

## Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)

### MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 14, 2023, 1–4 p.m.

Hybrid meeting

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**Councilors Present:** Kelly Caiazzo, Sarah Bresolin Silver, Larry Chretien (virtual), Sarah Cullinan, Mary Knittle (virtual; designee for Marybeth Campbell), Jeremy Koo (virtual; designee for Julie Curti), Amy McGuire (virtual), Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Kyle Murray, JS Rancourt (virtual), Jonathan Stout, Andy Sun (virtual), Dirk Lauinger (virtual; designee for Andy Sun 1:30 – 4:00 PM), Kate Tohme, Kathryn Wright (virtual)

**Councilors Absent:** Alex Worsley

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

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

**Consultants Present:** Paul Alvarez, Jennifer Haugh, Dennis Stephens, Tim Woolf

**Other Attendees:** Erin Engstrom (Eversource)

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#### 1. Call to Order

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

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

**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. Meeting Minutes Review and Voting**

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony asked if there were any suggested changes to the November 9, 2023, and November 16, 2023, GMAC meeting minutes. Councilor Kelly Caiazzo requested a punctuation change on page 8 of the minutes for November 16 (“If the appendix needs to be framed...”). Councilor Kyle Murray moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 9 and 16, 2023. Councilor Kate Tohme seconded the motion. The motion carried with Mary Knittle abstaining.

Commissioner Mahony asked if there were any suggested changes to the November 17, 2023, Executive Committee meeting minutes. None were suggested. Councilor Kyle Murray moved to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes of November 17, 2023; Councilor Kelly Caiazzo seconded. The motion carried with Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver abstaining.

### **4. Equity Working Group (EWG) Charter Extension**

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony began to share the contents of slide 4. Councilor Kyle Murray suggested the discussion be tabled until the EWG Chair Kathryn Wright arrived at the meeting. Commissioner Mahony concurred.

### **5. Review of EDC Technical Sessions**

Erin Engstrom of Eversource presented on slides 5–9 regarding the joint utility group’s technical workshops. She also shared information about the additional technical workshop as part of the Technical Standards Review Group. Feedback will be worked into the final Electric-Sector Modernization Plan (ESMP) to be filed in late January.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Department of Energy Resources (DOER):** You said a couple times that you’ll be incorporating feedback; are you producing a report or review with the GMAC?

**Erin Engstrom:** Yes; we will submit that as an appendix and also on the website.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Done end of January?

**Erin Engstrom:** No, in the next couple of weeks. We’re also providing that to [the facilitators] Jan Besser and Jonathan Raab.

**Councilor Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, representing the environmental advocacy community:** Did you receive feedback different than what we offered?

**Erin Engstrom:** Yes. One of the things that stuck out is that the plans are very technical, and a lot of stakeholders are definitely energy-savvy and asked great questions. There are a lot of questions around generation; we have these grand plans, and the questions are about where we get the power from. On the stakeholder engagement piece, I think it was great to do mixed breakout groups within each sector to bring their own priorities to the table, such as from folks

from labor and workforce training. We tried to get a little deeper about pain points and community stakeholders that we should incorporate into our thinking. One person dug into the pain points of a substation—just that it's there, and are there aesthetic concerns, or is there more to it? There is no straight answer. The EDCs are making sure they are taking into account historic inequities and having an understanding of what communities are burdened with and how to explain overall need and necessity of in that area. We had similar feedback overall, but it was nice to hear from a different group of individuals.

**Councilor Kate Tohme, New Leaf Energy, representing the distributed generation renewable energy industry:** Since this is a unique situation, are you considering utilizing presentations or technical sessions for the department?

**Erin Engstrom:** I would have to check with my counterparts from the other EDCs, but I think that would make a lot of sense.

Engstrom proposed restructuring of Section 3, agreed upon across EDCs, that would change the flow of that portion of the ESMPs. One of the main challenges was taking Equity Working Group recommendations and incorporating those into the current structure; the proposed changes attempt to address this.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Just to clarify, key takeaways from stakeholder engagement.

