

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)

Equity Working Group

MEETING MINUTES

Friday July 11, 2025, 10:00 a.m.– 11:30 a.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members Present: Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation (chair); Julia Fox, Department of Energy Resources; Kyle Murray, Acadia Center; Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance - *joined 10:33 a.m.*; Jolette Westbrook, Environmental Defense Fund; Mary Wambui, Planning Office for Urban Affairs

Non-Voting Members: Erin Engstrom, Eversource

Members Absent: Chris Modlish, Attorney General’s Office

DOER Staff Present: Colin Carroll, Elischia Fludd, Nicole Marcus

Others Present: Marc Lucas, National Grid; Meredith Boericke, Eversource; Alec O’Meara, Unitil; Maya Mastro Green Energy Consumers Alliance

Consultants Present: Kyle Schultz and Tim Woolf, Synapse

1. Call to Order

Kathryn Wright, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda

Chair Wright took roll call and gave an overview of the agenda.

3. Meeting Minutes Review and Voting

Chair Wright called for approval of the minutes. Kyle Murray motioned to approve the minutes. Julia Fox seconded. The March 24, 2025 meeting minutes were approved.

4. Updates

Chair Wright gave an update on the July 31st GMAC meeting, which is focused on equity in grid planning, and the July 17th public stakeholder session.

Julia Fox, DOER: If you are not on the attendance list for the event, please let me know as the event is technically full.

5. EDC Presentation on ESMP Metrics and Reporting

Marc Lucas (National Grid) gave a presentation on how the electric distribution companies (EDCs) intend to incorporate equity into ESMP biannual reporting. The EDCs are focused on procedural equity and stakeholder engagement. They plan to report the number of stakeholder requests made and will follow up with a more detailed narrative description. They have guidelines for stakeholder outreach to ensure procedural equity, aspects of which were integrated into the CESAG framework. Marc noted that there will be ramping up (*e.g.*, staff training) now that there's a Department of Public Utilities (Department or DPU) Order and draft Community Engagement Stakeholder Advisory Group (CESAG) framework.

Erin Engstrom, Eversource: We plan to present the final CESAG framework at the July GMAC meeting. They incorporated the feedback from the EWG into the CESAG framework.

Chair Kathryn Wright: To confirm, with regards to the DPU Order, my understanding is that the metrics and reporting piece has been extended?

Erin Engstrom: It's with the Department now. The cost recovery Order came out in June.

Chair Kathryn Wright: With regards to bullet about making sure stakeholders impacted by ESMP infrastructure projects have the necessary information to participate – how are you measuring that? Is it going to be in a narrative?

Marc Lucas: It's more of an internal question we're asking ourselves. Will not be a narrative reporting.

Mary Wambui, Planning Office for Urban Affairs: Objectivity has to be defined from the CESAG. Will not be defined if it is just internal. Need to pull away from an internal objectivity to external.

Erin Engstrom: Every community is going to be different as to what they need for information. Step one is to make sure our teams are thinking about it internally.

Alec O'Meara, Unitil: Unitil representative on CESAG. Continuous feedback improvement loop. As it comes in, you assess, build upon, share.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Appreciates feedback loop. Goal with reporting is making sure there's enough information in the public sphere to make sure people know this feedback is occurring.

Jolette Westbrook, Environmental Defense Fund: Will the framework address how the community will know their feedback is being heard? Will there be some public facing tool? How will people know what is going on with their comments?

Marc Lucas: There will be some publicly easily accessible mechanisms so people can see how their feedback was incorporated. It won't be a guessing game.

Jolette Westbrook: Assuming will include the reasons why, if it's not incorporated, why it isn't, so people can know what's happening in their community

At 10:33 a.m. Larry Chretien joined.

Julia Fox: Wants to understand the process for evaluating the community engagement framework. What are the plans for evaluating it and making any necessary updates?

Marc Lucas: Will talk about the lessons learned, if there are things we need to apply moving forward.

