PUBLIC COMMENT LISTENING SESSION

Wednesday, April 17, 2023
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Councilors Present:	Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Daniel Leary, Brooke Winner, Tim Costa, Cindy Carroll, Michael Ferrante, Jo Ann Bodemer, Steven Miller, Paul Johnson, Meg Lusardi, Kate Peters, Martijn Fleuren, Mary Wambui, Kyle Murray, Brian Beote, Sonakshi Saxena, Jillian Winterkorn, Maggie Downey
Consultants Present:	Annalise Stein, Griffith Keating
DOER Staff Present:	Ina Dasso

Bodemer, acting on behalf of the Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM.

Commissioner Mahony thanked participants for joining and sharing thoughts on the 2025-2027 April Draft Plan. Commissioner Mahony stated that the purpose of the public comment listening sessions is to solicit feedback on topics related to the 2025-2027 Draft Three-Year Plan.

Bodemer reviewed the schedule for the upcoming listening sessions scheduled for May 13 from 2:00-4:00PM and June 3 from 6:00-7:30 PM. Bodemer noted that the EEAC is currently reviewing the April Draft Plan, holding listening sessions, and submitting comments to the Program Administrators (PAs) on the Draft Plan.

Public Comment

Nancy Chafetz (CPower)
Chafetz highlighted the ConnectedSolutions Program for commercial and industrial (C&I) customers and provided six recommendations:

1. Raise the incentive cap as it creates a disadvantage for smaller customers. Specifically, smaller customers cannot build a large enough battery to achieve economies of scale or meaningful resilience. Chafetz recommended increasing the incentive cap to a number that is based on seven times the customer's peak load. This ensures that a cap still exists

but allows a diverse base of customers to enter the program and achieve resilience with their batteries.

2. Chafetz emphasized the importance of the five-year rate lock for incentives, which is critical to battery development. Chafetz suggested that lengthening the rate lock to seven or more years would strengthen the ConnectedSolutions program. Chafetz said that locking in the incentive rate, the basis on which incentives are paid, and clarifying the methodology for measuring performance are crucial for providing certainty of the rate lock.
3. Implement a Winter ConnectedSolutions Program as soon as possible PAs determine that it is cost effective.
4. Promote enrollment in the Targeted Dispatch program through a broader marketing program for ConnectedSolutions.
5. Increase the Targeted Dispatch incentive rate, which would promote enrollment, to $45 per kilowatt.
6. Reduce the Installed Capacity (ICAP) tag to reduce costs, as PAs call Targeted Dispatch events when there are not peak days.

Mark Dyen (Gas Transition Allies and 350 Massachusetts)

Dyen commented that the April Draft Plan makes significant strides toward remedying access issues for low- and moderate-income customers; however, the Plan undervalues the importance of information, quality assurance, the contractor network, and cost control for market-rate customers. Dyen said that the quality of comprehensive assessments and contractor management via turnkey services should be available to all customers. Dyen highlighted his impression that the Plan underestimates the value and potential impact of community and neighborhood programs. Dyen recommended that the PAs center marketing efforts around such programs. Dyen also suggested quantifying the benefit of community participation. Dyen said that the Draft Plan does not properly identify the intention of the Commonwealth to transition away from natural gas to heat-pumps. At current energy rates it is more expensive to switch to a heat pump than to use natural gas, and though rate reform may be outside the purview of the Council, Dyen suggested that electric and gas rates be adjusted to promote the Commonwealth's policy of decarbonizing buildings.

Tina Grosowsky

Grosowsky expressed support for Dyen's comments. Grosowsky discussed general improvements to MassSave outside of the Three-Year Plan. Grosowsky noted that customers do not receive funding or support services from MassSave in a timely manner. Grosowsky recommended that the PAs implement a one-month plan to make the programs work for everyone.

Alyssa Benalfew-Ramos (Black Economic Council of Massachusetts)

Benalfew-Ramos expressed support for increased supplier diversity and the supplier-diversity study included in the Draft Plan. Some of the metrics for the PAs have not been designated, as the study has not yet been completed. Based on the list of activities the PAs plan to undertake to advance supplier diversity, there are several that can have metrics or goals designed at this time, rather than waiting until after the study is conducted. Benalfew-Ramos noted that the study can provide specifics around the number or percentage of minority or diverse owned businesses.

Benalfew-Ramos highlighted the need for efforts from PAs to be measurable and realistic. Benalfew-Ramos expressed support for listing concrete goals for supplier diversity within the Plan itself. There are equity related metrics in the equity section and throughout the Plan. However, there are areas in the Plan that lack specific goals or metrics.

Tina Grosowsky
Grosowsky expressed concerns about the marketing of the listening sessions, noting that there are few participants at this listening session. Grosowsky noted that outreach may not be working or effectively reaching community members. Grosowsky recommended more diverse and targeted outreach. Grosowsky has not seen billboards, social media, or other advertisements of the new state campaign for participating in Massachusetts' climate plan. Grosowsky suggested going to the community for the listening sessions and EEAC meetings, rather than asking the community to come to the sessions.

Ajey Pandey (Reading Municipal Light Department)
Pandey noted that the 2022-2024 Three-Year Plan had changes to heat-pump rebates for gas customers of investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and electric customers of municipal light plants (MLPs) for electricity. Pandey highlighted that there was a lack of specific details provided about these modified rebates. For the 2025-2027 Plan, Pandey suggested providing additional communications and customer support for MLP customers that receive gas through an IOU.

Hessann Farooqi (Boston Climate Action Network)
Farooqi commented that the Boston Climate Action Network is conducting a large-scale community research project in environmental justice (EJ) neighborhoods with an emphasis on engaging renters and landlords. From this research, they determined that 25% of renters have heard of the MassSave program, 7% of renters have received an energy assessment, and 69% of renters complained to their landlords about energy issues. Farooqi highlighted that 41% of renters reported that their landlord had raised or discussed raising rent after implementing improvements. Farooqi also noted that 72% of landlords did not know if they qualified for the MassSave program. Farooqi said that community education and Community First Partnerships (CFPs) are excellent ways to reach renters and landlords in EJ communities. Once these customers are in the process of receiving energy assessments, Farooqi suggested that there be a one-stop shop that describes financing options, rebates, and incentives for all decarbonization offerings. Farooqi said that the PAs should have a centralized, uniform process to benefit all customers.

Fred Davis (Massachusetts Climate Action Network)
Davis commented that the Massachusetts Climate Action Network will be holding a session on May 6 at 12:00PM to discuss the April Draft Plan. Davis instructed interested participants to visit massclimateaction.org and subscribe to their email distribution.

Todd Olinsky-Paul (Clean Energy Group)
Olinsky-Paul expressed support for Chafetz's comments and recommendations, specifically the recommendations to increase the incentive cap and extend the five-year rate lock. Olinsky-Paul highlighted the urgent need for a Winter ConnectedSolutions Program, as customers were informed of both the summer and winter programs, but the PAs never called winter events.

Olinsky-Paul noted that the Clean Energy Group has supported battery storage and the ConnectedSolutions Program for several years. Olinsky-Paul also identified the lack of an income-eligible offering for battery storage and said that the state has a responsibility to ensure demand-management programs extend to income-eligible customers.

Bodemer thanked the participants for joining and encouraged additional comments on the April Draft Plan. Bodemer reiterated that the Council will host additional listening sessions on May 13 and June 3.

Adjournment

Bodemer, acting on behalf of the Chair, adjourned the meeting at 10:49 AM.