

City of Boston BERDO Review Board  
Public Meeting Minutes  
Zoom Virtual Meeting  
December 9, 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.

**Staff Present:** Hannah Payne, Diana Vasquez, Aidan Callan, Dr. Claudia Diezmartinez, Zengel “Ziggy” Chin, Simenish Semine, Jennie Chang, Brooks Winner, and Catherine Miranda.

**Others:** Approximately sixty-two (62) members of the public attended this meeting.

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**Motion to Nominate Acting Chair**

**4:34 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 J. Nelson seconded the motion. All Board Members in attendance (5) at the time were in favor. The motion carried at 4:35 pm.

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**Call Meeting to Order**

**4:35 pm:** A meeting of the Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance, hereafter referred to as (BERDO), within the Air Pollution Control Commission, was called to order on December 9 at 4:35 pm. This meeting was held virtually.

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**Roll Call**

**4:36 pm:** The following BERDO Review Board members were in attendance: Acting Chair Stephen Ellis, Rashida Boyd, Hessian Farooqi, Gail Latimore, and Jack Nelson.

The following Environment Department staff were in attendance: Hannah Payne, Diana Vasquez, Aidan Callan, Dr. Claudia Diezmartinez, Zengel “Ziggy” Chin, Simenish Semine, Jennie Chang, Brooks Winner, and Catherine Miranda.

**Others:** Approximately sixty-two (62) members of the public attended this meeting.

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**First Agenda Item: Annual Review Board Meeting for Residential Tenants**

**4:38 pm:** D. Vasquez and Z. Chin presented information about BERDO and the Review Board.

**4:52 pm:** Acting Chair S. Ellis opened a public comment period.

- In the Zoom Chat, Arlene asked how she can find out if her private development is in compliance.
  - H. Payne explained that there are two ways to determine if a building complies with BERDO. The first way is to look up a building with the address in the annual Disclosure. The second way is to look up the building in the BERDO Calculator, which will show emissions compliance and projected emissions.
- L. Freeman asked how the upcoming change in federal administration may affect BERDO and Massachusetts as a state.
  - H. Payne answered that BERDO is a local law whose authority stems from the Massachusetts Constitution. Therefore, it should not be affected by the upcoming change in federal administration. The City is working to ensure that work to address climate change can and will continue.
  - S. Ellis asked a follow-up question about whether the City anticipates any issues with the current financial incentives being provided to building owners regarding the upcoming change in the federal administration.
  - H. Payne explained that funding for energy efficiency and decarbonization work in Massachusetts through the Mass Save Program comes through rate-payer funds and will not be affected by the change in Federal administration. Tax credits available from the Federal government might be impacted; however, as of today, they will continue to be offered.
- In the Zoom Chat, F. Allescia asked how BERDO was established. Did the EPA assess Boston's air quality? What is the carbon number that the City of Boston deems dangerous? What number is Boston looking for for compliance?
  - H. Payne answered that in 2013, Boston established the Building Energy Reporting and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO 1.0), requiring large buildings to report energy use annually. The 2019 Climate Action Plan proposed a building performance standard to set emissions limits based on reported energy use. After technical studies and community engagement, BERDO 2.0 was passed in 2021, focusing on reducing carbon emissions, Boston's largest contributor to climate change. The City aims for net-zero greenhouse gas

emissions by 2050 and conducts annual greenhouse gas inventories. Large buildings, while only 5% of Boston's structures, account for 40% of emissions, making BERDO impactful in addressing climate and local air quality issues.

- In the Zoom Chat, M. Brogan and H. Brogan asked if there are funding sources for historical buildings in Boston to help fund decarbonization and if there are exceptions from BERDO for buildings that have restrictions on the type of construction that can be done in the building.
  - H. Payne answered that Boston doesn't have specific funding for historic buildings but offers programs like the Mass Save program and the new Building Decarbonization Advisor Program (BDAP). BDAP connects under-resourced BERDO building owners with experts to develop net-zero plans, with applications for future cohorts opening in spring. Flexibility exists through Hardship Compliance Plans for buildings facing unique challenges. Building owners are encouraged to report emissions early, seek assessments, and explore retrofitting and efficiency options, as many historic buildings in the region have successfully implemented energy upgrades.
- In the Zoom Chat, F. Allescia asked how the fines being paid by the building owner help the City achieve zero emissions by 2050.
  - H. Payne explained that BERDO includes fines for noncompliance, such as failing to report data or exceeding emissions limits. However, building owners exceeding limits can avoid fines by making an Alternative Compliance Payment (ACP). About 85% of buildings are expected to meet 2025 compliance limits, but stricter 2030 limits will require action from more than half of the buildings. BERDO encourages emissions reduction planning through weatherization, energy efficiency upgrades, and transitioning to electric heat pumps. Flexibility Measures are available for buildings facing financial or logistical challenges. BERDO aims to reduce emissions, not generate revenue, and ACPs are used to fund emissions reductions elsewhere in Boston via the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund, focusing on environmental justice benefits.
- In the Zoom Chat, M. Ramos asked how residents with lived experience can become members of the BERDO Review Board.
  - H. Payne answered that Board members must have expertise in environmental justice, affordable housing, labor rights, workforce

development, building engineering, energy, real estate, public health, architecture, and historic preservation. Expertise can come from degrees, professional experience, or lived experience. Nominations are reviewed to ensure balanced representation across these fields, with organizations encouraged to highlight the nominee's expertise and value to the board during the nomination process.

- In the Zoom Chat, R. Parent asked if there is a YouTube video explaining how to read the data and information on the BERDO Emissions Calculator Excel sheet.
  - C. Diezmartinez answered that there is no YouTube video; however, the [guide](#) shared in the chat can help with navigating the BERDO Calculator and how to input and interpret the data.

**5:24 pm:** Acting Chair S. Ellis closed a public comment period.

**5:24 pm:** Board Q&A Session

- H. Farroqi asked for an update on the two open seats on the Review Board.
  - D. Vasquez shared that the Mayor has appointed one seat, and the nominee's name is Jessica Boatright. Jessica has experience working on decarbonization for affordable housing for the City, and she is waiting for approval from the City Council. The Review Board is still accepting nominations on a rolling basis until the Mayor appoints the remaining seat.

**5:30 pm:** City staff presented on other resources for residential tenants.

**5:51 pm:** Acting Chair S. Ellis opened a public comment period.

- S. Ellis asked for more information about letters residents might receive about third-party electricity suppliers.
  - J. Chang explained that the City of Boston sends two types of official mailings for its program: welcome letter packets for new Eversource accounts and consumer protection postcards for those who previously opted out or use third-party suppliers. Residents are advised to verify the authenticity of mailings by checking for official city seals or logos, avoid sharing account information with unverified sources, and remain cautious of companies with similar acronyms.
- In the Zoom Chat, Frank asked if there are any incentives available for condos owned by BPDA with a 65-year lease to cover the costs of maintaining historical integrity for building upgrades.

- H. Payne answered that there are incentives available through Mass Save. The Historic Preservation Office will know more information about the requirements of historical buildings.

**6:01 pm:** Acting Chair S. Ellis closed a public comment period.

**6:02 pm:** Board Q&A Session

- G. Latimore asked how much money is in the Mass Save budget to encourage people to use Mass Save resources.
  - B. Winner answered that the budget for 2022-2024 is \$4 billion, while the budget for 2025-2027 has increased to \$4.9 billion to support building owners. Of this, \$2 billion is specifically allocated for equity initiatives to assist low- and moderate-income building owners and renters.
- S. Ellis asked what a tenant can do to engage with Mass Save if their landlord is not involved in decarbonizing the building.
  - B. Winner answered that renters can visit the Mass Save Renters page for up-to-date energy-saving resources, including an online home energy assessment to generate recommendations. Renters can also make changes without landlord permission, such as installing energy-efficient appliances like air conditioners, air purifiers, and dehumidifiers, which are often eligible for rebates. Additionally, renters can explore community solar programs to lower utility bills.
  - S. Ellis asked the follow-up question: What would a tenant do if renting from a large rental organization or agency?
  - B. Winner answered that identifying sustainability managers within management companies can be helpful, as they may already focus on compliance and energy initiatives. Renters can research their building's compliance status and use this information to highlight opportunities, such as Mass Save programs, federal tax incentives, and resources from the Retrofit Resource Hub. These programs offer significant incentives for multifamily buildings, allowing landlords to save money and prepare for future regulations.
- G. Latimore asked where residents can find on their utility bill who is sourcing their electricity.

- J. Chang explained that the electricity supplier information is typically listed on the bill's first page, either in the blue box labeled "current charges for electricity" or under "your supplier is." For Boston Community Choice Electricity (CCE) participants, the bill will indicate "billing for City of Boston CCE" with the contracted supplier. If the supplier listed differs, such as Eversource or another third-party supplier, the bill will provide their name, address, and contact details.

**6:23 pm:** Acting Chair S. Ellis opened a public comment period.

**6:24 pm:** Acting Chair S. Ellis closed a public comment period.

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### **Third Agenda Item: Approval of Meeting Minutes.**

**6:24 pm:** The Review Board voted on approving the [November 25 Meeting Minutes](#). Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded the motion. Four (4) Board Members voted in favor. One (1) Board Members abstained. The motion carried at 6:26 pm.

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### **Fourth Agenda Item: Administrative Updates**

**6:29 pm:** Z. Chin shared the number of Building Portfolio and Individual Compliance Schedule applications.

The City has received one signed grant agreement from the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund recipients and is waiting for the two other organizations to sign their grant agreements.

Building owners will receive free BERDO assistance at an event in Allston-Brighton on December 10 from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

The full calendar of the Review Board meetings for 2025 can be found on the BERDO Review Board website at [boston.gov/berdo-review-board](https://boston.gov/berdo-review-board).

The next meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2025.

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### **Meeting Adjournment**

**6:32 pm:** Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 6:33 pm.