

CITY OF BOSTON
Office of Participatory Budgeting External Oversight Board Meeting
Tuesday, February 25th, 2025

EOB members present:

Jim Kennedy, Carla Stovell, Marilyn Forman, Jarrett Wright

OPB Staff present: Ashley Groffenberger, Chief Financial Officer, Renato Castelo, Director, Office of Participatory Budgeting, Cynthia Lin, Chief of Staff

Board co-chair Jim Kennedy called to order the External Oversight Board meeting and conducted a roll call. With four members present, there was no quorum. Co-Chair Kennedy stated that the Board members will approve the minutes in the next meeting. Mr. Kennedy provided an overview of the agenda.

Director Castelo shared the dates for upcoming Board meetings and then invited Evan Kuras to discuss details about the community conversations Data + Soul is organizing as part of the evaluation process. During the first week of March, the evaluation team will be hosting in-person and virtual reflection conversations with residents who participated in the various phases of the PB process. Mr. Kuras extended the invite to members of the public and asked to share information to their networks.

Chief of Staff Cynthia Lin presented a recap of the voting phase and winning PB projects. She highlighted some key takeaways from the voting process and mentioned that the team is waiting to get further details from the evaluation and outreach contractors on voting statistics. Co-Chair Jim Kennedy suggested expanding engagements with Social Studies teachers for future PB Cycles, and shared his appreciation for the Mayor and City departments for the support Ideas in Action has received.

Director Castelo announced the winning proposals and listed out the rankings, number of votes, funding received, and lead departments. Mr. Castelo pointed out that the proposal that came in sixth place will receive a portion of the funding requested due to OPB's funding cap of \$2 million for Cycle One. Board member Stovell asked if the MBTA could help fully fund the budget difference for the bench proposal. Mr. Castelo mentioned that the Office will work with the Transportation Department on identifying next steps for funding and implementation.

Director Castelo shared the list of proposals that were not selected for this Cycle and mentioned that OPB has communicated this to respective departments. Board member Wright suggested that the team keep track of all the proposals that were not selected in order to fully capture the

impact of the process through the years. Mr. Castelo shared that the team had not thought about it but it's a good idea to see if these proposals could get incorporated in a future cycle.

Mr. Castelo continued by discussing plans for project implementation. The office will create a project tracking system to monitor projects. This will include a tracking system for City Departments to monitor funding and progress on projects, as well as an online dashboard for residents to view the status of projects.

Mr. Castelo explained that there will be two ways in which projects will be implemented. One is City Department-led implementation and the other is via community grants, also administered by City Departments. Next steps involve meetings with each department to define timelines, develop RFPs, establish evaluation criteria, and form application review committees. Mr. Castelo invited the Board to participate in the application review process.

Ms. Lin provided an overview of preparations for Cycle Two. Mr. Kennedy requested that Board members review the Rulebook before the next meeting and suggested refining the submitted ideas and improving the Visioning Forums to avoid a rushed process. Board member Wright asked about criteria for implementing projects. Mr. Castelo responded that they would include Equity and Inclusion language and collaborate with City departments to formulate application questions and assessment criteria. He reminded the Board that a public hearing is required by the ordinance to report on funding use and impacted demographics, with an update expected by the end of the year.

Co-Chair Kennedy opened the meeting for public comments. A member of the public emphasized the importance of direct outreach to residents and shared experiences about in-person voting. A member of the BBA highlighted outreach efforts conducted by organizations during the voting period, and suggested that experienced organization members participate in the application review committee. Mr. Castelo noted that organizations with relevant experience will have the opportunity to apply for grants to implement the proposals, but would not be part of the application review committee at this time. Mr. Castelo concluded by expressing excitement for the selected projects in the first cycle and eagerness to learn from implementations as Cycle Two approaches.

Co Chair Jim Kennedy adjourned the meeting at 7:10 PM

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