**Erin Engstrom:** Yes, sections 3.3 and 3.4—incorporating what we would do with those takeaways.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Can you give us a little concept of how you're treating customers and community partners, community engagement, and transparency?

**Erin Engstrom:** The latter is how we do outreach differently with communities and municipalities. Community engagement warranted its own section.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** Would you see ongoing and new proposed stakeholder working groups going under 3.5?

**Erin Engstrom:** New proposed stakeholder working groups would go into 3.5; ongoing stakeholder engagement would go into 3.3 or 3.4.

**Tim Woolf, Synapse:** Are there any other sections you're proposing to restructure?

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee, representing Eversource:** Not at this point.

**Erin Engstrom:** Not for this plan. We haven't had enough time. We're working to incorporate all of the recommendations.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** This is a special case.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Does anyone object to this happening for this plan?

No one offered any objections.

## **6. Equity Working Group charter Extension**

**Commissioner Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation, representing environmental justice community:** The main purpose behind the proposed changes is to give the group a chance to comment on materials presented to the Department of Public Utilities. This would give this group more flexibility.

Councilor Kyle Murray moved, and Councilor Jeremy Koo moved to amend the Equity Working Group charter as presented to the council. The motion carried with Dirk Lauinger abstaining.

## **7. Review of 2023 GMAC Process**

Jennifer Haugh, GreenerU, presented slides 16–25.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** (re: joint CETWG meeting) We held that meeting because the legislature directed it. It did yield some results in that one of the sections of that working group is including in its final report right now is they're going to have a section on distribution planning. That is a transmission working group, so distribution is not really their focus, and thus what they're including is from our discussion and what we did here.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, representing the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center:** I have a question about last point—have their findings ever been available?

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I know one of the things we struggled with was not having enough info about costs, whereas the CETWG is working on transmission costs separately. So, I don't know. When I read that, that's what I take away from it. We struggled with not enough information.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** The way it's stated is that it maybe became available after, but it's not something we ever reviewed as a GMAC.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** We never did get it, and I believe there's a statement from Digaunto Chatterjee that the data associated with the investments in the ESMPs is probably at least a year out, so it also felt like the conversation we were having with this group was pretty high-level and theoretical because we weren't working with the data that we needed.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** The two processes were siloed, in retrospect. We focused here in GMAC on building a ground-up model of the CECs' implication on building plans, platforms, and costs. The CETWG came at it from a different angle with offshore wind, theoretical transmission, policy statements. If it was truly intertwined, which we hopefully can get to, we could look the future of electrification and solar: now let's solve for the transmission

design needed to integrate all of this. That portion would take a year or longer. The legislation contemplated it to be in sync I think but the underlying processes are you can't do this. Maybe we can do this in the next go-around.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** In the next go-around there probably won't be a CETWG, but there is always ISO-NE.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** Maybe this could be a working group of GMAC?

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Maybe!

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** (re: Equity Working Group / "The public, not the EDCs, should be driving discussion on equity.") This is not a critique of the working group, but this is what should be happening, and should be bringing it to the EDCs.

**Councilor Larry Chretien, Green Energy Consumers Alliance, representing low- and middle-income consumers:** That might have been my comment. My point was basically that we lean on the EDCs to provide us with technical information and status of what's going on in their geography, how their substations are doing, lines, DERs, and that's what they would know. Equity is a policy principle or goal; it's an ethic that I think the stakeholders, and the public, ought to be driven by the Healey Administration and stakeholders here. I'm a critic of the EDCs all the time but I don't think it's their job for us to ask them an open-ended question about how you can make this whole thing more equitable. How do you define equity? We should tell them what we want and why we want it and ask them how they can produce in that area.

**Councilor Jonathan Stout, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, representing large commercial and industrial end-use customers:** (re: "scale of agreement") Regarding the second delta, in filling this out in an effort to not be duplicative, it felt like this wasn't as pulled into conversations as frequently as what was into the observation document.

**Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver:** I'm curious if the scale of agreement exercise was helpful to them?

