

## **Green Buildings Advisory Committee**

### **Draft Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, December 12, 2023 | 9:00 AM

McKenna Conference Room (1st Floor), 560 Jefferson Blvd., Warwick, RI 02886

Members of the public were allowed to join remotely via Zoom

**Members in Attendance:** James Cambio, Patrick Crowley, Justine Brown, Tim Carroll, Ken Filarski, Christopher Armstrong, Rachel Calabro

**Others in Attendance:** Eli Bossin, Brittany Becker, George Sfinarolakis, Nathan Cleveland, Christopher McSween (virtual), Karen Verrengia (virtual)

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### **Agenda**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Filarski called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**2. Office of Energy Resources Administrative Announcements**

Mr. Cleveland announced the launch of the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant program for municipalities. Municipal applications are due by the end of February and more information can be found on the Office of Energy Resources website.

**3. Vote on October 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Committee Member Crowley motioned to approve the October 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes. Committee Member Brown seconded. All in favor, none opposed.

**4. Vote on November 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Committee Member Crowley motioned to approve the November 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes. Committee Member Calabro seconded. All in favor, none opposed.

**5. Chair Announcements**

Chairman Filarski congratulated Committee Member Crowley on his new position with the AFL-CIO. Chairman Filarski also discussed the public project requests for proposals (RFPs) that will need to comply with the Green Buildings Act (GBA) and the importance to communicate the law's requirements with public procurements.

**6. Discussion on Communications and Outreach to Public Agencies**

One of the top issues for GBA compliance seems to be a lack of awareness. Based on their initial research, Mr. Bossin of the Energy Efficiency Group would recommend proactive outreach from the State and buy-in from the State Division of Purchases to ensure that the requirement is included in State procurements. For municipal procurement, Mr. Bossin believes it will require a more grassroots approach that relies on the existing code official and school authority networks. The Committee may also want to consider how personnel resources and a single point-of-contact to help communicate about the Act could improve compliance.

Committee Member Armstrong commented that he thinks the law is conveniently ignorable and that there is a lack of clarity on who must comply and who does not. As a comparison, he referenced Massachusetts which uses a very aggressive stretch code that the industry is aware of and is binding. In Rhode Island, he finds that anything beyond the requirements of the building code is up to the will of the client. Mr. Armstrong's understanding is that Massachusetts ties their stretch code to their Green Communities Act, which makes the community eligible for additional state funds and support to encourage communities to implement the stretch code. Projects in these communities must meet the stretch code requirements in order to receive their required permits, making it unavoidable.

Chairman Filarski stated that he also believes the Committee will need to be more aggressive with education rather than relying on happenstance.

Committee Member Brown suggested that the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) may be able to establish an internal review process for any RFPs that come through their office to confirm compliance with the GBA, but because not all State RFPs go through DCAMM, buy-in from the Division of Purchases will be important.

Commissioner Cambio asked if there would be a way for plan reviewers to be aware of the compliance paths chosen for a project or if there could be a pre-plan approval process.

#### **7. Review and Potential Vote on the Green Buildings Act Rules and Regulations**

Chairman Filarski started by explaining that he is proposing to include some of the language from the statute in the rules and regulations to help readers understand how to comply with the law. He summarized the sections of the proposed rules and regulations.

Committee Member Armstrong commented that the Committee and the rules need to be clear about how they are defining the term "certified" as it is both a specific LEED designation and a verb.

Committee Members discussed the role and responsibility of local code officials for enforcement of the GBA. They discussed that this may be made easier if projects follow through with completing their third-party certification before the local building permitting process. They also asked if the US Green Building Council could provide some guidance on implementing the law as it relies on their voluntary certification program.

Committee Member Crowley suggested that we continue to review and revise the language of the rules and regulations before the Committee looks to vote on approval of the proposed language.

#### **8. Review and Potential Vote on Template Green Buildings Act Request for Proposal Language**

Committee Member Armstrong believes that it is important to remove any ambiguity about whether a project needs to comply with the Act or not. It would not require a change in the drafted language, but whomever is issuing the RFP needs to be clear on whether their project needs to meet the requirements or not.

Committee Member Crowley motioned to approve the template RFP language. Committee Member Calabro seconded. All in favor, none opposed.

#### **9. Update on the Study of the Green Buildings Act**

Ms. Becker of the Energy Efficiency Group provided an update on the study of the GBA. This study has included a survey and interviews of stakeholders involved in building projects in the state. So far, the research has suggested that awareness of the Act and resources for compliance are the largest barriers. Establishing a monitoring and verification mechanism may be helpful as well. Mr. Bossin discussed the report timeline and that they are expecting to deliver the final report to the Committee by early March.

**10. Discussion and Potential Vote on the Scheduling of Future Committee Meetings**

Agenda item 10 was tabled until the next Committee meeting.

**11. Discussion of Green Buildings Act Annual Report**

Agenda item 11 was tabled until the next Committee meeting.

**12. Updates from Committee Members**

Agenda item 12 was tabled until the next Committee Meeting.

**13. Public Comment**

None.

**14. Adjourn**

Committee Member Crowley motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:01 a.m. Committee Member Calabro seconded. All in favor, none opposed, and the meeting was adjourned.