

City of Boston BERDO Review Board
Public Meeting Minutes
Zoom Virtual Meeting
March 24, 2025, at 4:30 pm
[View recording here](#)

Board Members in Attendance: Jessica Boatright, Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Stephen Ellis, Lori Ferriss, Gail Latimore, and Reginald “Reggie” Stovell Jr.

Board Members not in Attendance: Rashida Boyd, Hessann Farooqi, and Jack Nelson.

Staff Present: Hannah Payne, Diana Vasquez, and Dr. Claudia Diezmartinez.

Others: Approximately twelve (12) members of the public attended this meeting.

Motion to Nominate Acting Chair

4:45 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 L. Ferriss seconded the motion. All Board Members in attendance (5) were in favor. The motion carried at 4:46 pm.

Call Meeting to Order

4:46 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 March 24 at 4:46 pm. This meeting was held virtually.

Roll Call

4:47 pm: The following BERDO Review Board members were in attendance: Acting Chair Stephen Ellis, Jessica Boatright, Lori Ferriss, Gail Latimore, and Reginald “Reggie” Stovell Jr.

The following Environment Department staff were in attendance: Hannah Payne, Diana Vasquez, and Dr. Claudia Diezmartinez.

Others: Approximately twelve (12) members of the public attended this meeting.

First Agenda Item: Discussion and Vote on Opening the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund for the 2025 Application Cycle.

4:51 pm: Acting Chair S. Ellis called the public meeting to order.

5:52 pm: D. Vasquez presented details about the 2025 application cycle for the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund (the Fund).

5:56 pm: Councilor G. Coletta Zapata joined the meeting.

5:56 pm: Board Q&A Session

- J. Boatright asked if previous applicants who want to roll over their applications will have an opportunity to submit new supplemental materials.
 - D. Vasquez answered that she would contact applicants to see if anything needed to be updated in their previous applications.
- J. Boatright asked if there were any issues with applicants waiting to hear back about funding decisions for the Fund and trying to apply for additional funding.
 - D. Vasquez answered that there were no timing issues from applicants last year.
- S. Ellis asked for a reminder as to why non-profit organizations are the only ones eligible to receive grants from the Fund.
 - D. Vasquez explained that the current funding for the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund was provided by the Mayor and City Council using operating dollars. However, due to Massachusetts' anti-aid amendment, which limits how public funds can be used, projects must have a clear public purpose—particularly since the fund focuses on building decarbonization. As a result, working with nonprofits is a reliable way to ensure this requirement is met.
 - H. Payne added that each project funded through the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund undergoes additional screening to ensure it serves a clear public purpose. Upfront guidelines are provided to help applicants understand eligibility. However, since determining what qualifies as a public purpose can be complex, applicants are encouraged to reach out with questions.
- L. Ferris asked what the logic is for prioritizing BERDO buildings for the Fund.
 - S. Ellis answered that during the Fund, the focus naturally shifted toward supporting retrofit and weatherization projects for multifamily buildings subject to BERDO and located in environmental justice communities. While that focus emerged organically, it doesn't necessarily define future cycles,

and there is openness to expanding the fund's scope to broadly support environmental justice communities, regardless of BERDO building status.

- G. Latimore expressed her support for prioritizing BERDO buildings and focusing on large buildings in environmental justice communities.
- G. Latimore asked for the amount left in the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund pool.
 - D. Vasquez shared that there is a little over \$2,077,000 left in the Fund.
- R. Stovell asked how the Review Board landed on the amount of \$750,000 to grant for the first application cycle.
 - D. Vasquez explained that last year, the funding amount of \$750,000 was set as a strategic estimate to gauge potential applicants' interest while preserving a healthy fund balance, especially given that alternative compliance payments weren't expected until at least the following year. In addition, the Board released \$500,000 to support the Building Decarbonization Advisor Program, which offers free services to eligible building owners, bringing the total funding released to \$1.25 million. The \$250,000 project cap aligned well with applicant interest.
 - S. Ellis added that granting multiple awards of \$250,000 allowed more projects to be funded from the amount released.
- R. Stovell commented on funding smaller buildings or projects with \$250,000 instead of giving the full amount to a single project.
- L. Ferriss asked if the funds could be used by nonprofits that serve building owners and assist with project planning.
 - D. Vasquez confirmed that non-profit organizations that serve building owners are eligible for funds to assist building owners.
- S. Ellis requested that the motion to open the Fund be amended to include two \$250,000 awards, with the last \$250,000 split into smaller awards.

5:25 pm: Board Member J. Boatright made a motion to open the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund for the 2025 application cycle. The Review Board will allocate \$750,000, with a preference to make at least four awards, not to exceed \$250,000 each. Board Member R. Stovell seconded the motion. Five (5) Board members voted in favor. One (1) Board member abstained. The motion carried at 5:26 pm.

Second Agenda Item: Building Portfolio and Individual Compliance Schedule Hearing

5:26 pm: Acting Chair S. Ellis recused himself and appointed Board Member J. Boatright to serve as acting chair pro tem.

5:27 pm: D. Vasquez presented information and details about Pathway 3 Building Portfolios.

5:29 pm: Boston University presented its Building Portfolio and Individual Compliance Schedule application.

5:46 pm: City staff presented staff comments.

5:53 pm: Board Q&A Session

- G. Coletta Zapata asked why BU the used Mass DEP emissions factors to calculate their ICS.
 - D. Carlberg answered that in 2010, BU began publicly reporting emissions through the AASHE STARS system, which covers everything from operations to research and curriculum. BU has always aimed to be as accurate and transparent as possible, so it has used a higher emissions factor than ISO New England's—closer to what MassDEP uses—because it's believed to reflect reality better. BU understands the value of having a consistent emissions factor across BERDO reporting and appreciates the benefit of having more current data. But switching would mean redoing BU's past emissions data and updating everything reported, which is a significant lift. This is becoming less of an issue for BU since the university now matches 100% of its electricity with renewable energy and no longer has to worry about the emissions factor delay going forward.
- L. Ferriss asked for more information about how Mass DEP emissions factors will give BU a higher emissions limit.
 - G. Brewer answered that the higher baseline gives BU added flexibility in meeting its emissions targets, but it's a forward-looking decision. By aligning with MassDEP's emissions factors, BU is preparing for a future where, if the BU Wind program were no longer available, the university would then be subject to those higher emissions factors—essentially balancing out the flexibility gained from using a higher baseline now.
- L. Ferriss asked what plans BU has to decarbonize the two utility plants.

- D. Carlberg explained that BU is taking a portfolio approach to decarbonization, with a formal plan expected by the end of the year. Early findings highlight a focus on energy efficiency and reducing emissions from heating at the building scale. Boston University is also exploring opportunities for thermal energy networks, particularly using geothermal systems, to improve performance and maximize emissions reductions. The overarching strategy prioritizes measures that deliver the greatest emissions impact per dollar spent.
- G. Latimore asked for more information about the HVAC replacement at the 700 Albany Street building and the annual emissions reduction.
 - D. Carlberg answered that BU recently completed a project at 700 Albany Street that involved replacing and rebuilding air handling units, upgrading building automation controls for better air exchange management, and installing a centralized exhaust system with energy recovery coils to capture thermal energy from outgoing air. This strategy, which may eventually incorporate water source heat pumps for heating and cooling, is part of BU's broader climate action plan. The project resulted in a 45% emissions reduction for that building, though its impact on the total campus portfolio is relatively small. While BU regularly engages with its internal and external communities on sustainability, there was no specific outreach to nearby environmental justice communities for this project.
- R. Stovell asked about the life span of the equipment used in the turbine and steam turbine retrofit.
 - D. Carlberg said that the equipment's life span is long and will continue to be updated as BU decarbonizes the campus.
- J. Boatright asked for more information about community engagement during the development of the Climate Action Plan.
 - D. Carlberg answered that when BU developed its initial Climate Action Plan, it invited the broader community to participate through public forums on the Medical and Charles River campuses, with over 150 attendees at the latter. Many participants were community members passionate about addressing climate change. BU plans to hold additional forums as part of the upcoming Climate Action Plan update and will continue engaging key partners, including the City of Boston and utility providers.

6:18 pm: Chair J. Boatright opened a public comment period.

6:20 pm: Chair J. Boatright closed a public comment period.

6:22 pm: Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to request that Boston University update their ICS application using ISO New England Emissions Factors. Councilor G. Coletta Zapata seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 6:23 pm.

Third Agenda Item: Approval of Meeting Minutes.

6:26 pm.: The Review Board continued the vote on approving the March 10 Meeting Minutes to the next Review Board meeting.

Fourth Agenda Item: Administrative Updates

6:27 pm: D. Vasquez shared the number of flexibility measure applications the City has received and an update on the awardees of last year's Equitable Emissions Investment Fund application cycle.

The BERDO team is hosting a series of webinars in the upcoming months, and more information is available on the BERDO website: <https://www.boston.gov/berdo#events>.

The team is planning to conduct more in-person workshops in different neighborhoods. The next one will be at the Civic Pavillion on March 26 from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm. RSVP is not needed but is encouraged.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 14.

Meeting Adjournment

6:30 pm: Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member L. Ferris seconded. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 6:30 pm.