

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee working group BERDO met remotely via Zoom at 5:30 PM on Tuesday, April 16th, 2024.

The following members and staff were present: Brian Hebeisen (chair), Silas Fyler (Energy Manager), Pat Rathbone, Jocelyn Tager, Ernesta Krackiewicz,

Others present:

The meeting started with a quorum at 5:30 with Brian Hebeisen presiding.

1) Announcements

2) Minutes

The Committee unanimously approved minutes for meetings on (3/5, 3/7, 3/11, 3/15, 3/28)

3) Status of BERDO Moving Forward

Brian, Pat, Silas, and Jocelyn discussed the implementation of a software called BEAM and the potential expansion of the Portfolio Manager program to include a broader range of buildings. Brian clarified that BEAM, unlike the Portfolio Manager, is used to process data on the back end, making it easier for building owners to handle information. Pat and Silas raised concerns about the potential workload for city staff if the BERDO rule is passed, with smaller buildings. They suggested a pilot program for smaller buildings. Brian shared that he had a conversation with someone from Newton about including smaller residential buildings in the project, and he agreed to discuss this further. The group also discussed how Newton is considering similar changes and is currently reviewing their BERDO plan. Jocelyn highlighted the differences in building structures and population between Newton and Watertown, suggesting that incorporating some of Newton's structures could make sense.

An update was given on the status of the BERDO draft, with predictions of a proposal being submitted to the city council by the end of the month.

The group also discussed potential alignments with a recently published BER from DOER and agreed to stay updated on the situation. There was a discussion about the limitations of reporting alone in reducing greenhouse gases, with Pat expressing skepticism and Silas confirming that existing legislation only requires reporting, not reduction. Brian clarified that legislative action would be needed to mandate reductions. The team also discussed potential changes to their reporting and energy plans, with Brian suggesting a review of a new report, but no immediate changes were seen as necessary.

The idea of allowing baseline adjustment to data from 2019 was proposed by Silas, but Brian doubted its significance due to the newness of the climate energy plan. The team also considered potential improvements to their current process, with Brian suggesting a list of possible changes to be considered later.

Silas proposed a question about whether all-electric buildings should be penalized for energy usage if they are not 100% green. He suggested that such buildings could be charged extra for electricity or pay an additional charge (ACP) if the grid is not 100% green by 2032. Brian and Jocelyn were confused about whether this would be a penalty or simply an increased cost. Silas clarified that he was only considering greenhouse gas reduction and not energy efficiency. Brian then expressed his opinion that the city should aim for a more stringent electricity mix, suggesting that the current 40% non-green sources were too high. The team discussed the reduction requirements for non-electric buildings in the context of the state's mandate for 100% green energy by 2050.

Silas demonstrated the concept of building energy efficiency and its impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions using a hypothetical 20,000 square foot building. The discussion also touched on the associated costs with meeting different reduction targets. Brian, and Pat concluded that for an all-electric building, the most cost-effective solution would be to pay the ACPs instead of buying RECs, as the ACPs would be less expensive and require less

management. Jocelyn confirmed the importance of energy-efficient buildings, sharing her experience with the new part of her house.

Brian, Silas, and Pat discussed the potential implications of changing the BERDO draft for building efficiency. Brian expressed confusion about the need to modify the current system, given that buildings meeting the requirements without changes would not require additional effort. Silas clarified that the goal was to ensure all electric buildings have zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. However, Pat and Brian both felt that the discussion was unproductive and that Silas's initial point about step reductions for efficiency and gas-to-electric conversion was more relevant. They also discussed the energy usage of different building types, noting that some, like restaurants, would face challenges in meeting efficiency standards due to their high energy usage.

Silas proposed the use of software to analyze buildings' energy usage and suggest improvements, a concept already successfully implemented by other organizations. Brian agreed to this idea and saw it as a potential next step for their project, suggesting they discuss it further within their group and seek quotes for building analysis. The possibility of other towns like Boston and Cambridge using similar systems was discussed, with Silas revealing that the city of Denver was already using such a system and awaiting a demonstration from a company called Triumph, which Boston was considering. Jocelyn offered her assistance in case Silas needed help finding the company or arranging a demo.

Jocelyn and Silas suggested an opportunity to be proactive by offering programs and consultants to assist smaller building owners and developers who might struggle with the new city council decisions. They proposed to discuss this strategy further while waiting for the city council's verdict. Brian suggested scheduling the next meeting to discuss implementation strategies and the direction for their work. Silas agreed, suggesting a slow approach to researching how other cities are dealing with similar issues. Pat raised the question of whether to focus on shoring up arguments about the condos, given it's a likely initial issue the city council will want to address.

The team discussed the challenges and potential solutions regarding the issue of condos in large buildings, with a focus on fairness in cost distribution for greenhouse gas emissions. They decided to continue discussing this issue in a follow-up meeting, while also preparing for an upcoming city council meeting.

4) Decided next meeting will be 5:30pm on 5/29/24

5) Move to adjourn at 7:00 pm

All approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Silas Fyler