

# Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)

## MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 15, 2023

Hybrid Meeting

---

**Councilors Present:** Liz Anderson, Richard Labrecque (designee for Sarah Bresolin Silver), Marybeth Campbell (virtual), Larry Chretien (virtual), Mrinmayee Kale (designee for Kathryn Cox-Arslan), Julie Curti (virtual), Elizabeth Mahony, Amy McGuire (virtual), Kyle Murray (virtual), Galen Nelson (virtual), JS Rancourt (virtual), Jonathan Stout, Andy Sun (virtual), Alex Worsley, Kathryn Wright

**Non-Voting Councilors:** Digaunto Chatterjee, Carol Sedewitz, Kevin Sprague (virtual)

**Councilors Absent:** None.

**DOER Staff Present:** Joanna Troy, Aurora Edington, Austin Dawson, Sarah McDaniel

**Other Attendees:** Juan Martinez (Eversource), Jack Habib (Eversource), Nancy Israel (National Grid).

---

### 1. Call to Order

Commissioner Mahony, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

### 2. Welcome, Agenda, Roll Call

***Commissioner Mahony – Commissioner Department of Energy Resources (DOER)***

Commissioner Mahony welcomed and thanked all participants for their participation.

Commissioner Mahony welcomed new designees and began introductions. Commissioner Mahony then took roll call for voting and non-voting members. All voting and non-voting members present.

### 3. Information Requests and Executive Committee Updates

Commissioner Mahony updated the Council regarding an information request for heatmaps for other available 2050 forecast predictions which was posted on the GMAC website (slide 4).

Commissioner Mahony provided Executive Committee meeting updates including meeting agenda topics discussed for June and July GMAC meetings; the July meeting will include topics related to stakeholder engagement and equity. Commissioner Mahony, on behalf of the Executive Committee, proposed to expand the July 13<sup>th</sup> meeting by 30 minutes to start at 12:30 p.m. to accept general public comment and expand the August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting by 1 hour to start at 12:00 p.m. to accept public comment on draft ESMP outline. No objection from any GMAC Members.

***Discussion:***

***Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation, Representing the environmental justice community***

Wright asked for clarity that the longer meeting time would be reserved for additional public comment time. Commissioner Mahony confirmed this intention.

**4. Public Comment**

Commissioner Mahony introduced the only attendee registered to provide public comment, Bob Espindola.

***Bob Espindola, President of The Energy Consortium (TEC)***

Espindola expressed general interest in transparency and wanted to ensure the Electric Sector Modernization Plans (ESMPs) were attentive to power quality in addition to costs. Espindola acknowledged that TEC is working with the electric distribution companies on a momentary outages working group and while supportive of distributed energy resources, raised a concern about their impact on power quality. Espindola requested the Council consider power quality issues and noted the need for power quality standards and reporting.

Commissioner Mahony recognized Valessa Souter-Kline to provide public comment.

***Valessa Souter-Kline, Northeast Regional Director of Solar Energy Industries Association***

Souter-Kline, as a representative of SEIA, voiced her support for the GMAC and ESMP work and interest in better understanding EDC forecasting particularly for developer planning.

**5. Follow Up Questions from Last Month's Planning 101 and Forecasting 101 Topics**

Commissioner Mahony welcomed GMAC members to share any further comments or questions on the Planning and Forecasting topics discussed at the April GMAC meeting. No comments or questions were asked by GMAC members.

## **6. Topic 1: DPU Docket and Working Groups Review**

Commissioner Mahony introduced the series of presentations (slide 8).

Commissioner Mahony presented on state climate goals and targets, including the following working groups: Clean Energy Transmission Working Group (CETWG), Electric Vehicle Intergovernmental Coordinating Council (EVICC), Gas System Enhancement Plan (GSEP), Electric Facilities Siting Board (EFSB) (slides 9-12).

Labrecque (Agilias Energy) presented on the following working groups: Technical Standards Review Group (TSRG), Energy Storage Interconnection Review Group (ESIRG), Wholesale Distribution Tariff Working Group (WDT), Interconnection Implementation Review Group (IIRG) (slides 13-14).

Chretien (Green Energy Consumers Alliance) presented on grid modernization dockets and Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Stakeholder Working Group (slide 15-17).

