

## Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)

### MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 28, 2023, 1–4 p.m.

Hybrid meeting

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**Councilors Present:** Liz Anderson, Larry Chretien (virtual), Marybeth Campbell (virtual), Sarah Cullinan, Jeremy Koo (virtual; designee for Julie Curti), Amy McGuire (virtual), Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Kyle Murray, JS Rancourt (virtual), Jonathan Stout (virtual), Kate Tohme (virtual), Alex Worsley (virtual), Kathryn Wright

**Councilors Absent:** Sarah Bresolin Silver, Andy Sun

**Non-voting Councilors:** Carol Sedewitz (National Grid), Digaunto Chatterjee (Eversource)

**DOER Staff Present:** Aurora Edington, Julia Fox, Sarah McDaniel

**Consultants Present:** Paul Alvarez, Aidan Glaser Schoff, Jennifer Haugh, Tim Woolf

**Other Attendees:** Andrew Schneller (Incoming GMAC appointment for National Grid)

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#### 1. Call to Order

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

#### 2. Welcome, Agenda, Roll Call

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Department of Energy Resources (DOER):** Commissioner Mahony welcomed all participants to the GMAC meeting and took roll call for voting and non-voting members. No additions or changes to the agenda were suggested. The Commissioner walked through the proposed agenda (slide 2).

#### 3. Public Comment

**Sen. Michael Barrett:** Thank you and the members of GMAC for the incredible work you all did. My staff and I learned a great deal. One issue on which I'd love a little clarification is the way that the legislature and Department of Public Utilities (DPU) should view the roughly 230 discrete projects listed by utilities as part of their plans. When the legislature created the GMAC, it did not anticipate that the plans would include discrete projects, and in fact the word "project" is not listed at all in the requirement of electric-sector modernization plans (ESMPs) and it follows in the mission of the GMAC to review. I'm not saying listing them wasn't helpful; it's an extra step the EDCs did and it's raised some legal and legislative questions. For example, does the GMAC in having reviewed the ESMPs believe that it's given scrutiny to each individual project? The answer may be obvious, but it would be good to have GMAC on the record having a perspective. For now, the House and Senate do treat the GMAC review of the ESMPs, and in particular the prospect of DPU approval of such, as tantamount to approving individual projects. Those that we now have to contend with are treated as if the presumption is they've been reviewed, embraced, and endorsed. So we need clarity from the GMAC because we need lots of clarity before we write Commission on Energy Infrastructure Siting and Permitting (CEISP) legislation in a parallel working group. Their projects are accorded a particular status as discrete projects, not just a plan. I would love to hear from the DPU later about how much presumption it should attach to each of the 230 construction projects.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I know you've asked a question, and I am trying to balance that this is a public comment during an open investigation, so I might push this off. Questions may come up later in this meeting and otherwise I think we understand the point you're making and encourage anyone who's a member of GMAC to follow up outside of this discussion if we are unsuccessful in addressing points later in the meeting.

**Tina Grosowsky:** Thank you for letting me speak. I'm Tina Grosowsky and I live in Hudson. I'm a member of Elders Climate Action. I'm wondering what kind of transparency you all will be using to share your work so that advocates can advocate for current legislation to pass hopefully another strong clean energy and climate bill; it sounds like Sen. Barrett is going into good detail about that. What kind of reporting are you going to be doing, and with what level of transparency, so that bills need to be passed among other things that need to be done to get this work started in Massachusetts?

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Some of those questions will be answered when we discuss our 2024 GMAC meeting schedule, but we'll take your point on what we're talking about compared to the legislative cycle.

**Councilor Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, representing the environmental advocacy community:** To that point, all of our work product is publicly available on the website.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** That's a great point. This includes the 100+ page document by the consultants and a slide deck, plus the ESMPs. Those are all available and hopefully useful to everyone.

**Councilor Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance, representing low- to moderate-income residential consumers:** I wanted to pick up on what Kyle just said. Something that may

be obvious to a lot but not all is that the emphasis is on *advisory*, and we've produced documents that have explained our recommendations. The process has been incredibly transparent with regard to that, but now the ball has moved to the courts, and we will continue to work overtime in this forum.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** That is a good reminder.

**Sen. Michael Barrett:** I appreciate that all that is true, but the GMAC needs to help the legislature. It's great that we're referred to the hundreds/thousands of pages and there's no question that the poor are free to sleep under bridges, but neither option is necessarily helpful. We need help from you because our staff is actually much more constrained than yours are collectively. So we need help poring through hundreds of pages and figuring out where the status of these hundreds of projects are. This is the group that has the expertise and we'll lose a lot of that once this moves to legislature, because we're dealing with roughly 100 different provisions, 95 of which don't have to do with ESMPs, and we need input and help from those who have been closer to a particular problem. Thank you.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Thank you for the engagement. Let's move on.

#### **4. Meeting Minutes Review and Voting**

Commissioner Mahony asked if there were any corrections or additions to the December 4, 2023, GMAC or February 15, 2024, Executive Committee minutes. None were proffered.

Councilor Kyle Murray moved and Councilor Kathryn Wright seconded approval of the GMAC meeting minutes for December 14, 2024. The motion carried with Councilor Marybeth Campbell, Councilor JS Rancourt, and Councilor Alex Worsley abstaining.

Councilor Kyle Murray moved and Councilor Sarah Cullinan seconded approval of the Executive Committee minutes of February 15, 2024. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **5. Executive Committee Appointment**

Commissioner Mahony expressed her gratitude for working with the retiring Carol Sedewitz, National Grid, who subsequently expressed her pleasure in having worked with the GMAC. She introduced her replacement, Andrew Schneller, Vice President of Regulatory Strategy at National Grid, who has a background in engineering and operations.

Councilor Kyle Murray moved and Councilor Sarah Cullinan seconded to appoint Digaunto Chatterjee, Eversource, to represent the EDCs as a non-voting member of the Executive Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **6. 2024 GMAC Meeting Schedule**

Commissioner Mahony introduced the 2024 GMAC meeting schedule.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, representing the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center:** Looking at the proposed topics for those meetings, I wonder if in June or July we start the conversation ahead of the DPU order to talk about the next steps for GMAC. My thinking is I think there is a role for GMAC in integrating more of a stakeholder process early on, and if our thinking on that would be integrated into the DPU on what that process might look like in the order they come up with. I wonder if it would be helpful to start that conversation. It's very late in the process considering the procedural schedule, but I'm just putting it out there for consideration.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** How is what you're suggesting different from the conversation about GMAC comments in the DPU?

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** Maybe it will be covered. Just a bullet for September: what next steps for GMAC means, and part of that could be done today.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I was thinking of how it ties into the DPU and based on the procedural schedule, it's too far along.

**Councilor Kate Tohme, New Leaf Energy, representing the distributed generation renewable energy industry:** I agree with both of you; maybe what Sarah is saying is instead of trying to come up with comments that can be submitted on behalf of GMAC, she's recommending that we have a conversation as a committee to consider whether we can individually make proposals as intervenors on the proceedings. I support Sarah's recommendation, but I agree that June or July is too late, so we should either do this today or through smaller group conversations.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** It's mostly going to be today, and I think probably those of us who have intervened are thinking about that for the proceeding. This is our proposal: if at the end of the conversation today it doesn't feel like enough, we can always schedule another GMAC meeting before June or July, which is too late. Let's see where we are at the end of the day.

Commissioner Mahony mentioned that the DOER will check to ensure that the calendar posted is correct and will explore whether there is an official role for GMAC. She encouraged all GMAC members who are commenting on the process to share information with Senator Barrett, so everyone understands real challenge and balance we're trying to achieve here. This issue gets into legal arguments a lot of us will wade into; we don't have a specific GMAC lawyer. Encourage this group to talk with the Senator and others about opinions on a lot of this.

## **7. NECEC/MassCEC Event Series**

Councilor Sarah Cullinan shared a slide regarding the "Transition to the Future Grid in MA" event series as a NECEC and MassCEC collaboration.

## **8. GMAC Operating Budget Proposal**

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony shared slides 8 and 9 on GMAC operating budget proposal. There are proposed options to spend a DPU-approved \$50,000 for operational expenses, which

could be used on additional distribution system planning-related studies, technical support, providing more stakeholder engagement opportunities, and/or public-facing materials. The DOER posed two options: host a fall in-person stakeholder session and/or publish public-facing materials in fall 2024.

***Councilor Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation, representing the environmental justice***

***community:*** I'm curious given that we've just heard about the NECEC series and that event being in the fall and if there's a way we can coordinate and leverage those funds best. I'm generally interested in creating public-facing materials, because we can use many organizations to help disseminate that information. The consultant materials have been helpful; there's another layer down that we desperately need to do, particularly after orders come out. No. 1 might be helpful, but I would push for No. 2.

***Councilor Larry Chretien:*** There's a big gap that these dollars could help to fill. We're an advisory body and some of us are intervening, but most of it's with the DPU. If you try to find anything in the DPU file room to explain the process, it's awful. It's hard to explain what's going on with the process. How would you tell them how to find appropriate information requests on topic? The GMAC website would be the more user-friendly way to go. We could present it in a way for the average person to go there and get some information that they would never find at the DPU. When it's all said and done and approved in August, having a strong summary of what developed there would be helpful. To go another step further, not everything in the ESMP dockets are what people are concerned about with regard to grid modernization: there's a lot of action outside these particular dockets, and that needs to be explained better to people.

***Councilor Kyle Murray:*** I would never criticize our friends at the DPU, but Larry raises a point about the website not being the most user-friendly, and that's a good use of funding. Particularly regarding what Kathryn was mentioning, I agree with both points. The idea of an in-person stakeholder session is interesting, but that seems like it's a one-off vs. potentially several sets of materials that could be produced and that could have a more lasting and helpful approach. In the world of limited funding, my preference would be No. 2.

***Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:*** Going back to your three-part series, Sarah, not necessarily about GMAC, but about tech: can you share more about the third event and what that means?

***Councilor Sarah Cullinan:*** This is a pretty limited event, about 100 people, so it's not really envisioned to be a broad publicly facing stakeholder event—it's more targeted to certain types of stakeholders that would be part of planning and ideation side of the picture, and it's not related to the GMAC, more of a parallel. I don't think it would replace something like a post-order event, but I also do agree that having materials that can be disseminated more widely might be more effective use of the money than having an event unless there was some hybrid where the materials presented at the event could be disseminated afterward, or event is recorded, or there's certain representation and whatever content can be used as public-facing material. But \$50,000 only goes so far in terms of creating accessible content.

***Councilor Marybeth Campbell, Worcester Community Action Council, representing a local agency administering the low-income weatherization program:*** If I had to lean on something, it

would be Option 2 for the more sustainable utility of it and being mindful of thinking about bilingual resources as well. I don't know Tina who spoke earlier, but assume that from a community level, I know that \$50K won't do it, but engaging at the consumer community level where adoption is a critical part of this and also a bunch of project-oriented disruption in communities, something needs to be contemplated in terms of working with organizations to get consumer-level information out there more quickly.

**Councilor Jeremy Koo, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, representing municipal or regional interests:** I agree with what folks have said; I'd emphasize about engaging with municipalities and community-based organizations. We hosted some info sessions in the fall to engage municipalities for input. There was a lot of interest in the process. The challenge is trying to find the right level of content to put into a stakeholder session to make it productive for a diverse group—sounds kind of daunting. I would be interested in having some strong public-facing materials to keep following up with our communities to keep proactively engaging as process moves forward.

