treasury a tight, unified priority list. Board direction leaned toward forming a member task force to pursue the interpretation.

Executive session — Listed on the agenda; not captured in the recording.

Adjournment.

ACTION ITEMS

Item	Owner
Finalize and communicate the 2027 dues number before the close of San Diego so members can budget	Malcolm Woolf
Begin member outreach on the technical-services dues increase; monitor pushback and flag if it warrants revisiting in December	Chris Hayes / Marla Barnes
Stand up the Water Power PAC; communicate the opt-out for dues applied to PAC admin costs to all members	Matthew Allen
Manage cloud-based beta testing of the AI Licensing Intelligence Database (July–August) and report findings	Connor Nelson
Bring a formal AI database proposal (including pricing model and name) back to the board after beta	Malcolm Woolf
Circulate a revised four-year strategic plan for electronic vote or next-meeting approval	Malcolm Woolf
Send the list of top ~40 member companies by revenue to the board (Leadership Circle)	Malcolm Woolf / Marla Barnes
Reconsider whether the technical program needs two new hires vs. shared admin support before finalizing staffing	Malcolm Woolf
Pursue Treasury Safe Harbor table release; report back after the Treasury meeting	Malcolm Woolf / Kathleen Robertson
Convene a member task force (with KPMG) to pursue a Treasury interpretation on pump storage 45/PTC eligibility, coordinated through the tax group	Kathleen Robertson
Add a link to the Hydropower Foundation on NHA's website	Malcolm Woolf

These notes were prepared using AI technology from the June 23 and June 24, 2026 NHA Board Meeting recordings.