Alec O Meara: One of the concepts regarding stakeholder engagement is that any plan is essentially a living document. The CESAG framework as a strong foundation, will use it to understand what will work best for each EDC.

Meredith Boericke, Eversource: The work the EWG did at the beginning of the year was taken very seriously by the CESAG. Looking forward to sharing more at the end of the month (at the GMAC meeting). For biannual report, have committed to include a narrative of CESAG process.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Emphasized distributional equity in comments, and whether EDCs could include locational data about where benefits are going. Where did utilities land in terms of including more quantitative locational data not related to stakeholder engagement but more related to ESMP investments?

Erin Engstrom: Metrics EDCs proposed are in front of the Department. EDCs did not change the metrics since EDCs last spoke to EWG. Some of the aspects Kathryn mentioned are things EDCs could look at including in the narrative aspects of biannual report.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Had comments about parts of the ESMPs that aren't yet active, such as reporting on the Grid Services Compensation Fund which the DPU now approved. How are EDCs thinking about metrics and disclosure?

Erin Engstrom: Plan to address what we are doing in terms of the grid services compensation fund in the narrative part of the report.

Chair Kathryn Wright: We raised this in March because the original metrics were silent on the fund, and it's a priority for a lot of folks on the line.

Julia Fox: Wanted to flag there was some back and forth in the proceeding on geographical data and that the EDCs committed to providing updates on grid compensation fund in the narrative part of the report.

6. CY2026 Strategic Planning

Chair Kathryn Wright: Wants to check in with the group about where we go from here. Especially since EWG charter was very focused on providing recommendations to ESMPs and on metrics. To date, EWG has done a lot, but these processes are ending soon. There is a gap between Phase II ESMP process and next ESMP phase. Want to talk about how to spend time in 2026.

Chair Wright showed a figure of ongoing Massachusetts processes. White boxes are things the EWG has been involved in, blue shows things the EWG has not been formally involved in.

Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance: Thinking of equity, two realms, economic circumstances and EJ communities (geographical). Wants to see where investments are being made and if there's equity with respect to that. In 2026, wants to see information about investments authorized by DPU and impact on rates. Looking for a bill impacts discussion. With respect to EJ communities, its mapping. What investments have been made and how are they benefiting EJ communities? Are there pain points? But not every project – there will be a bajillion. Major projects.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Agree on the bill impact piece. The Integrated Energy Planning Stakeholder Working Group has been talking about bill impacts.

Mary Wambui: How solar and battery resources being managed is becoming an equity issue.

Erin Engstrom: Larry, to your point, a DOE Energy Fellow working for the DPU created a heatmap of all the grid modernization docket investments and cross-referenced that with EJ communities. Is that something you would be looking for a similar analysis? Erin will send analysis to Julia to share with the group.

Mary Wambui: That is helpful but does not fully get to what Larry was saying. One problem we have is energy affordability, and what the impacts of these investments are.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Agree, one of the conversations we had was that the ESMP bill impacts are just tied to the ESMP investments.

Erin Engstrom: To be clear, the mapping exercise was just answering one portion of what Larry asked. Agrees bill impacts are another analysis. Thinks this is still reactive, and part of what Mary would be asking for is a bill impacts of what investments we will make in advance. One of the things we could take back is how do we look at this from a proactive perspective. Paint some awareness of what the potential bill impacts will be.

Kyle Murray, Acadia Center: Appreciates that suggestion. Right now, we're completely in the dark. Is it going to be \$2? Or \$200? Understands it would be hypothetical. With recent ESMP Order, have some sense of costs that would be approved. Other costs DPU said take these up with the next rate case.

Larry Chretien: To respond to Erin and Mary's points – this is why I want to separate bill impacts from geographical impacts. Two kinds of analysis. Let's get granular. What will ESMPs

cost for the average consumer. Wants to know about the full picture (*e.g.*, incl. supply) but at a minimum, want to understand ESMPs.

