MA Statewide EE Database Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Friday April 4, 2014, 1:30pm – 3:00pm
100 Cambridge Street, 2ⁿᵈ floor, Conference Room B

Attendees: Christina Halfpenny (DOER), Matt Saunders (AG), Christina Dietrich (ENE), Nancy Seidman (DEP), Brad Swing (Boston), Bob Rio (AIM), John Howat (NCLC), Debra Hall (DHCD), Amy Vavak (MECA), Eric Winkler (ISO), Shaela Collins (Rich May), Monica Cohen (Columbia Gas), Lynn Westerlind (National Grid), Lisa Shea (NU), Mary Downes (Unitil), Margaret Song (Cape Light), Alex Papali (GJC),Leo Steidel (Energy Platforms), Mike Myser (Energy Platforms), Eric Belliveau (Optimal), Jeff Schlegel (Consultant), Michael Blasnik (Consultant), Steve Bower (Optimal), Steven Venezia (DOER), Ian Finlayson (DOER), Lawrence Masland (DOER), Sharon Weber (DEP), Ben Davis (DPU), Barry Perlmutter (DPU), Jeff Leupold (DPU), Cara Mottola (DPU)

Tina welcomed all, and introduced Ben Davis of the DPU.

Tina summarized the current status of the database project: that a near final draft of the Vision Statement for the statewide database was distributed. We have had robust discussions in the working group and subcommittee meetings. We are addressing the critical elements of creating a functional database. Tina stated that the EEAC currently can't do what we need to do with the data we have. We cannot adequately perform planning and verification functions.

The vision document will go to the EEAC in May, asking for the approval of the specification. We are very close to having a final specification. That will complete phase 1 of the subcommittee mandate. Tina then asked each of the voting subcommittee members to comment on the current documents:

Matt said there will not be consensus in the working group. The PAs have issues that will not get addressed in this process. The DPU has to weigh in on this and the sooner the better. The tone of the PAs comments says that we can ask for things but they don't have to give them to us.

Bob said the database shouldn't give us data we don't need. The baseline has to be just energy efficiency data. The database shouldn't be for collecting data for the EPA & the Global Warming Solutions Act.

Debra said that in thinking about what the future would be like, she attended the EM&V webinar yesterday and everything was 2011 data, why couldn't it be current data with analytical tools? It is important to get the database right so it can be vibrant. I like the vision statement a lot, but look forward to the database bringing us up to the point where we can plan in real time with real data.

Shaela stated that customer level data is a problem for the PAs. She is happy to talk about what data you need. There are legal obstacles to getting this data. We don't share the vision.

EricW stated that ISO has no position on the database. They are supportive of the efforts and will offer support in anyway it can.

Brad stated support for the vision statement. Boston is interested for its own improvement of the Renew Boston program and sees broad and growing interest from cities and towns, and agrees with collecting project/site and measure data. As a participant in the process he agrees with Matt on the fundamental issue of having the DPU weigh in.

Christina D is eager to see a database out there with more recent data. That will be very helpful.

Nancy Seidman said DEP supports the existence of the Database. The Vision Statement is well put together. MA needs greater transparency and accountability for the level of effort involved in our energy efficiency programs.

John stated that for the low income network energy efficiency programs are very important. He is supportive of data-driven analysis to improve program design, help with outreach efforts, and he sees real value in developing a database tool. Transparency is important. There is an inherent conflict between privacy and transparency. Hopefully the DPU can come to resolution of that conflict.

Tina said that the value goes to the highest level of success. For example in measuring participants and market saturation levels. The current datasets don't tell us what participation numbers are. We don't have project/site/measure data to compare against usage. That is a critical piece of data. How many people have taken advantage of the energy efficiency programs, we need to count more than just widgets.

Shaela stated that just because participants is not well defined, doesn't mean the statewide database will solve that.

Lynn said that if saturation and penetration are important we should move that up in the Vision statement. If that is an objective it should be clearly articulated. Are we going broader and deeper…if so, the database would help. Add that as an objective.

EricW said that we still have not seen the basis of the database, and how is it intended to be used? We need the attribution of the stakeholders, we have never seen any product requests. We need to have a separate process to determine what information is appropriate to publish. What are the types of questions that can be answered?

Shaela said we should identify what we want to answer, let us know, and we'll take care of it. You do not have the authority to require access to confidential data.

Barry and EricW talked about the need to define the purposes of the database.

Jeff suggested that the DPU would like to hear a concise statement of what kind of help DPU can give. All of the stakeholders should weigh in on the request. Undertaking privacy concerns may be difficult, we have a full plate in 2014 and need to prioritize.

Ben said the department has a grid modernization docket which has been broken into several other dockets. One of these addresses privacy of usage data. We don't need to address that until we get the meters in, not for several years. But the timing here is different. We need staff to think about this and bring it back to the commission. Is the area of disagreement around privacy? Are there other issues? DPU has the authority, making sure customer data is protected. Or is there more? Is it both privacy and access.

Shaela stated she thinks it's both.

Tina said that if we go to the DPU we want to resolve the issue and not find another roadblock.

EricW said that you cannot build a data system if you don't know how it's going to be used. What is the data you think you need? It is a public database and sensitive. You need an explicit reason to build the database.

Brad said that the questions go beyond privacy. Does EEAC have the authority to ask questions of all PA programs? We need to use the data the way Tina describes to determine whether we are achieving all cost effective EE, not EricW.

EricW said that to determine all cost effective, compare potential to actual. Populate the database with census data. Penetration requires a much broader dataset.

Ben stated that the DPU is sensitive to respecting the EEAC, and not to step until we have some official ask. Some thought about a role for the DPU. We will talk with the commissioners to put their heads together and come back. The subcommittee should put together a concise statement of this group regarding privacy and scope.

Tina said we can do that, we are not that far off. We can at least figure out where we want the DPU involvement. We will commit to that. The progress we have made, while frustrating at times, is significant. Thanks for everyone's help.

Tina adjourned the meeting.