

Grid Modernization Advisory Council (GMAC) Executive Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 21, 2024, 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Councilors Present: Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy (Chair), Sarah Bresolin Silver, Kyle Murray, Chris Modlish, Sarah Cullinan

Non-voting Councilors: Digaunto Chatterjee

DOER Staff Present: Julia Fox, Aurora Edington, Colin Carroll

Consultants Present: Tim Woolf, Kyle Schultz

1. Welcome, Roll Call, and Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 9:32 AM. Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy, as Chair, welcomed the group, took roll call, and went through the meeting agenda on slide 2.

2. GMAC Engagement

a. Building a Collaborative Inclusive Forum: GMAC Meeting Norms

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed GMAC meeting norms, and discussed the environment the GMAC wants to create, and the goals of the GMAC meetings. She discussed the ideas on slide 3 to achieve these meeting goals.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver, ENGIE North America, representing the energy storage industry: Thinks these are all good ideas. Meeting in person is the most valuable way to meet. Members attending virtually have done a good job of having cameras on. It's reasonable to ask people to come in person, to the extent that it's not an undue burden. Would like to think about an opportunity to talk to the consultants prior to meetings, especially when there's a big deliverable, recognizing the need to comply with Open Meeting Law.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy, Department of Energy Resources (DOER): Maybe hold some office hours? Consultants available for GMAC members to call them up.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan, Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, representing Massachusetts Clean Energy Center: I appreciate returning to meeting norms. Making this explicit to full GMAC can remind people to step back and allow others to speak. Polls are also a good idea. In terms of creating opportunities for collaboration outside of meetings, maybe we could have some 1:1 member meetings.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Reminder of Open Meeting Law: We cannot meet as a quorum (more than 8) without noticing it as a public meeting. GMAC members are welcome to speak to each other and the consultants. Agreed with Sarah Cullinan: It is unlikely that the GMAC will be able to discuss all the topics in these meetings, maybe small topical meetings to discuss is a good way.

Councilor Kyle Murray, Acadia Center, representing the environmental advocacy community: The Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC) holds office hours with consultants. Before meeting, consultants send out times you can book with them in advance of a meeting. Thinks office hours are a great idea.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: We can confirm with the EEAC and see what has worked and what hasn't. Any interest in a coffee hour?

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: Would attend. Suggests they are paired with the GMAC meetings. Could even be a "bagged lunch".

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Had discussed "field trips." Would have to be less than 8 members.

Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee, representing Eversource: Would welcome field trips. Underground network systems, underground distribution systems, substations. Transmission system is not an easy thing to pick up – how EDCs are thinking about transmission build out to enable ESMPs. Happy to do anything the GMAC members want. Would love to take members out into underground manholes.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Interested in small, optional group trips. This will help with GMAC member education. DOER is happy to coordinate with EDCs to facilitate.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: Great idea to do field trips. Also a good opportunity for photo ops, engagement, showing people that the GMAC exists.

Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee: Great opportunity to interact with line workers.

b. Doing Work that Members Care About: Spectrum of Engagement

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed the role of the GMAC, the statutory objectives of the GMAC, and how the GMAC fits into the overall picture. She discussed where the GMAC's role is along the spectrum of public participation on slide 4 and asked for Ex Com member's thoughts.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: Thinks the GMAC role goes up to "involve" on the spectrum of engagement.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Agrees that "involve" is a fitting role for the next couple of years. Maybe on a limited set of recommendations the GMAC role could move to "collaborate" or "empower".

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed how the consultants can support the achievement of the GMAC's goals in 2025. Will put office hours on the list. Noted that there is less of a need for consultants to sit in on every single related activity meeting, but if there is a hole, the GMAC can use consultants to fill it.

Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee: May be helpful to think of time allocation between the list of items on slide 5. Thinks items a) providing technical expertise on ESMPs, and b) providing information regarding best practices for grid mod in other states provide the most support/value.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin Silver: Thinks consultants have done a great job. Agrees a) and b) should be priority focus areas. Jurisdictional scan can take a long time, but that would be helpful. Would also prioritize f) providing recommendations on ESMP issues.

Councilor Chris Modlish, Office of the Attorney General, representing the Office of the Attorney General: Agrees with b) providing information regarding grid modernization in other states as an important priority for next year.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: Views the role of the consultants is to provide independent analysis and technical expertise but is not to provide recommendations to the GMAC. Would rather consultants function as an independent analyst, not to suggest where GMAC is headed.

Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee: Seconds Sarah's point. Should think about reactive vs proactive. *E.g.*, rate design. Focus on up-and-coming issues coming in front of the DPU, so the GMAC can get in front of the issues, instead of reacting. For rate design, bringing in experts, and having them discuss best practices in other jurisdictions.

Councilor Kyle Murray: Ideas on how to break down the silos – planning is happening in many different dockets. Would put it in b) category – are there other states who have achieved it better? On f) providing recommendations – recommendations can be helpful, but may limit imagination – *e.g.*, well these are the consultants' recommendations, so people may just go with those.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Hearing mixed feedback on consultants providing recommendations. Not a priority for the short-term anyways. Have heard feedback on priorities a) and b).

3. 2025 GMAC Plan

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed the GMAC goals on slide 6. She also reviewed the GMAC's key statutory objectives on slide 7 and noted that the goal is to create a workplan that will facilitate achievement of those objectives.

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: Thought we had conversation at the last GMAC about using the next year to be about balancing bringing people up to speed and being more involved in implementation. Thinks there's an opportunity to be a forum about things related to implementation.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed the Jan-July GMAC meeting topics and schedule on slide 8. She highlighted that DOER took the feedback from the last GMAC meeting and that DOER wanted to plan for only the next 6 months.

Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee: For each of these [topics] the EDCs are doing a lot. It would be helpful for GMAC members to really dive deep into what EDCs are doing (*e.g.*, NWA analysis, ESMP metrics, cost recovery, etc.) Wondered if there is room in the GMAC to hear from the EDCs about what they're doing?

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: When we talk about level setting, that's what we're talking about. How can we make sure the GMAC understands what's going on. Wants to rely on EDCs for their perspectives. Also wants to rely on consultants for their perspectives on best practices, what's happening in other states.

Councilor Chris Modlish: Who is giving presentations? Consultants? Using information provided by EDCs in advance and bringing in best practices from other jurisdictions?

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: When it's an EDC action, it makes sense for EDCs to present. Also using consultants. Wants to also call on GMAC members, and their areas of expertise.

Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee: Opportunity for GMAC to benefit from industry experts on things like mass transit electrification, building electrification. Doesn't see any time for that in the first 6 months, and that's ok, but wants to make sure we're thinking about it. Could bring in technical experts from Boston properties – they're doing a new building on Binney Street that is all air source heat pumps– could have them discuss what they've learned.

Councilor Kyle Murray: Integrated gas and electric planning being done in LTSPP? Isn't there supposed to be a proceeding about it?

Councilor Digaunto Chatterjee: EDCs working on it, not part of LTSPP.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Is everyone Ok with DOER and consultants moving forwards on this plan? (members generally assented)

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy discussed 3 options for stakeholder sessions.

Councilor Sarah Bresolin: Thinks most appropriate role is option 2 (GMAC conference)

Councilor Kyle Murray: Agrees with option 2. Coordinating with CEC/ NECC could be a good idea.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: Thinks focus of these would be slightly more public facing

Councilor Sarah Cullinan: Agrees option 2 feels appropriate. There's a need for distribution 101, but EDCs did do a lot of it initially. Technical deep dives: could be a lot of value but sees it as a different tool. Could be something after these first 6 months if we make more progress into GMAC as a forum for discussing various proceedings.

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy: We are thinking about doing 2, so maybe think about option 2 (GMAC conference) for first one, and perhaps something more technical for the second one. DOER will start thinking about building out a plan for the stakeholder session.

4. Draft Activity Tracker

Kyle Schultz (Synapse) gave an overview of the draft excel-based activity tracker.

Councilor Kyle Murray: Thinks tracker is helpful!

Sarah Bresolin: Thinks it's helpful. GMAC website does a good job with showing all the different GMAC meetings and documents. Thinks it's a "nice to have". Not a must-have.

Joanna Troy: Could be something we create internally. DOER can reassess if making it publicly available takes too much time relative to value.

5. Other Discussion Areas

How frequently should ExCom meet in 2025? Would bimonthly sufficient?

Kyle Murray: Bi-monthly seems sufficient.

Sarah Cullinan: Agrees with bi-monthly.

ExCom members generally agree with bi-monthly hourly meetings.

6. Close and Next Steps

Equity Working Group meeting is December 6, 2024. Next GMAC meeting is December 17, 2024, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

7. Adjourn

Deputy Commissioner Joanna Troy adjourned the meeting at 10:51 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kyle Schultz, Synapse

Meeting attachments:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation slides