

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 26, 2025, 1:00 p.m.– 3:00 p.m.

Hybrid meeting

Councilors Present: Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy (Chair), Chris Modlish (virtual), Kate Tohme (virtual), Manan Parikh (designee for Sarah Bresolin Silver; virtual), Amy McGuire (virtual), Sarah Cullinan, Larry Chretien (virtual), Marybeth Campbell (virtual), Kathryn Wright (virtual), Alex Worsley (virtual), Julie Curti (virtual), Andy Sun (virtual), JS Rancourt (virtual), Kyle Murray (virtual)

Councilors Absent: Jonathan Stout

Non-voting Councilors: Andrew Schneller (National Grid; virtual), Kevin Sprague (Unitil; virtual), Lavelle Freeman (designee for Digaunto Chatterjee; Eversource)

DOER Staff Present: Colin Carroll (virtual), Aurora Edington, Nicole Marcus, Charles Dawson, Marian Harkavy (virtual), Jenny Goldberg (virtual), Julia Fox (virtual) Josh Ryor, EEA

Consultants Present: Aidan Glaser Schoff, Kyle Schultz

Others Present: Faye Brown (National Grid; virtual), Gerhard Walker (Eversource), Ronny Sandoval (Regulatory Assistance Project; virtual), Caitlin Broderick (National Grid; virtual), Josh Ryor (EEA)

1. Call to Order

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy, Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER), GMAC Chairperson called the meeting to order at 1:03 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

There were no public comments.

4. Meeting Minutes Review and Voting

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy asked if there were any corrections or additions to the May 29, 2025, GMAC minutes. Councilor Julie Curti suggested that the spelling of her name be corrected if possible. Councilor Kyle Murray moved to approve May 1, 2025, GMAC meeting minutes as amended. Councilor Sarah Cullinan seconded. The motion carried.

Audiovisual corrections were made at 1:08 p.m.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy asked if there were any corrections or additions to the June 5, 2025, Executive Committee minutes. Councilor Kyle Murray moved to approve June 5, 2025, GMAC meeting minutes. Councilor Chris Modlish seconded. The motion carried.

5. GMAC Strategic Plan Update

Kyle Schultz, GMAC consultant presented an update of the GMAC strategic plan.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy asked if anyone had commentary on the survey.

Councilor Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation, Representing the environmental justice community: Was this sent to both voting and non-voting members?

Kyle Schultz: Yes, it was sent to all GMAC members.

6. ESMP Activities Updates

a. ESMP Phase II

Aurora Edington, Massachusetts DOER, discussed upcoming deadlines related to ESMP Phase II activities.

Gerhard Walker, Eversource: The Integrated Energy Planning (IEP) working group hasn't met in the interim. We met prior to the last GMAC meeting. An IEP activities update will occur later on in the agenda.

Councilor Kate Tohme, New Leaf Energy, Representing the distributed generation renewable energy industry: Related to the Long-term System Planning Process (LTSP), a public hearing and procedural discussion has been scheduled for July 1. A procedural schedule may become available after July 1.

Councilor Andrew Schneller, Representing National Grid: We've launched our Non-Wires Alternatives, the five bridge-to-wire ones, Nantucket, West Charleton and others. Those are open until July 15.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: What do you mean by open?

Councilor Andrew Schneller: Residential, C&I, aggregators and others are invited to participate in "bridge to wires" NWAs projects in five locations. We are trying to keep the peak loads down while those projects are developed. In Nantucket and Foxborough, we are doing connected solutions plus. In Millbury, Whitins Pond, and West Charleton, we are doing a marketplace. This is a new concept where we are asking people to bid in, rather than a fixed connection. We are hoping to learn about market segmentation and where the market works better than the connected solutions plus program.

b. ESMP Phase II Order

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy presented a high-level summary on the ESMP Phase II Order. She summarized investment types the Department approved for short-term recovery and the investments ineligible for short-term recovery through the ESMP recovery mechanism.

Councilor Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance, Representing low- and middle-income residential customers: The last bullet on slide 8: is that asking for comments on process or dollars?

Aurora Edington, DOER: I believe it is not focused on costs but instead process. Specifically, how to incorporate future ESMP costs into base rates. I believe that the department will open a proceeding to fully investigate that.

c. Energy Affordability, Independence, and Innovation Act

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy presented a summary on the Energy Affordability, Independence, and Innovation Act filed by Governor Healey. She highlighted the components of the proposed Act that may apply to the ESMP and GMAC.

Councilor Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, Representing the environmental advocacy community: Written commentary is still being accepted by the committee for the next week or so. Additionally, the Senate and House have reached an agreement on rules, most relevant to this Act is that a deadline which was previously in February is now in December of this year.

Additionally, House bills have to be acted on within three months of the hearing date, but there may be an exception for bills filed by the Governor, which applies here.

7. Integrated Energy Planning Presentations

Ronny Sandoval of the Regulatory Assistance Project presented on opportunities for integrating electric and gas planning. He presented on the reasons for coordinated electric and gas planning; jurisdictions with gas and electric planning; key features of modern utility system planning; electric and gas service territory overlap; and indications of progress on electric and gas coordination.

Councilor Alex Worsley, Stack Energy Consulting, Representing the transmission-scale renewable energy industry: Thank you for presenting, and for staying on through the LDC and EDC presentations. You mentioned implementation options for these plans. Can you bring up a couple of key ones that we can keep in mind?

Ronny Sandoval: We're not telling folks to immediately reform everything, but to instead take incremental steps to determine what level of coordination is already occurring. Sequencing the dockets is important, such that information flows properly between dockets. There are different approaches, especially if the service territories do or do not align. Creating dedicated channels for communication is important. If there aren't enough established channels and there are opportunities to improve data sharing processes, then you can launch a technical workshop or investigatory docket to help with the alignment. There is often different expertise in which these decisions are made, and encouraging greater cooperation could result in better outcomes. These are enumerated in our report.

Gerhard Walker, Eversource, presented on Integrated Energy Planning (IEP) on behalf of the EDCs and LDCs. He presented on the regulatory background of IEP; the motivation behind IEP and targeted electrification; a vision of IEP and optimizing investments and system costs; how IEP and the ESMPs are related; and key opportunities for the IEP working group including objectives and upcoming meetings.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Referring to slide 24: This black box, starting with "The primary objective..." I think this is spot-on. There's always a challenge of "throw another working group at it" which Aurora has highlighted. Half of the GMAC is already on the IEP working group. Also, what is the actual interaction between the GMAC and the IEP? For myself, IEP is meant to make sure that all those other programs are being planned together. The objective of the GMAC is to make sure that the joint objectives of the electric grid are met. These all have impacts on each other. I view the IEP as a planning group, rather than an objective-oriented group. How did you come up with this black box?

Gerhard Walker: Taking a bit of a step back, this concept was discussed in the NPA working group. We view this as: is there a cost-optimized solution to a pipe replacement? That's why we are introducing the RIM tests rather than just the Total Resource Cost test. The IEP brings into

consideration the fundamental underlying physical constraints of the system. If we are doing this transition, how do we best phase this cost? It will not necessarily make it cheap, but it can minimize the costs.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, Representing the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center: To your comment on the black box and the objectives. It's pointing to IEP broadly as a planning structure, but not necessarily the working group.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: That's correct.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: We talked about it in the IEP working group, it makes sense to make it a cost minimization and cost effectiveness framework. To add the other objectives from other venues into the IEP working group could unnecessarily complicate things.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Any other questions for Gerhard? No. We will transition to a break.

A break commenced at 2:13pm. The meeting resumed at 2:21 p.m.

Jenny Goldberg, DOER, presented on DOER's vision for Integrated Energy Planning. She discussed the Commonwealth's climate goals, cost minimization, regulatory interventions, existing planning processes, prioritization of education of customers, prioritizing EJ communities, working with MLPs, and incorporating stakeholder input.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Thank you, Jenny. This is super comprehensive. I want to highlight on slide 31 that it is a required GHG limit. It's not a goal to meet the GHG limits, it is a legal requirement. The IEP doesn't need to state an emissions goal. All the planning processes that feed into the IEP must meet those limits. Thus, the IEP is inclusive of this limit by law. I agree with the black box that its main purpose is cost effectiveness, it is still based on that requirement.

Gerhard Walker: The Energy Efficiency program and plan has specific GHG reductions and goals. The IEP does not have specific GHG reductions and goals.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: It is helpful for planning processes to have specific objectives.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: I find this conversation around the objective helpful. Something I have a question about is, what even is IEP? Is it a layer that sits over existing planning and existing functionalities? Is it going to take these other plans and place it through a filter then re-circulate? I like thinking of it as a cost-effectiveness tool. What exactly are the tasks and objectives under IEP that are unique to what it is trying to do? Because of what it is, it is easy for it to become too big. We want it to be as narrow as possible and additive to the current processes.

Gerhard Walker: I 100 percent agree. Going back to my four key bullets, we need answers on some of those points. Can some money from energy efficiency be included for targeted electrification? If there is more money available, customer choice becomes easier because more money is available. It's not as easy as: complete these steps.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: IEP will organically change as the planning processes also change.

Gerhard Walker: From the utility perspective, once we have answered these questions, the actual technical analysis is the easiest part of all of this.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: I am glad you think that.

Gerhard Walker: We can do that very well. The question is: what is the objective function?

8. Integrated Energy Planning Facilitated Discussion

Councilor Kyle Murray: I'd love to have a discussion on obligation to serve, but I will hand it over to Alex to start the discussion.

Councilor Alex Worsley: Opening the floor with clarifying questions. How I've been thinking about this is transparency in information flowing between entities and where and when improvements are going to be made, such as NPAs. Aligning with DOER's goal of minimizing peaks, what sorts of solutions can help us manage the potential challenges on the gas side. From the EDCs and LDCs, do you have examples of how information is going to flow? Also, on the sequencing of different processes, do the EDCs have thoughts knowing that there are set timelines for ESMPs etc.?

