

CITY OF BOSTON
Office of Participatory Budgeting External Oversight Board Meeting

Thursday, April 18th, 2025

EOB members present:

Jim Kennedy, Carla Stovell, Marilyn Forman, Lisa Hy, Jarrett Wright

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. Director Castelo provided an overview of the agenda and the proposed schedule for the next Board meetings.

Director Castelo provided responses to the public comments from the previous board meeting. Chief of Staff Cynthia Lin proceeded by providing responses to the Rulebook feedback. She pointed out that a number of the comments came from the Better Budget Alliance (BBA) and many comments were process related and would be continued to be refined with the Board in the coming months.

Ms. Lin then presented a holistic overview of the changes proposed for the 2025-2026 Rulebook. One key change is the combination of visioning forums and proposal development into a single phase, now called "Proposal Developing." The office plans to restructure the original forum format into a series of workshops. In these workshops, residents will collaborate with City departments to create proposals. Ms. Lin mentioned that instead of using community priorities, the office will revert to the original nine categories, as they were effectively aligned in the first cycle. For the voting phase, she shared that the office intends to include demographic information on voting ballots to gather more data for reporting purposes.

Director Castelo mentioned that many of the updates for Cycle Two are based on feedback received from the PB evaluation process and lessons learned. He continued by thanking the Board for their collaboration and flexibility during the pilot year to help make the first cycle a success. He asked the Board members to approve the suggested updates so the rulebook can be adopted. Board co-chair Kennedy called for a motion to approve to adopt updates to the Rulebook. The Board unanimously voted to approve revisions to the 2025-2026 Rulebook.

Co-Chair Kennedy also called for a motion to incorporate the meeting minutes, which were also approved by all Board members in attendance.

Director Castelo provided an update on the awarded project implementation for cycle one. He stated that the office is continuing to meet with departments that will be overseeing the implementation. Board member Stovell made a note about including neighborhood residents in media outreach and engagement efforts when the implementation begins and before the completion as a way to encourage other residents to be a part of the PB process. Director Castelo agreed that it was a good idea..He then provided a brief overview of cycle two preparations.

Mr. Kennedy provided a closing statement thanking the public for helping in the establishment of the office, for advocating, providing feedback, and participating in the process. Secondly, he thanked all the Board members for volunteering their time and participating in meetings to lay the ground work. Lastly, he thanked OPB staff for all their hard work and all the success of cycle one. He shared that he has high hopes for the success of cycle two. The rest of the Board members thanked Mr. Kennedy for being a great leader for the Board.

Mr. Kennedy opened the meeting for public comment and there was no public comments.

Co Chair Jim Kennedy adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM

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