

**Board of Directors**

**Clerk Coordinator**

Rhanna Kidwell

**Treasurer**

Jennifer Abbott

**Directors**

Frieda Dweck

Jane Harper

Madeline Ranalli

Maureen Riley-Meagher

Margie Ross Decter

Sharyn Roberts

Marcia Tabenken

Cyrus Vaghar

**Spokesperson**

Marcia Johnson

Marc C. Laredo, President,  
Lisle Baker, President Emeritus and Chair of the Zoning & Planning Committee,  
John Oliver, Vice Chair of the Zoning & Planning Committee, and  
Honorable Members of the Zoning & Planning Committee  
The City Council of the City of Newton  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Dear City Councilors:

We write regarding a Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO), before you in parts, to encourage you to fulfill the objectives of Newton Climate Action. We urge you to adopt the measures recommended by the Newton Citizens Commission on Energy (NCCE) in the form of two items docketed for the NCCE in your last session: BERDO for Large Buildings over 20,000 square feet (Docket Item #228-22) and BERDO for Smaller-Than-Large Buildings (Docket Item #128-22).

In so calling, we reiterate the words of most the recent chair of the Zoning & Planning Committee and former President of the LWVN, Deborah Crossley who said “we are not going fast enough” (timecode 40m 20s, [in committee, on February 14, 2022](#)). Now five years into the City’s 5-Year Climate Action Plan, your action on these two items may prove to be the first to affect substantial greenhouse gas emission reductions in Newton. For further clarity, we enumerate The League of Women Voters Newton (LWVN) support for your passing:

3. BERDO For Large Buildings: The Fuller Administration prepared and revised the 2023 design of Newton BERDO (#228-22) for buildings larger than 20,000 square feet. The League judges this “Large Building BERDO” to be necessary but not sufficient, due to:
  - a) the exclusion of multi-family dwelling buildings over 20,000 square feet, comprising 29% of all buildings in that size category;
  - b) the prolongation, by years, of Boston’s schedule of quantitative performance standards to be met.

We urge passage, at this time.

4. Amendment to Reconstitute the 2023 BERDO For Large Buildings: The NCCE reaffirmed its position that large multi-family residential-use buildings, including those owned as apartments, condominiums or otherwise, be included in “Large Building BERDO” and subject to the same rules as all other large buildings, as described to you by Co-Director of Climate and Sustainability in November 2023. The League judges the re-inclusion of multi-family buildings in BERDO For Large Buildings as necessary and timely, especially as the Fuller Administration has stated it intends to include multi-family buildings, one year hence.

We urge passage, at this time.

3. Amendment to Pilot an All Residential BERDO 1.0: The NCCE recommended adoption of an energy use reporting, benchmarking and public publication ordinance applicable to residential-use properties not subject to BERDO for Large Buildings. Presently before the Council is an amendment requiring reporting from a subset of properties that are occupied by other than their deeded owners, which are called “Rentals”. The League judges passage an essential and “directionally correct” step to substantially reduce emissions from pre-existing residential buildings which are the source of 38% of all of Newton’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions. We are aware of no other credible proposal addressing that challenge facing us.

Based on the following League positions, we urge passage, at this time.

1. Taken from page 30, LWVMA WHERE WE STAND, last updated 2023
  - The League has supported legislation designed to encourage conservation by requiring disclosure of energy costs and audits, requiring appliance efficiency standards and encouraging the development and use of renewable energy systems.
2. Taken from page 97 of IMPACT ON ISSUES A GUIDE TO PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS of the LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS 2022 – 2024
  - Action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources and energy conservation through funding for research and development, financial incentives, rate-setting policies, and mandatory standards.
  - Policies to reduce energy demand and minimize the need for new generating capacity through techniques such as marginal cost or peak-load pricing or demand-management programs.
  - Reduction of energy growth rates.

We have weighed the proposals and relied on experts in our membership, at other League of Women Voters organizations, and at the NCCE, in whom we have the utmost confidence, in concluding that all three measures deserve your vote and passage by the Council as a whole.

Please advance all three components of the NCCE recommendations for BERDO in Newton.

Sincerely yours,

*Marcia Johnson*

Marcia Johnson  
Spokesperson, Board of Directors, LWVN