**Councilor Carol Sedewitz, National Grid:** I think it was helpful, and it helped us focus on which responses and how we were going to respond faster. But any recommendation that came out, even if it didn't have agreement across GMAC, are ones we are going to be responding to no matter what. But it was helpful to understand how aligned the GMAC was.

**Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver, ENGIE North America, representing the energy storage industry:** That's good to know—I didn't find it useful because I thought I had a pretty good sense where people's pain points were, so if it's useful for utilities, then that's great. Otherwise, I didn't find it useful.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** Just to respond to that, the one reason why it's really helpful is behind Carol and I are dozens of Eversource and National Grid staff who are actively working who weren't in the room, so it's helpful for them to understand what happened. The quantity and

time associated with it from the EDCs is we're humans who are real people working on this. I think as much as we're talking about the GMAC members here on how much work we all have done, there needs to be some recognition of the amount of effort that has gone in from the EDCs, staff, and effort around the clock. The compressed time has taken a toll on people so I think we should recognize that as well that it's a lot of work in a short amount of time. A lot has been asked of the EDCs and I think we have delivered. Amount of effort our teams have put in is significant.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** Thank you Digaunto Chatterjee and all for your hard work. Everyone in this room recognizes it. Back to the scale of agreement, I was not perfectly clear on what this was utilized for—just for EDCs to see how GMAC members were aligning or if DOER was also using it to break down recommendations that consultants were using. I'm interested in learning more about that and how that process could be improved of the recommendation and process, as it was least pleasant for me as a council member. I worry that because of the volume of recommendations for this and the Word document that the attention necessary to make it valuable wasn't possible because of bandwidth of the council members. One reason was council members offered questions, observations, recommendations, so possibly we could have only used the scale of agreement on those and could have cut down on time. Maybe it's valuable to just say if you disagree vs. agree strongly. I found myself agreeing with most everything, and it probably would have been more valuable to see if we didn't agree with.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I think the DOER used the scale of agreement to get through the process in a more digestible fashion.

**Aurora Edington, DOER staff:** I think it was invaluable in helping us put together the final sheet at the last meeting. In a week and a half we went from 74 to 88 recommendations and were worried about abiding by open meeting law and transparency, not having enough time to go through each thing. Highlighting areas of disagreement directly informed our thinking. If members weren't totally green on something, we reached out to specific individuals where there were indications where they wouldn't support as currently written, or if something was duplicative of something else—it was a 48-hour exercise between that deadline and Thursday meeting, so it was useful for us.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** I wouldn't want to get rid of that usefulness. I'd cut out questions vs. observations and recommendations.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** I also found that the most difficult, due to time. Many recommendations that I didn't necessarily at first glance fully get what was being proposed and would have liked to research it more, but based on time, to agree or disagree—that sounds about right. So in the future, it would be good to just have some additional time to look into some things would have solved a lot of the pain with that section.

**Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver:** It's clear that we should keep it, since so many people found value. I just wanted to make sure there was value.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** That's why we wanted to do the survey, because next time is in four years, and we won't remember all of this.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** (re: additional questions for discussion) On the more time thing, we were obviously on a tight timeline. The statute doesn't designate us to start at a certain time, so next time we can start earlier. Just checking we don't need any statutory changes next time.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** The 80 days might stick, so we might want to think about that. We only started this body on March 31, so we harmed ourselves a little bit, and there was a change in administration. We will have less of that next time around.

## **8. 2024 Department of Public Utilities (DPU) Docket Process**

Commissioner Mahony presented slides 26–28.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** (re: looking ahead to the ESMP dockets) I think the language in the memo was Members of the GMAC or entities that had their interests represented on the GMAC. For those listening in, I'm not sure how the DPU interprets that, but if you think your interests were represented by a GMAC member, you'll fall into the general track.

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** (re: 2024 GMAC consultant role) Thank you—this is a very appropriate balance to strike. This will be valuable to any of us on GMAC and the general public looking for good information and whether they will want to participate further in the process. This is a good use of time and resources.

