

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC) Executive Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, August 25, 2023
Virtual Zoom Meeting

Councilors Present: Kelly Caiazzo (designee for Liz Anderson), Sarah Bresolin Silver, Joanna Troy (designee for Elizabeth Mahony), Kyle Murray

Non-Voting Councilors: Carol Sedewitz

Councilors Absent: Galen Nelson

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

1. Call to Order

Deputy Commissioner Troy, as Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda

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

3. Consultant Update

Deputy Commissioner Troy gave the update on the consultant procurement process. The GMAC staff are in the final steps of hiring and contract execution. As soon as that is done, we can notify GMAC members of the hired consultant. This will be done via email.

Discussion:

Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, Representing the environmental advocacy community: Murray inquired about the timeline for hiring the GMAC consultant. Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that the hope is to have the final signatures within hours and have the contract executed today or Monday.

Carol Sedewitz, Representing National Grid: Given that the consultants are informed, and they have read the minutes, is there anything the EDCs must expect before September 1st?

Deputy Commissioner Troy: The consultants are aware of the tight timeline. This was a part of the bidding process. They have been read into the process.

4. Plan for Reviewing ESMP Drafts (September – November)

Deputy Commissioner Troy shared slide 4 of presentation slides. She explained that there are two listening sessions in late October. The GMAC will also need to coordinate with the Clean Energy Transition Working Group (CETWG).

Discussion:

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz noted that the GMAC is crammed for time. Given that October 31st is a day where people are engaged with their families, is there another time we should consider that would allow more stakeholders participate?

Deputy Commissioner Troy: Deputy Commissioner Troy explained that is why we are proposing to have that session during the day. It is a tight timeline to move them. The sessions are in a position that means we have reviewed materials as a body with enough time to notify the public with materials. We can plan to have deliberation drafts circulated by that week during the ESMP review.

Kyle Murray: Murray flagged that there is a House Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy Committee hearing on energy efficiency from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM that day. Individuals that would want to participate in both could not do that. Murray suggested moving the 10/31 listening session date to 11/1. Deputy Commissioner Troy noted that would be considered, but asked members to continue to hold the proposed 10/31 for now. Please let us know if there are any other conflicts.

Sarah Bresolin Silver, ENGIE North America, Representing the energy storage industry: Bresolin Silver spoke on the topic of the CETWG coordination meeting. She asked what the purpose of the coordination was and why we would not want to invite Open Meeting Law (OML) issues?

Deputy Commissioner Troy: Coordination with the CETWG is required by the legislation. The purpose of CTEWG is to develop a report to TUE Committee on costs and planning necessary to build out transmission for clean energy goals. This report is due by December 31st, 2023. We could coordinate on the distribution topic on the state level policy impacts on transmission needs. The concerns of OML with a joint meeting is that we would have to add this as an additional to the meetings we already have, and we would need a quorum of GMAC members to make that an official GMAC meeting.

Sarah Bresolin Silver: That is helpful. Looking at language in the statute, this does not seem like coordination if we are only invited to listen. Might be more beneficial to make this an official meeting. Could this be added as a GMAC agenda item for next GMAC meeting? I do think it is important and that a joint meeting is a better coordination effort instead of us listening. Having someone available to make an oral submission could be useful. Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that the GMAC could speak as the guest speaker/presenter to represent the GMAC. This could be one or two GMAC members to represent all voices of the GMAC.

Deputy Commissioner Troy: We will poll the group to see who can make that 10/13 date, and we can see about making that a GMAC joint meeting if we have quorum.

Carol Sedewitz: Are there questions that they have of the GMAC? Is there a way the CETWG could send questions to us beforehand, so it is productive? Deputy Commissioner Troy noted that she will have this request added to the CETWG September meeting agenda to get that from CETWG.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz inquired about the collection of GMAC feedback and if the form is what is reported to the EDCs. Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that concerns will be grouped together based on the Excel submissions. The goal is to have consensus and the Excel sheet allows for discussion. She asked if this would be a useful way of sending feedback to the EDCs. Sedewitz responded that this would be helpful if concerns are grouped together and summarized.

Kyle Murray: Murray asked if this recommendation/feedback Excel document has been used at Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC). Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that this has not been used at the EEAC.

Kelly Caiazzo, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, Representing the Attorney General: Caiazzo asked about what a discussion of EDC response to initial feedback would look like. She did not offer a formal suggestion but inquired on how the group imagined that discussion working. Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that we have not talked about GMAC council vs. EDC feedback. The original intent was to get feedback from voting and nonvoting members.

Carol Sedewitz: As I think about the ESMPs, when we are covering multiple chapters at a time. Lots of feedback is to be expected and the EDCs will have to be taking feedback under advisement. The EDCs would not be responding in the moment. They would need to bring the information back and think about it.

Kyle Murray: Understanding EDC needing to talk to their teams, it would be useful for the EDCs to make their best attempt to briefly answer questions in the moment. It is understood that they must go back to their teams.

Carol Sedewitz: The challenge is that we don't know yet what kind of feedback we will get. Sedewitz asked that the GMAC make recommendations clear. If there are any substantial requests for information, we can take it back and have internal discussions amongst the EDCs to make sure we have the right filing in January. We are open to ideas since this is a new process.

Deputy Commissioner Troy noted that if there are any areas where EDCs want feedback sooner or later, let us know.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz spoke on the need to have a check in on the process of the ESMP review and ask questions such as: is this going to work? Will we need to revise this? She wondered if this was the “vibe check” noted in the meeting agenda slides. It is challenging to add any more sessions. What would we do if we got the feedback that the process does not work?

Deputy Commissioner Troy: This is the intention of the vibe check. Is there a thought that maybe doing an overall up front? I don’t anticipate all GMAC members to read the whole plan upfront.

Carol Sedewitz: At the end of the meeting on Sept. 14th, we may want to allocate time—even 15 minutes—for that kind of check in. At the end of meeting, we can see how feedback is coming to really get the sense if the whole GMAC will the schedule work or will be having to make significant changes to it.

Kyle Murray: Not sure how we could shift the schedule. We could potentially be asking the legislature for a one-month delay, but that is never guaranteed. It is a potential option to note.

Deputy Commissioner Troy: Deputy Commissioner Troy noted that this type of “gut check” of asking GMAC members to complete this review will occur at the September 14th meeting. Caiazzo asked if this is about process and scheduling, not on substantive ESMP content. It was confirmed by Deputy Commissioner Troy and Sedewitz that this is a gut check on the ESMP review process.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz asked about the guiding questions of the ESMP review. Are we asking guiding questions not on system today, but what we are doing for the future of the ESMP? Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that the guiding questions relate to the question: “Does the actual written plan reflect these principles?”

5. Equity Working Group Proposal

Deputy Commissioner Troy shared slide 11 of the presentation slides, which outlined a proposal for the Equity Working Group charter.

Discussion:

Carol Sedewitz: Question on membership: If we are adding three more members not in GMAC for a very limited scope, will that create a challenge to come up to speed given that the GMAC has been at it for a while? Looking for thoughts on that.

Sarah Bresolin Silver: Why was this recommended?

Deputy Commissioner Troy: This was recommended to provide those different perspectives. The intention of 3 additional members was that multiple people spoke at GMAC meetings on the topic of equity. The proportion of Equity Working Group (EWG) members is weighted to those involved in GMAC. The external stakeholder side with expertise in equity can provide guidance.

Sarah McDaniel, DOER: McDaniel noted that designee rules can be added to the charter so that designees of GMAC members can serve on the EWG. She also noted that the 4-month term is written in the charter.

Kyle Murray: On the EEAC, there are 16 members and 3 members representing organizations not on EEAC. Having three members representing external organizations in the GMAC EWG is a large proportion. Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that we could make the external stakeholder membership 2 members to fix the size and weighting. Murray agreed and noted that it is good to have outside perspectives.

Carol Sedewitz: Would additional members be voting or nonvoting members?

Deputy Commissioner Troy: They would be voting members. That is how it works in the EEAC. Quorum is based on an odd number and voting on an even number. Quorum is more the issue than voting issues.

Kyle Murray: What if we go back to three figures? There are two representatives who are EEAC consultants on the EEAC EWG. Having one consultant on the GMAC EWG could be useful.

Deputy Commissioner Troy: We plan to have the GMAC consultant take meeting minutes. Make it clear in the charter that the consultant can participate but would be nonvoting. McDaniel asked if it was necessary to add this in the charter. Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that it could make people aware that the consultant would be there.

Kyle Murray: A discussion took place on the duties of the EWG. Deputy Commissioner Troy asked if the EEAC votes on items. We are seeking recommendations from this working group.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz asked if the EWG membership makeup and size issue is not related to voting, will you reduce the external stakeholder membership number to two additional members. Deputy Commissioner Troy responded that reducing the number addressed size and voting concerns. I also think the goal is to have those other two members have a voting position.

Kelly Caiazzo: My initial thought is that if we are lowering the number of members, and we are asking people to volunteer their time to participate, it might make sense to have them vote.

Kyle Murray: Murray added that they should be voting members unless we determine the EEAC does it differently and find out why. Sedewitz supported Murray's suggestion.

Deputy Commissioner Troy: The EWG needs to have recommendations ready for the full GMAC by November 9th. DOER will make changes to charter for membership and will reach out for nominations. We will collect nominations for voting on September 14th.

6. Other Discussion Areas

Discussion:

Sarah Bresolin Silver: Bresolin Silver gave a heads up based on the last meeting that was relevant to this discussion. Bresolin Silver heard from the three primary renewable trade associations that they are concerned about the lack of time to discuss some of the relevant provisions in the upcoming meetings. They are reserving their opinions until they see the plans. She asked if there is interest in additional stakeholder session focused on DG stakeholders, that are either working or technical sessions where there could be opportunity for back and forth.

Everyone hopes we can make the review work. It can be tough when the EDCs are in listening mode. Deputy Commissioner Troy thanked Bresolin Silver for the flag. I may turn this to Carol Sedewitz. There are two technical sessions scheduled. This is the avenue we can use to increase stakeholder engagement.

Carol Sedewitz: I will take that back to the group: Making technical session part of the stakeholder session. We need to get them in before the January submittal.

Sarah Bresolin Silver: Listening sessions could have a technical session component.

7. Close

Deputy Commissioner Troy, as Acting Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:22 PM.

Meeting Materials:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides
- Preread: Proposed Equity Working Group Charter
- Preread: GMAC ESMP Review Excel Draft