

The Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee working group BERDO met remotely via Zoom at 5:00 PM on Monday, July 8th, 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 5:00 with Brian Hebeisen presiding.

1) Announcements

2) Review of the BERDO Draft Regulations

Next Steps

1. Silas to update minutes to change "individual compliance plans" to "individual compliance schedules" in section 7.0.
2. Silas to add discussion of section 9.1.2 (building type changes and new baselines) to the minutes.
3. Silas to remove section 11 on individual compliance schedules from the regulations.
4. Silas to remove the section on district energy systems from the regulations for now.
5. Jocelyn to send grammar and wording suggestions for the regulations to Silas.
6. Silas to present Jocelyn's grammar and wording suggestions at the next meeting.
7. Silas to update section 10.3.1 to change "owners that" to "owners who".
8. Silas to update section 10.3.1.C to change "timing requirement" to "time requirement".

Summary

The team discussed the potential use of electric vehicles and the necessary charging infrastructure, as well as the regulations for electric buildings and the concept of a 'vacant building'. They also deliberated on the need for a new compliance baseline, the process of determining a building's vacancy, and the implications of hardship plans. Lastly, they discussed the definition and implementation of district energy systems, and the regulations for solar PV in Massachusetts.

Electric Vehicles and Charging Infrastructure Discussion

Silas provided information on the potential use of electric vehicles, including police cars and fire trucks, and the necessary charging infrastructure. They concurred that the police station was the most suitable location for charging due to its existing 3-phase infrastructure and its role as the fleet's hub. The team also discussed the implementation of a fast charging system to reduce charging time and the difficulty in purchasing electric police cruisers, with Silas noting a shortage of only 500 made cruisers were made last year.

Electric Building Regulations and Minutes Approval

Brian, Silas, and Jocelyn discussed and agreed on the approval of the minutes circulated by Silas, with some minor changes. They revisited previous discussions about the regulations of electric buildings,

focusing on the distinction between individual and company-wide compliance plans and the potential need for new baselines in case of a building type change. Silas proposed to provide a detailed list of changes made in each version of the regulations for clarity and traceability, while also suggesting the removal of a definition related to Watertown Electricity Choice under reporting. The team also agreed to review the notes from their last meeting to address any outstanding issues, and to further discuss the addition of "days" to section 3,.6.5.2.

Vacant Building Energy Usage Discussion

Silas, Jocelyn, and Brian discussed the concept of a 'vacant building' and its implications for energy usage. They considered various scenarios of vacant buildings, including those without an occupancy permit and those with an occupancy permit but not in use, and explored the idea of a vacant building requiring departmental approval. The team agreed that a building should be considered vacant if it is not using a lot of energy, but also discussed the possibility of exceptions based on the discretion of the department. They also considered the role of the department in determining energy baselines and reductions, and the need for a Review Board to make exceptions for certain cases. The team acknowledged potential issues related to energy usage in buildings and agreed to address these scenarios separately due to their differences.

New Baseline for Building Energy Usage

Jocelyn and Brian discussed the need for a new baseline when a building's type changes. The energy usage can significantly increase, while Silas emphasized the importance of knowing the building's type. Brian proposed that the focus should be on energy usage rather than building type, but raised concerns about potential manipulation of the system by building owners. Silas suggested that a third-party review and data submission could help mitigate this issue. They also discussed the potential impact of building additions on energy usage.

Vacant Building Process and Compliance Schedules

The team discussed the need for clarification on certain operational aspects, specifically regarding the process of determining if a building is vacant. Brian, Jocelyn, and Silas agreed to postpone the issue until later, as they were unsure if it would contribute to a resolution of other, existing problems. The team also debated the necessity of individual compliance schedules, but the matter was left unresolved due to a discrepancy in the changes listed on Silas's document and those discussed in the meeting.

Compliance Schedules and Hardship Plan Modifications

Silas proposed eliminating individual compliance schedules, and the team concurred. Brian clarified his understanding of the terms 'hardship' and 'deferral', emphasizing that a hardship plan only applies to buildings that have demonstrated genuine efforts to overcome significant challenges, not simply those that are historically significant or financially struggling. The team also discussed how Draft Regulations changes were made, with Silas admitting to possible errors in his implementation of short-term and long-term hardships. The team deliberated on the complications arising from the overuse of the term 'hardship', leading to modifications in compliance plans and the transfer of authority from the Review Board to the department, among other adjustments.

District Energy Systems and Solar Arrays

Silas raised questions about the definition and implementation of district energy systems, using Boston's district steam system as an example. The team discussed the potential for a solar array to function as a district energy system on a smaller scale, with Silas suggesting that a solar array supporting two buildings on a parcel could share a single meter. However, Brian clarified that the solar array's energy output would be sold to the buildings as RECs, an accounting concept, and the buildings would divide the energy produced. The team also discussed the possibility of buildings purchasing energy from each other's solar arrays, but Brian pointed out this could lead to double dipping and would not result in clean energy.

Solar PV Regulations in Massachusetts

Brian, Silas, Jocelyn, and Pat discussed the regulations for solar PV throughout Massachusetts, agreeing to follow the guidelines already set in place by the BERDO. They also debated the specifics of section 10.3, with a grammar correction suggested for clarity. The team decided to leave certain regulations out of the current document, intending to revisit them if necessary, and to keep others simple to avoid confusion among building owners. They also discussed a campus scenario involving two large buildings on one parcel, deciding to revisit later.

Document Changes and Scheduling Meetings

The team discussed and agreed on changes to a document, with Jocelyn suggesting the time requirement should not apply to owners who join an existing eligible purchase agreement. Pat and Brian discussed the awkwardness of the current wording and agreed on revising it. Brian proposed a process where Jocelyn could send him grammar corrections, which he would then forward to Silas for presentation at the next meeting. The team also agreed to schedule their next meeting on Monday, the 15th, and Pat confirmed that there was a school building committee meeting on Wednesday, the 17th.

3) Decided next meeting will be next meeting on Thursday, July 18th at 7:00 PM.

4) Move to adjourn at 6:35 pm

All approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Silas Fyler