**Councilor Jeremy Koo, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, representing municipal or regional interests:** I would agree with Councilor Chretien and agree that this is a great list of further support from the consultants. I will say as folks are trying to engage municipalities around the Commonwealth and keep them apprised of the process, we relied heavily on the information to digest and translate that information for stakeholders, so further support in the same vein and additional third-party analysis would be invaluable for engagement efforts.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** I have a clarifying question—reviewing cost benefit and ratepayer impacts analysis, would they do an entirely independent separate version of these? I haven't seen these yet from the EDCs; something to be filed with the plans is not available to us, so there's going to be a version of that. Is the proposal for the consultants to do that independently or take those analyses and digest them and present what the EDCs have done?

**Commissioner Mahony:** The process always envisioned that the consultants would come back to us in February to give a review of what was filed, including cost-benefits analysis and RIA. We're suggesting another layer and asking consultants to offer a CBA as a third-party non-biased opinion to the GMAC.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** Would this include a ratepayer analysis?

**Tim Woolf:** It might be fairly straightforward to do; it depends on what was filed. It might be a critique.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** This would be based on what's going to be on the record, not interrogatories and additional information.

**Councilor Carol Sedewitz:** Just wanting to clarify if they're doing that work and it's just presented to GMAC but not be used by any of the GMAC entities? Because they wouldn't be able to because you're in an open docket for that work to be funded; some are intervenors.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** It would have to be entered into evidence.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** The *ex-parte* DPU staff in the room and all the other parties are not present, but if GMAC members are intervenors, but don't see why *ex-parte* would exist.

**Councilor Carol Sedewitz:** I'm referring to funding for that work.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** The funding comes from what is approved by the department for consultants to do work on behalf of GMAC, rather than in an intervenor capacity.

**Councilor Carol Sedewitz:** So, intervenors couldn't use that information?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** But it will be posted and public, so it could be used.

**Tim Woolf:** We could address this; my reading was consultants' analysis couldn't be used by specific council members, but it could be as council as a whole. Kind of gray.

**Carol Sedewitz:** Good point; I will have to check.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** I wonder if we have already considered or want to the concept of asking the DPU if GMAC as a body could participate. Not sure we can write a brief or sponsor a witness or ask questions at an evidentiary hearing, but as a group, we could put together information requests to be offered in discovery. We would have to ask the DPU.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Practically speaking, how would that work? DOER will participate as an intervenor, so we'll have to manage our own. How would GMAC be managed?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** With assistance of the consultants and ask for special intervention and ask questions during discovery process. There are a lot of questions posed by GMAC in the recommendations, hopefully answered by initial filings and discovery of intervenors. Not sure we have the bandwidth, but I'm thinking it's time-consuming and expensive to intervene so many do not have an opportunity. I wonder if there is a place for GMAC as a body to participate in adjudicatory proceedings in a new and novel limited fashion.

**Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver:** My comment is not about the consultants' role, but about the DPU process. I wanted to add on that some people have said that so many members of GMAC



are intervening, and as Kate just said, it's really expensive and time consuming, so not sure there will be so many members intervening. I'm curious to know.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** Back to a cost-benefit analysis and whether or not it can be used by intervenors, the consultants have prepared stuff along the way for the GMAC, and I'm going to intervene. There are things I'm likely going to use during the process. So, I guess, is the question on the timing and the docket has now started and so we're trying to cut it off? That's the concern I have. I do acknowledge it's a bit of a gray area. Is it possible we could seek out in advance an opinion from the DPU on whether or not that's allowed?

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Now we're getting into the legal arguments. I think consultants were hired to provide support to the GMAC.

