

MVRF Advisory Committee  
Meeting date: 3/7/2023 – 9am – 11 am  
Location: Via Zoom

Attendees:

Laurie Burzlaff, Evan Silverio, Tennis Lilly, Anil Navkal . Ana Javier, Susan Almono, Evelyn Friedman, Joyce Losick, Abel Vargas.

DOER: Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Maggie McCarey, Alissa Whiteman, Danilo Morales.

AGO: ETD Chief Nate Forster, Adriana Bakhos, Jo Ann Bodemer.

DOER staff welcome Advisory Committee (AC) members and new DOER commissioner Elizabeth Mahony to the meeting.

Several AC members congratulated the new Commissioner and wishing her success in her new role.

ETD Chief Nathan Foster introduce Jo Ann Bodemer as the person who will take Elizabeth Mahony (Now Commissioner) at the AGO team.

DOER staff starts the meeting by presenting the feedback provided by the AC last December, and what actions the DOER and AGO are taking to address each item of this feedback.

Three categories of feedback were received from the AC:

1. Increase transparency.
2. Better onboarding to new AC members.
3. Frequency and length of the meetings.

Each category has specific sub items. Described below.

In terms of increasing transparency

DOER and AGO will share periodic updated spreadsheet with programs that includes budgets; share information on individual project metrics, contract benefits, work force composition of the projects, and maintain the MVRF website updated.

One request from some AC members was to record the meetings. Recording the meetings will help in different ways. For example, if an AC member misses a meeting, the recording can be shared. Or if someone in the community wants to know about the topics we talk during the meetings and how decisions are taken, having recordings would be a great way to increase transparency. Most AC members agreed to record this and future meetings to increase transparency.

In terms of better on boarding of new AC members

DOER and AGO also agreed to provided written and verbal information on MVRF- programs, and projects to new AC members; provide energy and other relevant glossary to AC members with less energy expertise backgrounds; use less acronyms during meeting or spell out.

In terms of meetings modality and frequency

AC agreed to have one-hour meetings every month. The meetings will be held in person and via zoom. There is a preference to have in person meetings during the summer and zoom meetings during the winter. Other considerations for in person meetings are weather conditions, and covid.

One AC member asked about clarifying roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee. The Commissioner and AGO staff clarified that based on the MOU the AC provides guidance. The selection of projects and grant recipients is decided by the DOER and AGO. However, all the decisions taken by AGO and DOER comeback to the guidance provided by the AC. Commissioner Mahony stated conversations and discussions with the AC are the buildings

blocks to the design of the MVRF programs. AGO and DOER stated that both offices are always open to feedback.

One AC member mentioned that Lawrence residents don't have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the AC. Some people in the Lawrence community may think the AC members have the power to pick projects and assign budgets. How or in what ways we can explain the roles and responsibilities of the AC to the Lawrence community? Another AC member added that in fact there is concerns in the community about the settlement agreement, adding that we have to find a way to ensure the community the funding from this Settlement Agreement is going to be use efficiently. There are expectations on how this settlement agreement is going to impact families in Lawrence.

Commissioner Mahony stated that we have talked about roles and responsibilities in the past within the AC. However, we haven't discussed how to share this information with the community, and asked the question to the AC on how we communicate better this information with the Lawrence community, how we do it? Adding that this will be a topic for a future AC meeting.

A Lawrence AC member shared that Mayor Brian De-Pena is pushing Massave to increase residents' participation in Massave programs at least 10 times more than current participation rates. Adding that Lawrence work and increased in client participation will impact the design of the Energy Efficiency Enrichment program.

Another AC member suggested to wait until AGO and DOER complete the design of the Enrichment Program, and the Workforce development program. After that we can communicate and share all this information with the Lawrence community. We can explain the community how these programs work, and how the AC meeting provided feedback to help designing these programs.

A DOER staff added that the feedback provided by the AC impacted the Enrichment Program PON, adding that the AC feedback is very important to design these programs.

Following the agenda another topic of discussion was the frequency of the meetings. Several AC members stated that knowing that the launching and implementation of the Enrichment Program is getting close, it makes sense to have meetings more frequently. However, these meetings could be shorter, one hour only. The majority of the AC members agree on having a one-hour meeting per month. DOER staff will send out a calendar invitation for future monthly meetings.

Regarding excel spreadsheet- program and budget updates provided by DOER to the AC. One AC member commented that the excel format is not easy to understand, not friendly to read it. Commissioner Mahony stated that we have an annual Status Report prepared for the DPU. This report is mostly written in word and easy to understand. DOER staff will share this report with AC. DOER staff add that we can use the spreadsheet to keep track of the budget, and we can add a status column where we update the AC.

Another AC member adds that excel is ok to present a snapshot of programs and budget.

One AC member asked how much money will be left after we launch the Enrichment Program, the Outreach PON and the workforce program? Commissioner Mahony and DOER staff explain that the max budget amount for the Enrichment Program is \$ 2,750,000. DOER still working on the outreach PON budget. AGO, still researching on workforce development. The AC will help to decide the amount allocated to the workforce program. Currently, there is \$ 17,300,000 left.

One AC asks when the Program Facilitator will be pick and announce, adding that the sooner the announcement the better. DOER staff respond that there is no clear date for announcement yet. Another AC member share that the DOER posted a different PON on commbuys, Massachusetts online procurement platform. It is a PON that contains energy efficiency, electrification

programs. This AC member asks if Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence communities are encouraged to apply to this PON? DOER staff responds the three communities are encouraged to apply to this PON. DOER staff will send the link to this PON on commbuys to all AC.

An Advisory Committee member asks what is the definition of Low and Moderate-Income (LMI) in the Enrichment Program? DOER staff responds this is not defined in the MOU, which gives us more flexibility to serve people and implement programs related with energy efficiency, barrier mitigation or solar energy in the Enrichment Program.

Other existing programs that can help us with the design of the Enrichment Program are the lean (low-income energy affordability network) program, and MasSave. Also understanding the capacity of cap agencies like ABCD (Action for Boston Community Development) and GLCAC (Greater Lawrence Community Action Council). A DOER staff member adds that there are federal funding coming that should be consider and it could be added later. Stating as a reminder the Enrichment Program will focus first on barrier mitigation and energy efficiency measures.

AC member mentions that solar maybe a way to help Lawrence community to reduce energy burdens. Also, adding that currently there are predatory solar companies signing residents into bad solar deals. AGO staff add that issues like this are solved between the consumer protection office and AGO. Adding that who is selected as Program Facilitator can help residents to select good and reliable contractors, including solar contractors. As a follow up in this issue, the City of Lawrence will forward memo with solar complains to Commissioner Mahony, and she will help with that.

One AC member asked who is the consumer protection officer for the Merrimack Valley area? The AGO will follow up and confirm who is the person in charge of the Merrimack Valley area.