



MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 27, 2021
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Councilors Present: Greg Abbe (for Jennifer D Maddox), Cindy Arcate, Jo Ann Bodemer (for Maura Healey), Amy Boyd, Cindy Carroll, Tim Costa, Eugenia Gibbons (for Mary Wambui), Paul Gromer, Justin Davidson, Maggie Downey, Frank Gundal, Charlie Harak, Elliott Jacobson, Paul Johnson, Jane Lano, Maggie McCarey (Chair), Cammy Peterson, Chris Porter, Robert Rio, Stephanie Terach, Dennis Villanueva, Sharon Weber (for Martin Suuberg)

Councilors Absent: Michael Ferrante, Deirdre Manning, Andrew Newman

Consultants Present: Eric Belliveau, Adrian Caesar, Jeff Schlegel

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

1. Call to Order

McCarey, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

2. Public Comment

Emily Jones (LISC)

Jones asked the EEAC to consider recommendations on high performance new construction, deep energy retrofits, strategic electrification, and equitable workforce development. Jones suggested passive house incentive and training programs should be developed for 1-4-unit households. To meet 2030 Clean Energy and Climate Plan goals, Jones said a passive house deep retrofit incentive program and revision of LEAN retrofit program to provide up to \$40,000 per unit would be necessary. Jones supported the passive house recommendation to incentivize central electric hot water heating in multifamily buildings. On equitable workforce development, Jones recommended \$12 million of annual spending on training, education, job placement, and grants. Lastly, Jones suggested that achieving carbon emission reduction goals, benefit-cost analysis needs to capture the full societal benefits of carbon reduction and Global Warming Solutions Act non-compliance.

Lawrence Lessard (NEGPA)

Lessard called from an installation site where a ground source heat pump (GSHP) was replacing a fossil fuel heating system. Lessard provided recommendations to the program administrators (PAs), the first of which was updating the Massachusetts Technical Reference Manual (TRM) to accurately capture all GSHP benefits across all sectors. Next, Lessard urged the PAs to set benchmarks for GSHP installations in the 2022-2024 Plan and include them as a component of strategic electrification efforts. Lessard also suggested the PAs include low- and moderate-income specific GSHP strategy since they have low operation and maintenance costs, good air filtration, and quiet operating sound relative to other electric heating systems. Lessard requested that NYPA participate in a technical session with the Council’s Consultant Team (C-Team) to GSHP inputs in the TRM.

Jane Carbone (Homeowner’s Rehab)

Carbone supported LEAN program revisions that would accommodate more deep energy retrofits in existing and newly constructed affordable housing. Carbone added that the LEAN program revisions should compliment the passive house program so existing market rate buildings will qualify given they do not meet LEAN eligibility requirements. Carbone noted that deep energy retrofits will be needed in all building types to meet climate goals, and this will not be possible without market transformation driven by Mass Save programs. Carbone urged the Council to adopt the recommendations provided by Jones on behalf of LISC. In addition, Carbone noted Homeowner’s Rehab attributed substantial greenhouse gas reductions to tracked deep energy retrofit projects.

Hank Keating (Passive House Massachusetts)

Keating sponsored some of the suggestions made by Jones and Carbone, and emphasized that many would not be cost-effective under current tests. Keating said the recent climate bill vetoed by Governor Baker included language that would have led to the inclusion of carbon reduction social benefits in cost-effectiveness screening. Keating indicated the bill would be resubmitted by the Senate, and the Council should consider modifying benefit-cost testing.

3. Council Updates & Business

Virtual Meeting Procedure Review

McCarey reviewed the virtual EEAC meeting procedures, which included the following:

1. The Council meetings would be recorded.
2. All attendees except for Councilors and presenters would remain muted for the duration of the meeting.
3. Councilors would hold comments until the end of presentations, but Councilors and other participants should speak instead of using any chat functionality.
4. Councilors who disconnect from meetings need to announce when they rejoin.
5. All Council votes would be taken by a roll call for accuracy.

Energy Efficiency Guidelines Update

McCarey announced that the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) opened an investigation on Docket No. 20-150 regarding the Energy Efficiency Guidelines. McCarey said initial comments were submitted, reply comments were due next week, and the documents could be found in the online DPU file room.

September EEAC Meeting Minutes

Weber motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Arcate seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The minutes were approved, as submitted, by the Council.

October Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Boyd motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Jacobson seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The minutes were approved, as submitted, by the Executive Committee.

October EEAC Meeting Minutes

Abbe commented that he should be listed as designee for Jennifer Maddox. Tim Costa commented he should be listed as the Council representative for ISO-New England, instead of designee for Victoria Rojo. Weber motioned to approve the minutes as amended. Arcate seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The minutes were approved, as amended, by the Council.

November Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Boyd motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Jacobson seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The minutes were approved, as submitted, by the Executive Committee.

November EEAC Meeting Minutes

Abbe commented that he should be listed as designee for Jennifer Maddox. Tim Costa commented that he should be listed as the Council representative for ISO-New England, instead of designee for Victoria Rojo. Villanueva noted that he should be listed as a Council member for the November Council meeting. Weber motioned to approve the minutes as amended. Arcate seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The minutes were approved, as amended, by the Council.

December Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Boyd motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Jacobson seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The minutes were approved, as submitted, by the Executive Committee.

4. Executive Committee Candidate Statements and Vote

Each Executive Committee candidate provided a statement for appointment to their desired Executive Committee Seat. McCarey clarified that there would be a vote for each open Seat even if there was only one candidate.

Discussion and Vote – Environmental Seat

Arcate motioned to appoint Amy Boyd to the Executive Committee Environmental Seat. Peterson seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. Amy Boyd was appointed to the Environmental Seat on the Executive Committee.

Discussion and Vote – Commercial & Industrial Seat

Johnson motioned to appoint Dennis Villanueva to the Executive Committee Commercial & Industrial Seat. Rio seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. Dennis Villanueva was appointed to the Commercial & Industrial Seat on the Executive Committee.

Discussion and Vote – Residential Seat

McCary was glad to have two qualified candidates in Greg Abbe and Elliott Jacobson, and stated that the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) would abstain from voting on the Executive Committee Residential Seat unless there was a tie.

Gundal, on behalf of the PAs, said LEAN provides several unique perspectives given their long history of implementation, background in equity, and experience beyond energy efficiency programs. Gundal indicated that LEAN has been a strong partner for the PAs.

Weber wanted to verify that there were no term limits for Executive Committee or Council members. McCary confirmed that there were no term limits in the Executive Committee Charter and Council Bylaws.

Johnson said he has learned to appreciate Jacobson’s work, perspectives, and sense of humor over the years. Johnson commented that he values the questions and comments Abbe frequently poses.

Vote – Residential Seat

Arcate motioned to vote for the Executive Committee Residential Seat. Weber seconded. Abbe, Arcate, Johnson, Peterson, and Gibbons voted in favor of Greg Abbe. Davidson, Bosco, Jacobson, and Rio voted in favor of Elliott Jacobson. Bodemer, Boyd, McCary, Villanueva, and Weber abstained. Greg Abbe was appointed to the Residential Seat on the Executive Committee.

5. 2021 Council Priorities Review and Vote

Council Discussion

Gibbons believed that Priority #2 was not as fleshed out as others, so the equity work planned for 2021 should be described in greater detail. McCary said the Equity Working Group (EWG) has developed detailed recommendations for the equity efforts in 2021 and the 2022-2024 Plan. Peterson suggested that current efforts, such as the municipal partnerships, could be described in the priorities to provide better context. McCary said the language could be modified to reflect current efforts being carried out to promote equity.

Weber was concerned the electric vehicle (EV) charging station pilots would not be closed by the end of 2021 to inform which PA model would be best for full program launch in 2022. McCary said it would make sense to include the EV charging station pilots with the Active Demand Management items included in Priority #1.

Peterson commented that the introductory paragraph of the Priorities successfully captured key issues impacting program planning and implementation, like COVID-19. Peterson added that populations more susceptible to negative COVID-19 and climate change impacts should be addressed in the language. Boyd recommended that customers most adversely impacted by extreme summer and winter temperatures should be called out as well. Peterson also suggested the language in Priority #3 should set the expectation of a draft Plan in September unless the Council deems it unnecessary.