**Councilor Carol Sedewitz:** As you're thinking through this, if the GMAC is doing this, and the EDCs are non-voting members, how this works is a question that needs to be reviewed.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** More of a philosophical observation here: the Climate Law was written to bring all sectors of broad-bearing interests together to work together and advise the utilities on their net benefits, ratepayer impacts, plans, etc. Given the timing, the latter weren't done for adequate time, and GMAC doesn't really know which recommendations at this point will or won't flow into the ESMP. But if we could set that aside for a second, the idea of GMAC was to advise the EDCs on their plans, so when the GMAC advises on the ESMPs, there's an implicit sense that the GMAC has advised the ESMP. So, if the GMAC is now whatever we do as a body, not as individual intervenors, it sets this gray into a dark/clear area, I don't think fundamentally that was the role that we're all going to actively work against each other in an adjudicatory proceeding as the GMAC body—the purpose was to have more consensus built in leading up to the submission. But if we're all going to hire independent entities submitting independent analyses, I think that can be done outside of GMAC. But GMAC's role was bigger than that.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Two points. One, GMAC's role does not end when we submit our recommendations, and certainly we'll have reactions in these meetings and outside based on what's filed on January 29. But I've been reminded that coming back to Kate's question on how consultants help GMAC if GMAC was given permission to ask for discovery, it's not in their contract to help support the GMAC in an ESMP adjudication. We can't rely on that, but we can continue to rely on them to do what we propose and what the DPU is allowed. But that one extra step about process is not allowable under the contract. But the ultimate question of whether GMAC should ask for discovery is not yet clear.

**Councilor Sarah Cullinan:** My point was being a limited intervenor, parallel to the EEAC, and just trying to figure out how we would fit in. It's not clear, but I think there might be a parallel there in being a helpful guide for the role of the GMAC.

**Councilor Amy McGuire, Highland Electric Fleets, representing the electric vehicle industry:** I wanted to raise a question or comment around Kyle pointing out that they're planning to intervene. It's certainly the case that not everyone will; there is a high likelihood that a subset of

GMAC members would come together in a collective and potentially intervene together. My question is, is that something that should be treated outside of this group entirely, or given the prior comments, should we address that as something likely to happen and therefore determine what that should or could look like as a group? And whether there are any rules for or against that about what information we can use, etc.?

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** What you're proposing is that members of the GMAC in their primary lives decide to come together and intervene, that's because you represent your business interests. As long as you're doing that, it's kosher.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** I'm not super comfortable with a body contemplating intervention; I'm not sure that's been done before, and I don't think there's precedent around that. It doesn't mean it can't be done. On first read I'm not comfortable using it to strategize around intervention of the docket, as this could actually lead to problems.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** You're reacting to if members came together to intervene as a GMAC group?

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** Yes, by using this to strategize; outside of this body, members talk to each other, but using this as a way to talk about intervention doesn't seem proper. I also wanted to address Digaunto's point that you saw it as review and therefore we are beyond that point. That is not how the EEAC operates; they provide those recommendations and then there is a review of implementation as things go. That's how I view this role; we are going to continue to meet to see how the plan is implemented and provide recommendations along the way for mid-term modifications.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** I'm not disagreeing but was suggesting that process because it was so compressed that the review didn't have enough time before it was officially filed. In a utopian state, all GMAC recommendations have shaped the ESMPs to what has been. So, in utopian situation, I don't see GMAC actively trying to reshape it in front of the adjudicatory process because they were fully involved.

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** Do I hear that GMAC information cannot be brought as intervenors?

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** No. The DPU talks about the ongoing work of the consultants and trying to set some boundaries. But as has been pointed out, DPU's regulations do allow for parties to ask the DPU to take notice of publicly available documents. Obviously, we have a very robust website with a lot of those. So that's one point that's been raised.

**Councilor Larry Chretien:** I would think so. Perhaps I will ask our counsel to ask for some clarification on this. In the public's interest, whether it's a consultant or anybody else, if it's on a publicly available website, it ought to be fair game. Obviously, once you present it in the discovery process, it's up to the DPU to determine if it makes sense and is valid and productive in getting to ultimate objective. We'll try to clarify that, whether it's the consultant's work or otherwise.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I will just note that coming back to why we were suggesting this is something that was helpful is there's a lot of information out there, a lot of pages, and we were just thinking that an analysis would be helpful to the general public and to the GMAC. That's why we're suggesting it; having lived through a number of adjudications, any time you're bringing in outside information it's subject to cross-examination. It's a tricky balance. The main point is to just have that transparency and another layer of information out there.

**Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver:** I presume that the DPU will recognize how much work we did to put together the report, how much time went into it, and just wondering if there's anything we should be doing as a council to make sure the report is influential as a process.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** The statute requires utilities to address all of our recommendations and tell the DPU which ones they took up, rejected, and modified. So, it's a responsibility of the DPU to look for that, and of utilities to put that forward. That's not us standing on the rooftops and shouting listen to us, but it is part of the statute. This was the consultant plan. This was a good discussion; the only open question is how GMAC can ask through discovery.

**Councilor Kelly Caiazzo, Office of the Attorney General, representing the Office of the Attorney General:** I assume we would have to have had a meeting if we were to submit anything.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** We would have to file participant status by January 30 and then there is the question of who would actually file it—Kate, any ideas?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** If this is too complex, it's just an idea. It's also something we could contemplate for the next iteration of the ESMP. There are a lot of questions, and they weren't all required to be answered; DPU has limited staff and resources. It's going to be difficult for individuals and entities that have time to have a background understanding and knowledge to participate, so I'm trying to think of a way that the GMAC to be able to participate and act as a resource beyond recommendations that have already been provided. Maybe it's too difficult to do for this one.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I would say I don't know how to resolve it right now, but I think there we'll see who files for intervention and that's part of your daily business life. Phone a friend and make points to other colleagues who intervened.

**Councilor Carol Sedewitz:** (re: proposed GMAC meeting schedule) One reaction as far as scheduling for the EDCs, given it's an open docket, we might be in hybrid mode / remote as opposed to being here just to keep things fair and above board, recognizing that we'll listen in but might not be able to comment.

**Commissioner Kathryn Wright:** I just want to clarify that consultants' support will continue for the Equity Working Group. The EWG was interested in cost and ratepayer analysis in particular filed at DPU, so I'm just trying to ensure that we'll still have support in that process as well.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** Yes, the consultants will be available as they have been in the past for the EWG, and then we'll have to figure out what steps can happen with respect to the analysis they can pull together. But we'll continue to revisit that question to make sure we are consistent with DPU.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** For the mid-February meeting, is February 11 most likely? I'm just trying to figure out getting what's on the schedule.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** The challenge is giving enough time for consultants to review what's filed on the 29<sup>th</sup> and then a lot of people have February school vacation to consider. We said mid, but it might be late.

**Aurora Edington:** We could send out a survey to see about mid-February through first week of March, as well as with other dates.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** We would look at week of February 12 through 26, keeping in mind the February break. That's a good idea about the survey.

**Paul Alvarez, The Wired Group:** Just wondering, we might give some thought to have two meetings regarding the docket, because if we are able to ask some questions, might want to give time to collect responses and provide another update to the initial review. Just food for thought.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** I think we decided that that's not going to happen this go-around.

## **9. Future ESMP Process Recommendations**

Woolf presented slides 30–64 to summarize of similar grid mod processes in other states.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** Illinois rejected a grid modernization plan just now. I'm not sure if this informal thing works; maybe we're better positioned here. What's the rest of the country doing?

**Tim Woolf:** States are doing benefit-cost analyses; we reviewed 21 different states. We went over some of the themes, and to your point about Illinois, a lot of plans were rejected by Commissions. It's happening, but the challenges everyone faces with this are significant. We haven't seen a lot of clear advancement outside of those states. Maybe that's too general.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** If you look at highest rates of jurisdictions, it would be good to have the other 21 states where rates may be more affordable and also meaningfully impacting greenhouse gas emissions and how they are looking at BCAs.

**Tim Woolf:** Using states' prices as a guide for what's happening is dangerous because there's so much behind those costs that it's hard to draw a correlation.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** These are states with clean climate policies, not just in terms of developing clean energy. But also like us, they've hit the wall.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** Gas-electric planning is very nascent. Have you noticed any of those jurisdictions integrating?

**Tim Woolf:** You probably know, just recently, Illinois just put out a gas planning process and requirements and I don't know how much it's been integrated with grid modernization, but I can't imagine that it wasn't. It's typically those states with high, demanding climate change goals.

Councilor Kate Tohme presented on slides 70–76.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** On slide 73, second-to-last bullet, I suggest that we not have just one static point, but ongoing.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** There is a lack of understanding of the third bullet suggesting that DPU staff would actively work in the analysis process. And how would they act in the adjudicatory process?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** The DPU staff could participate in early-stage engagement without having any conflict. But that's a consideration for DPU staff. This is a procedural recommendation for them to consider.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** On the next bullet, would you consider adding gas-electric filing?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** Yes. That makes a lot of sense.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** In light of this, maybe we should contemplate integration with the Climate Compliance Plans that came from the 20-80 DPU Order. I think we would have seen different plans had the 20-80 order been out. So, something in there about how 20-80 and the ESMPs integrate.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** Based on the statutory requirement for the GMAC, the DPU should consider how the process should or shouldn't be expanded. It may not be a requirement, but it would be helpful to have procedural guidelines to tell us how they're expanded. From my perspective, the statute requires minimum engagement and doesn't prohibit additional engagement.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** (re: slide 74) The last bullet is the only one I struggle with, because it's necessary, but how do we factor in ISO-NE as well as the competitive nature of transmission? Is there something that goes with it such as, but not limited to, direct assignment of those prudent costs and encumbered tiers or do the plans stay confidential and the costs stay transparent?

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** I would recommend that what is actually included in that progress report be discussed or debated.

**Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony:** You're going to give this list in a Word doc and share with GMAC and allow for comments posted on GMAC website and continue this discussion at the February meeting.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** I would like to ask if people have initial opinion if people are in support or against submitting comments.

**Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee:** I actually like most of them; I might add gas-electric, coordination for rate making, and the 20-80 order specifically asks for input, so is this maybe an avenue to create that in that last bullet.

**Councilor Carol Sedewitz:** So long as these are really focused on procedures for the next ESMP, it's helpful. Thinking through that timeline, it's 18 months, but some of the things you put in here as having alignment and having the same formatting and the same assumptions—that might take more than 18 months. You have to give EDCs time to implement that, and if there's much more getting added to this, it was very rushed for all the EDCs to pull this together. We need to give EDCs time to they need to take on a herculean task to review. I'm not sure 18 months is sufficient.

**Councilor Kate Tohme:** That's helpful.

**Paul Alvarez:** From a strategic perspective, I just want to put some bugs in the GMAC's ear. I would completely agree that we may need more time. To add some color to that: is the GMAC reviewing and analyzing utility plans or is the GMAC participating more iteratively in the steps that Tim outlined in the process? Rather than waiting for it to get done and dive in, do we have a role along the way? As the council identified, forecasting is critical; do we want to have participation in that forecasting well before the utility completes that forecast? This is question of a participatory vs. after-the-fact process, and that should inform some of these a little more thoroughly.

**Councilor Kyle Murray:** I like the idea of submitting comments as a body. I do have to consider for myself, I will be representing Acadia Center as an intervenor. Can I vote for comments on the GMAC to submit comments there and do my own? There are questions we have to think through with these, but it's a worthwhile exercise.

**Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver:** I support the comment and appreciate the need to take rules into consideration. Something that is okay. We see this in several different contexts, and I think it would be a shame for someone on the council who is intervening with their day job being prevented from participating and submitting comments through the GMAC.

## **10. Adjourn**

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony adjourned the meeting at 3:54 p.m.

**Meeting materials:**

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides
- Draft minutes from November 9, 2023, GMAC meeting
- Draft minutes from November 16, 2023, GMAC meeting
- Draft minutes from November 17, 2023, GMAC executive committee meeting
- Equity Working Group charter amendments.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Jennifer Haugh*  
GreenerU