

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC)
Executive Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 15, 2024, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Councilors Present: Liz Anderson for Kelly Caiazzo, Sarah Bresolin Silver, Sarah Cullinan, Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Kyle Murray

Non-voting Councilors: Carol Sedewitz (National Grid)

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

Consultants Present: Jennifer Haugh, Tim Woolf

Other Attendees: Digaunto Chatterjee (Eversource)

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, as chair, called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

2. Welcome, Roll Call, and Agenda

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony welcomed the group, took roll call, and went through the meeting agenda on slide 2.

3. GMAC Budget Review

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony presented slides 3 and 4 regarding the GMAC and its use of the consultants' time. She noted the inclusion of an operating budget for 2024; this is to keep open the possibility of more public meetings this year where we might need to host events in a publicly available space. This has been approved by the Department of Public Utilities (DPU).

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver, ENGIE North America, representing the energy storage industry: In terms of the DPU's order 23-98, is there more information in the docket about the breakdown of expenses?

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We filed a letter explaining the budget breakdown.

Sarah McDaniel, Legal Counsel for the Department of Energy Resources: There are some more detailed cost categories for what we anticipated for 2023 and 2024, and with our filing in August, we'll have to do a more detailed filing to show how the money was actually spent. Some of that may change, but the cost categories were more detailed in the letter.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: We are interested in hearing the Executive Committee's opinion in particular on the operating budget for public engagement. We're doing this for the first time and the feedback we've heard that the GMAC has provided a lot of good information to the public. Because these are such complicated plans and goals with a lot of technical detail, there's a lot of value in the GMAC continuing to provide information to the general public. So we have been thinking about the possibility of holding a stakeholder workshop in the fall, after the order is out, to talk about what was learned and what was approved, what the utilities have proposed, and how that fits into the general scope of essentially what we're doing in terms of policy development in Massachusetts. Would it make sense to have a day-long workshop to use this operating budget to hold something for the GMAC membership and also open it to the public to get into this? This doesn't have to be a full day; it could be a half-day. Just something more structured in terms of providing more information. I wanted to take it to this group to talk about the value of holding such an event.

Councilor Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, representing the environmental advocacy community: I have to admit the mention of a day-long event triggered a fight-or-flight response in me. But I see real value in that. It's a hobby horse for me to try and get more people involved in understanding grid modernization, so any regular or semi-regular events to get involved would be great, even for advocates and stakeholders.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: I agree that there is a lot of value in keeping people informed and explaining how everything fits together. I'm wondering if we can think about periodic touch points where it might be important to get people involved, and also to think some sort of short written document on the website where people could check out how everything fits together. I don't know what that looks like; it would have to be pretty high-level. Maybe that's something else we can think about too.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: A lot of what GMAC has talked about is community engagement, so I think to your point about regular engagement, we'll have to make sure that we are blending and balancing what the three EDCs are doing with how GMAC can fill in some gaps. I also like the idea of plain-language documents to help stakeholders understand what's going on.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, representing the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center: I appreciate how GMAC has taken on using consultant to

make information about DPU process available. I see this being as along the same lines: democratizing information and making it more widely available and accessible. After the order is filed is a good touch point, using that as a forum to introduce the findings of the order and what that means. But I was thinking of something Councilor Bresolin Silver said, building off idea of a written document: I wonder about making a video, and what that might cost, or creating other type of media that might be more easily digested or widely utilized than a written document. I'm just thinking about ways we can actually make it more accessible, even just making the basics more accessible. I also want to say that MassCEC and NECEC are doing an event series over the course of a couple months and the GMAC is invited to participate. One will be in September after the order is filed. This is not the same idea where there will be a broad effort to make information accessible; it's more about policy and planning strategies we can all be involved in in parallel to the ESMP process. Just wanted to put that out there of something else happening at the same time.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Regarding the video, we'll have to talk about a budget for that, but I'm just remembering back to when a time when the AG's office produced a video. It was not cheap, but I'll ask about the costs. I do like the concept because that's what we constantly hear. If we go back to the July meeting when Sophia Owen and the former DPU Commissioner spoke about equity and communicating with EJ communities, using visuals and different ways of communicating information is helpful. We'll have to think about that. It sounds like we're moving in a generally positive direction on putting together event in the fall, but we'll have time before then to get this group together and do another gut check with perhaps a more developed proposal to make sure that we're crafting this event in a way that makes it really useful.

4. 2024 GMAC Meeting Schedule

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony shared slide 5 on the upcoming GMAC meeting schedule.

Councilor Kyle Murray: Would it be possible to get calendar holes for these GMAC things again? I'm glad you just reminded me about the 28th because I need to shift a few things around.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony: Yes; we'll send out the February 28 meeting invitation again. The July meeting isn't set yet due to uncertainties around the DPU timeline, but we'll make sure that's settled and we'll send that out and send out a meeting poll. The September meeting may be another technical session / workshop, which would double as a GMAC meeting because we'd make that official. We'll continue to have Executive Committee meetings as needed; we'll schedule some for a couple, hopefully three, weeks in advance of the GMAC meetings. There are both Executive Committee and Equity Working Group meetings scheduled in March.

Liz Anderson for Kelly Caiazzo, Office of the Attorney General, representing the Office of the Attorney General: Also note that in terms of consultant presenting on ESMPs, we might want to fold in what's happening in the energy affordability proceeding. I think that will have an impact especially on Equity Working Group discussions.

5. Consultant Role

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony presented slide 6 on how the consultants are proceeding with the review of the filed ESMPs.

6. Equity Working Group Meeting Schedule

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony presented slide 7 on the Equity Working Group's plan moving forward in 2024.

7. Other Discussion Areas

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony indicated that this was Carol Sedewitz's last Executive Committee meeting. The GMAC will take a vote to ensure that her seat is filled on the Executive Committee moving forward. Mahony commended Sedewitz for her work with the GMAC. Sedewitz expressed her appreciation for and enjoyment with working with this team.

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony indicated that the DOER will send out calendar holds for upcoming meetings as soon as dates and times were settled through a scheduling poll. The scheduling poll will be sent out in early March.

8. Adjourn

Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer A. Haugh
GreenerU

Meeting attachments:

- Meeting agenda
- Presentation slides