

**CITY OF BOSTON**  
**Office of Participatory Budgeting External Oversight Board Meeting**  
Thursday, March 20th, 2025

**EOB members present:**

Jim Kennedy, Carla Stovell, Marilyn Forman, Lisa Hy

**OPB Staff present:** 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 asked Director Castelo to send out three months of minutes so members can review and approve in the next meeting. Mr. Kennedy provided an overview of the agenda.

Director Castelo shared dates for upcoming Board meetings and invited Evan Kuras from Data + Soul to present valuation findings that will assist with Rulebook updates. Mr. Kuras provided a recap of the key evaluation questions for the PB process and discussed the sources for mixed methods approach of data collection. He provided an overview of findings that addressed each of the key evaluation questions and shared that the final evaluation report will be completed in April.

Board member Hy provided a suggestion to report on the percentages of funding spent on community engagement, outreach, and workshops for under-deserved neighborhoods. Mr. Kennedy noted that the testimonials shared by residents during the evaluation presentation were interesting and important to the process.

Before diving into the proposed Rulebook changes, Director Castelo provided an overview of the accomplishments achieved during the PB pilot year, and acknowledged that there were areas for improvement and valuable lessons learned that will help inform revisions to Cycle Two. He presented proposed updates to the Rulebook, summarizing the specific sections of the Rulebook that will be revised.

Chief of Staff Cynthia Lin provided an overview of the proposed changes to the Rulebook by phases. She discussed the current structure based on the Rulebook, shared observations and

the feedback from Cycle One, and then suggested revisions for Idea Collection and the Review of Community Priorities phases. Board member Hy inquired about the funding for engaging additional contract partners. Director Castelo responded that spending will likely remain consistent with or slightly less than the pilot year. Board member Stovell requested that Director Castelo resend the budget report that was shared with the Board in the Fall. Board member Forman asked about the decision to remove zip codes from Idea Collection as a requirement. Ms. Lin explained that this was removed during the first cycle, as a board decision, after in-person testing found that it was often a barrier for people to submit ideas. Evan Kuras contributed by confirming that, in his work on data analysis, he found it easier to utilize neighborhoods.

Director Castelo briefly summarized the revisions to Visions Forums and the Developing Proposal phases. He shared the current approaches, key lessons learned, and shared proposed updates. Co-Chair Kennedy recommended that the slides with the suggested revisions be emailed to all the Board members so they can go through in a timely manner to allocate sufficient time for public comments.

Mr. Kennedy opened the meeting for public comment. A member of the public had a few questions about the presentation. They asked about details on the evaluation survey after the voting phase, requesting that the evaluation methodology be included in the final report. They mentioned the option of leaving the number of ballots open ended in the rulebook to offer more flexibility in choices on the ballot. They noted that removing the zipcode option may lose the ability for more detailed neighborhood level data for analysis. They urged the Board to focus on the current Idea Collection format and advocated for a needs assessment approach to be considered during this phase.

Co Chair Jim Kennedy adjourned the meeting at 8:01 PM

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