



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 5, 2021
Virtual Meeting: Zoom

Executive Committee Members Present: JoAnn Bodemer, Amy Boyd, Emmett Lyne, Maggie McCarey, Dennis Villanueva

Other Attendees: Eric Belliveau, Adrian Caesar, Maggie Downey, Audrey Eidelman, Frank Gundal, Jodi Hanover, Elliott Jacobson, Paul Johnson, Jerrold Oppenheim, Emily Webb, Sarah McDaniel, Commissioner Patrick Woodcock, Chris Porter, Greg Caggiano, Jessica Genest, Gretchen Calcagni

1. Call to Order

McCarey, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:07 AM.

2. Executive Committee Updates and Business

Updated Energy Efficiency Guidelines

McCarey announced that the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) issued an order approving updated Energy Efficiency Guidelines. McCarey said the impact of the updated guidelines on the 2022-2024 Plan will need to be discussed by the Council. McCarey also said the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) began its review of the updated Guidelines. Lyne added that the program administrators (PAs) have started reviewing the Guidelines to understand ramifications on the next Three-Year Plan. Hanover suggested that both the order and updated Guidelines are reviewed since the order contains additional information.

3. Draft 2022-2024 Three-Year Plan Review

Commissioner Woodcock thanked the PAs for their work, and commented that the Draft Plan accurately represents priorities set forth by the Council and stakeholder groups. Commissioner Woodcock noted that the timeline for revising the Plan will be limited, so the May meeting must be used efficiently and include discussion on granular Plan data.

McCarey said the Consultant Team (C-Team) would analyze measure-level data to identify areas of misalignment with Council recommendations set forth in the April Resolution. Lyne indicated a matrix of responses to Council priorities will be available by May 14th to support the review process. McCarey noted the Equity Working Group would meet prior to the May Council meeting to develop specific comments on the Draft Plan.

Bodemer echoed Commissioner Woodcock's praise of the Draft Plan narrative and inclusion of Council priorities. Bodemer also agreed that the underlying Plan data will show whether the narrative is supported by measure-level information.

McCarey proposed that the May Council meeting would include extensive Council discussion, as well as a Draft Plan data-focused presentation from the C-Team. Lyne indicated the PAs planned on presenting Draft Plan highlights during the May meeting. McCarey wanted to avoid summarizing Plan content during the May meeting since Councilors will be expected to review the Plan in advance.

Bodemer asked if the proposed PA highlights would be redundant with the C-Team presentation, but said it will be important to have PA subject matter experts available for questions.

Boyd suggested the PAs describe which Council recommendations were incorporated into the Plan Draft, then have the C-Team address which recommendations were not included. Boyd said Plan Highlights may be appropriate since some people may not review the Plan fully. McCarey recommended dividing Plan discussion into topics, much like the Fall Planning Workshops, so PA leads could provide highlights and context prior to Council discussion. Lyne supported this approach.

Porter believed context and top-line numbers like total spending and savings should be presented before the Plan highlights and C-Team data analysis. Belliveau emphasized that the 2022-2024 Plan includes new metrics, calculation methods, and context that are different from all previous Three-Year Plans, which makes top-line numbers less meaningful. Belliveau suggested that presenting context at the beginning will facilitate understanding of new Plan metrics. Lyne added that that members of the public will attend the meeting, making the Plan context and highlights more important. McCarey proposed that the PAs summarize top-line Plan data and priorities, the C-Team presents detailed Plan data analysis, the PA leads provide highlights for each Plan discussion topic, and then the Council discusses each topic.

Johnson was opposed to topical discussions, but supported at least 60-90 minutes of Council discussion on the Draft Plan. Johnson suggested that Councilors submit comments on the Plan prior to the meeting to motivate them to review the Plan more thoroughly. Johnson was very impressed by the Draft Plan narrative and hoped the underlying data would align with the text.

McCarey noted that an additional Council meeting in July has been needed to support development of the July Resolution in previous Planning cycles. Boyd said the Resolution is detailed, so additional time would be needed to solicit Council feedback and develop the Resolution itself. Belliveau agreed that an additional July meeting would be appropriate.

