

# Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)

## MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday, December 17, 2024, 1:00 p.m.– 4:00 p.m.**

Hybrid meeting

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**Councilors Present:** Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy, Chris Modlish (virtual), Larry Chretien (virtual), Sarah Cullinan (virtual), Kyle Murray, Kathryn Wright, Kate Tohme (virtual), JS Rancourt (virtual), Andy Sun (virtual), Jonathan Stout (virtual), Julie Curti (virtual), Jeremy Koo (designee for Julie Curti, virtual), Amy McGuire (virtual)

**Councilors Absent:** Sarah Bresolin Silver, Alex Worsley, Marybeth Campbell

**Non-voting Councilors:** Digaunto Chatterjee (Eversource), Andrew Schneller (National Grid, virtual), Kevin Sprague (Unitil, virtual)

**DOER Staff Present:** Aurora Edington, Julia Fox, Colin Carroll (virtual), Marian Harkavy (virtual), Lou Sahlu

**Consultants Present:** Tim Woolf, Kyle Schultz

**Others Present:** Nancy Israel (National Grid), Jen Schilling (Eversource), Elli Ntakou (Eversource), Sarah Basham (National Grid), Gerhard Walker (Eversource)

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### 1. Call to Order

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy Department of Energy Resources (DOER), as designated Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

### 2. Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy welcomed all participants to the GMAC meeting and took roll call for voting and non-voting members.

### 3. Public Comment

**Richard Keleher, Green Acton and Energy Committee:** We are working on getting more solar and keep running into the fact that the grid can't handle it. People in North Acton are told that they will have to spend thousands of dollars to do it. Richard has been trying to track the plan that Eversource has published, but it doesn't address the specific substation. This group is very important for getting off of fossil fuels.

#### a. Meeting Minutes Review and Voting

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy asked if there were any corrections or additions to the October 10th, 2024, GMAC or November 21, 2024, Executive Committee minutes. None were offered.

Councilor Kyle Murray moved to approve the October 10, 2024, GMAC meeting minutes. Councilor Kathryn Wright seconded. The motion carried.

Councilor Kyle Murray moved to approve the November 21, 2024, Executive Committee meeting minutes. Councilor Sarah Cullinan seconded. The motion carried.

#### b. EWG Appointment Vote

Commissioner Kyle Murray moved to appoint Jolette Westbrook to the Equity Working Group. Councilor Kathryn Wright seconded. The motion carried.

#### c. GMAC Meeting Norms

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed ideas for GMAC meeting goals, and ways to nurture an environment to achieve those goals.

**Councilor Andrew Schneller, representing National Grid:** Wanted to note that the bullet says specifically voting members are heard. Assumes all members' views should be heard.

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** It's meant to be an invitation to GMAC voting members specifically to be heard. EDCs have their own processes, and GMAC is for GMAC voting members to have a forum.

**Councilor Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation, representing the environmental justice community:** Want to emphasize importance of public engagement.

**Councilor Kate Tohme, New Leaf Energy, representing the distributed generation renewable energy industry:** For a coffee hour, we should decide on time before or after the meeting.

**Councilor Julie Curti, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, representing municipal or regional interests:** Want to reiterate Kathryn's point that we want to see more public

engagement. Interested in attending in-person but three-hour meetings plus a coffee hour are difficult.

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** This is the last three-hour meeting. Meetings will be two-hours in 2025.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee, representing Eversource:** Appreciates Richard's feedback. Richard is correct that Eversource does not currently have a specific plan for a substation location. Duly noted that the plan needs to include hosting capacity for Acton. On the substation field trip, could be on same day. Could be East Cambridge sub-station, seaport substation or downtown Boston substation.

**Julia Fox, DOER Staff:** Look out for a poll for substation visit.

#### **4. Updates on ESMP Activities**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy explained that they will be providing updates on activities and their relevance to the ESMPs and GMAC as a means of providing general information to the GMAC members and GMAC meeting attendees. These updates will not necessarily include action items for GMAC members.

##### **a. 2024 Climate Law**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy provided an overview of the new 2024 Climate Law.

##### **b. ESMP Phase II Procedural Notice**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy provided a summary of the ESMP Phase II procedural summary memo.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, representing the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center:** Are GMAC members automatically added to the service list for this docket?

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** This is the same docket. If you participated in the first phase, you will still be on the list.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** Intervened in the first phase and is wondering if he must participate in the second phase.

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** No, there are different levels of participation.

**Councilor Kathryn Wright:** EWG took a look at the procedural schedule. They are planning to do some working sessions to think about reporting and metrics.

**Councilor Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance, representing low- and middle-income residential customers:** Green Energy Consumer Alliance intervened in Phase I, and will plan to intervene, probably with light touch, submitting comments. They have limited bandwidth for second Phase II.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** Like Larry and Kyle, the Clean Energy Coalition plans to intervene and follow along in Phase II, to the extent they have bandwidth/ funding to participate.

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** Wanted to get input from GMAC on whether they wanted to come to a consensus. Sounds like members are generally low on bandwidth.

### **c. LTSPP Stakeholder Working Group**

Councilor Kate Tohme, New Low Energy, presented several slides with updates from the Long-Term System Planning Process for DER Interconnection (LTSPP) working group. She emphasized that members are welcome to reach out to her with questions.

### **d. EDC Updates**

The EDCs provided verbal updates on the Climate Vulnerability Assessment, Integrated Energy Planning, and Grid Services Study.

#### Grid Services Study

**Jen Schilling (Eversource):** Jen provided an update on the Grid Services Study. The study is a collaboration with MassCEC and the other EDCs. MassCEC is leading the study and has engaged with a consultant. They are currently working on coming up with a framework for how to value DERs as a grid asset and are thinking about how a program may work. They had the first stakeholder sessions yesterday.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan (MassCEC)** We're excited with doing this collaboratively. We didn't have very good participation from environmental justice groups at this stakeholder session.

**Councilor Andrew Schneller (National Grid):** Jen did a good job summarizing. How you value grid services will have a big update on how quickly they get on the grid.

#### Climate Vulnerability Assessment

**Councilor Andrew Schneller (National Grid):** National Grid is currently planning Climate Vulnerability Assessment and plans to publish it on their website publicly. Coastal flooding is a severe risk for substations. They are also looking at wildfires and planning for mitigation. Used two in-house geospatial risk tools.

**Elli Ntakou (Eversource):** Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA) is underway. They evaluated seven scenarios and are working on finalizing the second part of the study. Wants to find out which assets are impacted by which hazard type. A large part of report is cross-EDC collaboration. There are some differences across EDCs. Plan to publish findings in early 2025.

**Councilor Kevin Sprague (Unitil):** Continuing with identifying risks, which will be used as foundation for additional analysis to develop climate vulnerability assessment in Q1 2025. Also will be doing a supply change risk analysis which will be used in addition to the physical and transmission risks which will roll into climate plan in 2025.

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** DOER has funding for doing an energy vulnerability and risk assessment. It is not going to be public and will be completed next summer. Every state who receives federal funding must have an updated security energy plan.

### Integrated Energy Plan

**Councilor Andrew Schneller (National Grid):** Short-term focus is developing a tool to do a “quick and dirty” non-pipeline alternative (NPA) screening. From a longer-term perspective, National Grid is looking at how to scale from a very small NPA to a community scale NPA. Also looking at data sharing and cost allocation.

**Gerhard Walker (Eversource):** Wants to emphasize that EDCs are working closely together and that they are following NPA stakeholder groups. Screening processes for NPAs have been set up.

**Tim Woolf (Synapse):** Which members of GMAC are in NPA working group?

**Gerhard Walker (Eversource):** There are 30-some stakeholders in the group - doesn't know off the top of his head who is there.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** I want to flag that the integrated energy planning group is a utility group and the NPA group is open to the public.

#### **e. ESMP Activity Tracker – Live Demo**

Kyle Schultz, consultant, gave an overview of the excel ESMP Activity Tracker that Synapse developed.

### **5. 2025 GMAC Planning**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy reviewed the 2025 GMAC meeting goals, discussed ways for the GMAC consultants to support the GMAC, and gave an overview of 2025 GMAC meeting activities.

#### **a. 2025 GMAC Meeting Topics and Learning Goals**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed the January through July GMAC meeting topics, learning objectives, and reasons for topic timing. She asked GMAC members for feedback on the topics, because DOER plans to move forwards with the list of topics. Additionally, she highlighted that GMAC members are encouraged to reach out if there are topics on the list they would like to present on.

#### **b. GMAC Meeting Dates**

Joanna Troy discussed the planned dates for future GMAC meetings and asked if members have any conflicts. A schedule will be determined after this meeting.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** Interconnection implementation review group (IIRG) has monthly meeting on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 1-3pm. Can talk offline.

Chris Modlish also attends the IIRG.

#### **c. Draft January GMAC Meeting Agenda**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy gave an overview of the planned January GMAC meeting and the planned content of the fact sheets. She asked if any GMAC members would like to contribute to the GMAC

Sarah Cullinan volunteered to help out and to be a resource for the cost recovery portion of the agenda.

**Councilor Andrew Schneller (National Grid):** How do we make sure the various cost recovery presentations (EDCs, Synapse, GMAC members) is not overlapping?

**Tim Woolf:** Synapse presentation would be about the basics. EDCs would cover their proposals.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan (MassCEC):** Assuming there would be some coordination about who will present what.

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** We would set expectations about what each group can contribute.

**Councilor Chris Modlish, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office:** Also is happy to contribute to presentations.

**Julia Fox, DOER Staff:** One way GMAC members can get involved without necessarily presenting is to provide feedback on the cost-recovery 1-pager.

#### **d. GMAC Stakeholder Session #1**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy presented the plan for a July 2025 GMAC Stakeholder Session. She discussed the audience, goals, and ideas for various speakers and panels.

**Councilor Larry Chretien (Green Energy Consumer's Alliance):** Thinks there will be strong attendance. Saying Secretary Tepper or Commissioner Mahoney will speak will draw people. Someone needs to explicitly explain how ESMP process works towards climate goals. There should also be a panel on what it costs.

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** We need to think about what we'll cover in second session, but also acknowledges interest in costs.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** There's an opportunity for more workshop-y things. E.g., having a utility rep at every table. That model of turning things into smaller group discussions could be integrated even more instead of just staring at a panel of five people.

**Councilor Kathryn Wright:** Plus one to Larry and Sarah's comments. Is there a way to collect questions in advance? Wants to make sure the language advertising event doesn't feel exclusionary. Thinks more people will be interested than you might suspect. Encouraging to think about who to invite, making sure they have a big enough space. Coast Guard space has worked well before.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee (Eversource):** Should we think about advertising in local news? Something that gets more people than the activists, also get the public. Seconds Larry's idea about adding in affordability as a panel or breakout session.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** Likes the idea of a newspaper thing. Maybe timing it with an op-ed that talks about the grid and why modernizing it is so important. Maybe also non-traditional media (e.g., an ad on a podcast). Likes Kathryn's idea about asking questions in advance, maybe also asking what people are most interested in covering.

**Councilor Chris Modlish:** Think about advertising, maybe on social media, since that's where a lot of normal people get their news. Thinks costs are important. Consider whether it can be framed as affordability.

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** Also wants to coordinate with whatever the EDCs are doing (e.g., with the CESAG).

**Councilor Julie Curtie, MAPC:** Do you want to just have a session focused on municipal interests?

**Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:** Maybe municipal isn't the right word, maybe municipal and community? Focus is people doing planning at the municipal geographical scale, as opposed to the state level.

#### **e. 2025 Equity Working Group Plan**

Kathryn Wright, as chair of the GMAC Equity Working Group, presented on the EWG 2025 plan.

*Councilor Andrew Schneller (National Grid):* I would like to hear more about the grid services study.

*Councilor Sarah Cullinan (MassCEC):* They are in the early stages of any kind of program development. Still far away from any kind of compensation for grid services but should make sure they have eyes open in terms of things like ease of access, equitable distribution of benefits.

*Councilor Kathryn Wright:* EWG is thinking of a breakout stakeholder session.

*Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy:* Would it be beneficial to have a separate EWG meeting in Western Mass? If there's a hole, how can we help fill it?

*Councilor Kathryn Wright:* Wants to table her answer until after Q1 EWG meeting.

*Councilor Sarah Cullinan:* Question about equity metrics. Does the GMAC have a role in assisting in the development of metrics broadly? What's the pathway/ venue of metrics coming out the EWG? How would it be proposed to the DPU and make its way into the proceeding?

*Councilor Kathryn Wright:* At last meeting, discussed with Erin from Eversource revisiting metrics. Wanted to lean on DOER about best process to make sure feedback gets into Phase II proceeding.

*Councilor Sarah Cullinan:* Could be an opportunity for GMAC members to sign onto public comment saying they support the metrics.

#### **f. 2025 GMAC Budget Filing**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy provided an update on the 2025 budget filing.

#### **g. 2025 Stakeholder Engagement Materials**

Julia Fox (DOER) provided an update on stakeholder engagement materials, including the new GMAC landing page and factsheets.

*Councilor Sarah Cullinan:* In terms of all of the factsheets – there's a million things out there on cost recovery 101, etc. Value add/ hook should be making factsheets Massachusetts- specific.

### **6. Additional Topics**



**Councilor Kyle Murray:** Wanted to mention National Grid’s targeted electrification program. Docket 24-194? Wanted to bring it to people’s attention.

## **7. Close and Next Steps**

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kyle Schultz*

Synapse Energy Economics

### Meeting Attachments

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides
- Draft October 10, 2024 meeting minutes
- Draft November 21, 2024 ExCom meeting minutes
- EWG Appointment Statement of Candidacy
- Draft Activity Tracker
- Draft GMAC Factsheet - Cost Recovery
- ESMP Phase II Procedural Notice