McGuire (Highland Electric Fleets) presented on electric vehicle charging infrastructure programs (slide 18-24).

### ***Digaunto Chatterjee, Representing Eversource***

Chatterjee asked in a best-case scenario, what effect electric vehicle charging programs may or may not have on distribution investment. McGuire stated that customers need signals to utilize resources (active/passive demand response) effectively. Chatterjee clarified that shaving the peak, not displacing the peak is the intended goal and suggested the differential between off- and on-peaks need to reflect the cost of the deferred investments.

Kale (New Leaf Energy) presented on Provisional System Program capital investment projects (CIPs) and long-term system planning (slides 25-27).

Murray presented on Energy Efficiency Three-Year Plans and Future of Gas Investigation (slides 28-32).

### ***Carol Sedewitz, Representing National Grid***

Sedewitz (National Grid) inquired on how to incorporate the Energy Efficiency Three-Year Plan since it will be forming as the ESMPs are prepared. Commissioner Mahony suggested ESMPs

include comments on the direction of the Energy Efficiency Three-Year Plan. Anderson suggested to include Energy Efficiency Three-Year Plan as much as possible.

Anderson presented on rate cases, performance-based ratemaking, and utility-owned solar energy projects (slides 33-34).

Sedewitz and Martinez presented on distribution system reliability, resilience, and safety dockets, along with utility-owned storage investment plans, including distribution and transmission annual reliability reports, annual service quality performance reports, reporting of outage events via outage reporting protocol (ORP), vegetation management programs, annual emergency response plans (slides 35-43).

Commissioner Mahony thanked the Council for their preparation and presentations.

Break from 2:41 – 2:55 p.m.

## **7. Topic 2: Draft ESMP Outline**

Commissioner Mahony welcomed the Council back from break and introduced the ESMP outlines. Commissioner Mahony asked the EDCs to provide a brief overview of the outline.

Chatterjee and Sedewitz presented an overview of ESMP proposed outline.

### ***Discussion:***

#### ***Commissioner Mahony – Commissioner Department of Energy Resources (DOER)***

On 1.5, what kind of investments are going to be included in the summary? Sedewitz said they would summarize Section 7. Chatterjee stated it will include both approved and not approved.

#### ***Liz Anderson, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General***

Anderson asked to what extent there will be incremental investments included above what is already pre-approved. Chatterjee suggested that Eversource will include a Western Massachusetts substation, resubmit a previous critical investment project (CIP), and potentially one other project. Sedewitz state National Grid was taking a more expansive approach to include investments required for electrification.

#### ***Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation, Representing the environmental justice community***

Wright asked how closely the electric distribution companies' climate change forecasting in regard to resiliency and reliability aligns with the state's forecasting. Chatterjee shared that

Eversource would welcome presenting their modeling at a future GMAC meeting or sharing its findings.

***Commissioner Mahony – Commissioner Department of Energy Resources (DOER)***

Commissioner Mahony asked when the technical sessions required by statute would occur? Chatterjee responded that they are working on a plan.

Commissioner Mahony also recommended including explicit outreach efforts or programs to municipalities, in addition to addressing how working groups will fit into stakeholder engagement.

***Marybeth Campbell, Worcester Community Action Council, Representing a local agency administering the low-income weatherization program***

Campbell emphasized the importance of outreach through the network to address vulnerable populations, particularly related to electrification of house stock.

***Julie Curti, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Representing municipal or regional interests***

Curti reiterated the importance of municipal outreach, especially in communities who have been burdened by energy infrastructure in the past; asked about compensation to EJC or other stakeholders for their participation in the stakeholder process.

***JS Rancourt, DXS – Direct Expansion Solutions, Representing the building electrification industry***

Rancourt asked about what technology assumptions were made and what engagement with manufacturing, building industry, would occur for inclusion in the ESMPs. Rancourt asked if this would be included in the stakeholder engagement. Chatterjee suggested that they could release a request for information similar to how Eversource gathers information relative to non-wire alternatives.

***Liz Anderson, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General***

Anderson acknowledged engagement with local communities is newer to the companies and recommends engaging with experts on how best to facilitate; recognized that the next GMAC meeting will discuss stakeholder engagement more in depth.

***Galen Nelson, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, Representing***

Nelson echoed Rancourt's comments and expressed a willingness to develop and support technologies that meet the needs of electric distribution companies and are aligned with the climate goals of the Commonwealth.

***Mrinmayee Kale (designee: Kathryn Cox-Arslan), Representing the distributed generation renewable energy industry***

Kale asked if the stakeholders for the technical sessions has been established. Commissioner Mahony stated that that was a topic for the next GMAC meeting.

***Rick Labrecque (designee: Sarah Broselin-Silver), Representing the energy storage industry***

Labrecque noted that it would be helpful to see a baseline of specific distributed energy resources (e.g. demand response, energy efficiency, electric vehicles, and batteries) included in section 4 before coverage of key drivers in the 5- to 10-year forecast included in section 5.

***Commissioner Mahony – Commissioner Department of Energy Resources (DOER)***

Commissioner Mahony asked the companies to include a summary of key challenges facing the distribution system given climate goals; stating this would be appropriate as a less technical overview for general public readability.

***Julie Curti, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Representing municipal or regional interests***

Curti asked for geospatial analysis of energy infrastructure to determine the impact on EJ communities. Chatterjee explained electric substations will be necessary in EJ communities for electrification. Curti clarified she was not advocating on NIMBY grounds, but from an EJ perspective and wanted to know which communities have borne that burden and which have not. Sedewitz underscored that substations will need to be sited in every community. Commissioner Mahony emphasized that this information would also be important in evaluating non-wire alternatives.

***Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, Representing the environmental advocacy community***

Murray emphasized his support for a section on key challenges facing distribution system recommended by Commissioner Mahony.

***Kathryn Wright, Barr Foundation, Representing the environmental justice community***

Wright asked the companies how they defined environmental justice and disadvantaged communities. Chatterjee explained they used the states EJ designation. Wright encouraged checking in with the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council Equity Working Group on how EJ communities are identified beyond definition. Chatterjee added that sections 9.7 and 11 plan to discuss incentive programs in areas that have hosting capacity and building out infrastructure, including in EJ communities.

***Liz Anderson, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General***

Anderson supported Curti's request for an energy infrastructure assessment.

## Final Meeting Minutes – Approved by GMAC

In the interest of time, Commissioner Mahony asked for any general comments before the conclusion of the GMAC meeting.

### ***Commissioner Mahony – Commissioner Department of Energy Resources (DOER)***

Commissioner Mahony asked companies if it was appropriate to address the practical nature of the distribution system planning included in the ESMPs. Commissioner Mahony stated that the Healey-Driscoll Administration is supportive of non-wire alternatives and virtual power plants where economical. Chatterjee explained that it split the 5-10 year planning from the 20-30 year in response to immediate concerns of the grid in the short-term and longer term planning. Sedewitz added that investments included in the ESMPs will already be considered on the grounds of constructability, feasibility, and viability.

### ***Liz Anderson, Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General***

Anderson acknowledged that the ESMPs should include upgrades to bulk distribution and transmission system and requested information on what transmission upgrades and associated costs as it will be a ratepayer impact. Chatterjee disagreed with inclusion of transmission and stated it submits this information to NEPOOL. Anderson clarified that the request was isolated to visibility into transmission necessitated by distribution system upgrades included in the ESMPs.

### ***Kevin Sprague, Representing Unitil***

Sprague asked if it was possible to get written comments from GMAC members within two weeks so a revised outline could be brought to the July GMAC meeting. Commissioner Mahony asked, with no objection, that GMAC members provide written feedback on ESMP outline to EDCs by June 28, 2023.

### ***Julie Curti, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Representing municipal or regional interests***

Curti asked if the electric distribution companies could provide a more detailed version of the outline which would include the context included in their presentation.

## **8. Close & Next Steps**

Commissioner Mahony explained the next steps (slide 14). The Executive Committee reconvenes virtually on June 30, 2023. The GMAC reconvenes on July 13, 2023 in hybrid mode.

Commissioner Mahony thanked the Council and closed the GMAC meeting at 4:02 p.m.

### **Meeting Materials:**

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides
- Executive Committee slides

## Final Meeting Minutes – Approved by GMAC

- Preread: ESMP-Relevant Proceedings and Working Groups - Version 2
- Preread: EDCs' ESMP Draft Outline - 06/01/23
- Public comments on EDCs' ESMP Draft Outline received by June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023.