Gerhard Walker: Starting with the NPAs. The electric companies have established an intake process to consume gas customer information. We have a limited availability to do that. Those processes are set up. They can then initiate the NPA process. That includes a step zero process and benefit cost analysis. The initial gas assessment, the LDCs do themselves. Once the benefit-cost analysis is complete, customer outreach by the program administrator can continue. If the NPA doesn't proceed, it then reverts to traditional gas processes. We are now in the final stages of signing NDAs of the non-affiliated companies. Once that is in place, those processes exist on the NPA side. If there is an interest in this, I can provide more information on the data sharing processes and coordinating framework.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: If that's short, we can include that as an update.

Gerhard Walker: On the second part of the question on an IEP rather than a specific NPA trigger. All of the types of projects end up being targeted electrification projects. Electrification demonstration projects have a different search criteria set but it goes through the same process.

For the IEP effort, it is optimizing the cost of the transition. The review process is always the same: gas feasibility, electric feasibility, benefit-cost analysis.

Alex Worsley: I appreciate that response.

Councilor Kathryn Wright: I wanted to respond to some prompts you have on the slide. What interests me is the interaction between gas and electric ratepayers. This came up in the ESMPs, if we looked at all the planning processes, what is the impact on ratepayers? For me, if the IEP process can reconcile all these plans, that would be important. I would also like to better understand how neighborhoods are chosen. Also, on customer choice and education, I want to learn more from cases around the U.S. and the world. For Ronny, how well are the four bullets presented by the EDCs consistent with what you've observed in other states?

Ronny Sandoval: Good news, this is consistent with what we see in leading states. Most of the integration happens in an active docket rather than a forward-looking process that we are seeing here. Understanding when you make decisions, such as rebates, understanding what it means in terms of incremental investments on the electric grid. Getting a balance of how affordability is managed overall. Though there were concrete targets on decarbonization of the gas system, when final decisions were made, affordability limited the pace of adoption. There were various portfolios of measures considered, there was a concession made for speed vs. compliance for the affordability for customers. This process here seems to focus more on: let's understand the whole picture before we make a set of decisions.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: On the point: are there IEP priorities not discussed today? I would offer ground-source heat pumps. I think IEP could be a vehicle to better utilize ground-source heat pumps as an optimization tool that isn't optimized today. The Eversource ESMP looked at sensitivities about replacing air source with ground source, how many substations would you not build. I think that the reason ground source are not as incentivized is that they are much more expensive. But, when you are looking at cost optimization across gas and electric investments, there may be situations where more expensive ground source heat pumps have lower overall costs. The feedback loop between Energy Efficiency and IEP should more fully integrate that.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Ground source heat pumps are already incentivized, but they are so expensive. The cost can vary based on new construction, workforce, and other costs that are quite varied. All the things that are here in IEP, are there any intentions to consider land use processes? Such as land use constraints of a substation not being built or drilling?

Gerhard Walker: Great question, I don't have a good answer.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: I think that is something interesting to think about.

Councilor Larry Chretien: The whole discussion from the EDCs and DOER is excellent. Getting back to heat pumps and electrification: it's not only about MassSave. We are very interested in rate reform. We are looking at seasonal heat pump rates. Hopefully, by November

of 2026 it will have better rates. We are releasing a report soon that shows that customers who currently have gas will save money by switching to heat pumps. That could quicken the shift from gas to electric.

The second thing is that IEP should look at the requirement to reduce emissions, but that responsibility is everywhere, not just IEP's responsibility.

On the 49% by 2030, the climate compliance plans, they didn't do the job. We're not going to reach that without reducing gas consumption. We need to think about what the most cost-effective way is to switch people from gas to electric.

Councilor Kyle Murray: Something that goes unstated is the continued obligation to serve in the state. It appears to be the utilities and the DPU didn't do anything to change the obligation for existing customers. It's almost the whole ball game. It's lunacy to think we can move forward with a policy if 1 person out of 30 in a neighborhood wants to keep a gas stove and it prevents the whole decommissioning project. I don't think we have addressed that, and I don't think that the CCPs have seriously contemplated that.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Question number 5 of slide 35. What is the overlap between the LDCs, GMAC, and the CCPs? I know Kyle is involved and DOER is involved. In an attempt to not make the GMAC bucket too big, DOER's recommendation going into strategic planning is that the GMAC shouldn't participate in the CCP.

9. Close

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed the upcoming EWG meeting, stakeholder session, and GMAC meeting.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy adjourned the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Aidan Glaser Schoff
Synapse Energy Economics
Meeting Attachments

- Meeting Agenda
- Meeting Slide Deck
- Draft May 29, 2025 GMAC Meeting Minutes
- Draft June 5, 2025 GMAC Meeting Minutes
- Integrated Energy Planning (IEP) Topic Brief
- June Activity Tracker
- ESMP Phase II Order