

Commission on Fossil Fuel Workforce

Meeting Minutes

April 9, 2025

3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

ATTENDANCE		
Member	Seat / Affiliation	Attended on 4/9/25
Melissa Lavinson, <i>co-chair</i>	Executive Director, Office of Energy Transformation	X
Josh Cutler, <i>co-chair</i>	Undersecretary 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
Daniel Leary	President of Local 369 at Utility Workers Union-America (UWUA)	X
Dave Keating	International Representative at International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)	X
Frank Callahan	President, Massachusetts Building Trades Unit (MBTU)	
Greandoll Oliva	Youth Leader in Chelsea and Community Organizer with GreenRoots	X
Harry Brett	International Representative at United Association	
Jennifer Applebaum	Managing Director of Workforce Development at MassCEC	X
John Cook	President at Springfield Technical Community College	X
Kristen Gowin	Executive Manager at National Electrical Contractors Association of Greater Boston	X
Lawrence Lessard	Director at Achieve Renewable Energy, LLC	X
María Belén Power	Undersecretary of Environmental Justice & Equity	X
Mark Melnik	Director, Economic & Public Policy Research at UMass Donahue Institute	X
Meghan Leahy	Regional Vice President at Cogentrix Energy, LLC	X
Michael Vartabedian	Assistant Directing Business Representative at International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers	X
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)	

Proceedings:

The meeting with the Special Commission on Fossil Fuel Workforce commenced at 3:04 PM. Members were present in person and via video conference. Members officially introduced themselves and their affiliations. Co-Chair Josh Cutler outlined the goals for the meeting, which included: reviewing approaches taken by similar commissions in other states, addressing key questions and data needs, and forming small working groups of Commissioners to advance the Commission's work and execute plans. Co-Chair Melissa Lavinson reviewed the Commission's workplan and outlined the three phases of the Commission's work, detailing each step involved. No suggestions or questions were raised by members at this time.

A presentation reviewed the structures and approaches of clean energy workforce commissions in four states: Illinois, California, Washington, and Rhode Island. The review included an examination of their statutory requirements, timeframes, membership composition, timescale used for data analysis, and final recommendations. Common themes across other state commissions centered on upskilling current workforce, creating jobs, considerations for equity, and support for workers and communities whose jobs may be at risk. It was suggested that the Commission review these reports in full if interested in more information.

Co-Chair Josh Cutler initiated a discussion on the overarching goals of the Commission, posing questions such as: "What is the desired outcome of this Commission? What are the primary topics that should be addressed? What specific actions should the Legislature take based on this report?" Commissioners then separated into online and in-person groups for further discussion.

Suggestions and points raised by individual members during the discussion included:

- Identify industry gaps and workforce needs in the clean energy sector and provide a broader understanding to policymakers and public of where gaps exist, as well as realistic timing of the transition.
- Determine how we will adapt in the wake of affordability concerns and assess feasibility from a cost perspective.
- Consider Massachusetts' position in relation to federal government policies.
- Importance of sharing real-world examples to illustrate workforce and industry shifts.
- The need to avoid job loss before it happens for occupations in less demand and ensure we're providing energy careers, not just energy jobs.
- Challenges with getting companies to invest in upskilling, as well as finding them the money to support apprenticeship programs.
- Ensuring the plan is clear, actionable, backed by data, and will have impact in both immediate and long-term.
- Current training efforts within MBTA and Highland Electric Fleets on electric buses and the relatively smooth transition for its mechanics.

- The need to identify occupations with easier and more challenging transitions to the clean energy sector, potentially as a way to bucket into in the report.
- The complexities of workforce changes, even within the same occupation.
- The opportunities that community college courses can offer in training, although some courses may not be covered under free community college.
- The need to accurately depict existing workforce and training, certifications, licensures, needs, and clearly identify future needs.
 - Should consider workstream or process mapping for the final report, potentially using example occupations.
- Challenges that digitization and new technologies sometimes bring to training.
- Exploring successful training models from other states, such as the lineworker training program in New Hampshire and the importance of foundational certifications like the EPA 608 card.
- How to realistically align timing of expected transition (i.e. from fossil fuel to electric infrastructure) to inform timing of workforce, training, and licensure needs.
 - Noted that 85% of appliance/equipment changes by residential customers are made on an emergency basis. This challenges the “timing” of the transition, as most customers will replace like-with-like due to necessity. To create more certainty in timing and workforce needs, we should address this issue.
- Concerns around existing underemployment/unemployment of electricians and plumbers in the Greater Boston area.
 - Currently, there is double-digit unemployment in Greater Boston area of electricians and plumbers, while simultaneously having challenges securing trained and licensed electricians and plumbers throughout the state.
 - Identify and focus on near-term solutions to address this mismatch.
 - Identified a need to better educate policymakers on this issue.
- Challenges with accurately identifying and classifying existing energy workforce, including the skills, certificates and licenses of each.
 - Identifying potential licensure/safety standard needs and gaps for future workforce.
- The need to discuss the merits and evolving needs of technology-based licensing/certification to task-based licensing, as well as mixed licenses, especially given that a lot of clean energy work is multi-disciplinary.
- Opportunity to educate high school guidance counselors on occupations in the trade with information on education, training needs, and availability.
- The need to provide Commission members with an overview of utility expectations on infrastructure and workforce needs from Electric Sector Modernization Plans, Climate Compliance Plans, and any workforce planning.
- Address inconsistencies in permitting and licensing across the Commonwealth.

Co-Chair Melissa Lavinson addressed the Commission's data needs, emphasizing the legislative requirement to identify impacted areas and recommend support opportunities for workers. The

discussion focused on strategies for data collection, organization, and analysis. It was suggested to leverage the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) report and other reports as initial resources, acknowledging the time and financial constraints associated with conducting new, original modeling. The potential use of Lightcast for data analysis was also mentioned.

Co-Chair Melissa Lavinson brought up the idea of site visits with members of the Commission. Several sites have been suggested already, like the Manchester Community College Electrical Lineworker Program, IBEW Local 103, La Colaborativa, Highland Electric Fleets, MBTA mechanic training program, among others. Commissioners were asked to submit suggestions for potential site visits and stakeholder engagements by April 18th.

Co-Chair Melissa Lavinson presented next steps to the Commission, including drafting objectives for the Commission and the report based on the meeting discussions and legislative requirements. These draft objectives will be circulated with Commission members for feedback. Co-chairs will then begin developing the outline for the overall report. Co-chairs also solicited volunteers to lead and participate in two subgroups to advance the work of the Commission. One subgroup will focus on finding available research and reports to rely on for identifying areas impacted by the transition to clean energy. This subgroup will be led by Rob Cohen, Director of Policy at the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. The second subgroup will gain alignment on the list of industries in the energy sector, with trades and job classifications identified within those industries, plus a proposal on how to present wage and benefit packages in the report. This subgroup will be led by Katherine O'Malley, Deputy Executive Director at the Office of Energy Transformation, and David Jan, Senior Applied Economist at the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. Subgroups will meet in April and May as needed before the next full Commission meeting on May 14th from 1-3PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 PM.