

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC) Executive Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, October 27, 2–4 p.m.
Virtual Zoom Meeting

Councilors Present: Sarah Bresolin Silver, Kelly Caiazzo, Sarah Cullinan, Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Kyle Murray

Non-Voting Councilors: Carol Sedewitz

Councilors Absent: —

DOER Staff Present: Aurora Edington, Julia Fox, Marian Harkavy, Sarah McDaniel

Consultants Present: Jennifer Haugh, Tim Woolf, Daniela Miranda

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Department of Energy Resources (DOER): Commissioner Mahony welcomed all participants to the Executive Committee (ExCom). The Commissioner took roll call.

3. Upcoming GMAC Meetings

Commissioner Mahony walked through slides 3 (future meetings) and 4 (a visual of upcoming meetings on the calendar).

4. What to expect in November

Commissioner Mahony explained slide 5: what to expect in November. The final deliverable, a Word document, will together what we've covered and GMAC recommendations. We've talked a little bit about the word "findings" vs. whatever else; probably "observations." Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony expressed that she wanted to give the ExCom a chance to discuss what would be helpful for the final document.

Discussion:

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo, Office of the Attorney General, representing the Office of the Attorney General: Regarding the process for putting the document together and giving GMAC an opportunity to submit redlines and edit in real time, will there be a vote on the document itself?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We'll talk about this a little more as we get into this, but we're thinking about inserting a process on November 9 that offers a bit of a ranking of relative priority to help with debate. That's one version of reflecting opinions in writing. On November 16, we had always assumed that we need to send the recommendations to the utilities as a document from the GMAC, so we will need a vote on that. When we originally talked about this back in May or June, we talked about allowing a majority vote and not a consensus.

Councilor Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, representing the environmental advocacy community: Yes, even at EEAC the goal is to be unanimous, but you don't always get there.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz, representing National Grid: I kind of remember us talking about a dissenting opinion; that there would be a majority but if somebody was very concerned about it, there would be an opportunity for them to provide an alternate comment.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: This will come up depending on whether this is presented as a Word or Excel document; the latter might be harder to read, but it is slightly easier to distinguish what areas show dissent.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: To maybe connect the two pieces, whether the actual recommendations are represented in Word or Excel, I suggest that we do try to get high-level recommendations or some reflection of GMAC priorities under those categories. It's a framing device for the EDCs so they know the GMAC areas of focus for the department and public so even if there are observations, there's some opportunity to be a little bit directive. That would be helpful in the overarching document regardless of how the specific recommendations are shared.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I think the proposed process will help with that today, so there is a ranking of priorities.

Mahony presented slide 6 and proposed the scale of agreement methodology, which offers GMAC members an opportunity to rank each recommendation to determine what to discuss further according to where there is the most disagreement. Members would have until November 13 to fill it out so they have enough time after discussion on November 9. This would give us a sense, especially on November 16, to figure out what to run through very quickly.

Aurora Edington, staff member of the DOER: This is just to help indicate those areas where we don't need to discuss at all. If there's a 4 or a 5, those elements would be pushed up to save more time to discuss. To Carol's point, if there is a 5, there can be a comment as to why you'd disagree. We're thinking of a Word document for observations and an Excel document for the scale of agreement. There would be four documents sent on Friday, November 3.

Discussion:

Councilor Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, representing Massachusetts Clean Energy Center: To what extent are the consolidated GMAC recommendations actually consolidated or synthesized? The way we see them now, it's one full spreadsheet with literally hundreds of lines; to what extent will that be distilled into common recommendations and observations?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I know that Tim and his team have been consolidating things.