**Councilor Liz Anderson, Attorney General's Office, representing the Attorney General's Office:** I also agree. Option 2 makes most sense, as it would get the most use. I wanted to echo what Sarah brought up which is the idea of a video; how can we distill this to the most basic overview to people who have never thought about our electric grid, and how do we talk about what's happening and doing on a distribution level, why we have a GMAC, answering basic questions that a member of the public, anybody in life not working in this building that they can actually understand what we're doing here and why it will impact their life. Video form is more effective than a 2-3-page summary in catching people's attention. Want to see if we can do that. I know the budget is not very big, but if we could look into it, it might be worthwhile.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Just noting that Liz will now represent AG's office on the GMAC. Also noted that the AG's office did a video on federally focused resources on transmission, and it was terrific. It came out in July. Two speakers came in to talk about equity and EJ communities. The point was when you're disseminating this kind of info, you need to come up with different types of information that speaks in a way that's engaging and digestible. Remember that really good visual representation of the work is important.

**Councilor Kathryn Wright:** They produced story-telling vignettes; that could be a resource.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee, representing Eversource:** I have no idea, but if we're thinking about community engagement, is there any way to explore matching federal funds and increase the dollars? If there's any option to do that, we should try.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** We're looking at every opportunity that has come up; I don't recall anything like that being proposed, although DOER's website isn't that great either, so we're looking for a fellow to help support communications. But we'll ask questions of our team that's been scouring federal proposals. There is a lot of money out there, but it doesn't necessarily match up here. We'll take a look. I'm hearing strongly that Option 2 is preference, and maybe we can maximize other stakeholder sessions to explore Option 1.

## 9. Future ESMP Recommendations

Councilor Tohme went over a slide detailing the path of recommendations for future ESMP processes, which was initially presented in December 2023. The DOER shared the draft GMAC comments to DPU document. Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony teed up a conversation about the potential for the GMAC to submit comments to the DPU before the deadline of March 12. Councilor Tohme spoke to the multiple versions of documents, which include the full redlined document, a clean version with comments removed, and a clean version of what remains.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** Question to the council: have you had a chance to look at this, and would you like to start going through comments, or should we look at how many recommendations are still left and determine whether we want to move forward with filing? The introduction and procedural backgrounds are largely untouched. For recommendations, there is a new bullet included by a council member as a follow-on to a bullet that was deleted, so we may want to exclude it.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Would it help as we're all looking at this slimmed down version to go through and flag what your thoughts are on each of these bullets and what maybe got dropped, and how by dropping them it no longer weakens the bullet in front of us?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** These are still valuable; there's just not a lot of recommendations. The question is it worth us submitting to the DPU? I don't oppose it, but it's different than what I initially submitted, which was about a page and a half of recommendations.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I think still worth the GMAC speaking on the record to the DPU. Any strong opinions?

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** As I look at this, we're just starting the DPU process and maybe we should hold some of these 2028 process recommendations until it runs its course a little more. I might have different opinion later on about adding or subtracting recommendations.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** My only response is we have a limited opportunity to submit on adjudicatory proceedings; the only way is to submit public comments, and the GMAC is not intervenor.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Public comments are due March 12, which is less than two weeks away. Just to expand, having lived through a couple dockets, if it's not on the record at the right time, the DPU can ignore it, or it could go in a different direction, and I think this is the only opportunity for an order for the 2028 process. Which is the struggle we're all facing: we have one strange shot at it all.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** I personally think we should submit, even if they're more limited. The third bullet down was originally about how parallel processes are subsumed or coordinated with the ESMP processes (grid modernization, electric vehicles, energy efficiency, CIPs) and one councilor added this to incorporate with DPU Order 20-80.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** I have a question about process. Would this be like if any council member objected, it was deleted?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** Yes, any objection was deleted.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** That's part of my concern—there could have been 15 out of 16 councilors in agreement or some may not have cared as much. I object to deleting some of the original recommendations. I wouldn't want the DPU to think that this was the extent of the GMAC's comments.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** We do have the original document with the changes tracked. I'm not sure we can have the conversation we need to make that determination in 20 minutes today. Another issue is if we're submitting this on behalf of GMAC, it's hard to submit a recommendation that a council member doesn't agree with.

**Councilor Kathryn Wright:** I believe this 20-80 addition is mine and I wanted to speak to it. One big area where I felt like I needed clarity and would want the future version of GMAC to have a larger point on is this worth submitting. I think there's a difference between an intervenor vs. individual GMAC member vs. the council, and I wouldn't want us to regret having not said anything on the record.

**Councilor Liz Anderson:** As someone who I think is primarily responsible for a lot of deletions, I think everybody knows that the AGO's office is very enmeshed in these proceedings. Our concern on what we deleted is we are going to be developing recommendations on these points as our case in chief and we're not prepared to say we know what that looks like, and we wanted to avoid a situation where we signed onto a recommendation as part of the GMAC that we aren't going to agree with, or we don't want to undermine, and think there are a lot of recommendations, while we agree with at a high level and conceptually, they need to be further developed. There are a lot of legal arguments on the brief with additional evidence and support on how things should be done. We also felt it's too high-level; there's no clarification on processes. We're asking for clarity but not telling them what we want. We're unlikely to get clarity if we don't tell them exactly what we're looking for. That's another thing we can develop over time in these dockets. Just so you know where we're coming from. We agree with the consultants' comments on substantive instead of process recommendations, but we would want to take the 20-80 reference out.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** I take your points, Kate, Kathryn, and Liz, and understand that this is meant to be a consensus for the GMAC and I wasn't thinking about undermining recommendations of the AGO's office. So fair; understood. If we have to remove certain things, I'm comfortable with that.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I wrestled with this and our team has as well: as an intervening party looking to sponsor testimony, what do we do and how do we do it when we've been a body that has voted by consensus? Could we have these broad, high-level comments and then have additional comments that those of us who are intervening and don't feel comfortable signing onto right now say "the following members suggested this?" I still struggle with that



because it's still the GMAC offering it. It seems like there's no good option, but it all comes from the right place. If we can get to an agreement on even these limited comments, I think it would be pretty striking for the DPU to see that, and I think that I would argue that once it's on the record, anyone else can react to it and offer suggestions on how to give specifics on how to do any of these things.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** I think that's helpful and agree. To Kyle's point, I also had a concern that the DPU may view these as our only procedural recommendations, so to that point we should consider adding a sentence that clarifies our struggle—submitting those with full consensus. I hope that this is not inappropriate to say, but the original recommendations draft is available on the GMAC website and anyone who's an intervenor could submit them individually. This is a public comment period and you can put that forward. I would encourage you to submit them to the extent that you do agree with them.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** If we were to submit this, would people feel comfortable submitting giving there are two bullet points that still have a question mark? Do we support doing something and then figure out what we're doing?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** We can talk about the two bullets and potentially vote on whether we want to submit the remaining.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** One of the themes that got removed is I'm wondering if we can capture something very general about and get consensus on. This goes to my earlier point about what does the GMAC see its role in going forward and starting that process or being part of it, that starts the ESMP planning and engagement earlier, and we're kind of that bridge to create working groups that flow into the ESMP process. I wonder if we can capture that on a very general level, or if we can put something about our intended schedule over the next year or five years—something very high level so the DPU has something about how the GMAC intends to be involved.

**Councilor Liz Anderson:** I agree; that's a good idea.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** I agree; maybe a subcategory with one bullet that has overarching recommendations and that the DPU should define the future role of the GMAC and work with us to define that. The best-case scenario would be for the DPU to determine a procedural schedule for the GMAC in working with the ESMP process.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** I agree wholeheartedly on aligning with and working in concert, and not being reactionary.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** We're asking the DPU to help define with GMAC's input the future role of the GMAC in the five-year process and that the DPU actually set up a process for figuring that out.

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** On the authority of the DPU, how is that separate from the GMAC statute and what we do?

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** That's part of the challenge—I think that's why we point to the fact that there are statutory directives, and we want to make sure the DPU doesn't make grand assumptions in their order and that they work with us to make sure not only do we work to meet statutory directives, but in a way that helps progress all of this.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** To Sen. Barrett's point earlier, the legislature is working on a climate bill as we speak. The deadline for that is July 31, but that's when the bill's going to happen. There's some value in us also looking at the statute and seeing if there are statutory changes we need to recommend as well and talking about those, because those can be changed. It's an opportunity we have.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Looking at this language, the overarching recommendation, and with Larry's point, I can't remember if the obvious point of statutory framework if that's in here; if it's consistent with the GMAC's statutory directive, the DPU should help define this and also meet the point that how do we want to make sure this is happening? We don't need another adjudicatory procedure, but how is the DPU going to actually do it?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** I think it would be helpful to be specific and one potential recommendation would be for DPU staff to join a GMAC meeting.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Yes! After the order out, they can.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** There can be conversations with GMAC at its first meeting following that.

**Councilor Liz Anderson:** What are we looking for? We're talking about having them come talk to us, but isn't our ask for an order at the end of it—PBR metrics? I do think it's possible.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** The interlocutory order seems to imply that adjudicatory proceedings are going to be phased and the review of strategic plans is first phase, so could make recommend that in the second phase of ESMP proceedings that the DPU convene a technical conference or meeting with the GMAC in the dockets so that then it's on the record and the DPU can finish an order so it's on the record.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** 20-80?

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** I'm okay to cut it. We can't address it.

**Councilor Kathryn Wright:** If we do, we should add a sentence that individuals will weigh in with additional commentary.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** The 20-80 order came out after the GMAC recommendations; maybe delete that because that was in specific reference to this bullet.

**Councilor Liz Anderson:** Regarding scope: one of the things that's already in the GMAC recommendations; why are we including here? What was the intent by calling this one out?

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** There was a lot of agita about the lack of info on transmission infrastructure, and we're trying to overcome that in the next one. That could be argued about a lot of things.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** It's included because it's meant to be a procedural reporting requirement and not a substantive determination on transmission upgrades. Because it's a distribution system report, there's not a lot of information about transmission; it's more about how the parallel process associated should be available.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Given that Kate's framing is about reporting to GMAC.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** We should give DPU discretion about this.

**Councilor Liz Anderson:** This just raises more questions—talking about reporting after adjudicatory proceeding, they're giving us reporting following the proceeding; I still have a lot of questions about what that looks like because don't want to make a recommendation that's not clear and fully fleshed out, because I don't think it'll be helpful to the DPU if we don't further define what it is that we're looking for.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I get that point, but is this in a way highlighting one of the things we struggled with specifically that the statute directed us and we were stymied? And is this a way to reflect that and allow others to provide details on how that reporting could happen?

**Councilor Liz Anderson:** Thinking about it that way, we could rephrase this as more of a statement that the GMAC did request information about transmission investments either triggered by or related to ESMPs and that info was not forthcoming, and that stymied our order by statute. This could be recommendation for change.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Are you suggesting that in bulleted list or in the body of the letter?

**Councilor Liz Anderson:** In the body of letter, similar to the timing of 20-80, and information we didn't get that we were expected to weigh in on.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** We did work with the Clean Energy Transmission Working Group (CETWG) to a certain extent and point out that distribution and transmission planning alignment is important. Point of that bullet was meant to leave it up to DPU to not be too prescriptive of how to obtain that information, recognizing that there's a parallel process that needs to continue. Unless there's transparency on how that process is unfolding, there are no checks and balances.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Can we put a sentence in paragraph above that everyone's circling around that we've struggling with as part of our statute? I suggest that we take a break

and couple people can work on that sentence, and we can check back after the break to see if we can come back to this later.

*BREAK*

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony shared new language pulled from bullet and incorporated into a paragraph above. Councilors Tohme and Anderson indicated their support for the changes.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Before we move on, are people feeling confident that we can vote on this document? Any objections to taking this step? One other concern is if we do endorse this letter, if you can all give the DOER the ability to do clean up so we submit something clean.

Councilor Kyle Murray moved to approve submission of this letter as amended in the room and with further grammatical updates by DOER afterwards to submit to the DPU as public comment in the three open dockets. Councilor Liz Anderson seconded. The motion carried with Councilor Amy McGuire abstaining.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** I wanted to ask permission to leave; have a conflict and need to drop off.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Thank you for letting us know, no need to ask for permission.

Councilor Chatterjee left at 2:55 p.m.

## **10. GMAC Consultant Comments on the 2024 ESMPs**

Tim Woolf, Synapse, went through slides 14–65.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** [slide 21] I agree wholeheartedly that “accepted but modified” often meant that they did not accept substance of recommendation. That was a particular frustration of mine going through these. If you’re changing something in some way, don’t pretend you’ve accepted the recommendation when you aren’t substantively accepting them.

**Councilor Alex Worsley, Stack Energy Consulting, representing the transmission-scale renewable energy industry:** [slide 20] You have numbers in parentheses, are these that fall into this bucket? Can you just clarify what parentheses are?

**Tim Woolf:** That’s a great question—I didn’t prepare this table. We’ll look it up and get back to you.

**Councilor Alex Worsley:** It would be helpful to identify those that didn’t substantively agree with recommendations, because I wholeheartedly agree with Kyle.

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** [slide 18] Can I raise a point on that order. We signed up to be on GMAC and wanted to make sure investments were right, representing LMI ratepayers. We even set up the Equity Working Group to think about that and we know that the draft we looked at in

September indicated that there wasn't a lot of detail for us as a GMAC to comment on that. Then we get to the docket and we're told through this order that we don't really have anything of value to say to the DPU that could impact ratepayers. Then we find out that the DPU's plan is to approve through other dockets.

**Tim Woolf:** I share your frustration. One thing is where do costs get approved and cost recovery; there's more clarity than there was in the fall. But one question I have is National Grid is before the DPU regarding a rate case. These plans are to be recovered through those rate cases. This creates a fractured review process. As we'll see, the way that costs are categorized as recovered through rate cases and not recovered through rate cases is not clear either.

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** This raises the question to the public about what the GMAC is about and how we're representing their interests. It was a heavy lift for the Green Energy Consumers Alliance to be on the GMAC and to be an intervenor for this because we thought this would be a bigger deal. We are also time-of-use intervenors. I'm just not sure this is fully in line with what the legislation was intended to be when setting up the GMAC. I'm glad to be intervening because we're trying to pull as much out of this docket as we can, but there's no way to tell anybody with a straight face that these dockets will resolve or tell the whole story about how Massachusetts is going to modernize the grid.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** [slide 18] We don't know how third bullet will happen. Going back to Sen. Barrett's point, I'm sure this is a question he'll be interested in talk with you, Larry, and others about and if a statutory change is necessary. I can't speak for the DPU, but some of these decisions were made because they only have seven months to get this done and figure out what they can do, much like us last fall. Hopefully there are opportunities to correct this in the future.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** [slide 35] That was a helpful analysis. The takeaway is the observation about forecast not accounting for 20-80 is very good; almost by happy accident their over-forecast of the phased happens to align with full electrification. But that's not the way to think about it because if they were to then plan for full electrification, they would probably overshoot, because they'd maintain the same assumption about non-managed charging and stack additional heat pumps on top of electric vehicles. So to align with full electrification, they would have to adjust and add in additional heat pump load, but would align with full electrification. That would be the proper way to think about it, based on the information you've put together.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** The thing about inconsistent scenarios was something I flagged during the draft plans, and the fact that that wasn't considered is exceptionally frustrating. I thought we raised it early enough. The lack of managed charging is such an oversight; it's pretty unacceptable. Storage as a resource helps with demand. We've seen this again and again, and we also raised this during the draft plan phase, so I'm just getting some of my frustrations out.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** On reliability spending, is this based on proactive or reactive? The kicker is we're trying to plan a grid to meet our clean energy future, and yet the grid is being hammered by storms driven by climate change, so there's been a lot of spending recently.

