

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC) Executive Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, April 24, 2023

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Councilors Present: Liz Anderson, Alex Worsley (designee for Sarah Bresolin Silver), Jennifer Daloisio, Elizabeth Mahony, Kyle Murray

Non-Voting Councilors: Carol Sedewitz

Councilors Absent: ---

DOER Staff Present: Joanna Troy, Aurora Edington, Chris McDonough

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Mahony, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda

Commissioner Mahony – Commissioner Department of Energy Resources (DOER)

Commissioner Mahony welcomed all participants to the Executive Committee (ExComm). The Commissioner mentioned that there was a technical issue with allowing participants to turn on their video. A troubleshooting link to Zoom’s website was shared in the chat. The Commissioner took roll call for voting and non-voting members.

Agenda

The Commissioner walked through the agenda for the upcoming meeting (slide 2).

The Commissioner noted that the GMAC has not previously discussed stakeholder and public comments and that she would like to have public input but also wants to ensure that the GMAC is able to meet its compressed timeline. The Commissioner paused for questions on the agenda. Hearing no questions, she moved on.

Agenda for Upcoming Meetings

The Commissioner shared slide 3 and commented that the GMAC is on a fast schedule. At its two upcoming meetings, she would like the GMAC to discuss planning, forecasting, and the integration of distributed energy resources (DER), buildings, and transportation with the grid.

Discussion:

Commissioner Mahony:

There are two meetings coming up in May and June. In a previous meeting, there was a suggestion about providing pre-read materials in advance of meetings. We would like input on what pre-read materials should be sent out before the meeting as well as the plan for outside speakers and the format of how the upcoming meetings should work.

Carol Sedewitz, representing National Grid:

What has been laid out is a great start. I would like to request feedback on how much information the electric distribution companies (EDCs) should bring to the GMAC, whether the GMAC would like to see a straw proposal of the EDCs' electric-sector modernization plans (ESMPs), and whether there are any considerations related to confidentiality that should be considered.

Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, Representing the environmental advocacy community

How much extra effort it would be to provide the straw proposal?

Carol Sedewitz

The EDCs need to do the straw proposal anyway and we are working with the other EDCs to make sure that our proposals are aligned. I would like to bring the straw proposal to the next ExComm meeting to get it in front of the GMAC by June. It might just be a table of contents (TOC).

Kyle Murray:

I would appreciate seeing the straw proposal at the June meeting.

Commissioner Mahony:

The June meeting would be the right meeting to bring it to.

Liz Anderson, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General:

The more input the GMAC can make before the plan is finalized, the better.

The Commissioner moved to slide 5

Commissioner Mahony:

Doing planning 101 at the May meeting allows everyone to get on the same page and understand what the EDCs are doing and also any key differences. The GMAC will want to go through all the existing dockets and see what parts of those dockets will be incorporated into the ESMPs. These presentations at the May meeting will lead into what we just discussed of the TOC straw proposal. I recommend that we use the June meeting to have an overview of forecasting and maybe topic 2 for the June meeting could be feedback on the TOC of the ESMP. Any feedback?

Carol Sedewitz:

We think that forecasting is part of planning 101. Could we pull forecasting into topic 1 for the May 11th meeting? So maybe a forecasting and planning 101 meeting? Then we could do the dockets as a pre-read and then do the TOC for the June meeting.

Commissioner Mahony:

I think we could do planning and forecasting for the May 11th meeting, but I think including the relevant dockets is too much and a lot of presentations from the EDCs.

Jennifer Daloisio, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center:

I want to raise how we are going to organize getting feedback to the EDCs. Council members should have meaningful time to respond to that feedback.

Commissioner Mahony:

Just to make sure I understand, your concern is that the EDCs have time to react to any feedback the GMAC might have?

Jennifer Daloisio:

Correct.

Carol Sedewitz

One of the reasons we wanted to present the straw proposal of the ESMP at the June meeting is so we could use the July meeting for feedback. Could we have a separate session to receive that feedback?

Commissioner Mahony:

I think the constraint here is that the open meeting law which constrains how the GMAC gives feedback. But maybe adding another meeting is the right call.

Carol Sedewitz

If we get feedback while the meeting is running, maybe that is sufficient.

