

City of Boston BERDO Review Board
Public Meeting Minutes
Zoom Virtual Meeting
September 28, 2026, at 4:30 pm
[View recording here](#)

Board Members in Attendance: Jessica Boatright, Samira Ahmadi, Stephen Ellis, Camilo Esquivia-Zapata, Hessann Farooqi, Lori Ferriss, Gail Latimore, and Councilor Brian Worrell.

Board Members not in Attendance: None

Staff Present: Hannah Payne, Diana Vasquez, Claudia Diezmartínez, PhD, and Joy Jackson.

Others: Approximately eight (8) 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 28 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, Samira Ahmadi, Stephen Ellis, Camilo Esquivia-Zapata, Hessann Farooqi, Lori Ferriss, Gail Latimore, and Councilor Brian Worrell.

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

Others: Approximately eight (8) members of the public attended this meeting.

First Agenda Item: Vote on Flexibility Measure Application

4:39 pm: C. Diezmartínez presented information and details about Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH)'s Pathway 1 Building Portfolio.

4:43 pm: City staff presented staff comments.

5:44 pm: Board Q&A Session

- S. Ellis asked for confirmation that the other building uses outside of multifamily housing were so small that it did not impact the overall blended emissions standard.
 - C. Diezmartínez confirmed that is correct, since the primary use type was multifamily housing for the buildings.
- H. Farooqi asked what other challenges POAH anticipates for long-term compliance with BERDO.
 - J. Klump answered that all new construction projects in Boston are adhering to Passive House certification standards to achieve high energy efficiency and meet lower emissions targets. This aggressive baseline for new builds affords the applicant flexibility in the short-term for BERDO compliance.

4:45 pm: Board Member G. Latimore moved to approve Preservation of Affordable Housing's Building Portfolio application with standard conditions. Board Member H. Farooqi seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (8) voted in favor. The motion carried at 4:46 pm.

Second Agenda Item: Hardship Compliance Plan Hearing

4:47 pm: Chair Boatright called the public hearing to order.

4:47 pm: D. Vasquez presented an overview of the streamlined short-term Hardship Compliance Plans (HCP).

4:54 pm: D. Vasquez presented information and details about the Cooperative at CharlesNewtown's streamlined short-term Hardship Compliance Plan application.

5:00 pm: Board Q&A Session

- J. Boatright asked whether there are other carbon reduction or environmental regulations CharlesNewtown need to meet to stay in compliance over the next 3 to 5 years with other funding services.
 - M. Parker answered that while no immediate environmental regulatory hurdles have been flagged, CharlesNewtown's primary operational focus remains maintaining HUD compliance. The project's primary economic driver is an ongoing facade replacement program to update the property's original 55-year-old exterior. Deteriorating exterior walls have triggered recurring deficiencies during annual HUD inspections due to active water

infiltration, which degrades individual units and inflates maintenance costs through repeated interior wall and flooring repairs.

- S. Ellis asked how long the current electricity contract for CharlesNewTown is.
 - D. Ryan answered that the contract just got renewed for a couple of more years.
- S. Ellis asked what CharlesNewTown's plan is to address the high emissions or high natural gas usage.
 - M. Parker answered that, to address remaining gas consumption during the HCP period, the project's next scheduled phase will fully electrify six units. This conversion will eliminate reliance on gas-fired boilers across those units, permanently reducing the property's natural gas footprint.
- G. Latimore asked for clarification about the ownership structure and property management of CharlesNewtown.
 - M. Parker explained that the property operates under a housing cooperative ownership model where residents purchase a \$250 equity share upon move-in, which is refunded when they vacate. The community is supported by a Project-Based Section 8 contract that receives HUD Fair Market Rents, and WinnCompanies has managed professional property operations for the last 30 years.
- G. Latimore asked if CharlesNewtown has had a comprehensive building assessment and the status of their zero-over-time (ZOT) plan.
 - M. Parker answered that in 2025, CharlesNewtown engaged New Ecology to complete a comprehensive energy assessment, which identified approximately \$18 million in necessary BERDO compliance upgrades, including unit electrification. The report estimated that MassSave incentives could cover roughly \$6 million of those total costs. Per the special conditions, New Ecology will need to re-engage directly with MassSave to advance the incentive application and review process.

5:15 pm: Chair J. Boatright opened a public comment period.

5:16 pm: Chair J. Boatright closed a public comment period.

5:16 pm: Board Member S. Ellis made a motion to approve the Cooperatives of CharlesNewtown Housing Inc.'s streamlined short-term Hardship Compliance Plan application with standard conditions, and City Staff recommended special conditions.

Board Member H. Farooqi seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (8) voted in favor. The motion carried at 5:18 pm.

Third Agenda Item: Discussion and Vote on The Equitable Emissions Investment Fund Application Cycle 2026 Awards.

5:18 pm: Board Member Samira Ahmadi recused herself. Chair J. Boatright recused herself and appointed Board Member S. Ellis interim chair.

5:20 pm: D. Vasquez presents information about the finalists of the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund (the Fund).

5:31 pm: Board Q&A Session

- S. Ellis asked for a reminder of the Anti-Aid Amendment.
 - D. Vasquez answered that under the Massachusetts Constitution's Anti-Aid Amendment, public funds, such as the \$3.5 million municipal operating budget allocated to the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund, cannot be used for private benefit and must serve the public good. To ensure full legal compliance, the current grant cycle restricts eligibility exclusively to non-profit organizations, framing citywide emissions reduction as the primary public benefit. Consequently, soft costs like resident MBTA passes or meeting refreshments are flagged as legal risks, as city attorneys view them as localized private perks rather than direct decarbonization expenditures.
- Councilor Worrell asked how to compare the emissions reductions of the applications.
 - D. Vasquez explained that to improve consistency in its third grant cycle, the Fund is standardizing how projected emissions reductions are quantified across applications rather than relying on varied self-reported applicant estimates. Under the new standardized methodology, if grant funding covers a fractional share of a larger capital project, staff will calculate the emissions reductions proportionally based on the grant's share of the overall budget. If the grant fully funds a standalone intervention, such as an entire heat pump system, 100% of that system's calculated emissions reductions will be credited to the award, ensuring fair, apples-to-apples comparisons.

- Councilor Worell asked if the reporting compliance statuses are up to date for the finalists.
 - D. Vasquez answered that among the current applicant pool, only Madison Park is fully compliant with BERDO reporting for this cycle; the Planning Office for Urban Affairs submitted its report but remains in pending revisions status. Bridge Over Troubled Waters and Urban Edge have historical reporting records but need to formally request extensions for this year, while Children's Services of Roxbury has never submitted BERDO data. Despite these gaps, the BERDO team does not view reporting non-compliance as a disqualifying factor for EEIF grant eligibility; instead, it interprets it as an indicator that technical support is needed and recommends making future reporting completion a conditional requirement of the award.
- S. Ellis asked for clarification on whether Children's Services of Roxbury must report if its building is currently vacant.
 - D. Vasquez explained that BERDO reporting requirements apply even to vacant properties, as the City maintains strict definitions for vacancy exemptions. While the property has been held since around 2020 or 2021, the owner has not yet submitted the required vacancy form. If the building meets the official qualification criteria for an exemption, staff will require the owner to formally file the vacancy documentation to resolve their status.
- G. Latimore expressed support for staff recommendations overall, and for requiring non-compliant recipients to achieve BERDO compliance within a reasonable timeframe (e.g., a couple of months) as a mandatory condition of receiving funds.
- L. Ferriss asked whether organizations that receive less than the requested amount will be able to proceed with their project.
 - D. Vasquez answered that staff proactively contacted both Madison Park Development Corporation and Urban Edge Housing Corporation to explore scaling down their funding requests from \$200,000 to \$100,000. Both organizations confirmed that a reduced \$100,000 grant would remain viable and that they would proceed with their respective projects by fundraising the remaining capital gap through alternative sources.
- H. Farooqi commented, endorsing adding a formal BERDO reporting requirement as a condition of grant approval and proposed incorporating recommendations from the Climate-Ready Workforce Action Plan into award conditions

5:52 pm: Pro Tem Chair S. Ellis opened a public comment period.

5:54 pm: Pro Tem Chair S. Ellis closed a public comment period.

5:55 pm: Board Member H. Farooqi made a motion to approve the award of grants to Children's Services of Roxbury, Planning Office of Urban Affairs, Madison Park Development Corporation, and Urban Edge Housing Corporation from the Equitable Emissions Investment Fund, with the condition that all organizations complete BERDO reporting, Urban Edge can only use the funding towards the required consultant fees, and that the organizations report their performance with the Boston Residents Job Policy and Prevailing Wage Standard. Board Member G. Latimore seconded the motion. All board members in attendance (6) voted in favor. The motion carried at 6:06 pm.

6:07 pm: Chair J. Boatright and Board Member S. Ahmadi rejoined the hearing.

Fourth Item: Approval of Meeting Minutes.

6:07 pm: The Review Board voted to approve the [September 14 Meeting Minutes](#). Board Member G. Latimore made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Board Member S. Ellis seconded the motion. Six (6) board members voted in favor. Two (2) board members abstained. The motion carried at 5:47 pm.

Fifth Agenda Item: Administrative Updates

6:08 pm: D. Vasquez shared the following updates:

The BERDO Team has received one resubmission for a Short-Term Hardship Compliance Plan.

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

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 on November 5.

BERDO received an Electric Innovation Award for Policy Innovation at NYC Climate Week last week. The Electric Innovation Awards spotlight innovative leaders and models that can scale and then connect them to partners who help accelerate progress.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 13.

Meeting Adjournment

6:11 pm: Board Member S. Ellis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member G. Latimore seconded. All board members in attendance (8) voted in favor. The motion carried at 6:12 pm.