

Green Buildings Advisory Committee

Tuesday, February 15, 2022 | 9:00 – 10:00 AM

This meeting was held as a hybrid meeting, with in-person and remote attendance in compliance with Executive Order 22-01.

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present

Dr. Carrie Gill, Chair
Commissioner Jim Cambio
Mark Winslow
Christopher Armstrong
Josh Kessler
Stephen Turner
Mario Carreño, proxy

Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources
Building Code Commission
Gilbane
AIA Rhode Island
National Grid
Stephen Turner Inc.
Rhode Island Department of Education

Other Attendees Present

Director James Thorsen
Steven Chybowski
Art Zeman
Jon Erickson
Michael O'Brien Crayne
Kenneth Filarski
Andrea Krim
Darren Port
Karen Verrengia
Kai Salem

Rhode Island Department of Administration
Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources
RI Department of Environmental Management
National Grid
National Grid
Filarski Architecture Planning
Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships
Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships
CLEAResult
Green Energy Consumers Alliance

1. Call to order

Chairperson Gill called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

2. Announcements from Director Thorsen

Director Thorsen stated that, with the mandates set forth in the 2021 Act on Climate, the public sector has a duty to lead by example in decarbonizing buildings, while ideally advancing other key objectives like reducing taxpayer costs and advancing non-energy benefits like the safety of our buildings and the health, comfort, and productivity of the people who use them. As the Green Buildings Act is a tool for requiring green performance standards for major public works projects, the time is ripe for a strategic assessment of the Green Buildings Act.

Director Thorsen directed the Committee to conduct a study of the Green Buildings Act to be complete by the end of the year. Specifically, the study should identify best practices for implementing green building standards in other states, assess awareness of the Green Buildings Act in Rhode Island, and recommend ways in which we may amend the Green Buildings Act, including but not limited to clarifying application of the Act, strengthening green performance

standards, and quantifying the relative costs and benefits – and who incurs these costs and benefits – of such changes.

Director Thorsen also updated Committee Members that new members will be appointed to the Committee over the coming month and that terms will be set for Committee members.

3. Announcements from the Chair

Chairperson Gill noted that the proposed study will demonstrate how the Green Buildings Act can serve all Rhode Islanders and that filling the vacancies will provide fresh eyes and diverse perspectives to the Committee.

Chairperson Gill announced that the Committee has received a resignation from Ann Battersby with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, and that Art Zeman is filling in as her proxy for today's meeting. She thanked Ann for her service.

Chairperson Gill announced that the webpage for the Green Buildings Advisory Committee has been updated and that it now reflects current membership and the 2022 meeting dates.

Chairperson Gill updated Committee members on work related to the 2021 Act on Climate. The Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council hosted three public sharing sessions in January to help gather input on how to define 'net-zero emissions by 2050'. This input resulted in a draft chapter in the 2022 Update to the 2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan. The working draft is available for public review and feedback at <http://climatechange.ri.gov/>. The next sharing session will occur on March 16th. There will be additional public sessions on specific climate topics in the spring, and Chairperson Gill will continue to update the Committee on those sessions.

4. Old business

a. Update on development of 2021 Annual Report

A reporting form has been shared with public entities across the state to gather data for the 2021 Annual Report. The deadline for the reporting is February 21st, and the final report is expected for release around Earth Day. The Committee will review the draft report during their March meeting.

b. Other updates, if any

None.

5. New business

a. Presentation and discussion on 2021 Rhode Island Code

Commissioner Cambio led the discussion about the Rhode Island building code. In his update, Commissioner Cambio stated that the 2021 building code went into effect on February 2nd, 2022. The number of amendments to the code have been reduced, which is bringing the approved code closer in line to the model code.

Commissioner Cambio stated that it is now time to start reviewing codes for the next code cycle, with the plan to make new codes effective in early 2023.

Commissioner Cambio updated the Committee on the codes process, and that costs, benefits, safety, and resilience are all key considerations in the process.

Committee Member Turner stated that there will be working groups to review new building code proposals, and that the Committee members are welcome to join the working groups.

b. Presentation and discussion on RI Stretch Code

Committee Member Armstrong provided a presentation summarizing the role of the Rhode Island stretch code and its relation to the Green Buildings Act. During his presentation, Committee Member Armstrong raised the question of whether the State should pass a 2018 stretch code in the short term or wait until the 2021 stretch code is ready for adoption.

Committee Members raised additional questions about whether the thresholds on project sizes that must comply with the Green Buildings Act would be too narrow for the Green Buildings Act to achieve its goals that would be tied to the Act on Climate. A question was also raised about the incentives that are currently available for schools. It was decided that these questions could be addressed through the study conducted in 2022.

Chairperson Gill stated that for the March meeting, the Office of Energy Resources will provide a draft scope of work for the Green Buildings Act study for review by the Committee.

6. Correspondence

Chairperson Gill updated the Committee that there is now a new email address and that future correspondence to the Committee will be through DOA.RIGBAC@doa.ri.gov or the online form.

7. Public comment

Darren Port of the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships introduced himself to the Committee and congratulated the Committee for their work on stretch codes.

Ken Filarski thanked Director Thorsen for his comments. He stated that the US Green Buildings Council (USGBC) works closely with the International Green Conservation Code (IGCC), but that IGCC credits do not equate to LEED certification and other credits would be needed. Mr. Filarski stated that there needs to be clarification between the Green Buildings Act and green building codes. He also noted that a House bill was proposed to amend the Green Buildings Act which includes updating the membership of the Committee, specifies reporting requirements, and ties the Green Buildings Act to the 2021 Act on Climate.

8. Adjourn

Chairperson Gill adjourned the meeting at 10:02 a.m.