

City of Boston BERDO Review Board
Public Meeting Minutes
Zoom Virtual Meeting
August 26, 2024, at 4:30 pm
[View recording here](#)

Board Members in Attendance: Rashida Boyd, Stephen Ellis, Hessann Farooqi, Gail Latimore, and Jack Nelson.

Board Members not in Attendance: Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata and Lovette Jacobs

Staff Present: Hannah Payne, Diana Vasquez, Dr. Claudia Diezmartinez, and Zengel “Ziggy” Chin.

Others: Approximately nine (9) members of the public attended this meeting.

Motion to Nominate Acting Chair

4:35 pm: Environment staff D. Vasquez led a vote for Acting Chair. Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to nominate Board Member S. Ellis to serve as Acting Chair. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded the motion. All Board Members in attendance (5) at the time were in favor. The motion carried at 4:36 pm.

Call Hearing to Order

4:36 pm: A hearing of the Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance, hereafter referred to as (BERDO), within the Air Pollution Control Commission, was called to order on August 26 at 4:36 pm. This hearing was held virtually.

Roll Call

4:37 pm: The following BERDO Review Board members were in attendance: Acting Chair Stephen Ellis, Rashida Boyd, Hessann Farooqi, Gail Latimore, and Jack Nelson.

The following Environment Department staff were in attendance: Hannah Payne, Diana Vasquez, Dr. Claudia Diezmartinez, and Zengel “Ziggy” Chin.

Others: Approximately nine (9) members of the public attended this meeting.

First Agenda Item: Discussion and Vote on Equitable Emissions Investment Fund 2024 Application Cycle Finalist

4:39 pm: Board Member G. Latimore recused herself from this agenda item.

4:40 pm: Diana presented the results of the Review Board's evaluation of the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund (the Fund) applications.

4:43 pm: Dorchester Bay Economic Development Center

- S. Ellis commented that the application is straightforward and compelling with the level of impact the project would have on residents and helping residents save money on their bills. The application is complete and does not have any information missing.
- H. Farooqi raised concerns about the barriers that may exist before the installation of rooftop solar panels, such as the roof's reinforcement and sufficient electrical wiring. Which may cause higher costs in the future and if the applicant has considered other sources of funding, particularly the Solar for All funding.

4:46 pm: Fenway Community Development Corporation

- R. Boyd pointed out that Fenway CDC has another funding source of \$1,478,000.
- S. Ellis agreed with R. Boyd's comment about other sources of funding applications might have and how that should be considered when reviewing applications for the Fund.
- H. Farooqi was curious whether the improvements that Fenway CDC wants to make to their building could be covered under MassSave. H. Faarooqi asked if it is possible for the Review Board only to fund a portion of the project if other programs can fund other parts of the projects.
 - D. Vasquez answered that the Review Board has the discretion to award less than the amount requested by an applicant and that the Board could add stipulations in the grant agreement contract stating how the money could be spent.
- J. Nelson commented that his ranking of Fenway CDC's application was lower than that of other applicants because other projects had higher annual emissions reductions.
 - S. Ellis agreed with J. Nelson's comment about Fenway CDC's projected emissions reductions.

4:56 pm: Green Energy Consumers Alliance

- H. Faarooqi expressed his approval of the project since the applications were actively considering how they could scale the program's economics. He is interested in hearing more from the Green Energy Consumers Alliance.
- S. Ellis commented that as he read the application, more questions arose, and he felt like there were a lot of contingencies for the project to work.

4:54 pm: The Community Builders

- J. Nelson expressed his support for the application since the project is straightforward and achieves the objectives of BERDO.
- S. Ellis agreed with J. Nelson that the application is straightforward, but he is concerned about the scalability of the project since the project is limited to two buildings

4:57 pm: Board Q&A

- H. Farooqi raised the question of which other funding sources the applications have considered, as he does not think the Review Board should give funding to projects that other funding sources could cover, like MassSave. H. Farooqi also expressed his concern about the workforce development aspects of the projects to ensure the projects are paying prevailing wages and employing Boston residents.
- J. Nelson commented that he ranked projects with large emissions reductions more favorably. J. Nelson asked for clarification on why projects related to buildings that do not have to comply with BERDO are being considered.
 - D. Vasquez explained that the regulations do not explicitly say that the Fund has to go to help buildings subject to BERDO.
 - J. Nelson followed up to say that he liked the Built Buildings Lab and Codman Square NDC's projects.
- S. Ellis commented that there were two applications that were not mentioned and shared his thoughts on why they were not ranked as highly.
- S. Ellis asked if, when the City was reviewing applications, did they consider other funding sources the applications could have been eligible for.
 - H. Payne answered that this question would be good to ask the finalists when they present to the board. The Building Advisor Program is mostly for small, high-level planning projects, and the City is trying to target as many

buildings as possible in Boston. The target for the program is about \$10,000 to \$15,000 per building.

5:09 pm: Chair S. Ellis opened a public comment period.

- In the Zoom Chat, Y. Torrie asked if the City could share the slides related to applications ranked in the top three on at least one evaluation sheet.
- M. Brooks asked how the 30% reduction in energy bills mentioned in the Community Builder's application would be applied.
 - D. Vasquez explained that the 30% reduction would be in energy usage.
 - C. Diezmartinez added that the energy savings would be for common areas and reinvested into Community Builders' programming.
 - M. Brooks asked a follow-up question about how specifically the savings would be applied as discounts to tenants' bills or cost savings from energy reductions from solar installation in the Dorchester Bay or Community Builders projects.
 - D. Vasquez answered that Dorchester Bay covers the cost of utilities at the Wilder apartments and at the Glendale apartments, certain residents who pay their utilities will most likely receive up to 15% credit from the solar generated.
- Y. Torrie raised the question of whether more consideration should be given to applications that would do work in BERDO buildings.
 - D. Vasquez answered that the City left room in the regulations for flexibility for the Review Board to be able to focus on a theme, such as BERDO vs non BERDO buildings being the target. However, the theme should be announced beforehand for interested applicants.
 - H. Payne added that the Review Board has the discretion to prioritize BERDO buildings receiving the funding.

5:23 pm: Chair S. Ellis closed a public comment period.

- S. Ellis suggested adding that assistance to low-income residents is considered a benefit to tenants in the evaluation sheet.
- S. Ellis asked about the eligibility screening process.

- H. Payne explained that the eligibility review mostly examined what would trigger the Anti-Aid Amendment and whether the applicants had other grants that needed to be spent.
- C. Diezmartinez added that the emissions reduction aspect can differ from project to project. As long as a project included work that would help it reach zero net emissions, it was deemed eligible.
- D. Vasquez pointed out that the Review Board has discretion to award specific parts of project funding.

5:30 pm: Review Board members ranked their top 5 choices for finalists to come to present at the September 9 hearing.

5:36 pm: Board Member J. Nelson made a motion to invite Dorchester Bay Economic Development Center, Green Energy Consumer Alliance, The Community Builder, Codman Square NDC, and Fenway CDC to the September 9 hearing to present as the 2024 Equitable Emissions Investment Fund finalists. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (4) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:38 pm.

- H. Payne repeated the questions that the Review Board has for the applicants, including other funding sources they might have explored, such as MassSave, workforce development commitments, and tenant notifications.
 - S. Ellis asked for the applicants to explain the connection to workforce development better and for the City to define energy justice and emissions reduction per dollar.
 - H. Farooqi echoed S. Ellis's request for the definition of energy justice. He requested that the City notify the applicants that they were not selected and various funding resources be sent to them as well.
 - S. Ellis asked for clarification if the aim of the September 9 meeting is to pick three recipients of the Fund.
 - D. Vasquez answered that S. Ellis was correct but that the Board had the discretion to give more money if they wanted.
 - H. Payne added that presentations will take place on September 9, but time is set aside on the September 23 hearing for the Review Board to vote. If the Review Board is interested in funding a portion of a project, please let the City know so they can communicate that with the applicant beforehand.
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Second Agenda Item: Approval of Meeting Minutes.

5:44 pm: The public hearing was called to order at 5:44 pm. The Review Board voted on approving the [August 12 Meeting Minutes](#). Board Member H. Farooqi made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Board Member J. Nelson seconded the motion. Three (3) Board Members voted in favor. One (1) Board member abstained. The motion carried at 4:40 pm.

Third Agenda Item: Presentation of Updated Guidance on Building Portfolio and Individual Compliance Schedule (ICS) application deadlines.

5:45 pm: G. Latimore rejoined the public meeting.

5:45 pm: H. Payne shared the updated guidance on Building Portfolio and ICS application deadlines.

5:48 pm: Board Q&A

- H. Farooqi asked how the utilities have been rectifying account data issues.
 - H. Payne answered that the utility companies have been very responsive and the City is working with them to get temporary workarounds as they fix the account number issues
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Fourth Agenda Item: Administrative Updates

5:51 pm: Z. Chin shared the number of building portfolios and ICS applications. The City is still waiting to hear back from the long-term hardship compliance plan applicants about their resubmissions. There has been so far only one (1) nomination for the open seats on the board. The BERDO emissions calculator has been updated to reflect 2023 energy data and more accurately reflects Massachusetts' renewable portfolio standard. There is RDH training coming up in September for the Review Board.

October 14 is Indigenous People's Day and the Review Board should decide if they want to reschedule the meeting for October 15 or the following Monday on October 21.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 9.

- S. Ellis asked how many empty seats there are currently on the Board.
 - D. Vasquez responded that there are two (2) open seats on the Board.

- S. Ellis asked a follow-up question about whether anything should be done to get more nominations.
 - H. Payne answered that in the past, nominations seemed to come in at the last minute and close to the deadline, and the Google Form will remain open if the City does not receive enough nominations.
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Meeting Adjournment

5:54 pm: Board Member J. Nelson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member R. Boyd seconded. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:55 pm.