

City of Boston BERDO Review Board  
Public Meeting Minutes  
Zoom Virtual Meeting  
January 13, 2025, at 4:30 pm  
[View recording here](#)

**Board Members in Attendance:** Rashida Boyd, Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Stephen Ellis, Hessann Farooqi, and Gail Latimore.

**Board Members not in Attendance:** Jack Nelson

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

**Others:** Approximately forty-two (42) members of the public attended this meeting.

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**Motion to Nominate Acting Chair**

**4:43 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 4:43 pm.

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**Call Meeting to Order**

**4:44 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 January 13 at 4:44 pm. This meeting was held virtually.

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**Roll Call**

**5:06 pm:** The following BERDO Review Board members were in attendance: Acting Chair Stephen Ellis, Rashida Boyd, Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Hessann Farooqi, and Gail Latimore.

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

**Others:** Approximately forty-two (42) members of the public attended this meeting.

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**First Agenda Item: Vote on Building Portfolio Applications**

**4:46 pm:** Z. Chin presented information and details about DiamondRock Hospitality Co’s Building Portfolio application.

**4:47 pm:** Board Q&A Session

- H. Farooqi asked what challenges DiamondRock anticipates with trying to comply with BERDO.
  - S. Ajema answered that DiamondRock is in the process of assessing different compliance mechanisms, and in 6 months, they will have a better picture.
  - M. McGilligan added that one 100-year-old building will have different challenges when decarbonizing than the 20-year-old building in the portfolio.

**4:49 pm:** Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to approve DiamondRock Hospitality Co's Building Portfolio application with standard conditions. Councilor G. Coletta Zapata seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 4:50 pm.

**4:57 pm:** D. Vasquez presented information and details about Mass General Brigham's (MGB) Building Portfolio application.

**4:00 pm:** Board Q&A Session

- G. Latimore asked about determining prioritization in building decarbonization and compliance with emission standards, specifically asking how decisions will be made regarding which buildings to address first.
  - J. Messervy explained MGB's decarbonization master plan, which covers all facilities across Massachusetts. The plan includes three primary pathways: committing to carbon-free fuels, electrification, and reducing energy use intensity, leading to a 47% decrease since 2009. The decision-making process will involve identifying low-hanging fruit for immediate action while implementing multi-phase, multi-year strategies for more complex projects. The plan represents a significant capital investment with no direct revenue return, but MGB remains committed to meeting its decarbonization goals, including the 50% reduction target by 2030, despite varying challenges at different facilities.
  - G. Latimore asked the follow-up question: What is the timeline for completing the decarbonization master plan?
  - J. Messervy answered that by the summer the master plan should be completed.

- G. Latimore asked if Mass General Brigham has a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) or Women and Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE) utilization policy for its capital projects.
  - J. Messervy confirmed that MGB does this in the supply chain and within the City of Boston. After finalizing and agreeing with the Boston Building trades, MGB wants to amplify this commitment.
- H. Farooqi asked if MGB has looked into tax incentives or direct pay provisions from the Inflation Reduction Act.
  - D. Villaneuva answered that MGB incorporates the evaluation of each incentive as step one of decarbonization projects.
- H. Farooqi asked how MGB will reach carbon net zero if the MATEP plant is not decarbonized.
  - D. Villanueva answered that MGB has discussed efforts to reduce energy consumption and explore decarbonization strategies while managing the long-term contract.
- H. Farooqi asked how the energy efficiency measures will impact the demand and use from the MATEP plant.
  - D. Villanueva answered that the measures will reduce demand by 15% to 20% based on square footage.
- S. Ellis asked about the data being collected by clinicians and how this data would be disseminated, specifically if it would be included in the decarbonization master plan. He also asked whether there were plans to share this information with the broader public to increase transparency and understanding of the activities related to the buildings and the surrounding areas.
  - J. Messervy clarified that the data was not intended to be included in the decarbonization master plan, which primarily focuses on the technical aspects of achieving decarbonization goals. However, there is potential for a proactive approach, using data collection, weather projections, and air quality analysis to better understand and address health risks in advance, particularly during heat waves.
- S. Ellis commented that the information collected by the clinicians will be useful to include in the Emissions Compliance plan, due in two years.

- G. Latimore asked for further clarification on how the community would be engaged. She also raised concerns about how the clinician group has been engaged and commented on capital work and its implications for the community. She asked if anyone could provide insight into how the clinician group has influenced or contributed to capital improvements, particularly concerning environmental justice and patient communities.
  - J. Messervy explained that there is a standing committee, the Climate and Sustainability Action Committee. This committee includes physician and non-physician members and meets regularly to discuss decarbonization strategies and the health impacts of air quality, emissions, and heat on patient populations.

**5:25 pm:** Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to request a hearing for Mass General Brigham's Building Portfolio application. Acting Chair S. Ellis seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:28 pm.

**5:29 pm:** D. Vasquez presented information and details about The Community Builders (TCB) Building Portfolio application.

**5:32 pm:** Board Q&A Session

- S. Ellis asked for more information about the community life model and how it will be used to provide benefits to EJ communities.
  - M. Hipson explained that the community life model is TCB's social services program that helps connect tenants with resources.
- H. Farooqi asked what challenges TCB sees with complying with BERDO.
  - M. Hipson answered that the buildings involved are publicly subsidized, built with public funds, and often operate with public funding. Due to the lack of available cash for net-zero investments, TCB relies on public sector sources for decarbonization. This means applications must be made for competitive funding, with projects selected by the state and city.
- H. Farooqi asked how the buildings are metered and if tenants pay their own electricity bills.
  - M. Hipson explained that in some cases, residents pay for their utilities but receive a utility allowance, reducing their rent by an amount roughly equal to the cost of utilities. However, there are buildings, such as Building 104, where the owner covers utility costs.

- H. Farooqi asked if TCB had considered Boston Choice Community Electricity.
  - M. Hipson answered that a long-term contract is in place to secure lower-cost electricity. TCB is prioritizing maintaining low operating expenses. The current contract is locked in until 2026, at which point TCB plans to reevaluate its approach, emphasizing green energy and cost considerations more.
- G. Latimore asked for examples of resident engagement in capital issues and the impact residents have had on any capital projects undertaken by TCB.
  - M. Hispon answered that resident input drives capital projects for existing buildings. When feedback from community staff and property management identifies a building that could better serve residents, capital investments are prioritized for those sites. In terms of electrification, there is a strong emphasis on ensuring that residents do not face increased utility costs, particularly since many tenants pay their own utility bills.
- S. Ellis asked if TCB will be in compliance with 2025 emissions limits.
  - W. Lippincott explained that four buildings will be in compliance with the Building Portfolio and will help TCB have some flexibility in complying. Otherwise, the buildings will not be in compliance for 2025.

**5:47 pm:** Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to approve The Community Builders' Building Portfolio application with standard conditions. Councilor G. Coletta Zapata seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:48 pm.

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## **Second Agenda Item: City of Boston's Building Portfolio Hearing.**

**5:48 pm:** The public hearing was called to order.

**6:23 pm:** C. Kramer presented information about the City of Boston's Building Portfolio application.

**6:16 pm:** Chair S. Ellis opened a public comment period.

- R. Sathyanarayana asked if any conversations are going on with BPS schools other than Madison Park and Boston Green Academy to continue student engagement with green jobs.

- C. Kramer answered that there have been occasional inquiries from teachers interested in learning more about energy systems; these have been informal and not part of any specific initiative. Standardizing new curricula typically goes through the STEM department at BPS.

**6:21 pm:** Chair S. Ellis closed a public comment period.

**6:21 pm:** Board Q&A Session

- G. Latimore asked about the approach for replacing boilers and fixing HVAC issues in BPS.
  - C. Kramer answered that the next steps regarding replacements depend on various factors, and the issue of deferred maintenance and capital planning plays a significant role. The goal is to avoid waiting for a catastrophic failure and to maintain existing systems, particularly when transitioning from fossil fuel-supported systems to more sustainable options like water source heat pumps. The boilers may be replaced with an electric boiler or a water source heat pump.
- H. Farooqi asked if any combined heat and power plants (CHPs) in schools will reach the end of their lives in the next two years before the Emissions Standard Compliance Plan is due.
  - C. Kramer answered that he believes the CHP at the Murphy School is nearing the end of its life, as it is 12 years old. The current goal is to maintain the CHPs that are running well.
  - H. Farooqi requested an end-of-year strategy that will decommission the fossil fuel CHPs as quickly as possible to be addressed in the Emissions Standard Compliance Plan.
- S. Ellis commented that he would like the public to have access to the ranking methodology for the buildings in the City's Building Portfolio.
- G. Latimore commented on the potential for integrating educational opportunities into the city's contracting process for decarbonization work. She suggested having contractors present their work to classrooms, providing students with an understanding of the projects in their schools. Ensuring students gain insight into these improvements and access to practical learning experiences.

**6:44 pm:** Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to approve the City of Boston's Building Portfolio application with standard conditions and make a request to include

information regarding publicly disclosing the City of Boston's Capital Planning Ranking Methodology and the Boston Public Schools' engagement in the Emissions Standard Compliance Plan. Councilor G. Coletta Zapata seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 6:46 pm.

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

**6:46 pm:** The Review Board voted on approving the [December 9 Meeting Minutes](#). Board Member H. Farooqi made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Board Member G. Latimore seconded the motion. All Board Members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 6:47 pm.

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

**6:47 pm:** Z. Chin shared that the deadline for Individual Compliance Schedules (ICS) and Building Portfolio applications was January 6. 38 portfolio applications and 5 ICS applications were received, with 15 portfolio applications and 1 ICS application currently under review. Two new Short-term Hardship Compliance Plan submissions are being checked for completeness.

All three grant agreements have been signed, and funds are being distributed to recipients.

The 2024 BERDO disclosure was posted on October 1 and updated in mid-December to reflect energy data for buildings granted reporting extensions until November 15, 2024.

The first cohort of 22 building owners, mainly from multifamily housing, will receive decarbonization planning services and technical assistance. The next cohort begins in April 2025, and applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

A series of webinars will be hosted in the coming months. The first, on February 19, will introduce the 2025 BERDO season. The BERDO website will announce more dates.

The Allston-Brighton workshop on December 10 was successful, with 20 in-person consultations over four hours. More workshops are planned for different neighborhoods, with the next one in Fenway.

The City proposed forgoing the January 27 meeting to give the City time to review flexibility measure applications.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 10.

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## **Meeting Adjournment**

**6:51 pm:** Board Member Councilor G. Coletta Zapata made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member G. Latimore seconded. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 6:52 pm.