Jolette Westbrook: Wants to support comments that have been made regarding some sort of insight and transparency regarding the costs, so that people will know what ESMP has been costing.

Julia Fox: To share our perspective about going into 2026; important to recognize the ESMPs are very large, but need to be realistic about what we can accomplish in 2026. With GMAC, we're trying to identify 2-2 objectives, and think about some activities that goes with those objectives. Then create a work plan for those activities. Thinks we should think about what those activities are. Should lean on consultant support – what analysis can they help us with? If we can't get to certain things in this year, how can we slate it in in future years before we get the next ESMPs?

Chair Kathryn Wright: When is GMAC strategic plan process supposed to conclude?

Julia Fox: At September GMAC meeting, will be discussing a draft plan, in October will be approving it. Next EWG meeting scheduled is in October. Should discuss whether it makes sense to meet before them. By October, should have a good idea of what we want to accomplish in the next year.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Makes sense but also wants to have enough information from the GMAC so they're not flying blind on what they're planning.

Julia Fox: At the July GMAC meeting, could hear from the full council about what they're hoping to see from EWG in 2026.

Mary Wambui: Goals are influenced by what's going on in the last 3 year [EE] plan, and implementation of plan. In 2022-2024 were guided by what goals were going to be. In 2025-2027, were guided by some equity items that we did not succeed in getting before the DPU in the 2022-2024 term. Equity is progressive, needs to be grounded on formal processes that we have.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Good framing. May want to revisit the things we said before. Did not have enough conversations around bill impacts. Also weren't able to advance distributional equity analysis. There's some loose ends we could pick up. Can go back and look back at previous comments and see where there hasn't been a lot of resolution.

Chair Wright Talked about operations of the EWG – meeting cadence, two-year term of members and EWG member composition. Asked are there better ways to coordinate with other working groups or engage the public.

Kyle Murray: Agrees quarterly meeting cadence has been good.

Kathryn Wright: If we end up pursuing research projects, expects they would need to schedule some *ad hoc* meetings.

Julia Fox: If anyone was thinking about stepping down, should start to think about that, so we can begin recruitment. Feel free to send an email if you have thoughts about your own membership.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Will circle back with Clean Water Fund, who was on group previously but had to step down due to a staffing change. Knows they had expressed interest.

Question to folks who are on other working groups – is there a better way for us to stay coordinated?

Kyle Murray: Was thinking about inviting presentations from related work groups. Might be something more for GMAC proper.

Mary Wambui: Would like to support what Kyle said. Need to know what is the objective of the working group and the objective of the GMAC. Good to hear from people who are working on things that affect our work.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Thinks if we're doing work around distributional equity or rates, could make sense for us to hold some sort of listening session or dialog that's topic-specific.

Julia Fox: Could think about doing more educational campaigns.

Jolette Westbrook: Thinks education is vitally important. With all the initiatives going on in the Commonwealth, there's a lot of confusion about whose doing what and what we'll accomplish. Need to break issues down into smaller pieces, and explain how they fit together.

Larry Chretien: Ties back to metrics. We should go to the public and offer opportunities to engage with them, but once we have more data. Abstract nature is not going to excite people. If there was a report, heat map, etc. we could give a presentation and then take comments.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Would be helpful if folks more involved in the rates side could provide ideas about timing, would be helpful.

Mary Wambui: Agrees with Larry and Jolette. Also thinks there's an element of communication with EJ communities. Something on the EEAC side they've done is gather names from people in EJ organizations that we can learn from. Also identify topics, then look for people out there with expertise who can help us.

7. Closing/Adjourn

Chair Wright gave an update of upcoming GMAC and EWG events and meetings. She also reminded members of their original EWG Q4 goals. Thinks EWG will want to focus more on biannual reports and CESAG framework.

The meeting adjourned at 11:29 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Schultz

Synapse Energy Economics

Meeting materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides