

CITY OF BOSTON
Office of Participatory Budgeting External Oversight Board
One City Hall Square, Boston, MA 02201

Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 4, 2023

EOB members present: Carolline Pontoppidan, Jim Kennedy, Esther Weathers, Betsy Neptune, Carla Stovell, Khalid Mustafa, Lisa Hy, Marilyn Forman, Jarret Wright.

Staff present: Ashley Groffenberger, Chief Financial Officer and Renato Castelo, Director, Office of Participatory Budgeting.

Director Castelo opened the meeting, welcoming the newly appointed members of the Office's External Oversight Board. Members of the Board introduced themselves, and Chief Groffenberger thanked them for their commitment to serve in this capacity.

Director Castelo then proceeded to present an overview of the Office's Ordinance, discussing the mission of the Office; purpose, roles and responsibilities of the External Oversight Board; and the structure and timing of upcoming Board meetings.

During the presentation, Board member Betsy Neptune asked if funding for projects can be carried over to the next year if there is not enough time to decide on projects before the end of the current fiscal year. Director Castelo shared that the Office can make payments to a special revenue fund to support multi-year projects, and that selected projects can accept and expend additional grant funds as they are awarded.

Board member Neptune also asked if the Mayor could reject a project proposal that the community has decided that they want. Chief Groffenberger clarified that the Office will gather hundreds of ideas from residents during the Idea Collection process. The External Oversight Board and the Office will create a process to narrow down these project ideas based on eligibility criteria, feasibility, and equity considerations. Chief Groffenberger added that the Board and the Office will submit a final list of project proposals to the Mayor to be added to the ballot for public voting. The Office and the Board will assess, as part of the rulebook design process, how many project ideas will be listed on the final ballot, as well as how many of those ideas will be funded based on public voting results.

Board member Carla Stovell asked if there is another city or state that we can look at as reference to develop our own rulebook. Director Castelo shared that the Office of Participatory Budgeting has researched best practices in preparation for developing the City's PB rulebook, and that he will share with Board members a number of rulebook samples from municipalities across the country to serve as reference for the Board.

Board member Caroline Pontoppidan asked to clarify the rules or guidelines for board members to connect with residents to ensure that there are no Open Meeting Law violations. Director Castelo connected with the Office's Legal Counsel, which advised board members to keep

conversations about the business of the Board to public meetings and public hearings only. Director Castelo added that engaging and partnering with external organizations and community representatives to promote the Participatory Budgeting process falls under the responsibility of the Office.

Board member Jarret Wright asked if Board meetings be held in person or online. Director Castelo mentioned that most meetings of the External Oversight Board will be held online via Zoom unless otherwise posted, at a time that works for all if not most EOB members. Board member Wright followed up with another question, asking about the average annual appropriations for the Office. Chief Groffenberger shared that *it has been 2 million dollars every year, and added that moving forward, appropriations are subject to the Mayor and City Council approval, as part of the regular City budget process.*

Board member Jim Kennedy asked how well has the City in previous years connected with the public about the larger budget process. Chief Groffenberger commented that in the past few years the City has tried several different strategies to engage residents during the budget process, with varying levels of engagement, and that this is an area the Office of Participatory Budgeting will help advance, as it is envisioned for the PB process to inform the larger City budget through thoughtful engagement with various constituencies.

Board member Lisa Hy asked about the Board's role during community meetings. Director Castelo and Chief Groffenberger shared that the Office and the Board will define the roles of board members during community meetings based on which phase of the PB process we're in, and that Board members will be encouraged to help with outreach for in-person assemblies and potentially support with logistics during events. Board member Hy followed up asking how the group will elect its Chair and Co-Chair. Director Castelo responded that he will research how other Boards and Commissions have run this process in order to determine how the External Oversight Board will select their Chair and Co-Chair.

Lastly, Board member Wright asked if there is another governing document for this board, such as an existing statute in the City or State. Chief Groffenberted stated that the Office's Ordinance is the only document defining the roles and responsibilities of the Board.

As next steps, Director Castelo will send a follow up email to coordinate the Board's next meeting, in which Co-Chairs will be elected and Board members will learn about participatory budgeting at the global, regional, and local level.

Director Castelo adjourned the meeting at 7pm.

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