

# Newton Citizens Commission on Energy

City of Newton

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/climate-and-sustainability/citizens-commission-on-energy>



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

Halina Brown (Chair), Michael Gevelber, Stephen Grody, Philip Hanser, Asa Hopkins,  
Jonathan Kantar, Jon Klein, James Purdy (Vice Chair), Puja Vohra,  
Ann Berwick, William Ferguson (*ex-officio*)  
Advisory Members: Cory Alperstein, Fred Brustman, Beverly Craig, Philip Vergragt

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Newton Centre, MA 02459

## Minutes of the Meeting of June 29, 2022

The meeting was held on Zoom.

Attending: Halina Brown, Michael Gevelber, Stephen Grody, Philip Hanser, Jon Kantar, Jim Purdy;  
Cory Alperstein, Fred Brustman, Councilor Deb Crossley, Philip Vergragt, Jay Snyder,

### 1. Jay Snyder application join NCCE.

Jay described his experience – smart meters, energy efficiency, demand response, distributed energy resources. His company is an aggregator, working with ISO-NE. He is a Certified Energy Manager. He has done municipal building work, replacement of street lighting with LED, energy audits, climate action planning. He describes himself as action-oriented. He worked on BERDOs in New York City and other places. He believes outreach is important.

Philip asked, what about demand side management? Jay mentioned building loads. Also, EV chargers on city property can allow off-peak charging.

Michael asked, is demand reduction a business thing? How does it affect the pie chart? Jay said it contributes because the power mix is dirtier at certain hours of the day; one can quantify decarbonization. However, decarbonizing contributes to destabilization of the grid, so it requires demand-side management.

### 2. Progress Update

Halina gets updates from Ann Berwick every week for about 2 hours. Endless Energy Home Performance Contractors has been certified by the City based on their response to a City RFQ.

<https://www.goendlessenergy.com/>

Michael noted that Energy Sage is another business doing this. Did Endless propose an innovative marketing program? Philip argued that the City has no business recommending a preferred contractor.

Ann is starting a climate action bulletin with Liora Silkes. Michael said that this is NCCE's role: to act as a "quant" and evaluate performance from a marketing point of view.

Halina responded that Liora's primary job is to work with residents. The survey that Philip and Bob and Jon did gets at this.

Deb Crossley pointed out that the Mayor's newsletter goes to 30,000 addresses.

The City Council adopted PACE for Newton, a statewide program that cities can opt into; it allows 20 year low interest loans for energy improvements. The Scandinavian House will be the first to use it.

Details of the program at <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/key-initiatives/pace/>

The program lets the applicant agree to a betterment assessment and lien on their property, sufficient to repay the financing extended by a private capital provider. If the property is sold before the financing has been repaid, the assessment stays and is transferred to subsequent property owners.

### 3. BERDO

Michael said he is wondering why Boston's BERDO was accepted with so little uproar. There will be jobs for advisors to building owners. Bill Ferguson is committed to the project and is pushing hard. We need partnership with utilities to do this.

Deb Crossley challenged us to articulate these challenges.

Jon said he expects many building owners to have questions when they try to get their BERDO going. Josh Morse is a resource for long range planning models for portfolios, and Peter Barrer is also a resource.

Halina talked to Asa Hopkins about his firm Synapse's work – on the Boston BERDO.

Philip said BERDO is tricky: an owner like Boston University has the size to get a project in place, but many owners do not. We need to think about how to create opportunities like this.

Michael suggests that we get a handful of commercial owners in Newton to do the numbers on their properties. Deb suggested approaching Dante Capaso and family, who have several apartment buildings in Newton.

Halina will prompt Jon to introduce Bill Ferguson to Taurus Holdings, which acquired the Wells Avenue office park. Bill's BERDO working group has nine people, including Halina. They are doing brainstorming Thursday June 29.

Cory said keep in mind that front end investment is important for climate action.

Philip Hanser said the when emission limits are set, a business can monetize its compliance credits.

Jon asked, what about Stephen's tax based compliance scheme? Stephen replied that it's a matter of "right foot in front of left, left in front of right."

Cory suggested that we encourage older buildings to compete with newer ones.

Halina wants to give Bill 2 or 3 ideas, e.g.,

- Reach out to a few big players
- Try to combine BERDOs with Boston and create a trading program

Deb picked up on Cory's comment about marketing: most property owners don't think about it. But we can market the concept: better buildings are more financially competitive. We need to light that fire with owners.

Michael suggested a placeholder for next meeting: Mass HeatSmart Alliance for residential. What is its economic value – how to quantify it? E.g., what percentage of annual cost is the energy

Phil Hanser said home energy bills are 2-4% of a typical family budget, so it is hard to relate energy performance with sale price.

#### **4. Hybrid Meetings**

Stephen asked about NCCE going to in-person/hybrid meetings. Halina will inquire.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jim Purdy