Johnson agreed that a draft Plan and Term Sheet should be complete in September, and recommended the Term Sheet and benefit-cost models are also complete to provide sufficient time for review for before voting. McCarey said the Term Sheet would be subject to any changes stemming from revisions of the September draft Plan. Lyne indicated the term sheet is not statutorily required, so there is no guarantee all the PAs would agree to this recommendation. Boyd said the Term Sheet was useful for reaching an agreement on the Plan in advance of the October filing deadline, but the priority should be on having a robust draft Plan in September.

Arcate recommended that changes between Plan drafts are highlighted or summarized for clarity on what suggestions were actually adopted in the text. McCarey said the PA response to changes suggested in the July Resolution would be included as an attachment, so the changes from the April Plan draft could also be summarized in the September Plan draft. Johnson said the PAs constructed a list of changes based on Council recommendations in a previous planning cycle, so this could be very helpful.

Gibbons said the PAs should track changes between April and September Plan drafts, and include detailed explanations of significant changes. Boyd replied that the September draft is highest priority above all; in addition, the April Plan draft was essentially a placeholder during the previous planning cycle, so tracking changes to September would be inefficient. Boyd agreed with Arcate that a summary of changes would be most effective. Weber stated that sharing a Plan draft with tracked changes would be simple, so those who think it would not be helpful could review the version without tracked changes.

Villanueva highlighted the importance of Council recommendations being incorporated into the final Plan, which is why the status of whether recommendations are included in the Plan should be documented. Gibbons agreed with Villanueva, and said language requesting the Term Sheet in September if possible should be included in the Priorities. McCarey said the February resolution typically asks PAs to respond to the recommendation and provide explanations for each. Belliveau indicated the last Plan draft did include explanations for the omission of any recommendations. Lyne said preparing a matrix of all 158 Council Plan recommendations before April would require substantial workload, so he would discuss it with PA staff. McCarey responded that the April draft should explain the omitted recommendations in some capacity. Gibbons said the goal is to ensure the PAs are carrying the Council recommendations throughout the entire planning process.

2021 Council Priorities Vote

Peterson motioned to approve the 2021 Council Priorities as amended. Boyd seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The 2021 Council Priorities were approved, as amended, by the Council.

6. Consultant Team 2021 Workplan Vote

Belliveau presented the 2021 C-Team workplan and budget, which focuses heavily on the Three-Year Planning process, PA potential study review, Consultant Assessment of Potential, and continued program implementation oversight. Belliveau also noted that Crystal Johnson, who specializes in equity and low-income programs, would be joining the C-Team, while Jeff Schlegel would be taking on a reduced role.

Council Discussion

Johnson said the key drivers process should be done earlier in the year. Belliveau said this process cannot occur until more granular Plan data becomes available after April. Johnson asked Belliveau to explain the strategic evaluation plan. Belliveau indicated that this is the standalone EM&V plan appended to the draft Plan which details recommended evaluation studies and available funding. Johnson said the Council should weigh in on the EM&V process, as it seems studies are often repeated, or their results are not informative. Johnson suggested that review and analysis of programs in other jurisdictions should be an ongoing process. Belliveau said this underlined many of the C-Team whitepapers and presentations leading up to the Planning process, as many of the ideas from other jurisdictions were brought forward. Belliveau added reviewing other jurisdictions' programs is an ongoing process, but that analysis is not always formally presented to all stakeholders. McCarey referenced recent research the C-Team conducted on income verification strategy in other states.

Peterson said a workshop on how cost-effectiveness screening is applied throughout plan development would be useful. Belliveau replied that the C-Team would be happy to walk through benefit-cost models, measure characterization, and EM&V impacts on the cost-effectiveness screening. McCarey noted that if any substantive Council discussion occurs during the web meeting, then there would need to be a quorum. Belliveau said they should revisit this in April in preparation for the release of benefit-cost models.

Consultant Team 2021 Workplan Vote

Johnson motioned to approve the Consultant Team 2021 Workplan. Arcate seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The Consultant Team 2021 Workplan was approved, as submitted, by the Council.

7. Behavior Programs

Program Administrator Presentation

Wollenburg, Findlay, Kane, Carroll, Terach, and Berelli provided a summary of each PA's Behavior programs strategy during the current program implementation cycle, improved Behavioral approaches, and program features PAs are considering.

Consultant Team Feedback

Lynch appreciated the presentation of new approaches to Behavior programs, hoping they would be in place for the April Plan draft. Lynch noted that Behavior programs are a significant stream of savings, representing about 60% of planned annual electric savings for Eversource in 2021. Additionally, Lynch identified an opportunity for process improvements including more proactive engagement of Behavior strategy and opportunity to evaluate different approaches, especially for smaller PAs facing cost-effectiveness challenges.

Council Discussion

McCarey was impressed by National Grid's customization and data-driven marketing included in their program. McCarey also wondered if cost-effectiveness challenges faced by smaller PAs were due to an absence of customer savings or difficulty in measuring and verifying customer savings in those territories.

Gibbons asked how difference in service territory may be impact cost-effectiveness, and whether a mid-term modification (MTM) would be required to make proposed changes to Behavior programs. Gibbons was also interested in understanding what barriers customers face that may prevent them from implementing behavior recommendations.

Boyd recommended all the PAs file a MTM to implement changes to Behavior programs. Boyd felt the Council needs much more information to assess each different approach, and how Behavior program benefit-cost ratios could be improved. Weber also recommended a MTM be filed.

Johnson agreed that a MTM may be required, and also suggested the Opower method should be evaluated before moving to other approaches. Johnson wondered what percentage of customers have email addresses in PA databases. Wollenburg indicated they do not have email addresses for all customers, but there are modules that encourage sharing email addresses to allow for electronic communications. Johnson said mailing behavior recommendations may be more effective than bill inserts or emails, so this should be explored before changing program approaches. Wollenburg said some of the challenges are related to PA service territories, but they are exploring different communication channels.

Abbe asked to what extent the presence of bill inserts or other outreach methods have driven customers to other Residential programs compared to the absence of such outreach. Wollenburg responded that this can be measured to some extent electronically, but participation in other programs would not attribute those savings to Behavior programs. McCarey said this should be explored in cost-effectiveness screening. Abbe noted that Baltimore Gas and Electric experienced much higher Behavior savings when customers' energy use was compared to that of their neighbors using the Opower method in 2010, so Behavior programs can encourage participation.

Arcate asked if some spending on Behavior programs could be included in marketing budgets, especially to help smaller PAs overcome cost-effectiveness challenges. Carroll said they will examine this moving forward, especially if the value of home energy reports is promoting participation in other programs.

Villanueva was surprised that Behavior programs made up 60% of the Eversource planned 2021 savings, especially as it related to failed cost-effectiveness screening for smaller PAs. Villanueva asked how Behavior program savings were measured and verified. Lynch reiterated this was included in the 2021 plan filed in 2018. Lynch added that Behavior savings mainly contribute to annual savings due to the 1-year measure life applied to Behavior programs. Findlay said their program was cost-effective and delivering savings, but they determined they would fall behind without Behavioral innovation moving forward. Findlay added that there are customers with much savings potential that have not been reached. Lynch asked where Columbia Gas customers stand. Findlay said they would be included in Behavior initiatives once their account information becomes available.

Peterson said a MTM is necessary, so additional discussion and data exploration will be needed to allow Council input. For smaller PAs, Peterson suggested reconsidering benefits and savings are attributed so they can overcome cost-effectiveness challenges. Peterson also agreed with Abbe that comparisons to neighbors can be a motivating factor for customers.

McCarey said the Executive Committee and PAs will discuss the proposed MTM and draft a proposed Resolution before the February Council meeting. Boyd said whether or not an MTM is necessary, the Council should receive much more information on the proposed changes to Behavior programs.

8. Adjournment

McCarey, as chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:31 PM.