Kyle Murray:

Could we also receive written feedback from the public on this topic?

Commissioner Mahony:

That is definitely something we need to discuss. Carol, if you get feedback in July, would you be able to react to that in time for your submission?

Carol Sedewitz:

It depends on the feedback. Definitely for smaller feedback but it will be harder with larger feedback.

Commissioner Mahony:

When I look back to statute, it does say that utilities have to incorporate feedback and state why if they do not incorporate it. I think you'll probably get quite a bit of feedback from this group.

We need to take that into consideration, even though the point of this group is to have the feedback, we want to have it at right time, so you are making the most efficient use of your time.

Carol Sedewitz

The earlier we receive feedback the better.

Commissioner Mahony:

One thing this group needs to do is determine the proper way to solicit feedback under the Open Meeting Law. We will come back to this group with a recommendation.

Alex Worsley, Enel North America, representing the transmission-scale renewable energy industry:

I heard Carol say that having a full TOC by May 11th would not be possible. I wonder how much time in advance of June 15th we would need the TOC. We want to try to get materials out in advance to get more comments.

Carol Sedewitz:

10 days before June 15th might be good. We were shooting to have it ready by June. If we have it out on the 2nd, it would be a good nine days in advance of that.

Commissioner Mahony:

Thanks for the suggestion, Alex. I think that is a good strategy. Carol, could you work with your colleagues to see if that can be accomplished?

Carol Sedewitz:

I think June 2nd would work. If we can get it out sooner we will.

Commissioner Mahony:

Back to the slides, how do people feel about the 101s being on the May 11th meetings and then going over the TOC on the June 15th meeting? I would also ask the group to contemplate who is speaking that day. I don't think it's fair to put everything on the utilities and I think it would be good to hear multiple perspectives.

Liz Anderson:

How much of the dockets and working group materials can be done in pre-reading? Seems like a lot of that could be done in writing and cut down on time needed for presentations.

Commissioner Mahony:

I think there is a lot of pre-reading that can be done. There are some council members that have been very involved in those dockets, but there is benefit in this process of "connecting the dots." Not everyone will be able to read through all the materials though.

Kyle Murray:

It is dense material. There are varying backgrounds on the material. There are people coming to this that haven't dealt with any of the dockets. Throwing it all to people at pre-read means some people might miss the context. I think it would be good to do some of it in the meetings.

Commissioner Mahony:

Pushing it to June 15th gives us more time.

Carol Sedewitz:

What if there is a pre-read put out on the website and maybe there is a summary of it, where we don't really talk about it in a lot of detail? What if we did that for the May 11th meeting?

Commissioner Mahony:

Carol, are you suggesting we do a preview on May 11th?

Carol Sedewitz:

Yes, we do a preview and then come back together on June 15th and discuss in more detail on June 15th so it gives us more time to get comfortable.

Alex Worsley:

I think that makes sense. I think that the blocks of time that you have provided are reasonable and I don't think they should be shortened. I think we will want to get into forecasting. There may be some efficiency with doing forecasting and planning on the same day but I wouldn't want those blocks of time to be shortened.

Commissioner Mahony:

Agree. We are trying to cover a lot. We are also consciously trying to reserve time in the first 50 minutes to go over questions from the previous meeting.

Kyle Murray:

I want to touch on point of planning and forecasting not being all on the utilities. I think it will take a bit of time to think about who we can get to present to the GMAC. If you were looking for names, what would be the deadline to get those names or individuals?

Commissioner Mahony:

I think it would be by end of next week because May 11th is two weeks from Thursday.

Liz Anderson:

I want to support Carol's idea. Have some pre-reading materials and then having it presented in more depth is a good way to address a complex topic. We can start developing that library of pre-reads. It will be a lengthy list.

Commissioner Mahony:

Circling back to Kyle's point about speakers. We're suggesting Fred Schaefer from Cadeo Group who has experience in forecasting in the national sense. We have reached out to him and he has interest.

Carol Sedewitz:

I want to clarify. For the May 11th meeting, topic 1 would be planning and topic 2 would be forecasting? And then we would have a summary of dockets that we would carry forward into

June 15th meeting? Also want to highlight that for forecasting, our first ESMP will be based on the forecasts the utilities have already made.

