

City of Boston BERDO Review Board
Public Meeting Minutes
Zoom Virtual Meeting
August 11, 2025, at 4:30 pm
[View recording here](#)

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

Board Members not in Attendance: Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata and Lori Ferriss

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

Others: Approximately thirteen (13) members of the public attended this meeting.

Call Meeting to Order

4:37 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 August 11 at 4:37 pm. This meeting was held virtually.

Roll Call

4:38 pm: The following BERDO Review Board members were in attendance: Chair Jessica Boatright, Stephen Ellis, Hessann Farooqi, Gail Latimore, and Reginald “Reggie” Stovell Jr.

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

Others: Approximately thirteen (13) members of the public attended this meeting.

First Agenda Item: Vote on Flexibility Measure Application

4:39 pm: D. Vasquez presented information and details about Harvard University’s Building Portfolio application.

4:43 pm: City staff presented staff comments.

4:44 pm: Board Q&A Session

- J. Boatright commented that Harvard’s EJ narrative had good information but she would like to have seen more information about how affected neighborhoods would be engaged in their decarbonization plans.
- S. Ellis asked what efforts Harvard is taking to decarbonize the Allston district energy system.

- H. Henriksen shared that extensive engineering studies are underway on both Harvard's buildings and its district energy system, focusing on the Allston facility. The low-temperature hot water system has significant thermal storage capacity, allowing energy to be produced when the grid is clean and stored for later use during peak demand. While efficient, it currently runs on natural gas and Harvard is exploring pathways to transition away from it, which will be detailed in the upcoming emissions standard compliance plan.
- S. Ellis asked if Harvard will be able to meet their blended emissions standard proposed in the Building Portfolio.
 - H. Henriksen answered that Harvard has already met their 2025 emissions standard and continues to do extensive energy efficiency and heat recovery projects on campus.
- S. Ellis commented that he would also like to see more information about engaging the community on Harvard's decarbonization efforts.

4:52 pm: Board Member G. Latimore joined the meeting.

- H. Farroqi asked if Harvard had evaluated the opportunity for geothermal and a virtual power purchase agreement.
 - H. Henriksen answered that Harvard is exploring a wide range of technology options, including deep geothermal, where land and capacity allow. In late 2024, Harvard entered a virtual power purchase agreement alongside partners such as Mass General Brigham, MIT, and other nonprofits through Power Options. This agreement supports 100 megawatts of new renewable energy from solar and wind, covering 100% of Harvard's electricity needs, with the solar project already operational and the wind project expected online by 2026.
- H. Farooqi asked for more information about Harvard's practices of working with minority and women owned businesses and enterprises (MWBE) and local Boston contractors.
 - C. English answered that Harvard does not have a specific policy in place, but complies with all federal, state, and local contracting policies and regulations for Harvard's capital improvement projects.
- R. Stovell asked if the general contractor hired by Harvard follows the practice of hiring MWBE enterprises as subcontractors.

- C. English answered that he does not have a policy that he can share.
- G. Latimore asked Harvard to give examples of community engagement in the past.
 - C. English answered that with 95% of Harvard's building portfolio located in Environmental Justice communities, every development project includes a strong community engagement process, such as screening forms during the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act process and participation in task forces like the Allston IMP Task Force and the Allston Multimodal Project Task Force. The Allston IMP process alone involved over a dozen community meetings and included a whole chapter on sustainability. Additionally, Harvard owns about 200 acres of currently unoccupied land in Allston, offering a unique opportunity to address EJ concerns now while planning for future residents and workers in Beacon Park Yard.
- G. Latimore asked if Harvard has engaged tenants in BHA properties.
 - C. English confirmed that Harvard has engaged BHA tenants and hosted public meetings at BHA properties.
- G. Latimore asked if there is any feedback Harvard can share from engagement with low and moderate-income folks on their Institutional Master Plan.
 - C. English answered that he can share that information with the Review Board in a follow-up.
- G. Latimore asked for more information about the roadmap to be fossil fuel-free by 2050.
 - H. Henriksen explained that Harvard is pursuing a two-part decarbonization strategy. First, deep engineering studies are underway on both district energy systems and buildings to identify priority opportunities for rapid emissions cuts. At the same time, the university is acting on opportunities during renovations, new construction, deferred maintenance, or equipment replacement to advance decarbonization. In Allston, several new projects are being built with zero fossil fuels, low-embodied carbon concrete, mass timber, and sustainability standards exceeding regulations, including targets for Living Building Challenge Core certification.

5:13 pm: Board Member S. Ellis made a motion to request a hearing for Harvard's Building Portfolio application. Board Member Chair G. Latimore seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (4) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:16 pm.

Second Agenda Item: Report and Discussion on BERDO Regulations Update

5:16 pm: C. Diezmartinez presented details about the first key BERDO Regulations update.

5:38 pm: Board Q&A Session

- J. Boatright asked if there were any public comments that the BERDO team was not able to respond to.
 - C. Diezmartinez answered that some public comments were asking for changes to the ordinance, which is not possible during this process.
- J. Boatright asked if a building is subject to both the BERDO and Net-Zero Zoning requirements, is there a streamlined reporting process to report for both.
 - C. Diezmartinez explained that once a net-zero carbon building has a full year of operational data after receiving its certificate of occupancy, it will begin reporting through BERDO. This reporting demonstrates compliance with net-zero carbon zoning or alternative emission standards, meaning there is no separate reporting process outside of BERDO.
- S. Ellis asked how the feedback or collaboration process would look for engaging the public in finding an alternative to Energy Star Portfolio Manager.
 - C. Diezmartinez answered that the BERDO team regularly seeks feedback to improve processes, such as through surveys and public listening sessions, which have already helped refine reporting forms. While the regulations allow the Environment Department to identify an alternative platform if needed, there are currently no plans to move away from Energy Star Portfolio Manager. This platform remains the primary benchmarking tool nationwide and the standard used for BERDO reporting.
- S. Ellis asked if tenants may also ask for a letter of compliance status for a particular building.
 - C. Diezmartinez explained that the compliance status of buildings is already public through the BERDO Emissions Calculator and Annual Disclosure, which anyone can access. The proposed process provides building owners with a way to request an official compliance letter from the Environment Department if needed. This channel is intended for owners, not tenants or the general public.

- H. Farooqi asked for clarification on whether building owners could seek an exemption from compliance with Net-Zero zoning requirements through the Review Board.
 - C. Diezmartinez explained that net-zero carbon zoning is binding and overrides BERDO requirements. While the Review Board can include net-zero carbon buildings in a portfolio for compliance purposes, each building must still meet zoning standards. Hardship compliance plans may grant limited relief, such as alternative compliance mechanisms or exemptions for certain energy uses, but cannot alter emissions standards or timelines.
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Third Item: Approval of Meeting Minutes.

5:52 pm. The Review Board voted to approve the [June 30 Meeting Minutes](#). Board Member H. Farooqi made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Board Member R. Stovell seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:53 pm.

Fourth Agenda Item: Administrative Updates

6:26 pm: Z. Chin shared the following updates:

The number of flexibility measures received by the BERDO Team.

The Equitable Emissions Investment Fund applications have been shared with the Review Board.

August 15 is the Reporting Extension deadline, and the BERDO Reporting team will give an update at the next Review Board meeting.

The nomination process has been opened for Rashida Boyd's vacant seat and will close on August 25. This nomination cycle is only open for qualified Community-Based Organizations.

The BERDO team shared more information about BERDO Fest, which will bring together building owners with decarbonization experts.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 25, 2025.

Meeting Adjournment

5:58 pm: Chair J. Boatright made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member R. Stovell seconded. All board members in attendance (5) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:58 pm.