Tim Woolf: To make this especially useful for the readers—and by that, I mean the utilities, DPU and anyone else—the Word document could and should have a consolidated set of recommendations that will pull together the most important ones and show a consistent theme throughout the whole set of ESMPs. Both can be done, and the workbook can be more of an appendix that has all the gory details. The danger is that it puts a bit on the consultants to figure out what should be in the consolidated part, but we could try to do that by November 9 so that can be part of the discussion. On the observations, is there a plan to rank and score those as well, or just the recommendations?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We were thinking about this just for the recommendations, but we'll circle back to that.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: On that last point, when you were using the term observations, I thought that was the recommendations. Or are there actually going to be separate recommendations from observations? I wasn't clear on that. Secondly, if you do this ranking and you do it in two spots—Word and in Excel—we're going to need clarity on which ones are the ones that the EDCs need to actually demonstrate that we're responding to in our updated ESMPs. Will need clarity of all of these observations and recommendations and what needs to be changed for the EDCs to say “this is our response.” I thought we would be doing consolidated recommendations, not each and every one.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I think the goal is to work toward how Tim Woolf put it: that we are building up to consolidating recommendations, and that's what I believe you would have to react to in your plans and filings to the DPU. Going through the exercises that we'll go through in November will hopefully bring all of this together and allow us to consolidate and combine, as well as in meetings to see where people's thinking is, and then getting clarity on which members might not agree with everything. I think we are challenged by our process, so the goal is to get recommendations that the utilities will understand are our firm recommendations from the councilors, and that's what you should be reacting to. There is a separate question of picking what our favorites are, although it would be nice if we could, given the time that we have.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: We'll have the overview document and then the spreadsheet would be like an appendix. If we do that, would the spreadsheet version still have synthesized recommendations or each and every one? And then, another point, I think that the scale of agreement process could be helpful; I would just want to state from my view it would be to the extent that we didn't rank something or did it neutrally, we could just leave open the option that maybe each member wouldn't need to take a position on each and every thing; sometimes just saying strongly agree with general category, but using the exercise to help show agreement or disagreement.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: That's what we're thinking; this is just directional to help us narrow down what we actually have to talk about and live-edit on November 16. That's when everyone has to make some decisions, though I think we have to vote on the November 16; we don't have any other dates scheduled, so that's complying with open meeting law.

Sarah McDaniel, staff counsel with DOER: That's correct.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Back to your point, this is directional, and hopefully the goal is to get us to a more productive meeting on November 16, given the volume of topics we have to cover.

Tim Woolf: I'm glad we're having this conversation because I had a slightly different perception of what we could do here. I see observations as different from recommendations: an observation is that the ESMPs didn't include a BCA. The recommendation is that when they file in January, they should include specific suggestions. Another example is the short-term forecasts were done using a different method than the longer-term forecast; the recommendation is to make them line up and consistent. My thinking is they are different. I think the Word document could include the observation, and the recommendations would follow from that, and they could either be consolidated, synthesized in the Word document or Excel, though would prefer the Word. The structure of the Word document would be up for discussion: observations in front, recommendations in second part because they have to stand on their own. We could structure it another way—observations followed by recommendations or keeping them separate.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: To Tim Woolf's point, the observations section helps contextualize what we reviewed, and I think it is helpful for the utilities and the DPU to see what we're thinking about, given the recommendations will flow from them, so it helps set that up. It's also helpful for general public to have that summary. The recommendations are what the utilities have to react to; they don't have to agree with the observations, but they don't have to defend their stance.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: That's a helpful distinction. I'm just wondering if we might get to the point where GMAC members have overarching feelings or recommendations that haven't been expressed through individual spreadsheet lines, and when those will come into play and be incorporated. I can kind of see getting to this stage where we're looking at recommendations, and realize that overarching thoughts aren't necessarily reflected here, and where might those get infused into the process. Trying to build something in that would capture that might be helpful before November 16; the timeline and the process makes this really tough, because there's a very short timeline to synthesize and digest those final thoughts, but it's important to make room for that level of input from the GMAC.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: That's an excellent point; now we have to figure out where we slide that in and effectively allow for that process to fit in.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: I know the consultants are here to help and all the GMAC members are constrained for time. Maybe the GMAC members are given a deadline to offer additional comments.

Aurora Edington: There are two options: one could be a homework assignment to send in high-level observations by maybe November 2 so that we can incorporate that potentially into the draft before it goes out on the November 3. Or we could ask for that kind of feedback by either November 7 or 8 before the GMAC meeting so we have an additional slide of new or additional observations or recommendations to talk through as a GMAC so that could get incorporated into the document at that point, and we still have two meetings to talk about those.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Looking at the calendar and when things are due, what folks are going to receive in terms of that draft work product on November 3 will help inform those global decisions. So I think we should be asking for this after November 3 and turn it around as a useful exercise for November 9. I think we would need a general observations by end of day on

November 7 so our teams can put it together and get a slide ready for November 9. It's another homework assignment but a useful exercise; some people really have those global ideas they want to share.

Tim Woolf: That's all great. Another option is we'll be talking about the Word document on November 9; once people have seen it, we can discuss what big themes have been missed.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I think we'll have to do that too. Sarah Cullinan's point is we dived right into the details—we'll have to take a couple cracks at this and maybe ask for big observations, talk about them, and then ask for additions or refinement for November 16. Does anyone disagree with adding this in?

