

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)
Executive Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, September 29, 2–4 p.m.
Virtual Zoom Meeting

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

Non-Voting Councilors: Carol Sedewitz

Councilors Absent: --

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

Consultants Present: Jen Haugh, Tim Woolf, Daniela Miranda

1. Call to Order

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, Agenda (slide 2)

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy, Department of Energy Resources (DOER): Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy welcomed all participants to the Executive Committee (ExCom), noting that Commissioner Mahony was experiencing temporary technical issues. The Deputy Commissioner took roll call for voting and non-voting members. She asked if anyone wanted to add agenda items, of which there were none.

3. Agenda for Upcoming GMAC Meetings (slide 3)

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy walked through the agenda (slide 3). The GMAC should have a hold on their calendars for the October 13 CETWG meeting. GMAC members should

receive a Zoom panelist invitation for this meeting from the DPU on October 10. There were no follow-up questions.

There are two listening sessions scheduled: October 30, 6–7:30 p.m., and November 1, noon to 1:30 p.m. GMAC members are encouraged to tell their stakeholders about these meetings and share materials. There were no follow-up questions or discussion.

4. Question Areas on Process for ExCom

Is there an update from the EDCs on technical sessions?

Carol Sedewitz, representing National Grid: Sedewitz said that they have identified a consultant who is putting together the details.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Would these would be open or invitation-only?

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz didn't know but is likely to be open.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Deputy Commissioner Troy emphasized that it would be helpful to share their plans as they figure them out.

Councilor Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, representing the environmental advocacy community: Are the dates November 16 and 28?

Carol Sedewitz: Yes.

Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, representing Massachusetts Clean Energy Center: Are these were required?

Carol Sedewitz: Yes. These are intended to be public stakeholder sessions and technical sessions; these will be done together at the same meetings, which will cover different topics on the technical side—not two identical meetings.

The EDCs plan to provide their metrics to the GMAC for review on October 1. How should the GMAC plan to review these?

Carol Sedewitz: We had requested to push this out to October 5, recognizing that next weekend is the holiday weekend for some. She is hoping that there is time before October 10 to review at the Equity Working Group subcommittee. They would really like to take into account feedback from stakeholder sessions and is trying to get sign-off on metrics to send this out externally.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Deputy Commissioner Troy asked about the GMAC process to review metrics.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz said the plan is to submit information in two tranches: one on October 5 and the next on October 26.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Deputy Commissioner Troy asked if by EJ/equity metrics, are you thinking of including all of these for the October 26 GMAC meeting?

Carol Sedewitz: Yes.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Deputy Commissioner Troy emphasized that the second tranche needs to be submitted no later than October 17 to give the consultants time to review so they can turn it around on October 23. Any materials for October 10 need to be posted on October 5, as October 9 is a holiday. This will be a challenge for the consultants—we'll have to do the best kind of summary we can.

Tim Woolf, Synapse: Woolf asked that the EDCs post any kind of metrics they have.

Carol Sedewitz: Yes.

When should the GMAC discuss “what is being approved/modified/denied by the DPU in the adjudicated process?” (Recommendation to discuss alongside Chapter 2 on 10/26 Climate Act compliance.)

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Aurora Edington had circulated the DPU hearing officers' memo that set up the docket, and there are expectations in there of what the filings should look like. She thinks it's important to talk about this at the GMAC so we can understand what and how our recommendations will be considered by the department. The DOER's recommendation is to discuss that on October 26.

DOER staff member Aurora Edington: Edington shared slide 6 showing the next four GMAC meeting agendas.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: What is the DPU trying to do when they are trying to adjudicate the ESMPs?

Kelly Caiazzo, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, representing the Office of Attorney General: Regarding the comment about making recommendations fit into what the DPU will eventually do, what are the ways in which the GMAC has the opportunity to make recommendations that meaningfully impact the shape of the plans and what the companies are actually doing? There are a lot of good thoughts and recommendations in terms of analyses and assumptions or metrics, and that's helpful. But another piece of it is that it's going to change the investment the companies are going to make in terms of amount, size, and timing. How can the recommendations of the group be maximized to impact what the plans are and what the companies are actually going to do?

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: That's important, and it's going to be something we need to talk about internally at DOER and how best to lead that as a conversation when we get to October 26. Doesn't want the GMAC to get into a place of trying to become legal analysts. Would Councilor Caiazzo like to help with that conversation?

Kelly Caiazzo: We're interested in that, and we certainly understand that all of this is complex, and so any analyses will take time. She doesn't have a solution; it's not going to be easy to turn

those into additional recommendations, but doesn't want to look at it as a plan where we ask for more information and then give a yes or no.

Councilor Kyle Murray: In terms of feedback that we provide on the GMAC plan, at the EEAC, the members vote on a resolution that has a list of recommendations for improving the plan. There are also specific things we can include with our recommendations. As part of this process, the utilities will have to respond substantively as to why they do or do not adopt those recommendations or make changes based upon that. We will have to lean heavily on the consultants, because this is so complicated in a lot of areas.

Sarah Cullinan: Cullinan is concerned about how we're going to have that discussion—more interested in how this information will be presented to the DPU. How can the GMAC be helpful to that process?

Tim Woolf: There's a lot of things we can say about how the plans should be improved and modified. Whether to literally approve any specific investments in the plan is a hard thing to do without seeing net benefits, and we won't be able to see those until January, after the GMAC has completed its work.

Sarah Cullinan: Generally, what does the DPU consider and what does that process look like? Or was it about is the GMAC actually going to put out a recommendation of three columns: approve, modify, deny?

Aurora Edington: It's more about what is the DPU ultimately approving, modifying, denying, and this is more about how the GMAC can help that process.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver, ENGIE North America, representing the energy storage industry: Is it in the scope of the GMAC's roles to tell the DPU what they should be adjudicating?

Sarah Cullinan: She considered the question to be more about what the DPU does do.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: Should the GMAC's role be to recommend changes?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Yes, and we can also make recommendations on how the plans be reviewed.

Councilor Kyle Murray: The DPU is free to rule that they ignore the GMAC's recommendations.

Kelly Caiazzo: Circling back to Tim's comment about the challenge of approving plans and programs and the direction of it vs. a preapproval of specific investments that will be made year over year. Thinks those are different in terms of what's being approved and levels of specificity.

Carol Sedewitz: Are you asking about what the DPU is doing or GMAC? Is GMAC reviewing the reports and giving their indication of support or comments on room for improvement by incorporating XYZ into the plan, vs. GMAC actually coming out and saying we approve this

investment vs. another investment? Assumed the latter is what the DPU is looking at when they go through their process.

Kelly Caiazzo: Caiazzo is not imagining GMAC saying they approve or disapprove, but there's a question of the level of specificity that the GMAC recommendations can get to in terms of a broader recommendation just commenting on the plan vs. making recommendations that impact the actual component. The results of what the companies are saying they're going to do on an actual infrastructure and investment, order, timing, and that type of level.

Councilor Kyle Murray: According to the statute, the council shall review and provide recommendations on ESMPs, maximize customer benefits, etc.; the statute does not specify the nature of those recommendations, to whom, so he would read this expansively to say we can provide recommendations to the utilities, to the DPU, and the specific nature of all that is a bit up in the air.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Commissioner Mahony tends to agree with Councilor Murray's interpretation. We have a question as to whether this is in our purview, and a second question about when we actually get to it. And then there's a third question if we agree that this is for us to do, how do we present that? She can see that in two ways: that if we accept that it's in our purview, on the one hand, we would be saying to the utilities, this is what should be in your plan or is outside the scope, or the way it's presented is or isn't consistent. On the other hand, we could also be making recommendations to the department back to the utilities in that we don't need to do that by mid-November.

Carol Sedewitz: Regarding the level of recommendations that you might make, what information do you need from the EDCs to assess? Sedewitz wants to make sure that's a way of looking at it.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Maybe we ask these questions on the October 26?

Kelly Caiazzo: Just to clarify, she's not saying the GMAC should go through and have an up or down vote on every investment or detail in the plan, but using Councilor Murray's example of seeing additional details, the assumption is that there's a potential for that to change and have a cascading effect to many other parts of the plan. Maybe the GMAC does not talk about each piece of infrastructure, but some recommendations could have broad impacts.

Tim Woolf: The consultants can offer a lot of recommendations for how the plans should be improved. There's going to be a difference between what we're looking at and what will be filed. That gap is important; from what he's seen so far, he doesn't think the consultants, or the GMAC will be in a position to make recommendations until we see how the suggestions are adopted. There's going to be a limit to how much this council can do on that.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: This discussion will likely be better suited for the larger meeting.

Does the ExCom have any comments or suggestions to improve the GMAC review process?

Aurora Edington: Edington shared slide 8 about the spreadsheet review process.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: The GMAC has had two meetings; she thinks it's going well. It was helpful to have a little back and forth with the utilities. If there's time, that there can be a little more of this discussion. Discussion is important, and the spreadsheet is helpful in terms of understanding limited time. Keeping to concise responses will help facilitate discussion.

Councilor Kyle Murray: Murray agreed with Councilor Bresolin Silver. The back and forth is helpful if we have the time for it. The process overall is going as well as could be hoped given time constraints. We could have a little more dialogue and sending some recommendations, getting comments back if we had more time, but under the time crunch, this is how we have to view all of this. So far, it's going as well as we could hope.

Kelly Caiazzo: Regarding the review process, she thought the spreadsheet could also be used for data information requests and wanted to note that as a potential avenue. She also had a question about if there were ways for members to ask the consultants, either follow-up questions or to ask for an analysis. Is it possible to request something like that that might be outside the meetings?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Commissioner Mahony thinks it's possible and those requests should go through the DOER. She warned that based on the cadence we have set up right now, adding more layers might be difficult. We'll try and manage that, but we do want those questions to be asked.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz lends support for putting feedback into the spreadsheets and opportunity for utilities to provide feedback in there. The consultants' comments don't show up in those spreadsheets—is there a way those can also be entered into the spreadsheets so the utilities can get that feedback in a way that doesn't take time away from the meeting?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: What do we think of utilities adding feedback into spreadsheets?

Kelly Caiazzo: What is the relationship with the spreadsheets and the slides with the summary recommendations? Are we going forward thinking of summary recommendations being focus of conversation going forward, or will there be a separate exercise to make sure everything in the spreadsheet is captured? We talked about the option of having members express up or down for recommendations but wants to understand that relationship.

Aurora Edington: We do want to make some discrete updates to the spreadsheets, given this was our first round. We can offer up a little more detail with GMAC recommendations and have a table format for discussion in the next GMAC meeting and a numbered table. We talked about having an iterative method for talking about chapters and making our recommendations as we go, and then we'd discuss in our November meetings. Edington thinks using that process to get us to the November recommendations and get a little more concrete. GMAC members will be calling out strong areas of agreement or disagreement with recommendations during the next go-around.

Sarah Cullinan: Cullinan wants to make sure that it will end up coming out in our final recommendation process but has small complaint: consultant recommendations aren't automatically endorsed, and they are only explicit GMAC recommendations if they are endorsed. It's helpful to see the comparison of recommendations, but she is concerned about this.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Commissioner Mahony agreed that consultants are not the voice of the GMAC; it's all iterative and we're trying to move everything along, and that's why we have these spreadsheets. This is our method of exercising these sorts of demons. Coming back to Sedewitz's question, are we okay with utilities reacting to theirs, and can we put consultants' recommendations for them to react to? We can do the latter if everyone agrees.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz wanted to add that where the utilities would want to react on the spreadsheets is where the utilities could clarify or if there's an error, or whether there's another section where the answer appears elsewhere.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We're certainly experiencing that of seeing where information is maybe located elsewhere. This would be a column for clarification, correction, or redirection.

Commissioner Mahony asked if anyone had an objection to Sedewitz's suggestion. There were none.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: There are, then, two bits of homework for the recommendations spreadsheets:

- Create a column for utilities to clarify, correct, or redirect.
- Add consultants' recommendations to the large spreadsheet so utilities could do the same as we proceed forward.