Commissioner Mahony:

For May 11th, we are recommending that we use some of the administrative time as docket previews and then topic one can be planning and topic two can be forecasting. For the June 15th meeting, we will use the first hour to address any concerns about the previewed dockets. As for forecasting, we may not review your actual forecast but rather how you do the forecasting and use that as an opportunity for the GMAC to share how we feel that forecasting should be done for the ESMP.

Carol Sedewitz:

So to clarify, forecasting would be a EDC presentation and an outside speaker?

Commissioner Mahony:

Yes, Digaunto provided some significant feedback at our last meeting about how to break out the EDC process and about where things are and should go. We want to understand how you are doing this.

3. Consultant Scope of Work and Plan Forward

The Commissioner moves to slide 6.

Commissioner Mahony:

Doing a time check, let us move past the agenda and move into consultant scope of work. We will have to follow state procurement and DPU rules so it will take some time to bring the consultant on. That may limit the scope of what the consultant can achieve. Bringing up the timeline you saw in the slide deck (*moves to slide 7*), we outlined the goals for the consultant as outlined in the law. As you know, the EEAC has a consultant help with their responsibilities. We have borrowed some of those goals for this scope. Unless there are any objections we will get on writing the RFP and getting it out on the street. We are hoping to get it posted in June, so we should have another ExComm meeting before that scope is posted.

Carol Sedewitz:

Are we expecting the consultant will provide advice or comment to the EDC on the plans themselves?

Commissioner Mahony:

I will confer with Aurora and Joanna

Joanna Troy, Department of Energy Resources

The consultant will provide advice to the GMAC and then the GMAC would decide whether we want to provide it to the EDCs.

Carol Sedewitz:

I remember we were talking at one point at having two consultants, one administrative, one substantive.

Commissioner Mahony:

Just one consultant given the time.

Carol Sedewitz:

Will their main qualification be technical then?

Commissioner Mahony:

The RFP will be clear that we need both administrative and technical support. We will also have restrictions as to which preferred vendors we can use under state procurement laws.

Alex Worsley:

In terms of deliverables, what are they going to provide? A report? Quantitative analysis?

Commissioner Mahony:

The scope portion of the RFP will delineate the type of work product that we need. But timing is compressed, we are not sure how much of a technical report we can reasonably expect from consultants. We'll try to give broad guidelines in the scope of the RFP. We hope to check in with a draft scope at next meeting and get things moving in June.

4. Process for Information requests

Commissioner Mahony:

We have a few minutes left for our last topic (*moves to slide 9*). We need to figure out a balance of what information we would like with all the other work we want the utilities to be doing. We want to have a clear process delineated to expedite this process. We are proposing a process on this slide that will track what has been asked, what is still outstanding, provide 10 business days to respond, and a process for extensions. We recognize that this would rely on DOER to determine that line on which data requests to ask the EDCs.

Carol Sedewitz:

We really appreciate this clearing house type process. If the request is really substantial, we will bring it back to GMAC and ask for more time. Can we focus this on non-confidential information?

Commissioner Mahony:

Thank you for the reminder. Yes, we recognize that some people have the ability to access confidential information but as we want to organize and post this information publicly, we recommend focusing on non-confidential information.

Carol Sedewitz:

Thank you.

Jennifer Daloisio leaves the meeting at 4:00pm.

5. External stakeholder engagement and public comment

The Commissioner moves to slide 10.

Commissioner Mahony:

I know we are over time, but I do think we need to think about how we are engaging the public. Written comments always welcome, we will post them on our website. At the EEAC, we do reserve time for public comment and limit it to three minutes a person. That may be something we want to test at the May 11th meeting. I would also recommend that the GMAC consider having a meeting focused on public engagement. The next ExComm meeting is May 16th. Please think about upcoming agenda topics and speakers. We'll start planning out July and August.

Carol Sedewitz:

Thank you for getting through everything. For the May 16th meeting, I will have to end 20 minutes early. I am speaking at a conference and will need to step out of the meeting to get my mic set up.

Commissioner Mahony, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 04:03 PM.

Meeting Materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides