Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)

Equity Working Group

MEETING MINUTES

Friday October 10, 2025

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members Present:	Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation (chair); Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance; Julia Fox, Department of Energy Resources; Chris Modlish, Attorney General's Office; Kyle Murray, Acadia Center; Mary Wambui, Planning Office for Urban Affairs; Jolette Westbrook, Environmental Defense Fund
Non-Voting Members:	Marc Lucas, National Grid
Members Absent:	--
DOER Staff Present:	Marian Harkavy
Consultants Present:	Tim Woolf, Sophie Schadler, 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 asked if there were any edits to the July 11, 2025, EWG meeting minutes. None were offered. Chair Wright approved the July 11, 2025, meeting minutes.

4. **Updates**

a. **New EDC Representative on EWG**

Chair Kathryn Wright: The idea was raised to make the EDC chair in the EWG rotational, EDCs took us up on that offer. Marc Lucas from National Grid is joining us today. Marc presented on CESAG at the last GMAC meeting.

b. **MassCEC Grid Services Study**

Chair Kathryn Wright: Sarah Cullinan discussed the engagement plan for MassCEC Grid Services Study. It incorporates feedback from the EWG around an environmental justice focus, the distribution of DERS across MA, and compensation for DERs.

c. **GMAC Stakeholder Session**

Chair Kathryn Wright: The second GMAC stakeholder session is on Friday December 12 at UMass Amherst. Very similar format to the session held in Boston – panels introducing ESMPs and hearing from local stakeholders about their electrification experience.

Julia Fox: There will be a workshop hosted by EEA about barriers to interconnection in the afternoon.

Chair Kathryn Wright: Is the interconnection workshop targeted at the same audience as the first part of the stakeholder session, or should we notify others?

Julia Fox: The afternoon session is focused on municipal leaders, officials, and other community members. It is less geared toward EDCs.

Mary Wambui: A comment about the audience. Municipal voices do not always represent the interest of the cities and towns that they represent. For example, in Lowell, the community's interests and priorities differ from municipal interests and priorities.

Chair Kathryn Wright: (to Mary) Excellent point. At the last Boston session we had a mix of municipal and community voices. It is nice having a mixed group. It would be nice if Julia could share more information about the interconnection workshop in case people have more questions.

Julia Fox: Yes, we had good mix of stakeholders at the Boston meeting. The event registration will be on Eventbrite (details TBA). We are open to suggestions about other ways to advertise it.

d. **GMAC Activity Tracker**

Chair Kathryn Wright: The GMAC Activity Tracker is posted on the GMAC webpage alongside the monthly meeting materials.

5. **September Biannual Reports**

a. **ESMP Biannual Reports Memorandum Overview**

Chair Wright presented on the DPU's September 9 Memorandum and the updated reporting requirements for EDCs' biannual reports.

b. Summary of EWG Comments compared with the DPU's Final Memo

Chair Wright discussed the extent to which the DPU's final memo incorporated EWG's March comments.

c. September Biannual Reports

Tim Woolf (Synapse): summarized the contents of the September Biannual Reports, noting that updates to metrics will be included in the March report.

Larry Chretien: Regarding reprioritization – what was Eversource's process for replacing the battery project with volt-var? Did it go to the DPU to approve the switch-out, or did Eversource just go ahead with it?

Tim Woolf: I am not sure, but we can look into it.

Larry Chretien: It would be interesting to know. Also, where did they get approval for the spending in the first place? Phase II of the ESMPs?

Tim Woolf: Yes. Good question, we can present about that in the GMAC meeting. Not all costs in the EDC's investment proposals were approved in the DPU cost recovery Order. The biannual reports do not include the investments that were not approved.

Larry Chretien: Is cost recovery what we call Phase II dockets?

Tim Woolf: Yes.

Julia Fox: I made note of Larry's question. We will have time at the October 30 GMAC meeting to discuss biannual reports in more detail. Folks can send additional questions for the EDCs to cover in their presentations on the biannual reports.

Tim Woolf: Any other questions?

Chair Wright: Question about forecasting – what are the storage and DER updates centered around, the LTSSP process?

Tim Woolf: Noting that EDCs also updated their forecasting methods around EVs, heat pumps, and other things. These methodological changes apply to base load forecasting. They do not say a lot about the process for making these changes, but I can look for more information for GMAC meeting.

Chair Wright: That's fine, or we can get more information from EDCs. I am wondering about the stakeholder processes behind these updates.

6. 2026 GMAC Workplan

Julia Fox presented about the workplan development process for 2026, noting involvement and feedback from members throughout the process to identify goals and objectives for GMAC. Final version of the workplan will be approved at the October 30 GMAC meeting, and DPU budget request will be submitted on November 7.

Julia discussed the four objectives of the 2026 GMAC workplan.

7. EWG 2026 Workplan Proposal

Julia Fox presented on the 2026 EWG workplan including a rough outline of the general topics for each meeting.

8. Questions for EWG Members

Julia Fox: The floor is open to hear initial thoughts about this plan.

Larry Chretien: I fully support the plan. Acknowledging that the EWG and GMAC are focused on ESMPs, my concern is that we will get siloed from non-ESMP investments. Let's have quarterly updates on what investments are going on outside of ESMPs (from rate cases, reconciliation dockets, etc.) that will impact customers' bills. I also think it would be great to hear updates about the Rates Task Force and the IRWG.

Chair Wright: Thanks for the suggestions. Things I am curious about under Objective 1, if we just narrow to ESMP investments, bill impacts will be artificially low. Curious as to what DOER is thinking about non-ESMP investments, are there categories they are thinking of including? Has DOER done any thinking about this? It is also a challenge that EDCs are not even thinking about ESMP investments in the same way.

Marian Harkavy: We are struggling with this too. ESMP investments are quite small – it is overly restrictive to just look at these. I agree with Larry, we will have to take in the full picture of rates. We could bring in knowledge from Austin Dawson and other staff on the DOER team from the Rates Task Force. We would have to include grid mod investments more broadly, though this would be a scoping challenge for us. We need to have the full picture in mind, but somehow orient EWG and GMAC toward a more narrow focus on grid mod investments.

Mary Wambui: This might be outside of the scope but I am not sure where else to ask this. I have heard a lot of discussion outside of EWG about load growth as an opportunity, but I do not see where load growth is being viewed as an opportunity here. Load growth has benefits. I have seen in different places in the state where load growth is considered a benefit to the grid and for affordability. I can see benefits from load growth reducing costs, but have not heard about this in the context of GMAC.

Julia Fox: Great point. We automatically jump to the challenges of load growth to grid mod, but you are right there are major benefits too. Maybe in the biannual reports we can see the benefits of these investments.

Marian Harkavy: (to Mary) Just to make sure I am following, are you saying that load growth spreads costs over more kWh?

Mary Wambui: In a meeting with Google talking about increasing its load, they discuss the opportunities for how Google can reduce costs as it increases its load for the entire grid.

Marian Harkavy: That makes sense. I think that should be part of the second half of the EWG workplan where we discuss opportunities/strategies for addressing affordability. Rates Task Force has had some discussion about affordability opportunities for load growth.

Tim Woolf: I think they are saying you can reduce rates by spreading costs over more sales. Though when you need to build more infrastructure to support additional load it goes the other way (rates increase). I think we should be thinking about this in the bill impact analysis – what factors push rates up and pull them down. Also, I think we should focus on the distribution portion of the bills. We should start with a holistic view of bill components, but GMAC can most affect distribution rates.

Chair Wright: We can also talk about interconnection costs. Other states, like Virginia, have a high tax on data centers – turning this into an opportunity to generate revenue. Could we discuss alternative financing mechanisms as part of EWG? Not sure. At some point we would want to report on what we've found. We could pencil this in for the middle of the year.

Julia Fox: Right now we have quarterly meetings scheduled, and I do not want to overschedule, but open to discussion about opening up a meeting invite for the public, possibly a joint EWG and GMAC meeting to invite the pubic to?

Mary Wambui: I want to push back on Tim. There are benefits to communities of the risk mitigations of large loads. We have been told that GMAC is the place where ESMPs are discussed. Not sure where else would be appropriate to discuss the positive benefits of load growth. Maybe DOER can point me in the right direction.

Larry Chretien: To comment on 2026 priorities – I want data centers to be named in 2026 plans, not called step loads or large loads. We need to be more educated and conversant on benefits and drawbacks of data centers, particularly with regards to equity impacts and environmental impacts.

Julia Fox: We will still review biannual reports in March pertaining to the objectives we had identified, and stay in the loop about grid services, CBA, other guidance. We will keep these things on our radar, but the main objective for the EWG will be cost and bill impacts. Any other thoughts?

Kyle Murray: No new thoughts, I agree with a lot of what has been said on data centers.

Chris Modlish: I provided some comments in GMAC and in written feedback. I agree that the emphasis of the bill impact analysis needs to be on non-ESMP investments. We already have a bill impact analysis of EMSP investments. And some good discovery questions were already asked in Phase I and Phase II about the other types of investments to consider. We want to make sure customers are not subsidizing data centers – there are concerns about ratepayer funded infrastructure being used for data centers.

Kyle Murray: Echoing Chris, my biggest concern is that the state passed a law to incentivize data centers. My concern is that data centers are coming in at the expense of rate payers. Although that's more of a state-level policy/legislative concern that needs to be addressed.

Julia Fox: I am aspiring to send this final workplan out to GMAC next week. I want to make sure that the workplan is reflective of what we want and can accomplish. Kathryn, any other points on these questions before moving on?

Chair Wright: I like the proposed division of labor: bringing in other GMAC members on matters related to cost-effectiveness and investments. It would be helpful to have broader perspectives on these complex issues. So I support the suggested division of labor.

Marian Harkavy: GMAC has lots of interest in bill impacts. We have heard some suggestions that we could schedule an extra meeting or subcommittee if members desire this.

Julia Fox: This could also be an opportunity to have external parties join.

Julia Fox: Thanks all for the feedback and thoughts, we will get this out soon.

Mary Wambui: Noting a typo on one of the slides "financing the transition," and "peak working group"

Mary Wambui: I do not attend GMAC, but something that is coming up in many other meetings is the link between GSEP and ESMP. How do we know, geographically, the nodes where gas replacement and repairs are happening, and how to take advantage of this to reduce grid costs?

Chair Wright: It has not been a part of GMAC yet. EDCs are working on this in IEP. The December 4 GMAC meeting on IEP explicitly talks about gas planning. Folks raise comments about how IEP will continue after the working group.

Julia Fox: In the spring we had a part 1 of IEP where we invited EDCs and working group members to talk about it. IEP is a potential subcommittee/working group for 2026. We will raise questions for the GMAC about how to carry stakeholder work on that forward.

Marian Harkavy: Agreed, this is a huge need. It would be good to have those maps publicly available. My understanding from Jenny Goldberg of DOER who attends the IEP working group is that the working group will continue to meet after the date that was originally set for it to end. Hoping to get more updates in the December 4 meeting.

Mary Wambui: We just want the maps for affordable housing to know if we should be electrifying and who will be paying.

9. Closing/Adjourn

Chair Wright: Julia will circulate version 3 of the EWG workplan, please get back with any comments by October 30. The budget has to go to the DPU shortly after. The final GMAC meeting will be on integrated energy planning. December 12 is the public event in western Mass. The next ExCom meeting is December 18 discussing 2026. Look out for scheduling meeting invites for 2026.

The meeting adjourned at **11:16 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sophie Schadler

Synapse Energy Economics

Meeting materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides