



## MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 15, 2020  
Virtual Meeting via GoToWebinar

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**Councilors Present:** Greg Abbe (for Jennifer Maddox), Marie Abdou (for Chris Porter), Cindy Arcate, Elliott Jacobson, Don Boecke (for Maura Healey), Amy Boyd, Justin Davidson, Maggie Downey, Charlie Harak, Paul Johnson, Deirdre Manning, Cammy Peterson, Robert Rio, Stephanie Terach, Mary Wambui, Sharon Weber (for Martin Suuberg), Maggie McCarey (Chair)

**Councilors Absent:** Victoria Rojo

**Consultants Present:** Adrian Caesar, Margie Lynch, Eric Belliveau

**DOER Staff Present:** Emily Powers, Rachel Evans

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### 1. Call to Order

McCarey, as Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.

### 2. Public Comment

Due to the April EEAC meeting being held virtually in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, public comment was received in writing ahead of the meeting and posted to the EEAC website. During the meeting McCarey noted that Steve Cowell of E4theFuture had submitted public comment to the EEAC regarding COVID-19 impact mitigation efforts.

### 3. Council Updates & Business

McCarey announced the program administrators' filing of Daily Dispatch was submitted to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) for approval as a full-scale program. McCarey also said the DPU approved the Columbia Gas of Massachusetts (CMA) extension of enhanced incentives in Greater Lawrence. Penni Connor, on behalf of Eversource and CMA, provided an update on Eversource's proposed acquisition of CMA. Connor said Eversource expects to close the transaction at the end of Q3, but they will follow through on CMA's prior commitments to Merrimack Valley customers and term sheet.

DOER Commissioner Woodcock introduced himself and noted that this is a critical juncture for energy efficiency programs. He emphasized the need for all Councilors, PA's, and other stakeholders to assess how to safely resume programs. Commissioner Woodcock also stated that he is excited to continue the Commonwealth's leadership in the energy efficiency space, while ensuring equitable program delivery for all Massachusetts customers.

### ***Virtual Meeting Procedures***

McCarey provided an overview of the virtual meeting procedures during COVID-19, 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 should speak instead of using any chat functionality
4. Public comment would be posted to the Council website and reviewed by DOER during the meetings.
5. Councilors who disconnect from meetings need to announce when they rejoin.
6. All Council votes would be taken by a roll call for accuracy.

### ***February 5, 2020 EEAC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes***

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

### ***February 12, 2020 EEAC Meeting Minutes***

Manning motioned to approve the minutes as amended. Boyd seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed. Peterson abstained and Johnson was absent for the vote. The minutes were approved, as submitted, by the Council.

### ***March 4, 2020 EEAC 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. Mass Save Program Implementation Efforts During COVID-19**

### ***PA Presentation***

Abdou, on behalf of the PA's, provided an update on energy efficiency program implementation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The PA's have prioritized maintaining public safety, communicating program implementation efforts, supporting contractors, coordinating with Low-income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN) organizations, and developing a backlog of projects for a post-COVID future. Abdou noted that preliminary results from virtual home energy assessments and participation in virtual contractor training have been promising

### ***Council Discussion***

Peterson praised the PA's for mobilizing resources moving and accelerating virtual program efforts. Peterson asked if the virtual Residential home energy assessments (HEA's) were targeted at single-family buildings and if they included small multifamily buildings. In addition, Peterson asked if PA's considered virtual assessments for municipal buildings. Wollenburg answered that the initial focus has been on 1 to 4-unit multifamily buildings since contractors have more experience in these facilities and most Massachusetts multifamily customers reside in 1 to 4-unit homes. Abdou added that on the municipal front, virtual audits would also begin in smaller buildings, but PA's will work with cities to optimize virtual audits for municipal facilities.

Jacobson highlighted PA coordination with LEAN and assured the Council they are coordinating on the policy and program implementation level. Jacobson also said he is on a Department of Energy board that regularly tracks CARES Act funding disbursements.

Johnson noted that contractors, particularly smaller contractors, are vulnerable and unsure about their futures. Johnson believed that current efforts should focus on work that might be performed safely, such as external wall insulation and projects in unoccupied buildings, as opposed to building a backlog of projects. Johnson also said contractors may struggle to resume business as usual after the pandemic ends, so advance payments for projects could mitigate that. Abdou responded that PA's are partnering with contractors to understand what work can be unsuspended over time to get them back in the field safely, but they are unable to do so immediately. McCarey highlighted uncertainty around COVID-19 and program suspension as a challenge, but DOER is monitoring if federal funding is sufficient for small businesses. Johnson cautioned against letting skilled contractors go out of business as that would be detrimental to the energy efficiency workforce.

Harak asked if the PA's knew how many contractors have been furloughed or laid off, and how many may be out of business once on-site programs restart. Wollenburg said the PA's have anecdotal information, but estimated that the worst faring companies may have laid off upwards of 80 percent of their contractors. Wollenburg added that many contractors have expressed uncertainty about their ability to conduct business in the future. Harak referenced California utilities which provided loans to keep the contractor workforce in place and asked if this could be considered in Massachusetts. Abdou replied that energy efficiency dollars are being used to maintain current efforts and connect contractors to state and federal aid resources.

Rio cautioned against conflating energy efficiency programs with unemployment programs, as providing unemployment relief is within the scope of federal and state government responsibilities.

### **5. Cape and Vineyard Electrification Offering**

Downey gave a summary of changes to Cape Light Compact's Cape and Vineyard Electrification Offering (CVEO) since the February 12<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. These changes included a \$1.4m decrease in the heat pump budget, \$1.4m decrease in total CVEO budget, and increase in CVEO benefit-cost ratio from 2.1 to 2.4.

## ***Final Council Discussion and Vote***

Weber asked for clarification on the bill impacts associated with the redesign of CVEO. Brandt explained the bill impacts for Residential customers would depend on timing of the program's approval and the corresponding effects on the energy efficiency surcharge.

Harak motioned to approve the CVEO Resolution. Boyd second. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. Manning was absent for the vote. The CVEO Resolution was approved, as submitted, by the Council.

## **6. Non-Participant Studies**

### ***Council Discussion from Non-Participant Studies Webinar***

Abbe inquired what percentage of multifamily buildings in the Non-Participant study were state-funded public housing facilities; since the LEAN and the Department of Housing and Community Development regularly promote Mass Save programs in these facilities, participation here would be higher than in normal multifamily buildings. Wirtshafter said that data may be unavailable, but large multifamily buildings did contribute to the distribution they observed.

From the Key Takeaways slide, Boyd garnered that the study assumed using Census tracts as income indicators was valid. Dyke-Redmond said the study factored in ecological fallacy, so the notion of using Census tracts as the unit of analysis was more related to how the evaluations were conducted.

Johnson, in reference to customers in groups with lower participation, felt that understanding why they decide to participate would be more beneficial than why many of them opt out of programs. Dyke-Redmond said that studying barriers to participation was emphasized in the term sheet, but some of the reasons why those customers in those groups do participate in programs could be derived from existing data. Wirtshafter added that they asked respondents follow-up questions about why they participated and how they heard about Mass Save, but the study was still focused on non-participants.

### ***Non-Participant Studies Implementation Update from Program Administrators***

Wollenburg, on behalf of the PA's, described PA reactions to the Non-Participant Study results, current efforts that address the participation gaps across customer groups, and future changes in implementation strategies needed to mitigate those gaps.

### ***Consultant Team Recommendations***

Lynch presented C-Team recommendations for increasing participation in underserved customer groups. Targeted strategies for renters, moderate income, and LEP customers included increased efforts to reach smaller multifamily buildings, revised income verification process, more consistent language services, and intersectional outreach strategies.

### ***Council Discussion***

Arcate said the Non-Participant Study results merely reiterated what the Council has known for years about renter, moderate-income, and limited English proficiency (LEP) participation barriers, so a working group focused on boosting participation for those customer types will be necessary. McCarey seconded the suggestion to form a working group focused on these customer segments, especially since time at Council meetings to discuss participation gaps is limited. Wollenburg said the ideas discussed during the presentation are not necessarily all of efforts to increase participation among renters, moderate-income, and LEP customers.

Dorfler asked how the PA's would address customers that may be both moderate-income and renters, therefore facing multiple barriers to participation. Wollenburg replied that any success in addressing renters likely means that they are also serving LEP and moderate-income customers simultaneously since there is overlap between the groups. Wollenburg added that the PA's are still considering additional strategies like community partnerships that would help address multiple customer groups at the same time.

Harak urged the PA's to target landlords in order to capture deeper savings, avoid promoting loans since they can be a harmful financial instrument, and exercise caution when exploring different proxies for income verification.

Peterson said a working group for equity considerations would be useful and agreed that municipal community partnerships strategy can be a good platform for implementing other participation strategies. Peterson also stated that more frequent reporting on renter, moderate-income and LEP customer participation would be key to inform planning efforts. Boyd concurred with all of Peterson's comments, and suggested the working group also include community stakeholders.

Wambui recommended the Council and PA's shift away from labeling non-participation issues and community-based outreach as challenging. Wambui appreciated Eversource's commitment to collaborate with community members, as building trust within communities is paramount to reaching all customer groups. Weber also believed community leaders would provide valuable insights, especially if included in a working group.

McCarey noted the Executive Committee would discuss the proposed non-participation working group and present ideas to the Council during the May meeting.

## **7. 2020 Council Priorities**

McCarey added a section to the Priorities regarding temporary suspension of programs due to COVID-19 that was not included before; this section described program implementation and impact mitigation efforts that resulted from the pandemic.

### ***Final Council Discussion and Vote***

Abdou said the PA's were pleased to see their comments were incorporated into the Priorities, but the December 31<sup>st</sup> deadline for draft potential study results was unlikely to be met given the impact of COVID-19.

Boyd motioned to approve the 2020 Council Priorities. Peterson seconded. All were in favor, with none opposed or abstaining. The 2020 Council Priorities were approved, as submitted, by the Council.

## **8. Adjournment**

McCarey, as chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:02 PM.