

City of Boston BERDO Review Board
Public Meeting Minutes
Zoom Virtual Meeting
January 26, 2026, at 4:30 pm
[View recording here](#)

Board Members in Attendance: Jessica Boatright, Stephen Ellis, Hessann Farooqi, Lori Ferriss, Gail Latimore, and Reginald “Reggie” Stovell Jr.

Board Members not in Attendance: None.

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

Others: Approximately ten (10) members of the public attended this meeting.

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 January 26 at 4:35 pm. This meeting was held virtually.

Roll Call

4:36 pm: The following BERDO Review Board members were in attendance: Chair Jessica Boatright, Stephen Ellis, Hessann Farooqi, Lori Ferriss, Gail Latimore, and Reginald “Reggie” Stovell Jr.

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

Others: Approximately ten (10) members of the public attended this meeting.

First Agenda Item: Vote on Flexibility Measure Application

4:37 pm: D. Vasquez presented information and details about Northeastern University’s Pathway 2 Building Portfolio.

4:40 pm: City staff presented staff comments.

4:41 pm: Board Q&A Session

- J. Boatright asked how Northeastern will engage neighbors and other stakeholders regarding university projects.

- V. Spies answered that Northeastern previously developed a Climate Justice Action Plan through an 18-month, community-led process that informed its decarbonization and resiliency planning. Community partners, including students, faculty, staff, and Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE), have been and will continue to be engaged, particularly on projects with significant neighborhood disruption or air quality impacts. While not every project requires formal engagement, larger initiatives such as district energy upgrades will involve deeper coordination. Efforts are also expected to improve air quality by reducing reliance on natural gas and to support the broader community by lowering energy demand during peak grid periods.
- J. Boatright asked whether, for larger projects, there is a bidding process or an in-house standard system for contractors.
 - V. Spies explained that Northeastern has standard in-house project delivery systems but does not plan to bundle all work into a single large project due to financial and practical constraints. Instead, projects will be phased and strategically organized, often by grouping buildings with deferred maintenance needs or by focusing on specific campus areas. The Building Portfolio offers this flexibility and targeted planning while creating multiple bidding opportunities for both large and small firms across different projects.
- S. Ellis asked why Northeastern chose to use 'college/university' as the building use type for all its buildings, rather than characterizing each building individually.
 - D. Vasquez explained that college and university campuses typically include a wide range of building types, including dormitories, classrooms, laboratories, restaurants, and, in some cases, commercial spaces open to the general public. Under current BERDO guidance, colleges and universities generally have two options for building classification. One option is to designate most buildings under a single college or university category, with important caveats. Buildings that primarily serve non-university users, or that clearly do not align with typical academic or laboratory uses, should be classified more specifically based on their actual function.
 - J. Glickel added that the team initially explored breaking the buildings down into more detailed categories, but found that doing so did not significantly change the overall outcome. Because Northeastern includes many dormitories with relatively low energy intensity, those buildings offset the higher intensity lab spaces, resulting in a similar overall cost either way. Breaking buildings down into individual floors or mixed-use buildings, such

as student centers with restaurants on lower floors, proved complex and burdensome. In cases like large dormitories with dining halls that make up less than 10% of the building area, those uses did not meaningfully affect classification. After discussions with the City, the approach of simplifying the classifications was determined to be cleaner, easier to administer, and slightly beneficial overall.

- S. Ellis asked about the timeline for decommissioning the central heating plant.
 - V. Spies answered that the plan is flexible, but the goal is to fully decommission the plant by around 2030. As the infrastructure ages, Northeastern is increasingly connecting to Vicinity steam to replace lost plant capacity, with this transition already underway in some areas. At the same time, the strategy includes developing hot- and chilled-water district systems across the campus. Over time, this combined approach allows for reduced reliance on steam and greater use of lower temperature hot water and electric systems.
- H. Farooqi, what is Northeastern's plan to address emissions that cannot be eliminated or migrated on-site?
 - V. Spies answered that she can follow up with the information regarding drawing down one ton of carbon from the atmosphere for every ton that Northeastern emits from operations.
 - H. Farooqi requested that Northeastern provide the information in their Emissions Standard Compliance Plan that is due in two years.
- H. Farooqi asked if Northeastern has a collective bargaining agreement on construction and renovation-related projects.
 - J. Glickel answered that he will follow up with that information.
- H. Farooqi asked if the new projects as part of the Institutional Master Plan will comply with the net-zero carbon zoning code or will achieve net-zero emissions.
 - V. Spies explained that all projects must comply with the applicable building code and net-zero carbon emissions requirements. While not simple, new construction is generally more straightforward and easier to bring into compliance than existing buildings. The plan also takes advantage of these opportunities to expand geothermal infrastructure, such as installing approximately 46 geothermal wells beneath the new multipurpose athletic facility.

- G. Latimore asked which community groups were involved in the Climate Justice Plan.
 - V. Spies answered that New England Community Project, Reclaim Roxbury, and ACE were the key partners.
- G. Latimore asked what the comments and themes came from the community input in the Climate Justice Action Plan.
 - V. Spies answered that Northeastern's website outlines four core goals developed collaboratively with a steering committee: environmentally healthy campuses, strong community relationships, regenerative economies, and justice-centered research and academics. Many of these goals connect to BERDO-related energy work, particularly the objective of creating an environmentally healthy campus by eliminating greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality. Key efforts include decommissioning the central plant and advancing energy resilience to reduce grid strain during the transition away from fossil fuels.
- R. Stovell asked about Northeastern's MWBE utilization strategy.
 - V. Spies answered that as part of Northeastern's IMP, there are established requirements related to the participation of minority- and women-owned business enterprises. While the specific figures were not immediately available, these metrics are tracked and reported on at least annually, and the information can be provided. This work is recognized as an important component of economic development, with a clear emphasis on ensuring that communities and local businesses share in the benefits of the energy transition.

5:14 pm: Board Member R. Stovell made a motion to approve Northeastern University's Building Portfolio application with standard conditions, with the request to include information about how Northeastern will address emissions that cannot be eliminated or mitigated on-site and Northeastern's hiring policies for large decarbonization and capital projects. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (6) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:14 pm.

Second Agenda Item: Discussion and Vote on BERDO Procedures

5:17 pm: H. Payne presented details about the streamlined Short-Term Hardship Application.

5:26 pm: Board Q&A Session

- J. Boatright commented that many affordable housing owners have demonstrated strong engagement with BERDO and a genuine interest in compliance, but they face unique constraints tied to funding cycles. BERDO's ability to provide flexibility when organizations can demonstrate a clear commitment and plan to pursue competitive funding acknowledges that award timelines are often outside an owner's direct control. This approach helps owners responsibly manage their properties while also recognizing the goodwill and proactive efforts many have shown in supporting the administration's climate goals.
- S. Ellis asked whether federal COVID relief counts toward the \$5 million threshold for businesses.
 - D. Vasquez answered that federal grants were considered revenue, but federal loans were not.
- H. Farooqi asked how building owners who have gotten a home energy assessment in the last 2-3 years will engage with MassSave.
 - H. Payne answered that engaging with MassSave does not necessarily require a home energy assessment, since MassSave has different programs for different building types. The City will accept various forms of evidence of a good-faith effort to engage with MassSave.

5:34 pm: Board Member S. Ellis made a motion to approve to allow the Environment Department to publish the streamlined Short-Term Hardship Compliance Plan application as presented. Board Member G. Latimore seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (6) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:35 pm.

Third Item: Approval of Meeting Minutes.

5:35 pm: The Review Board voted to approve the [January 12 Meeting Minutes](#). Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Chair J. Boatright seconded the motion. Five (5) board members voted in favor. One (1) board member abstained. The motion carried at 5:36 pm.

Fourth Agenda Item: Administrative Updates

5:36 pm: Z. Chin shared the following updates:

The number of Hardship Compliance Plan applications.

The Green Ribbon Commission and the City of Boston are hosting a series of BERDO office hours over Zoom. Future events will be listed on the [BERDO website](#).

The BERDO team launched the new [MA Class I REC Connector Program](#). The program aims to support building owners with purchasing MA Class I Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) to comply with BERDO.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2026.

Meeting Adjournment

5:43 pm: Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded. All board members in attendance (6) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:44 pm.