McCarey said Councilors would be informed of the additional July Council meeting in advance of the May meeting.

4. Mid-Term Modifications

McCarey asked if the Updated Guidelines would impact the mid-term modifications (MTMs). Hanover replied that the previous guidelines would apply to the rest of the 2019-2021 term, and this is spelled out in the DPU Order.

Calcagni summarized the mid-term modification requests (MTM) submitted by program administrators (PAs). Calcagni indicated the MTMs include requests for both increased and decreased budgets, but would result in a net decrease in benefits for electric and gas programs.

McCarey asked if maintaining performance incentives in spite of MTMs was a recent decision or if this was the standard practice. Hanover indicated the MTMs do not modify Plan values, so the performance incentives would be calculated the same. McCarey asked if the budget changes would impact ratepayer collections. Hanover assumed that there would be no changes to ratepayer collections during the remainder of the current term.

Boyd commented that the Council tended to approve MTMs that would result in more budget and savings, and reject MTMs that request budget decreases.

Porter asked if the C-Team needed more information for the National Grid Electric C&I New Construction MTM. Calcagni confirmed more information was needed, including combined heat and power data.

McCarey wanted to know what portion of the Eversource Electric Residential Existing Buildings budget increase request was due to lighting spending. Belliveau said the types of lighting projects that are planned and actually installed is important to consider as it related to spending.

Bodemer appreciated the clear presentation of the C-Team MTM recommendations and agreed that the PAs should be pushed to pursue all cost-effective savings before requesting decreases in budget.

Boyd asked what the PA process would be for instances where the Council acknowledges an MTM, but does not approve of it. Hanover said the PAs requested decreases in budget when they project falling short of goals due to COVID impacts, so DPU filing would be required if the Council did not approve of an MTM. Hanover also said the PAs could redact an MTM if they determine a pathway to reaching goals. McCarey said if the PAs had specific data to justify MTMs for New Construction programs, then the Council would be more likely to approve them.

Belliveau asked when reconciliation for ratepayer collections would occur. Hanover was unsure when the reconciliations would take effect after MTMs, but clarified that the PAs would still pursue all cost-effective savings if budget decreases were approved. Belliveau asked if the draft 2022-2024 Plan would inform collections for 2022. Hanover indicated she could ask the PAs how 2022 collections would be shaped by the Plan Draft.

Boyd commented that there has been a large uptick in construction activity, and rejecting budget decrease requests could motivate the PAs to pursue all planned savings. Porter cautioned against applying the residential construction resurgence to the C&I sector, citing lower demand for office space as an example. Villanueva agreed with Boyd that construction activity has also increased in the commercial sector.

Johnson felt that rejecting the MTMs for decreased spending would result in higher savings achievement, so the PAs should present their projections for program performance. Johnson also wondered why Eversource overspent on lighting and National Grid overspent in C&I New Construction. Porter responded that the actual performance for a New Construction CHP project was higher than planned, so the true-up for savings and incentives triggered the MTM request. Johnson asked why more money should be invested into lighting. Gundal indicated there are still claimable lighting savings that should be pursued before lighting savings completely phase out.

5. Mass Save Program Update – Implementation Efforts During COVID-19

Lyne stated that three contractors have contracted COVID-19 during the past month, but there have been no indications of further spread. Lyne added that the PAs are working closely with the Low-Income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN) to maximize savings in Income Eligible homes. Jacobson said the vaccine and continued application of safety protocols bode well for reaching Income Eligible savings goals in 2021.

6. May EEAC Meeting – Agenda Finalization

McCarey indicated the C-Team and PAs would coordinate on their respective presentations for the May Council meeting in order to maximize Council discussion on the April Draft Plan.

7. June EEAC Meeting – Draft Topics

McCarey said the June Council meeting agenda would be finalized during the June Executive Committee meeting, but discussion on performance incentive mechanisms should be included in the June meeting.

8. Adjournment

McCarey, as Chair, adjourned the meeting at 11:33 AM.