Carol Sedewitz: Is it possible to flag high, medium, or low priorities in the comments? It might be helpful to understand what the most important things are, if something is minor or really important.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: This is the challenge of this process; we're trying to give everyone feedback. It's easy enough for our team to put in a new column to allow for that; I would be challenged to fill that out, because to me it's like we'll have to get to a point where we're essentially negotiating some things, and we'll need to know the large picture of whether or not something is a high priority, etc. And we're trying to work toward consensus. This creates challenges. Does it make sense to do that now, or does it make sense to wait until we've discussed the slate to do a weighting?

Carol Sedewitz: Definitely when doing the final comments, that would be helpful.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We didn't close the loop on Councilor Bresolin Silver's question on this part of the discussion, which was allowing for utilities to have some time to react in the room. We came up with these rules because we didn't think there'd be enough time, but there does seem to be enough time. What does the group think of creating a carve-out in the agenda to allow for utilities to respond or react to the discussion in the room?

Councilor Kyle Murray: We've had some time in the past couple meetings, and the responses have been helpful in shaping perspective. When we can do it, it's helpful to provide that time.

Sarah Cullinan: Cullinan would also endorse that. Is this going to be a carve-out of time, or can they use their discretion for a timely clarification? The last meeting was entirely appropriate. Or do we want to carve out five minutes to allow for comments? She acknowledges that it's extremely frustrating for utility representatives to sit through meetings where there's an answer.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: Councilor Bresolin Silver thinks it's most helpful if instead of carving out time, that there's a little more opportunity for back and forth. Point is not to get into long discussions about substance, but more about allowing utilities to answer when something appears in another section. It was helpful when the utilities and others are judicious in their use of time.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Commissioner Mahony personally endorsed that having utilities input is helpful and it's good that they're both aware of the big picture and time constraints, so she thinks we can manage it and allow for those quick clarifications or reactions to move the discussion along. It's a little bit of a test case; every meeting is a test case for us, and we need to keep seeing what works and how we can keep making progress.

Aurora Edington: Look out for an email end of day Monday with updates to the feedback spreadsheets.

How are we doing with GMAC member fatigue?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Commissioner Mahony recognizes that this process is a lot for all of these groups. On the one hand, we're stuck this way; on the other, we'll keep asking this question to see if anyone has any ideas, simply because we want the engagement of councilors to be meaningful throughout the whole process. Is there anything else we can be doing to help make this process go smoother?

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: We're being really well taken care of in terms of things being posted in time and very descriptive emails of what's expected, and forwarding us documents, so she thinks the DOER is doing the best it can. She can't think of anything else we need other than she hasn't been able to find the next spreadsheets. Thinks the next iteration of the ESMPs will have a lot of recommendations for changes.

Councilor Kyle Murray: Councilor Murray agrees. We need to work together as a council to bring appropriate snacks. He will do his best to bring some to the next meeting.

Are there ways that the GMAC consultant team could be supporting the GMAC review process better?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: This new process of offering recommendations to get the conversation going is helpful. If there's follow-up questions, folks will ask through DOER, and we'll forward those.

Carol Sedewitz: Sedewitz wondered if when consultants had questions of the EDCs, are they allowed to call us and ask questions? We might be able to clarify something for them quickly. Is that something we can think about in the process.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: That sounds reasonable. The question is, who would you prefer they're calling? Primary contacts?

Carol Sedewitz: We'd funnel it to the right people in the organizations. There might be something where we don't see this in the report, is it someplace else? That might be something we could share.

Tim Woolf: Woolf endorses what Carol suggested. We could set up a list in an email, and DOER could check it as well; it could be an informal information request.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: let's see how it goes and create the best format for the utilities and the consultants, and we'll suss it out with the next chapters.

5. Equity Working Group Update

Haugh reported that the first meeting is Monday, October 2, followed by another meeting Tuesday, October 10.

6. Other Discussion

No additional discussion was proposed.

7. Close and next steps

- Next ExCom meeting is October 27 from 2–3:30 p.m.
- Topics:
 - Discussion of ongoing GMAC ESMP review schedule and process
 - Equity Working Group progress
 - Check-in on consultant work to date

8. 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