**Paul Alvarez, The Wired Group:** These are mostly prospective, but are they aimed at resilience or reliability? They're largely aimed at reliability. The exception might be overhead distribution lines because of the poles, but that's my perspective. There's very little data about the splits: this is what we spend. We can't really tell what's in those big buckets, and it's a big chunk of money.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Back to Councilor Murray's earlier comment about storage: storage actually keeps the lights on during Cape storms. They also use that facility for other opportunities like peak load shaving. It'd be good to see that reflected in other things, such as load forecasts.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** [slide 53] My read on part of the reason that Eversource has far lower ESMP investments is they had a rate case as a PBR right before the ESMP, so they'd already built in the assumptions that now National Grid is planning for, so they have previously approved spending that they don't have to attribute to ESMPs. This may also be network spending, but I don't remember. I don't see how average headroom is at all helpful to think about, because you could have parts of the system where you have a lot of headroom but that's not where things are being built and where constraints are. You have other substations that are very near capacity. To average those, you can't move headroom from one substation and move it somewhere else. There might be potential solutions around better planning, such as large-scale solar in places that have no headroom, but could put in places that have headroom, could save money. But that's not necessarily something the EDCs can control. They currently don't have the ability to move a proposed project to accommodate their system. I just don't think averaging headroom really gives a good picture of the potential system needs.

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** [slide 48] Either National Grid or Eversource rate requirement slides: ESMP is the gray, and that's what we're here to talk about, essentially. This is the source of my frustration; we're not only limited to talking about what's gray because the orange and blue are in other proceedings. I question the impact we're having here; it's extremely frustrating. Part of our role is protecting ratepayers; trying to tease out where there might be over- or under-investments in colored parts of the bar, except we know that in each one of those cases there are dollars in other dockets. It's a little bit of a shell game.

**Tim Woolf:** Take system-wide headroom with huge grain of salt. It's just some indication for EDCs for what might be helpful. Unitil is huge.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** I agree about alternatives. [slide 58] I have a question about distributed generation greenhouse gas emissions reduction. In your opinion, are those reliable figures?

**Tim Woolf:** We looked at each of these and I didn't check whether the emissions curve makes sense. We looked earlier on emissions assumptions, and they vary widely across utilities. Maybe one of them is right, but not all three of them, because they're very different. I don't have a lot of confidence in these.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** On bill impact analysis, I don't understand how it can't be possible to do this that shows the total bill over time. We always get these iterations that are just

incremental over some arbitrary starting point, and it means nothing to anybody. These numbers aren't helpful at all in terms of what the experience of someone paying electric bills are going to be. It's inexcusable.

**Tim Woolf:** Worse, it's very misleading.

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** [slide 62] Following up, that's maybe a question we can ask in discovery. We're an intervenor. If you can take revenue requirements, what does this mean for a ratepayer in 2029? We will ask if it's allowed. On the change in electricity sales on rates, maybe you can provide a little more information offline—if it really means what you're saying, we're talking about electric vehicles and heat pumps, there should be fair number of these by 2030. I don't get why sales wouldn't increase somewhat significantly for utilities, and possibility that could actually suppress rates to some extent because of work that Synapse has done looking at California and other locations about broadening rate base, because electric vehicles are going to pay into rate base. Can you provide a little more detail?

## **11. Close and Next Steps**

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony indicated that the DOER will send out a poll to find dates for scheduling a July and September GMAC meetings. Sooner meetings are possible if something happens in the interim.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Jennifer A. Haugh*  
GreenerU

### **Meeting materials:**

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides
- Draft GMAC Comments to DPU on Procedural Recommendations
- Draft meeting minutes from December 14, 2023 GMAC meeting
- Draft meeting minutes from February 15, 2024 Executive Committee meeting
- Pre-read: DPU Interlocutory Order on Scope (2/20/24)
- Pre-read: DPU Interlocutory Order on Interventions (2/23/24)