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: I like the idea of having the option and having this general concept, and it could be that people have the option of submitting something in writing but it's not mandatory. You can raise it at the meeting and leave it open.

Tim Woolf: Just for clarification: should there be high-level concepts for both observations and recommendations? I would encourage both.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Maybe not everybody will want to rank everything. Sarah Cullinan asked about consolidating; we might think a little bit about refining the process and the product for you to rank. Does the group think this is a useful exercise or is it just another thing to do?

Councilor Kyle Murray: I think it's useful. People may have a lot of high-level thoughts they want to share in addition. It's one thing to share them in the spreadsheet, but I always find that when we have those discussions at the GMAC, I end up coming up with more things and that clarifies my thoughts.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I am inclined to do the scale of agreement with the high-level thought exercise we'll do; it's another step, and we'll try to do what we can to consolidate, but I think there will be things in there everyone will agree with, and we don't need to talk about it further and it's a time-saving exercise in the long run.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: Just clarifying the scale of agreement, are you looking at doing this on consolidated observations and recommendations, or just recommendations? Are you doing this on a very detailed spreadsheet or the consolidated versions you come up with?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I think we were thinking just on recommendations and not observations; that's where we're starting. I think the goal would be to try and consolidate so we're not all ranking hundreds of recommendations.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: I like the idea of ranking consolidated recommendations if that's possible. I think we should submit only the recommendations to the scale of agreement; I think the observations lead to them, and that just seems like additional work we don't have time for right now. But if the majority would like to subject the observations to the scale of agreement too, that's fine.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I'm leaning in that direction. This is trying to eliminate some things; everyone will get the observations and we'll be able to react to them and amend them. It's

not unamendable. We can tweak it. This is just because the recommendations are the core of what the utilities should work on, which is why we would apply this just to the recommendations.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: I understand the time constraint and the consolidated recommendations would be helpful since many are similar or overlapping. I'm not sure if there will be a comment column, but maybe more synthesis could be possible by adding a comment, rather than ranking seven recommendations covering overlapping content.

Tim Woolf: I'm okay with all that. Just a heads up that we need to be clear which recommendations we want the EDCs to reply to when they file their filing with the DPU. They're required to list every recommendation and how they address it, and my understanding that's the long list and that holds a lot more weight if it's the consolidated list.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Practically speaking, there are ways to consolidate, and if people disagree with how they're put together, they should tell us. The goal, in my opinion, is that we should consolidate as much as we can so the utilities can focus in on a shorter to-do list and have a more effective impact on the plans.

Tim Woolf: One more clarification: as we go through the Word document, it now has a lot of recommendations built in, and we're trying our best to eliminate redundancies and similarities. When I mentioned earlier in this call we would have a summary of consolidated recommendations in the Word document, I was thinking that would be an executive summary, but not have the be-all end all of recommendations. We need to be careful to make sure we don't leave any important ones out or include too much.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I hear what you're saying. I do hope there's a way for us to hone the recommendations so it's not the laundry list it feels like right now.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: Could there be a Word doc with overarching recommendations and those be repeated in a spreadsheet, and that includes again to some extent consolidated recommendations but drawing from every recommendation that the GMAC members submitted? My impression is that some individual recommendations might be questions that have been answered already, or things that may not be necessary any longer. I don't think the list of 800 recommendations in full is useful; so maybe there could be two levels of consolidation, and if all the recommendations could be in one place so the EDCs are clear on what they need to respond to and the text is repeated in a spreadsheet.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: I'm just going to request clarity for us, and thought how Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony framed it really made sense. I'm hoping the recommendations are consolidated and the EDCs are responding to those. That will really help us produce the best ESMPs that we can.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Part of this is we're going through this for the first time and we'll do what we can for the next couple weeks, but I think we'll get there. This is a good discussion. It sounds like we've come up with some clarity here: we'll give all council members the opportunity to provide overarching thoughts or recommendations, and we'll start that exercise with a written document due on November 7 to be discussed on November 9. We'll do what we can to consolidate recommendations so when we do the scale of agreement, process we have tightened up what people are reacting to. As part of this scaling, we won't require everyone to scale every single one. That will be used to help reduce the dialogue on November 16 with the

ultimate goal to make sure we have clear recommendations to the utilities from the members of the council majority hopefully getting to consensus on November 16.

5. November GMAC meeting agendas

Commissioner Mahony indicated that the GMAC hasn't heard from the EWG, so that's coming up on November 9. Tim Woolf and his team will go through a presentation on the draft observations and recommendations document, and then we'll get into a discussion. Councilor Kyle Murray and Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony sat through a similar EEAC meeting yesterday and it gave members an opportunity to reflect on what was agreed to and some slight changes suggested, which gave people an opportunity to respond.

Then on November 16, we'll return to that exercise, do last-minute changes, and start voting. At this point, the question is, do we vote on every recommendation, or if we have agreement? We just assume that's agreed to. My thought is we're narrowing down where we have disagreements so we have a big pile of agreed-upon recommendations without outstanding questions; if there is a small pile we cannot agree to and separate them out and have different votes or have one big package.

Discussion:

Councilor Kyle Murray: The EEAC is a good example of a process that is working well. Based on the makeup of the group, I don't anticipate there being insane levels of disagreement. There's a lot of alignment. We may get some disagreement, but there's no need to do a roll call for every recommendation or we'd be there all night.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: The goal is to have one vote. If there are some recommendations that are tougher votes, we can deal with them in real time and separately. We've talked about having an opportunity to provide a dissent on some of these, and we can handle it that way—we can offer individual dissent on some. A little flexibility will help here given this is our first time, but I think we know what we can do and how in a fair way.

6. Additional questions for ExCom consideration

a. Are the ways that the GMAC consultant could be better supporting the GMAC review process?

Commissioner Mahony noted there were no suggestions. She further stated that if there were any suggestions later to DOER know and it would be shared with Tim Woolf and his consultant team.

b. Do the EDCs have any updates on the technical session agendas or invitations?

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: The invites to those ~30 stakeholders have gone out, and most have accepted. Our facilitators are Janet Gail Besser and Dr. Jonathan Raab. They're finalizing Zoom links and those are going out soon. We've got an outline of two days of topics. The initial one has an overview and get into demand forecast, then have some clarifying questions and gain some feedback. We're trying to set it up with breakout sessions in the Zoom links. Then we'll talk about the implications for grid infrastructure needs, breakout sessions, etc. Then on the November 28, there will be a recap from the first day, then discussion in more detail ensuring equitable and just transition. That will be a big focus, as well as stakeholder engagement, workforce, economic, health issues. We've thought about Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver's comments and a few of our other GMAC stakeholders about how we are going to get into really detailed technical sessions: we've been talking about using one of the standing committees

e.g., the Technical Standards Review Group (TSRG) meeting on December 7, to use part of their agenda and make this a big part of the agenda to go deep on certain topic areas. We actually have a meeting on Tuesday among the EDCs to work through topics based on what we've been hearing and recognize that a lot of stakeholders might not want to be there for that, but they'll be invited, and it'll be made public, and use one of those existing working groups to go deep on that.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: That's an interesting idea of using TSRG. Can any sort of DER person be there or will that be the same group you've previously invited?

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: We'll work through that so I'm not speaking for all EDCs; the thought is to try and make it open because we've been hearing from the GMAC that a greater voice representation on technical challenges will have more chance to talk through those in more detail. I think more rather than fewer is my desire.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: That's good to hear. The number of DER participants with speaking roles is limited in the other technical sessions and that's not a great opportunity to engage, so I would encourage if the TSRG is open. I don't suspect you'll get even 25 people who will want to participate, but right now there isn't a good opportunity for that community to engage, so I like how you're thinking.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We've got our listening session on Monday, and I was going to advise folks that these technical sessions are happening. Because you've extended invitations, is there another opportunity for people to participate, or is that a closed list?

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: I will get back to you on that. The idea is that there would be many more people listening in and can participate using the Chat function. Janet and Jonathan may reach out to Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony and to Kathryn Wright as chair of EWG to get that scheduled. They just want to make sure that they're covering their bases. They took all the feedback you'd given two weeks ago about the participant list; I thought they were going to try to figure out if they could add some more to that list, but I don't have feedback on that yet.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: If you could do me a favor before the listening session on Monday, let me know how to characterize the participation opportunity in that meeting, including a link to the meeting.

7. Other discussion areas

Commissioner Mahony asked if there were any additional requests for agenda items for the December GMAC meeting. This meeting will include reactions to EDC technical sessions; we agreed to pick this up in December given the timing of the ESMP filings. Otherwise, the agenda would include planning for GMAC in 2024: meeting frequency, length, topics. Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony asked for opinions on what the GMAC should do during the seven-month DPU review process.

Discussion:

Councilor Kyle Murray: At least one meeting to talk about process improvements overall and a list of recommendations on that going forward would be helpful, as well as allowing for public comment.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Yes.

Carol Sedewitz: At first I agree about a seven-month delay until we have the order and we know the direction, and then in July/August bring people back together. But Councilor Kyle Murray's mention of best practices would make more sense to do sooner rather than later. Maybe include that on the December agenda, and maybe a short meeting in January over Zoom. But then you might want to wait until we get the feedback on what's happening at the DPU. It would seem to me that we've got a five-year cycle; we should get the feedback now and wait and see what's happening, then get people back together to get back onto a quarterly meeting until there's another point at which there are reports that need to be filed (twice a year); that might be something the GMAC can be reviewing. Then for the next filing, give two years in advance, instead of a rushed nine-month process.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Great idea to add to the December meeting to have the first discussion then.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: I like Councilor Kyle Murray's recommendation a lot; we should have this discussion while everything is fresh in our minds. I wonder if there is value in meeting once during the DPU process to discuss how that is proceeding. [Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver's Zoom connection cut out.]

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Do we think about having a meeting sometime after the plans are filed so the whole GMAC can hear from utilities, what is your task of taking our recommendations, what did you take, what did you skip, and why? That might be an exercise; I'm just struggling to think about where alignment with the DPU process we will want to have that happen. I almost think that should be before the public comment so the GMAC and other interveners can offer thoughts maybe in February. It's a complicated layering of things, but we know that some of these GMAC members won't intervene and might be interested to see the result of our work.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: I think that timing makes sense to have time to review public comments. Another thought would have a tag-up or a briefing with the adjudicatory schedule to get a summary of what became the top issues. It would be interesting to know which interveners who are engaged in the day to day of the DPU process where things have ended up. That might be superfluous, but I would appreciate someone doing the work for me to understand where things are before the final decision and see how things played out.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: It's kind of going where Sarah Cullinan went; I'm interested in what Carol Sedewitz thinks about this. It might be interesting for us to meet during the open docket period. I'm not sure what the EDCs would feel comfortable sharing with us, but I think there could be some value in talking about what we've learned so far. I would have to think about that a little bit more. I agree with Councilor Kyle Murray's recommendation to talk about process for next time. I like Carol Sedewitz's idea of maybe meeting quarterly for 90 minutes or less; we can always see what the right cadence is for us.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Carol Sedewitz will have a little homework to talk with their counsel and get feedback...

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: ...about the right cadence and how things are going in the docket.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: If we do it before the comment period, and if you think about when you have a public hearing for a rate case and you present the rate case, maybe we have something like that: this is what we filed, and I assume it would be very prepared and locked in,

but it would be helpful for the GMAC and the general public to hear that, and I know the DPU will also have a public hearing. But a public hearing in this docket wouldn't be like a rate case where someone would get up and explain. To Sarah Cullinan's point about after the briefing, it might be interesting to have all of the interveners come in and have briefs and talk about what they talked about and offer that same opportunity to the utilities and go through that, so people know what was debated. The only thing there is that at the end of the day, it doesn't matter what we brief; it matters what the DPU accepts in their order. We can figure that out later.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: Having something formally in the schedule and the timing would be helpful. I want to make sure I understand how these things will be working together, since some people will be doing two things at once as a GMAC member and litigating the proceeding. We don't want to start pulling DPU proceeding issues into GMAC. If we're in a proceeding and there are topics being discussed, it's a one-sided presentation, is there a desire for response and discussion. Just want to put some boundaries around that and think through how all that will work together.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Step one, Sedewitz should see what her folks think. Then we have another ExCom November 17; this was helpful to start thinking about it, and we can come back to this. Also FYI: we did submit our consultant budget to the DPU; DPU asked some questions that DOER will respond to regarding what they're doing and how we're spending this money.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: I'm curious about why the DPU wants to know how we're spending our consultant funding.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: It's ratepayer funded, so the DPU needed to approve.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: Were these questions asked in writing?

Sarah McDaniel: There is a docket DOER submitted on behalf of the GMAC (D.P.U. 23-98) and DPU responded to our filing with some questions. Those are posted in the docket, and DOER is working to respond.

A short discussion ensued regarding Halloween costumes.

8. Other Discussion

No additional discussion was proposed.

9. Close and Next Steps

The next ExCom meeting is November 17 at 2 p.m.

10. Close

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Haugh
GreenerU

Meeting Materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides