MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 18, 2019
1 Ashburton Place, Plaza Level
Ashburton Café Conference Room
Boston, MA 02108

Councilors Present: Greg Abbe (for Janelle Chan), Don Boecke (for Maura Healey), Amy Boyd, Cindy Arcate, Mary Downes (for Cindy Carroll), Elizabeth Cellucci, Tim Costa (for Victoria Rojo), Justin Davidson, Maggie Downey, Mary Wambui, Paul Gromer, Frank Gundal (for Tilak Subrahmanian), Charlie Harak, Elliott Jacobson, Paul Johnson, Judith Judson, Deirdre Manning, Audrey Penna (for Michael Sommer), Cammy Peterson, Marie Abdou (for Chris Porter), Robert Rio, Stephanie Terach, Sharon Weber (for Martin Suuberg), Joseph Dorfler (for Maura Healey)

Councilors Absent: Michael Ferrante, Rick Malmstrom, Andrew Newman

Consultants Present: Eric Belliveau, Margie Lynch, Adrian Caesar

DOER Staff Present: Maggie McCarey, Emily Powers, Ian Finlayson, Rachel Evans

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Judson, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:15 PM.

2. Council Updates & Business

EEAC Technical Consultant Procurement
Belliveau provided an overview of the technical consultants (C-Team) contract extension and proposed workplan. Prior to voting on the contract, Harak asked about the need for strategic planning described on Page 3 of the workplan and what that will entail during the remainder of the extended contract period. Belliveau responded that the planning would include incorporating current thoughts and strategies into the 2020 planning cycle. Boyd made a motion to approve the extended C-Team contract. Jacobson seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed. The contract was approved, as submitted, by the Council.
Commissioner Judson described a proposal to begin tracking Council priority status, as well as the extent to which Council actions align with the goals that have been set. McCarey added that this idea was a product of feedback from the survey previously administered to Council members; McCarey and Commissioner Judson believed that performing a formal lookback on the year would help hold the Council accountable to meeting its priorities.

3. Residential Program Updates

*Introduction to Residential Program Updates*
Stephan Wollenburg and Katelyn Mazuera, representing National Grid and Eversource respectively, provided background and context around plan decisions, updates on program enhancements and overall strategy. Following this introduction, Bob Eckel of Eversource and Leah Berger of Columbia Gas discussed Residential Coordinated Delivery (RCD). Optimizing the customer experience, maximizing pathways for customer engagement, and coordination with other initiatives were some of the focal points of the presentation.

*Council Discussion of Residential Program Updates*
Dorfler questioned how new and historical Residential data would now be compared given the novel Residential Sector segmentation. Eckel replied that having facility-level data will allow them to map the old segments to the newly defined segments and adequately compare data from any period. Wollenburg indicated that the new segmentation will allow for clearer analysis of trends in multifamily data and other housing types.

Boyd praised the presentation, particularly the inclusion of barriers to customer engagement and discussion about how to circumvent them. She asked how the online assessments and other data being collected can allow program administrators (PA’s) to track the continued customer journeys through different pathways. Wollenburg responded that comparing consumer data collected in Home Energy Assessments (HEA’s) or online assessments can highlight opportunities for improving customer experiences. Before recommending this data strategy to other PA’s, Wollenburg stated that they must first garner actionable insights and prove it is an effective technique.

Abbe thanked the presenters and commented that including the data from all PA’s in trend analysis would be helpful for illustrating patterns; the Bulbs per HEA analysis, for example, could have been more informative if it contained data from PA’s other than National Grid. He added that in order to become customers’ trusted energy advisors, PA’s need to consider all touchpoints, because one negative experience at a certain point can taint customer trust in PA’s. Abbe continued by asking whether the homes identified as having weatherization barriers could also be targeted for offering free barrier removal as long as they agree to accepting weatherization assistance. Eckel replied that since they do have data on these households, the PA’s can implement that targeted approach Abbe suggested.

Wambui stated that she appreciated the focus on renters in the presentation, but felt that the PA’s still need to go beyond energy savings packages in the future in order to achieve deeper savings and equity goals. She added that the decision-making dynamic in renter/multifamily buildings necessitates a model that will increase landlord engagement. Wollenburg answered that the
landlord engagement issue will not be easy to address, but there are strategies in place such as direct marketing of energy efficiency programs that are meant to stimulate landlord involvement. Manning expressed similar sentiments to Wambui, and suggested that PA’s should increase transparency around measure costs and costs of labor to help customers make informed decisions.

Peterson indicated that it would be helpful to understand the final outcome of these enhancements, what projections are, and how performance of the enhancements will be tracked. Additionally, she said that energy savings packages may be harmful to continued customer engagement with programs since some customers may get complacent after implementing measures in the packages. Berger responded that the energy packages can offer quick efficiency solutions while PA’s work on the back end to push deeper savings measures. Harak was very pleased that the conversion rate increased, and suggested that regular reports about program changes and their impacts on achieved savings would be useful for tracking program success.

Davidson mentioned that about 60 percent of Americans do not have $500 in emergency savings, and asked if the PA’s have researched cost barriers that may also hinder customer participation. Wollenburg answered that evaluations such as nonparticipant and market income characterization studies can shed more light on the potential effect of cost barriers. Berger added that the PA’s need to provide comprehensive offerings and assessments, which is why they incorporate marketing of other measures and programs into the visits that are conducted. Combining home inspections with HEA’s could streamline the process and expedite the actual implementation of measures.

**Customer Assistance with HVAC**
Kyle Svendsen of Eversource described HVAC customer pathways including RCD, self-directed, and contractor-driven routes, as well as a hybrid approach that could incorporate all of the involved components. Melanie Coen of National Grid outlined the various residential retail offerings, where the goal was to provide convenient services to customers through multiple channels. Some of the enhancements she disclosed were instant rebates, custom energy savings packages, and streamlining of rebate promotion.

**Council Discussion on Residential HVAC Program Enhancements**
Lynch appreciated the data included in the presentation and said the program enhancements bode well for increasing customer participation. She added that she would like to see the different channels through which HVAC customers come, since a high percentage come through retail and roughly 20 percent come through assessments. She emphasized the importance of integrated controls and quality installation to the success of heat pumps and other efficient HVAC measures.

Weber also praised the clarity of data and visuals included in the presentation, especially the matrix for energy optimization and HVAC checklist for customers. She asked whether graphics like these would be made publicly available. Commissioner Judson also asked if the PA’s were doing separate marketing to drive people to this information, which would help them make more informed decisions. Svendsen indicated that the recommendation matrix and other useful
illustrations should be included in the online calculator that they are planning to launch in order to facilitate transparency. In response to Commissioner Judson’s inquiry, Svendsen added that customers are currently driven to the rebate pages specific to the equipment they are considering, but once the online tools are launched the marketing will direct them to the Mass Save website. Peterson asked if there will be opportunity to include greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts in the curriculum they are currently offering to customers. She also wanted an explanation for the removal or modification of early retirement rebates. Svendsen responded that once the online calculator is launched, then GHG impacts can definitely be included. Coen added that the early retirement rebates were combined with the replace on failure incentive, and that the value for the combination is now less than it was when early retirement was a standalone incentive.

Abbe asked what percentage of HEA’s that are conducted are associated with heat loan applications, since the HEA requirement was removed from the heat loan application process. Svendsen replied that this was done to expedite the process and reduce the number of visits required to actually provide heat loans, but the PA’s still promote HEA’s; they want to avoid missing out on providing comprehensive services just to circumnavigate one small roadblock. Abbe also asked about the security around custom energy savings packages. Coen stated that there is not currently a security system in place to prevent customers from ordering excessive measures; for now, they assume customers are honest with their answers. Follow-up surveys will be administered to gauge if the measures are working and are being properly installed.

Boyd inquired about what steps PA’s are taking to ensure continued customer participation in weatherization and HVAC pathways. Svendsen answered that immediate customer needs are met, then different initiatives and offerings are marketed to them. The benefits of assessments and weatherization are promoted when contractors work with customers.

Johnson suggested that implementation of HVAC measures can undermine weatherization programs, and asked what percentage of HVAC customers proceed to perform weatherization improvements. Svendsen said that they did not currently have that data, but they typically target these customers for weatherization work. Johnson asked what incentives are provided for energy specialists who recommend measures to customers. Svendsen answered that PA’s are considering how to incentivize this, but it may be up to vendors to provide incentives here. Belliveau asked what level of assistance customers receive when they actually make decisions using the online calculator and energy specialists. Svendsen said that conversations with energy specialists regarding their preferences and priorities and the use of the online calculator will provide cost guidance and aid in the decision-making process.

Commissioner Judson recommended that the flow charts contained in the presentation should be made publicly available since they could greatly facilitate customer understanding of the different pathways. She added that videos and other interactive materials to facilitate transparency should be considered as well; consumer uncertainty could be a participation barrier itself.

**Hard-to-Reach Segments**
Amanda Formica and Brianna Kane, representing National Grid and Cape Light Compact respectively, provided definitions of hard-to-reach consumer segments, including limited English
proficiency (LEP), moderate income, and renting customers. They also described the strategies meant to increase penetration in these segments and linguistic trends that have been observed the past few years, which have guided marketing efforts. Kane expressed her appreciation of the Council members who previously discussed landlord engagement as a challenge that needs to be addressed.

**Council Discussion on Hard-to-Reach Segments**
McCarey, speaking on behalf of Peterson who left written comments with McCarey prior to departing the meeting, noted that Peterson was optimistic about the community partnerships program, and wants to see ten or more community partnerships during the first implementation year so the Councils and PA’s can improve upon them. She also urged PA’s to engage with trusted voices and organizations in communities and focus on workforce development and municipal facility upgrades.

Wambui was glad that Formica and Kane mentioned lack of equity in energy efficiency programs as a key issue of this age. She strongly suggested that Massachusetts addresses the equity issue if the state wants to maintain its number one energy efficiency ranking in the future. Wambui found the non-English speaking customer language breakdown to be very helpful, but suggested that one missing component to the community partnerships is involvement of environmental justice groups. She indicated that integrating these groups in energy efficiency programs will be challenging, so PA’s must be creative about how they get them involved.

**Wrap Up**
Wollenburg and Mazuera summarized the content that was presented, as well as key areas of focus and challenges moving forward.

Lynch said that the PA presentation included great improvements and did a good job of including all customer, commonwealth, and contractor perspectives in the program designs. She added that everyone must be ready to handle the decline in claimable lighting savings. Belliveau continued to say that the metrics used to track performance in the future will be key to continuous improvement of program design. Weber concurred with the comments from Lynch and Belliveau.

Abbe suggested that the PA’s strike a balance between facilitating customer autonomy and providing them with meaningful guidance, since misinformation could lead to poor decision-making. Wollenburg replied that the strategy will be to incorporate consumer preferences in the process to optimize their experiences. Abbe added that the current climate crisis necessitates immediate action, so PA’s should have a sense of urgency about implementing changes. Kane answered that programs will be optimized as they roll them out, and PA’s will administer any modifications that will improve program performance as quickly as possible.

Boyd thanked Abbe for bringing up the climate challenge and expressed excitement about the community partnerships initiative. She encouraged PA’s to scale them up rapidly and make provisions to help communities without energy efficiency expertise participate. Boyd also said that continuous improvements of programs over time will be the biggest contributor to adjusting to less claimable lighting savings. On the same topic, she asked what metrics are embedded in
measuring the success of the programs that were discussed. Wollenburg indicated that the metrics of program performance stem from those included in the energy efficiency plans and the Green Communities Act; he added that the nonparticipant study will provide a good baseline for gauging program progress over time.

McCarey suggested that there are goals in the efficiency plan that must be met to set a foundation for future success. She added that EM&V will be critical for evaluating program performance as soon as possible.

4. **Adjournment**

Commissioner Judson, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 5:08 PM.