

City of Boston BERDO Review Board
Public Meeting Minutes
Zoom Virtual Meeting
September 14, 2026, at 4:30 pm
[View recording here](#)

Board Members in Attendance: Jessica Boatright, Samira Ahmadi, Stephen Ellis, Hessann Farooqi, Gail Latimore, and Councilor Brian Worrell.

Board Members not in Attendance: Lori Ferriss

Staff Present: Hannah Payne, Diana Vasquez, Claudia Diezmartínez, PhD, and Dylan Grant.

Others: Approximately five (5) members of the public attended this meeting.

Call Meeting to Order

4:35 pm: A meeting of the Review Board for the Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance, hereafter referred to as BERDO, was called to order on September 14 at 4:35 pm. This meeting was held virtually.

Roll Call

4:35 pm: The following BERDO Review Board members were in attendance: Chair Jessica Boatright, Samira Ahmadi, Stephen Ellis, Hessann Farooqi, and Gail Latimore.

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

Others: Approximately five (5) 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 Boston Water & Sewer Commission's Pathway 1 Building Portfolio.

4:39 pm: City staff presented staff comments.

4:40 pm: Board Q&A Session

- There were no questions for the Review Board.

4:41 pm: Board Member S. Ellis moved to approve the Boston Water & Sewer Commission's Building Portfolio application with standard conditions. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (6) voted in favor. The motion carried at 4:42 pm.

Second Agenda Item: Discussion on the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund 2026 Application Cycle

4:42 pm: D. Vasquez and C. Diezmartínez presented information about the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund 2026 application cycle.

4:46 pm: Councilor B. Worrell joined the meeting.

4:55 pm: Board Q&A Session

- J. Boatright asked for clarification on how much will be left in the Fund after this year's application cycle.
 - D. Vasquez explained that the only anticipated recurring administrative draw from the \$698,000 balance is for Review Board member stipends, which are capped at \$200 per day of service or up to \$4,800 annually per participating member. For each participating member, funds are encumbered via a \$4,800 purchase order that renews every 12 months once fully drawn down. Total expenditures will fluctuate depending on how many eligible board members opt in to receive stipends and when purchase orders must be renewed.
- H. Farooqi commented that he is in support of the BERDO Team's recommendation.
- G. Latimore asked for clarification on the number of BERDO IDs subject to the 2025 emissions standard.
 - C. Diezmartínez explained that the total figure of 1,070 represents all 2025 buildings, campuses, and portfolios that have not yet finalized their compliance cycle, including those that failed to report, filed for extensions, or are undergoing data revisions and third-party verification. Conversely, the 760 properties that completed the entire reporting pipeline are excluded from that count, as are the 274 pending cases requiring further administrative review.

- G. Latimore asked if any third-party consultants are assisting the BERDO Team with emissions compliance review.
 - H. Payne answered that to manage the extensive data volume, the BERDO team is actively streamlining its review process across dedicated staff and external partners. One BERDO Assistant leads basic data quality reviews by following up on automated energy-usage flags during the pending revisions phase, while internal staff manages overall emissions compliance. To address recent staff turnover and handle complex submissions, the team engaged GreenerU under an operations support contract to assist with technical data-quality checks and specialized emissions-compliance evaluations.
- S. Ellis asked what percentage of entities under review are going to be above their emissions standard.
 - H. Payne answered that review priorities are currently focused on non-compliant properties exceeding their emissions thresholds, with staff already contacting nearly all affected owners to offer corrective options like a blended emission standard before moving them into official action-needed status. Additional secondary reviews are underway for complex multi-building portfolios, automated National Grid utility connections, gross floor area discrepancies, and custom renewable energy claims. Because very few properties submit compliant RECs or proper documentation, these claims trigger manual audits to prevent unverified compliance. Consequently, the vast majority of the 274 properties remaining in emissions review are actually below their emissions limits, with only around 10 uncorrected cases at risk of non-compliance. However, additional reviews are expected as remaining non-reporters submit late data.
- S. Ellis asked how the MA Class I REC Connector Program is structured with the City.
 - H. Payne explained that the Mass Class I REC Connector program operates as an entirely external process managed by Green Energy Consumers Alliance, which handles all associated financial transactions. Following a request for information that yielded a single responding broker, the City acts strictly as an informational resource rather than an intermediary, leaving building owners free to engage alternative REC brokers. The City's sole administrative role is verifying submitted documentation to confirm regulatory compliance.

- S. Ellis asked what happens to the entities that do not take advantage of the options to address their emissions.
 - H. Payne answered that enforcement for non-compliant properties follows a phased escalation protocol, beginning with weekly automated email reminders to entities in the pending revision, action-needed, or unsubmitted stages. If unaddressed, the City escalates to physical past-due notices, planning at least two mailings spaced 30 to 60 days apart. Continued non-compliance triggers formal Notice of Probable Violation and Notice of Violation issuances, each providing a mandatory grace period before daily financial penalties take effect. Based on city trends, staff expects most owners to achieve compliance as warning notices escalate before reaching the formal fining threshold.
- J. Boatright asked about the possibility of awarding all the projects and instead reducing the maximum award amount to less than \$200,000.
 - D. Vasquez answered that if the Review Board decides to reduce grant amounts below the \$200,000 baseline requested by all five finalists, staff will need to re-engage applicants to confirm project viability under reduced funding. Splitting or scaling down the fixed pool presents significant administrative challenges, and any modified allocation will require explicit written confirmation from each finalist before awards can be finalized.

Third Agenda Item: Discussion and Vote on Proposed Policies and Procedures Update on Default Energy Values

5:17 pm: H. Payne and D. Grant presented information about the proposed update to the BERDO Policies and Procedures.

5:26 pm: Board Q&A Session

- S. Ahmadi asked for clarification about the language using historical data.
 - H. Payne answered that the proposed methodology prioritizes historical data for calculations when available. If reliable historical data is not available, the team would use default standard values as a fallback, though this approach remains open to adjustments.
- S. Ahmadi asked if the rate of office vacancy has been factored into the default energy values.

- H. Payne answered that the proposed approach uses 2024 data and will continuously update calculations with the most recent annual data available to reflect current vacancy trends better. While the exact comparative calculations are not on hand, utilizing recent data is expected to yield slightly lower figures for office spaces than the 2018 benchmark values.
- S. Ellis asked for clarification on the method of normalization for the default energy values.
 - D. Grant explained that the methodology utilizes monthly values to align energy calculations directly with monthly utility billing cycles. To ensure accuracy across seasonal variations, these monthly figures will be paired with monthly heating and cooling degree days sourced directly from weather.gov.
- S. Ellis asked for confirmation that no buildings under 'healthcare' are using fuel oil as an energy source.
 - D. Grant answered that in the 2024 BERDO dataset, neither the food sales and service nor the healthcare sectors reported any fuel oil usage. While staff evaluated alternative data sources to fill this gap, they determined that default fuel oil figures may be unnecessary for these use types if historical reliance on fuel oil has been absent.
- H. Farooqi asked how often there are cases where building owners have to use default energy values.
 - H. Payne answered that while missing data remains relatively uncommon across BERDO submissions, staff occasionally encounter edge cases like faulty utility meters or mid-year service transitions that evade automated flags. When utility outreach fails to recover missing usage history, these gaps leave properties without complete reporting data and require dedicated administrative intervention.
- S. Ahmadi asked what about steam default energy values.
 - D. Grant answered that the proposed framework focuses on the three most common energy use types, intentionally excluding secondary fuels like diesel because they are rare and have low impact across reported data. For alternative fuels like steam, where new adoption is extremely rare, the team can rely on existing historical data to cover the small set of relevant properties.

5:43 pm: Board Member S. Ellis made a motion to approve Staff's recommendations to the proposed Policies & Procedures updates, with the addendum to edit the word 'should' to 'shall' in the first paragraph of the recommendation. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded the motion. All Board members in attendance (7) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:44 pm.

Fourth Item: Approval of Meeting Minutes.

5:44 pm: The Review Board voted to approve the [September 14 Meeting Minutes](#). Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Chair J. Boatright seconded the motion. Six (6) board members voted in favor. One (1) board member abstained. The motion carried at 5:47 pm.

Fifth Agenda Item: Administrative Updates

5:48 pm: C. Diezmartínez shared the following updates:

The deadline for Flexibility Measures (Building Portfolio, ICS, Streamlined and Short-Term HCPs) was on September 1. In total, nine (9) Streamlined Short-Term HCPs, one (1) ICS, and five (5) building portfolios were submitted.

A quick reporting update so far: 75% of BERDO IDs have completed their reporting and third-party verification or have requested an extension.

The new Deputy Director of Operations will join the team on September 21.

The BERDO Team is preparing for the annual data disclosure on October 1.

The BERDO Team will release a new Workbook for Condos and Co-ops and hold a virtual workshop on Oct. 6 and an in-person workshop in early November.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 28.

Meeting Adjournment

5:49 pm: Board Member H. Farooqi made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member G. Latimore seconded. All board members in attendance (7) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:50 pm.