

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC) Executive Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, July 28, 2023
Virtual Zoom Meeting

Councilors Present: Liz Anderson, Sarah Bresolin Silver, Galen Nelson, Elizabeth Mahony, Kyle Murray

Non-Voting Councilors: Carol Sedewitz

Councilors Absent: --

DOER Staff Present: Aurora Edington, Julia Fox, Sarah McDaniel, Joanna Troy

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Mahony, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda

Commissioner Mahony, Commissioner Department of Energy Resources (DOER): Commissioner Mahony welcomed all participants to the Executive Committee (ExCom). The Commissioner took roll call for voting and non-voting members. The Commissioner asked if anyone wanted to add agenda items. The Commissioner walked through the agenda (slide 2).

3. Update on Consultant Procurement

The Commissioner shared slide 3 of the presentation to discuss the consultant timeline. DOER is currently reviewing the consultant responses. A decision on the winning selection will be made at the end of next week. DOER will work to get the contract executed and is aiming for mid-August for the project kick-off meeting. The Commissioner asked if anyone had any questions on the consultant procurement calendar.

Discussion:

No questions were raised.

4. Agenda for August GMAC Meeting

The Commissioner shared slide 4 and shared the agenda for upcoming August GMAC meeting, including discussion topics, speaker ideas, and preread materials. The topics of DER integration and cost allocation will be discussed. Public comments will be at the beginning and end of the meeting.

Discussion:

Carol Sedewitz, Representing National Grid: Sedewitz asked a clarifying question regarding the EDCs' time for a collective presentation on each of the discussion topics. The Commissioner noted that the EDCs will have 10 minutes for each presentation.

Commissioner Mahony: The Commissioner noted that the DPU is unable to participate as a presenter on the cost allocation discussion topic.

Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, Representing the environmental advocacy community: Murray offered a suggestion for a potential additional speaker for cost allocation: The Regulatory Assistance Project (RAP).

Sarah Bresolin Silver, ENGIE North America, representing the transmission-scale renewable energy: Bresolin Silver seconded Murray's speaker suggestion. She also asked about the communications between the DPU and the reasoning for not presenting. Did they provide open docket numbers that support their position? The Commissioner responded that the DPU did not. Bresolin Silver registered her disappointment for them not speaking to the GMAC, as it is a good opportunity for learning.

Commissioner Mahony: Commissioner Mahony noted that typically, members of DPU staff listen in on GMAC. I share your frustration, and we understand there are open CIPs. We should not criticize the DPU, as they take their responsibilities seriously and they are cautious due to related dockets being open.

5. Plan for Reviewing ESMP Draft September - November

Slides 5-8 covered the EDCs' Electric Sector Modernization Plan (ESMP) review period, which will take place during September through November, after the ESMPs drafts are submitted on September 1, 2023. Discussion included expectations of GMAC members, a proposal for biweekly GMAC meetings during the review period, and the final product of the GMAC's recommendations and member votes.

Discussion:

Commissioner Mahony: The Commissioner asked the GMAC ExCom for their work product recommendations.

Liz Anderson, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General: Anderson commented that what is laid out for the review period makes sense. It will be hard to get consensus on all parts of the ESMPs. With the timeframe we have, this makes the most sense and I support this proposal. Murray seconded Anderson's comments and approval.

Galen Nelson, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center: To clarify, is the assumption that a majority vote will move forward?

Commissioner Mahony: The Commissioner responded that we would try to get consensus first before voting, and then reach a majority vote. The votes are a recommendation of the body overall.

Sarah Bresolin Silver: Bresolin Silver concurred with the comments made by Anderson and Murray and noted that there is a value in understanding where votes and comments lie.

Carol Sedewitz: From the utility side, my thoughts is that it can be helpful to understand where people come from on each section. It is a whole plan. Votes on one part may have a ripple effect on another part of the plan. They are comprehensive plans with core parts and specific parts.

Commissioner Mahony: The Commissioner extended her appreciation for the comment made by Sedewitz.

Galen Nelson: Nelson commended the DOER team for creating this schedule plan proposal and noted that the consultant has the greatest value to resolve most contentious issues. It will be helpful to apply their expertise where there is a strong correlation between confusion and contention. There is a need for independent experts' advice to help reach consensus.

Commissioner Mahony: We will be relying on them to present to the group, identify issues, and facilitate discussions.

Kyle Murray: Murray questioned if the meeting schedule conflicted with any EEAC meetings. The Commissioner and DOER team confirmed that there are no schedule conflicts between the two councils.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz liked that sections 5 and 6 were scheduled together and suggested that section 7 is moved to the final review alongside section 1. Commissioner Mahony noted that it would be thought over.

Liz Anderson: Anderson raised a point about having certain priorities embodied throughout the review process that pulls from the statute. We have not discussed the impact low-income ratepayers as a council yet. We should make recommendations for that. We need to make sure that we are touching on established priorities for each discussion and how that section of the ESMP furthers these goals.

Commissioner Mahony: Should we have a set of questions we pose to ourselves as we go through each section of the plan?

Liz Anderson: Yes. Anderson also noted that she is amicable to having more frequent meetings rather than longer meetings.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz commented that every 90 minutes, you should have a decent break. It is difficult getting a lot of meetings in.

Sarah Bresolin Silver: Bresolin Silver commented that she is happy with either longer or more frequent meetings – just schedule out far in advance to not lose people.

Kyle Murray: Murray noted that it is possible for more frequent meetings, but it would be useful to send out scheduled holds so that the council can decide if the additional meetings are necessary.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz commented that the ESMPs are large documents and lot to go through. She asked if there has been any thought to instituting smaller subcommittees and ask groups of GMAC members to take on sections.

Commissioner Mahony: The Commissioner responded to the question on subcommittees and questioned the ability to operate under Open Meeting Law.

Sarah McDaniel, DOER: McDaniel responded that we could make subcommittees, but must comply with OML. It could be difficult staff wise to have multiple meetings covered.

Commissioner Mahony: Under normal circumstances it makes sense, but here, we must question if it creates efficiencies when we are pressed on time. We must do what makes sense. Commissioner Mahony continued reviewing open questions for the committee and spoke on the question regarding the use of polls between meetings to gauge the GMAC’s thoughts. How do we keep this within OML? We did not settle on anything, but we were opening that up for discussion. Additionally, a point on the EDC technical sessions was raised. There are the meetings that the utilities are hosting – which will be posted in the calendar once set. The GMAC does not participate in those. They are helpful for hearing what general public is saying.

Sarah Bresolin Silver: Bresolin Silver asked Sedewitz if the EDCs had a sense on when the technical sessions would be held.

Carol Sedewitz: We are trying to do them jointly with Eversource and Unitil. We are planning for October and possibly early November. These will be web-based or hybrid. Stakeholder engagement teams are working on it now to balance sessions across the state and getting the right communities involved.

Liz Anderson: Anderson raised that after reading the statute, there is a GMAC obligation to coordinate with Clean Energy Transmission Working Group (CETWG). Have we thought about that?

Commissioner Mahony: The CETWG just kicked off this morning. The Chair of DPU is co-chair of group. This is a great question for DOER to follow up on.

Sarah Bresolin Silver: ENGIE did attend this morning. They talked about the impact of DER on the transmission system and there will be more discussion. It is important that we coordinate and communicate.

Joanna Troy, DOER: The CETWG topics have not yet been solidified, and they are doing like modules similarly to what we do for GMAC meetings. One module could be distribution system impacts and how we can measure impact of distribution system things to transmission system.

Representative Roy wants final report to identify how state policymakers can impact transmission costs. Maybe we could have a joint meeting between CETWG and GMAC.

Commissioner Mahony: This can be raised at the planning meeting on Monday for CETWG.

6. Other Discussion Areas

Discussion:

Kyle Murray: Murray raised a point on spreading information through the GMAC's networks and asked if it is possible to produce a template or easily sharable document to share that is easy to understand. The Commissioner asked for clarification on the request and if it was for language for an email, or a one pager. She noted that it should include simple language that can be translated to multiple languages. Murray responded that both would work, and it would include an announcement about stakeholder working groups.

Commissioner Mahony: We will think about it. If anyone has any creative folks on their team who can contribute, please reach out.

Kyle Murray: Murray raised a point on if there should there be discussion about recent FERC announcement from yesterday. The Commissioner said yes. Anderson noted that the order has not come out yet, but it will next week. FERC announced high level directives. Commissioner Mahony said that we will add a high-level summary to the preread list for the August GMAC meeting and see who of those speakers can address it.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz raised that ISO queues are an issue for us. Recognize that how to move that part of the process faster. The Commissioner responded that it was a CETWG issue. She noted that the link and flag it is a good first step.

7. Close

Commissioner Mahony, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:02 PM.

Meeting Materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides