



PUBLIC COMMENT AFTERNOON LISTENING SESSION

Monday, May 13, 2023
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Councilors Present: Commissioner Elizabeth Mahony, Brooks 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, Maggie Downey, Greg Abbe, Robert Rio, Stephanie Terach, Hammad Chaudhry, William Rose, Daniel Leary, Alexis Washburn

Consultants Present: Annalise Stein, Margie Lynch

DOER Staff Present: Ina Dasso, Jo Ann Bodemer

1. Call to Order

Bodemer, acting on behalf of the Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

Bodemer announced that the EEAC will hold the next public-comment-listening session on June 3 from 6:00-7:00 PM. Bodemer noted that the EEAC is currently reviewing the 2025-2027 Draft Plan, hosting listening sessions, and submitting comments to the Program Administrators (PAs) on the Draft Plan.

2. Public Comment

Heather Deese (Dandelion Energy)

Deese commented that the Draft Plan seems strong but recommended that the PAs increase rebates above current levels to account for the whole-home rebate for ground-source-heat pumps. Deese supported the proposal to keep interest rates for HEAT Loans at zero percent. Deese commented that the proposed \$25,000 cap on HEAT Loans and five-year term will be a challenge for some customers. Deese appreciated and emphasized the inclusion of the market-transformation adders for prescriptive rebates for ground-source-heat pumps in the Residential New Construction program. Deese shared that moderate- and low-income customers, who face particularly high energy burdens, can benefit from ground-source-heat pumps and direct-install programs. Deese also supported rebates to install higher-efficiency heat-pumps.

Claire Chang (Greenfield Solar)

Chang commented that the vehicle-to-grid component (bidirectional charging) of the ConnectedSolutions program provides the PAs with a three-year period to prepare for increased interest in electric vehicles (EVs). However, this requires customers to have a battery storage system, which can be used to power their houses. Chang urged the PAs to investigate how bidirectional charging will work in 2028. Chang noted that ConnectedSolutions currently does not work for small-residential customers. Chang emphasized the need to examine financial considerations for customers and the practicability of the ConnectedSolutions program.

Emily Jones (Local Initiatives Support Corporation – LISC Massachusetts)

Jones highlighted LISC Massachusetts’s support for the following in the 2025-2027 three-year plan:

1. Increase passive house incentives for high performance and new construction.
2. Expand incentives for income eligible deep energy retrofit incentive pathway.
3. Inclusion of window-heat pumps as an eligible measure in the Low-income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN) program.
4. Partnership with the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) on equitable rate design for a just transition.

Jones expressed appreciation for the inclusion of passive-house incentives in the previous Three-Year Plans as ensuring that new affordable-multifamily housing meets passive-house standards positions the Commonwealth to better achieve its net-zero goals. However, construction costs continue to increase, creating additional challenges for developers. Jones urged the EEAC to consider doubling the MassSave passive-house incentive from \$3,000 to \$6,000 per unit to enable passive-house construction and ensure that multifamily-new construction is climate ready. Jones commended the deep-energy retrofit pathway for income-eligible customers and encouraged additional investment. Jones said that federal and state resources are becoming available for decarbonization projects, but LEAN incentives for deep-energy retrofits remain a key piece of funding for affordable-housing owners interested in decarbonizing their existing buildings. Jones urged the EEAC to consider doubling the total incentive from \$350 per MMBtu to \$700 per MMBtu to further scale the work. Jones encouraged the EEAC to add window-heat pumps as an eligible measure in the LEAN program. Jones noted that installation of a window-heat pump should be combined with insulation and air sealing. While more holistic retrofits should be planned longer term, Jones said that this is a quick way to decrease carbon emissions while providing highly efficient heating and cooling for low- and moderate-income residents. Jones noted that LISC is highly supportive of increasing heat-pump installations for low- and moderate-income residents who heat with delivered fuels. Jones encouraged the EEAC to engage with the DPU, as it advances near- and long-term rate designs that align with the Commonwealth’s decarbonization goals. Jones suggested that the PAs consider higher discount rates, affordable-housing-owner rates, and rates for heat-pump users to ensure decarbonization is accessible and financially viable for low- and moderate-income residents and owners of affordable housing.

Mark Dyen (Gas Transition Allies and 350 Massachusetts)

Dyen noted that the Draft Plan assumes that switching from gas heat to heat-pumps will cost customers more resulting in a greater focus on converting delivered-fuel-heating systems to heat-pumps. Dyen stated that this concern, as detailed in the plan, is unnecessary and unacceptable. With gas prices rising and expected electric-rate reforms, the presumed cost advantage for average customers is disappearing. Dyen said there are existing approaches that can provide benefits to the utility, grid system, and customers. Dyen suggested using the enhanced audit described in the Draft Plan to deliver financial benefits from the full package of energy efficiency to existing gas customers. Dyen said that these customers would see lower bills from a combination of replacing wiring, aging heating and cooling equipment, and building insulation. Dyen also suggested that adding site mounted solar, purchasing electricity through municipal-aggregation plans, and time-of-use rates could deliver more benefits. Dyen recommended that the PAs implement this all-systems approach in communities to avoid further investment in aging gas infrastructure and transition to non-emitting heat at the community level. Dyen explained that this approach would be an expansion of the Community First Partnerships (CFPs) to deliver comprehensive programs to a community, rather than just marketing existing programs. Dyen emphasized the benefits from decommissioning gas-pipeline branches and incorporating smart technologies and geothermal energy to reduce the peak impact of this community-based transition. Dyen noted that the PAs must coordinate this approach with public buildings and commercial projects to maximize the impact.

Hessann Farooqi (Boston Climate Action Network)

Farooqi stated that over the last year, the Boston Climate Action Network has been focused on connecting people with the MassSave program, particularly in environmental-justice communities. Farooqi noted that they conducted a research study, funded by the MassSave community-education grant, to understand how the program is operating. Farooqi Listed key takeaways from the study including the importance of community partnerships, both through the community-education grant and the CFPs, in reaching residents in equity communities. Farooqi supported the increased funding for the CFPs, and while \$60,000 per year for three years is a great start, hiring full-time staff requires more funding. Farooqi also noted that Community First Partners and recipients of the community-education grants would benefit from expanded data sources to help target customers with potential for the greatest cost savings.

Robert Cooper (Embue)

Cooper endorsed the layering of demand-reduction incentives on top of incentives for building-management systems. Cooper supported the inclusion of monitoring-based commissioning in the Draft Plan but stated that the program would pay incentives at the end of operation, in proportion to the achieved energy savings. Cooper said that monitoring-based commissioning is intended to monitor existing systems in order to identify inefficiencies. Cooper urged the PAs to consider upfront incentives for monitoring-based commissioning. Cooper explained that connected thermostats is the appropriate name for Wi-Fi thermostats, as such nomenclature implies that Wi-Fi thermostats require Wi-Fi to operate. Cooper commented that the Draft Plan has a goal to provide full cost coverage for low-income-multifamily projects, and while this should always be the goal, there may be times when the incentive does not fully fund a project. Cooper suggested that the owner should have an option of a cost share if the incentive does not fully fund the project. Cooper noted that the multifamily pathways characterized in the Draft Plan are complex. Instead, Cooper recommended that the PAs develop a document that identifies all of the

available incentives from each sector organized in the form of a decision tree. Cooper said that this will facilitate transparency and help people understand all of their options.

Josh Wietecha (Priority One Plumbing & Heating, Inc.)

Wietecha commented that some of the goals of the turnkey delivery for moderate-income and market-rate customers are to provide instant incentives, establish best practices and technical standards, and act as a guide for customers participating in the program. Wietecha expressed concerns about standardized pricing, specifically that it could create issues for smaller contractors who compete solely on the basis of lower prices, which allows them to participate in Mass Save and add value for customers. Wietecha said that smaller contractors might have longer waiting periods or offer limited services, so similar pricing for large and small contractors will disincentivize customers from using small contractors. Wietecha added that large companies may use salespeople to offer estimates, so standardized pricing for the market-rate program may cause salespeople to present solutions outside of Mass Save because they can control the pricing and margin to increase their commission.

Elena Weissmann (Vote Solar)

Weissmann commented that low- and moderate-income ratepayers are being priced out of the clean-energy transition, and program benefits need to be concentrated on these customers to account for decades of disinvestment in their communities. Weissmann appreciated the improvements on language access and income eligibility in the Draft Plan. Weissmann suggested increasing the percentage goals for heat-pump installations in low- and moderate-income households to be one-third of the total number of heat-pumps, especially those using delivered fuels. Weissman said that low- and moderate-income households will require resources to successfully switch from delivered fuels, as it would not otherwise be accessible or financially viable. Weissmann encouraged the final 2025-2027 Plan to explicitly center the guiding principle of distributive justice. The benefits of clean energy and electrification transition must be in the hands of those who stand to benefit the most. Weissmann recommended that the final Plan include provisions to make program benefits more accessible to the average ratepayer.

Angie Gregory

Gregory expressed concerns with the electric and gas utilities serving as the program administrators for Mass Save rather than a third-party organization, such as a non-profit. Gregory stated that a community non-profit would be best suited to reach more consumers. Gregory highlighted that the Center for Ecotechnology has developed a method called tariff-on-bill financing to reduce the capital burdens on ratepayers.

Larry Chretien (Green Energy Consumers Alliance, Inc.)

Chretien commended the Council's efforts and commented that MassSave cannot equitably achieve the Commonwealth's goals without the coordination of a clean-heat standard. Chretien said that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) oversaw a stakeholder process in early 2023 to develop a clean-heat standard. Chretien praised DEP and the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for bringing the clean-heat standard forward, but expressed disappointment that there has not been a larger public discussion on how MassSave would coexist and work with a clean-heat standard. Chretien said that the Draft Plan does not reduce greenhouse-gas emissions enough as it does not target enough heat-pump installations,

especially in the homes of low- and moderate-income families. Additionally, Chretien stated that the level of electrification required to meet climate goals is more than MassSave is capable of accomplishing. Chretien recommended allocating 40% of clean-heat credits to income-eligible customers. Chretien also suggested converting homes and businesses to heat-pump-water heaters, induction stoves, and electric-clothes dryers. Chretien noted that it is possible to build the clean-heat standard into the structure of MassSave to have one location for customers and contractors. Chretien requested that the Council and PAs invite DEP to hold public discussions about how to coordinate the clean-heat standard with MassSave.

Todd Olinsky-Paul (Clean Energy Group)

Olinsky-Paul stated that there is an upcoming report that tracks equity participation in Massachusetts programs related to energy storage, including ConnectedSolutions, the SMART Program, and the clean-heat standard. While the report is not yet finalized, Olinsky-Paul noted that it is difficult to track relevant information due to a lack of transparency. Olinsky-Paul commented that the public cannot make substantive comments and suggestions when the information for these programs is unavailable. Olinsky-Paul recommended that the PAs provide more transparent public reporting to see if income-eligible customers are able to participate in these programs.

Roger Luckmann (Elders Climate Action)

Luckmann commented that the PAs should roll out support services and turnkey delivery for all customers, including market rate customers, as quickly as possible. Luckmann supported the redesign of the home-energy assessment, which will address all energy efficiency and decarbonization opportunities. In addition, the redesigned assessment will be used to educate customers about financial, health, and other non-energy benefits, in addition to renewable energy options including solar and batteries. Luckmann recommended that the assessment also include a simplified financial calculator for HEAT Loans. Luckmann requested that the next Draft Plan provide more details on how the assessment for solar and batteries will be performed and communicated to consumers. Luckmann said that it will be challenging to report and share this information with customers in an easily comprehensible format. Luckmann suggested that customers should be encouraged to review their assessment reports with the MassSave navigator to ensure that they have a full understanding of its contents. Luckmann recommended that the home-energy assessment, report, and software tools be the responsibility of the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. Luckmann said that the turnkey approach is important because finding qualified contractors to install heat-pumps within the state will continue to be a challenge for many customers. Luckmann added that a turnkey approach will allow for significant oversight of cost and quality and mitigate customer dissatisfaction with flawed installations. Luckmann also recommended providing customer support for vendor selection, establishing higher standards for vendor certifications, expanding quality inspections by third parties, enabling public access to vendor reviews, and creating vetted lists of vendors maintained by third parties. Luckmann commented that the PAs should provide services to help customers navigate decarbonization and the network of advocates of building electrification as soon as possible. Luckmann also recommended including a financing consultation for customers.

Craig Altemose (BlocPower)

Altemose highlighted that electrical upgrades are a costly barrier without sufficient state or federal incentives to accommodate these costs. Altemose commented that background-check policies place restrictions on who can enter the workforce. Altemose stated that BlocPower is running a workforce-development program in Boston that targets employing formerly incarcerated individuals who are trying to reintegrate into society.

Tom Sciacca

Sciacca indicated that he installed a single-head heat-pump two years ago that has reduced his winter-gas consumption by 85% each following winter. Sciacca said that the installation cost was under \$4,000, and while MassSave emphasizes 100% electrification, the programs must overcome obstacles in the minds of potential customers. Sciacca suggested that risk-averse customers will be more likely to install small and cheap systems that only partially displace fossil-fuel use, as there is lower risk. Sciacca suggested that the PAs provide larger incentives for smaller heat-pump systems.

Marcia Hart

Hart thanked the Councilors for their contributions to the Draft Plan. Hart stressed the importance of a competent, transparent, and standardized home-energy assessment. Hart encouraged the installation of efficient appliances such as water heaters, stoves, and clothes dryers, in addition to customer reports that describe health benefits, cost savings, and available incentives and rebates. Hart also urged the PAs to consider training and certifications to ensure quality installation of heat-pumps, especially given that 14% of planned heat-pump installations are in low- and moderate-income homes. Hart agreed with Weissmann's comment that one-third of planned heat-pumps should be in low- and moderate-income homes.

1. Adjournment

Bodemer, acting on behalf of the Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:10 PM.