

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)
Executive Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, November 17, 2023, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting

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

Councilors Absent: Sarah Bresolin Silver

Non-voting Councilors: Carol Sedewitz

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

Consultants Present: Jennifer Haugh, Tim Woolf

1. Call to Order

Aurora Edington, as Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony’s designee, chaired the meeting until Commissioner Mahony was able to join. She called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, and Agenda

Aurora Edington took roll call. She said the GMAC had a great meeting yesterday, where the group voted to approve the amended recommendations report. She thanked everyone for participating. The ExCom will be talking about discussions areas ahead.

Edington presented slides 3–5, which covered one remaining upcoming EDC technical session on November 28 and a plan for the year ahead. Potential meetings past December could be February, June/July, and September 2024.

Councilor Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, representing the environmental advocacy community:
One thing we should mention to members is as things arise, we may need to schedule meetings.

This is our best attempt at scheduling now, but if something pops up in May, we might need to have a meeting then, or something like that.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, representing Massachusetts Clean Energy Center: As part of the December 14 meeting, I wonder if it's still a good idea to allow the EDCs to ask questions about the recommendations as they are trying to implement them? Do we want to present an opportunity for them to seek clarification?

Aurora Edington: I agree we could send this over email and ask if the EDCs have any questions.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz, representing National Grid: I think that's a good idea.

Aurora Edington: The December meeting is three hours long, though we might not need that much time. For additional meetings, how much time do we want? Two hours?

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: The February meeting may be a really difficult time for us to pull off, as it's a very busy time and a fast turnaround. If we could put that off until May, that would be helpful.

Aurora Edington: The idea was to go over the EDCs' responses to the GMAC in their initial filing. Any other ExCom members have thoughts on how to scope this request of the EDCs to make it less of an initial burden as the docket process is underway?

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: The EDCs will have just filed with the department, and part of that filing is explanations of which recommendations they accepted and which they have not, and why. So, I even wonder whether if the investigation is open if they'd be able to provide any additional information to the GMAC in a public forum than is already in the filing anyway. Would there be any added benefit of them presenting that information versus what has already been filed? Maybe the consultants could summarize and compare that information.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: The EDCs will have requirements of our filing will have to show how we've responded to all of the GMAC recommendations, and that will be explicit in our filings. And since it is open and many of the participations in GMAC may actually be intervenors in the case, there are just concerns about how we do this procedurally.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: That makes a lot of sense. It still might make sense to contemplate and review what was taken up and what wasn't. I still see value in having the GMAC discuss.

Councilor Kyle Murray: I agree with Councilor Sarah Cullinan. What we're going to be able to get out of the utilities because of the ongoing proceeding is likely to be minimal, so I wonder if there's the opportunity to have the consultants sort of review it in advance, like Councilor Sarah Cullinan was proposing, maybe send us out their thoughts at the end of the meeting and come up with their questions, then give the EDCs enough time to go through what they can and can't say instead of having them do that live. But don't know how much extra burden that would be.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: I also have to ask if you're asking questions, how does that work with an open docket and discovery? It feels like we have to do that within the DPU process and that's the concern.

Councilor Kyle Murray: That's fair, and maybe there should be a stipulation that if you are a GMAC Councilor who is intervening, you can't ask a question. I'm not sure how we can get around things like that. I'm going to intervene, so I wasn't expecting to. I'm not sure how much value there is to all of this. So maybe just a consultant presentation on it.

Aurora Edington: I'm hearing that the February meeting makes sense, maybe mid- to late February, and we can ask the consultant to present. Slide 6 shows the ESMP docket procedural schedule; it might make sense to have the consultants look at the EDCs' filings and focus on what's in those filings compared to our report and recommendations, and we could plan for that material to be released a week or two in advance of the GMAC meeting, then use the meeting as a discussion forum. Are there any issues of doing that in the GMAC meeting where there are going to be a lot of intervenors? I might ask Sarah McDaniel if there are any concerns about whether we have to be careful about with that.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo, Office of the Attorney General, representing the Office of the Attorney General: I don't want to speak for other council members, but just to weigh in, our office would plan to fully participate in the DPU proceeding and at that point I would expect that our participation would be focused in that forum. I just wanted to reiterate that point.

Aurora Edington: Maybe this is at most an informational presentation and less of a Q&A.

Councilor Kyle Murray: Also, the value of these is that they are public forums, so there's value in having the public to see that presentation maybe if they want to join us. Maybe we advertise it, because I'm sure not everyone will have the time to read the entire ESMPs. So for your senators, representatives, stakeholders, nonprofits groups, etc., I think there's a lot of value in that at least.

Aurora Edington: We'll keep it mid- to late February, have a consultant presentation, and maybe take public comment.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: We might also have to consider whether the EDCs would be present. Maybe they wouldn't be or speak at the meeting just again because of the active case going on.

Aurora Edington: We'll check on that, but it seems like there's value. In the June/July meeting, it might be useful for the intervenors to discuss their briefs submitted to the DPUs. Any thoughts? We're open to further discussion.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: I think I raised this at the last meeting, and Sarah Bresolin Silver also said she thought it would be helpful. When I proposed it, it was honestly selfish—I don't know how much I will say, to Councilor Kyle Murray's point; there are plenty of people interested but won't have the capacity or bandwidth to follow DPU proceeding details, so having the debrief of what went on and where things ended would be helpful. It's helpful to see where things were before the decision came out. That was the thrust of it. Last time we also discussed

whether there might still be procedural issues or conflicts with intervenors, but don't know if that's the case when we reach the briefing.

Aurora Edington: If we do this, it's more of a "for the public awareness" type of meeting that I imagine would focus on consultant summary of the timeline and what happened. There's a lot that's going on in those months between discovery and hearings and briefs, so it could certainly be a high-level review of process and how we got here and different intervenor positions. Any thoughts from folks who plan to intervene, is it preferred if the consultant did a high-level summary of those positions or turn to different intervenors? This is far off—I'm just wanting to do a read of the room.

Councilor Kyle Murray: The AGO and DOER will need to run some of this stuff by the legal teams, so we can figure out the specific details later. I'm comfortable sharing, but I don't know if that's the right thing or not, honestly.

Aurora Edington. Okay. Hearing a theme of keeping it more public-facing and informational than trying to get into any nitty-gritty details of the docket or issues there, and we'll keep all of those to the DPU process. And then for September, this is probably mid- to late September GMAC meeting to review the DPU order at that time. I also imagine the December 2023 meeting will be talking a lot about process and what we want to see improved for the next ESMP process, timeline, and sub-working groups of the GMAC that might be useful or necessary or not to support the next ESMPs, so I think perhaps out of that process discussion we might get a little bit more color into maybe not the next year but maybe the following year for GMAC activities. Slide 7 shows is a little more information about some of the topics that were discussed on the 9th and at the last ExCom meeting. For the Equity Working Group, I'm not sure there's a clear role for this group beyond the charter.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: I thought about potential development of the CESAG and how that might work without offering any specific recommendations or structure or timing; just a proposal at this point. I think that the EWG's work is valuable and if we think about longer-term process and something like that continuing, we definitely want to consider that, but we should ask the EWG members their opinions. So yeah, no set recommendation from me, but there are a few different layers we could think about even if it's not for the immediate future.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony joined and took over as Chair.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Any objections to extending EWG charter?

Caiazzo repeated her statement above.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: My only thought about that is that if we don't extend the EWG charter, in favor of whatever these other processes proposed that won't be stood out until probably next fall, we lose the charter and everything we've already voted on. And we'd need to reestablish the EWG in three years and have to go through all of that again. There's always the option to extend the charter and not have the EWG do anything for a while, though I personally think they could do things during the next year that won't happen in these other proposals.

Councilor Kyle Murray: I lean toward extend the charter by maybe six months or something and talk with the full group and get some ideas on what we want to cover. Especially without Councilor Kathryn Wright here right now, it's tough to figure out what the group should do, but like the idea to preserve it.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Councilor Kelly Caiazzo raises good point about checking in with EWG. It's valuable to have them on deck in case we need them. We will do that as follow up and discuss it at the December meeting. Regarding the role of the consultants coming up in the next year, it sounds like you all discussed for Feb and June/July meetings that they will have a role, and that will be very helpful to provide that sort of unbiased review of things. But what else would be helpful for them to do? This is what we're proposing to talk about in December in helping us in the next year or two. Lastly, rate design—do we create some sort of rate design working group? I guess these are questions for us to ponder at this December meeting.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: I just had a question about the prior to the submitting broad recommendations. What was that referring to?

Aurora Edington: That's a holdover. That should be deleted.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: Given the conversation about intervenors being conflicted regarding discussing ESMPs within the GMAC before the order is issued as proceeding is still open, would that be a concern of participation within a rate design working group? Does everyone have to be on hold while the proceeding is open?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I missed that discussion. I see this as just providing recognition and professional courtesy of not discussing each other's work, but none of us are decision makers, so there's no conflict here. We can do this work and need to do this work.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: Can the utilities also participate, or do they have conflicts?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: I'm not a utilities lawyer but I wouldn't think so. The question is, what is before the GMAC for us to decide? That's what I think of when I think of conflict. At this point, there's nothing to decide as of yesterday. I will also note, as Councilor Sarah Cullinan knows, MassCEC and DOER are starting to do this work ourselves together, and we're already doing this sort of rate design exploration so it's not as critical for the GMAC to do it. But I'm not opposed to the GMAC looking at it.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: I think we'd want to take this back to our legal counsel for us to really understand what challenges we're putting ourselves in if we're participating in it. GMAC could do this, but I'm not sure how active EDCs could be given there's an active docket where these topics might be discussed. That's the piece where we have to look at where's the risk and how do we balance the benefits within the discussion.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Definitely bring that back as homework in December and talk with folks on your side. Do we want to address these questions? We don't need to have answers right now.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: Just to be clear, in December there would be a discussion about potential working groups that would just carry on in parallel if the proceeding was ongoing?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Correct.

Councilor Kelly Caiazzo: I would think that we would want to participate in that discussion but also just have a various layers to consider so I don't know how much we would be able to participate for a variety of reasons in parallel with the proceeding.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Because of bandwidth issues or more than that? Here's what I'll say—do we even want to talk about this in December or put it off? That's my only question.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: I'm thinking about the pace of the docket and the complexity of trying to balance what can be said and can't be, so I'd be in the camp of no right now for having this going on concurrently and thinking about when the right time is to start it. Is it in the summer?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Does anyone object to us taking this off of the December agenda and putting it in a to-do list for maybe the summer? Hearing none, we'll strike it, and we will postpone discussion on it. Any objection of the first bullet about the GMAC process and recommendations to DPU on future processes?

Aurora Edington: Just add that if there are any suggestions of the best way to facilitate that kind of discussion, we're open to that.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We'll look at this and maybe the consultant team has some suggestions here. We'll have more time and that will give us a lot to do. Regarding Slide 8 (other discussion areas), here is a brief GMAC consultant update. We submitted that budget to the DPU and the DOER is awaiting the DPU order after DOER responded to questions from them. Because the consultants are paid for through ratepayer funds, the DPU has to approve of this work. They asked us a bunch of questions, which we've answered, and we think we're good there. The consultants have been sticking to the budget, which is good news for 2023, so we feel confident at least in the budgeting realm of things. The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for December 22 from 2–3:30; we could cancel this. I don't think we're going to have much to say, since we don't have a meeting in January.

(There were no objections to canceling the December 22 ExCom meeting.)

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We'll cancel that one and gather again in January.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: The EDCs are still working on another technical session as part of a Massachusetts Technical Standards Review Group (TSRG) meeting on December 7. We're

working on getting a link and agenda finalized; we've been going back and forth for the last couple of days. That will be posted next week and will be open to all. We're going to have West Monroe Partners facilitating that for us. Again, that is happening on December 7, 2023 and will be focused really for the DER community, with DER defined as PV, storage, and also enabling more electrification, so we'll be going into more depth on DERMS capabilities in the plans. We'll try and make sure you know about this meeting. We hoped to have information out earlier, but we're still working through it. We'll make sure that anybody who participates in the TSRG meetings will get this invite. We were wondering if we can work with you on getting this out to others. This will be a Teams meeting and can have up to 1,000 people on the call, so it's open to anyone. I just want to make sure we have the right agenda before we put it out there.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We can send this out on DOER's GMAC distribution list if you can send us the details.

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: I will do that early next week.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: There may have been sound issues, but anything else about the EDC technical session?

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: Nope, but that's posted, the information is out there, the agenda is posted, so that is happening.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Where is that posted?

Councilor Carol Sedewitz: It's on our individual websites. This is just like the one for the 15th and is posted right below the notification about that one. Participants should be able to register for both. This is also posted on the GMAC website if I remember correctly.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: There are Zoom registration links there, yes.

3. Adjourn

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 2:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer A. Haugh
GreenerU

Meeting Materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides
- Preread: DPU ESMP Procedural Order – 11/14/23