



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

### EERMC FULL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 21, 2023

Full Council Meeting | 3:00 - 5:00 PM

Department of Administration Conference Room 2A, Providence, RI 02908 with remote participation via Zoom.

**Members in Attendance:** Jordan Day, Brett Feldman, Harry Oakley (departed at 4:15 p.m.), Chris Kearns, Bob Izzo, Tom Magliocchetti, Peter Gill Case, Joe Garlick, Kurt Teichert, Priscilla De La Cruz

**Others in Attendance:** Sam Ross, Craig Johnson, Jake Curran, Jordan Galluzzo (virtual), Brenden Dagher, Mark Kravatz, Steven Chybowsky, Alison Donovan, Greg Caggiano, Michael O'Brien Crayne (virtual), Marisa Desautel (virtual), Bryan Evans (virtual), Adrian Caesar (virtual), Nelson DiBiase (virtual), John Harrington (virtual), Ben Smith (virtual), Stephen Lasher (virtual), Emily Koo (virtual), Abbie Hasenfus (virtual), Ann Clarke (virtual), Bert Cooper (virtual)

#### 1. Call to Order

Chairperson Oakley called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

#### 2. Chair Report

Chairperson Oakley delivered the Chair Report, where he provided instructions for making a public comment at the meeting and noted that the Public Comment period would be moved to the start of the meeting, rather than at the end. He shared that the Council would plan to meet on the third Thursday in January at 3 p.m. for their next meeting and noted the additional materials posted to the meeting webpage for Council Members' awareness and review.

#### 3. Executive Director Report

Acting Commissioner Kearns delivered the Executive Director Report. He shared that the first phase of the solicitation for the Energy Efficiency Program Administrator has been posted to the State Purchasing website. He also let the Council know that a Rhode Island-specific version of the Rewiring America electrification incentives calculator has been launched to help homeowners navigate incentives available to them and lastly, he thanked the Council Members for time and commitment to the Council throughout the year. Acting Commissioner Kearns also let the Council know that the Office of Energy Resources (OER)

has posted the last proposed funding allocation plan for Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) funds for the year and that allocation plan is available for public comment.

**4. Meeting Minutes – November 16, 2023**

Chairperson Oakley motioned to approve the November 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes. Council Member Day seconded. All in favor, none opposed.

**5. Public Comment (5 Minutes, 3:10 – 3:15 p.m.)**

*Stephen Lasher, Enphase Energy*

Mr. Lasher introduced himself as the director of business development for grid services and Enphase Energy and shared his concerns about the proposed reduction in the Company's payments for residential battery incentives in their system reliability procurement demand response investment proposal. He believes that when comparing his data between Massachusetts and Rhode Island, they have been able to get four times more batteries installed in Rhode Island, which has likely been in response to the comparatively higher incentive level offered. He has pointed to Rhode Island's battery incentive program as a leader around the country. He also expressed concerns with the complexity with the Renewable Energy Fund program which has not reached as many customers as it could.

*Emily Koo, The Acadia Center*

Ms. Koo highlighted The Acadia Center's desires to increase the energy efficiency savings goals and program budgets and that in Connecticut, their efficiency plans have now incorporated an equity performance management incentive which may serve as a template for Rhode Island. She also commented on the equity metrics being reported on by utilities in Massachusetts which includes over 25 results-oriented and time-bound measures.

**6. Special Topics (20 Minutes, 3:15 – 3:35 p.m.)**

*a. Presentation from the 2023 Farm Energy Fellow (10 min, 3:15 – 3:25 p.m.)*

Mr. Curran presented on his work in 2023 as the Farm Energy Fellow with OER. In his role, he conducted outreach and managed the Rhode Island Agricultural Energy Program which provides grants to farmers for energy projects. This program was able to award 14 grants to farms in the fall 2023 round, which is the most projects in a single funding round to date. The program is designed to help support Rhode Island farmers as they play vital roles in the local economy. Mr. Curran was able to help secure \$250,000 in federal funding from the United States Department of Agriculture to provide technical assistance to Rhode Island farmers to receive additional federal funds for energy projects. Mr. Curran also completed case studies during his year as a Farm Energy Fellow and created flyers to reach farmers about these programs.

*b. Presentation from the Mike Guerard Energy Fellow (10 min, 3:25 – 3:35 p.m.)*

Ms. Galluzzo presented on her work as the 2023 Mike Guerard Energy Fellow. Her work and presentation focused on using science communication to improve awareness of energy efficiency policy. She explained that science communication must be engaging, informative, and digestible. She commented that one of the first things she learned this year was that many agencies have the letter "E" in their acronyms which can be confusing for the general public. She also learned that there are many meetings that stretch energy stakeholders thin, so newsletters summarizing the meeting results can be a helpful tool.

Chairperson Oakley commented that he completely agrees that clearly identifying what entity is responsible for what and minimizing overlap is a priority for stakeholders and customers in the state.

Mr. Johnson commented that Ms. Galluzzo was a phenomenal Energy Fellow and that she excelled with developing the Council newsletter.

## **7. Program Oversight (60 Minutes, 3:35 – 4:35 p.m.)**

### *a. Rhode Island Energy Presentation and Discussion on Equity (30 min, 3:35 – 4:05 p.m.)*

Mr. Dagher of Rhode Island Energy shared an update on the Council's equity efforts since the last Council meeting. He was joined virtually by Mr. Evans of the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) for this presentation. One of their goals is to tie metrics to the specific strategies suggested by the Equity Working Group (EWG). The Company and GHHI have also sent out updates to the EWG and plans for the first quarter in 2024.

Mr. Evans introduced himself and the work of GHHI. GHHI is under contract with the Company to help facilitate the EWG. GHHI and the Company have identified four key objectives for the 2024 EWG which includes uplifting more voices from underserved and underrepresented communities, creating a shortlist of equity strategies and metrics by the end of the first quarter, identifying and prioritizing long-term equity strategies and metrics to work toward, and to establish a clear line of communication between the EERMC and the EWG. Mr. Evans also showed the timeline for the 2024 EWG.

Vice Chair Gill Case commented that while there are some very positive signs of progress on these matters, he would like to see every effort made to start sharing the data that was determined to be low-hanging fruit by the Company's feasibility assessment. He also stated that he thinks it will be important to make sure that there is coordination to ensure that there is a Council Member attending each of the EWG meetings in 2024.

Chairperson Oakley echoed those remarks and that the new Company and staff are coming in now with an opportunity to really push these elements forward like they have not been before and that there is momentum to keep things moving.

### *b. Energy Efficiency Docket 23-35-EE Regulatory Updates (15 min, 4:05 – 4:20 p.m.)*

Mr. Ross began with a summary of the regulatory schedule and a summary of the key themes covered in the information requests and the hearings. Some of the topics including the cost of supply and carbon accounting methodologies may be topics explored further over the coming year.

Mr. Johnson covered some of the rulings impacting the 2024 Energy Efficiency Plan. These rulings included a reduction in the Company's performance incentive amount, rejecting the proposal for a 100% moderate-income weatherization incentive, setting the Council's budget at a level flat with the 2023 year, and otherwise approving the 2024 Program Plan budget, savings goals, and system benefit charge rates. Additional materials on all of the rulings will be provided ahead of future Council meetings.

Ms. Desautel commented that the Consultant Team did an excellent job representing the Council at the docket hearings which is leading to some positive conversations for coordinating plans and recommendations in the future.

The Council's Consultant Team will share updates on the current status, data requests, and timeline for the energy efficiency docket proceedings with the Council.

## **8. Council Business (130 Minutes, 4:20 – 5:00 p.m.)**

*a. Council Branding and Communications Development Update and Discussion (20 min, 4:20 – 4:40 p.m.)*

Mr. Smith of Advocacy Solutions presented the latest iteration of the Council's updated website. This included the Council's latest logo design and color scheme. A few additional updates to the site and ensuring that it is mobile friendly will happen over the coming days. The online Google tool will also be able to translate the webpage into different languages as needed. The updates have looked to make the website less text-heavy and to divide pages into more clear sections.

*b. Review of Council's 2023 Budget and Potential Vote for Reallocations (10 min, 4:40 – 4:50 p.m.)*

Council Member De La Cruz motioned to move the \$25,000 originally allocated for a k-12 education initiative to the Consultant Team's budget and to move \$150 from the potential study data refresh to the EERMC website line item. Council Member Day seconded. All in favor, none opposed.

*c. Discussion and Potential Vote to Issue a Request for Proposals for Legal Services (10 min, 4:50 – 5:00 p.m.)*

Mr. Chybowski clarified for the Council that they are approaching the end of their current contract extension limit for legal services and are at a time when they will need to go out to market to procure legal services.

Vice Chair Gill Case provided some background that in the past, the Council was experiencing more volatility so maintaining consistent legal services and extending the contracts was valued in previous years. The Council now seems to be in a more stable place and likely in a better place to see what is available in the market.

Council Member Garlick shared that the last time the Council put out an RFP for legal services, they received a lot of general legal proposals that were not very responsive to their specific needs.

Council Member Day motioned to approve going out to bid for legal services subject to amendments by the Consultant Team and OER staff. All in favor, none opposed.

## **9. Adjournment**

Vice Chair Gill Case adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m.