

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

EOB members present:

Jim Kennedy, Marilyn Foreman, Carla Pantaleon-Stovell, Esther Weathers, Jared Wright, and Claire Teylouni

OPB staff present: Renato Castelo, Director; Cynthia Lin, Chief of Staff

Board Co-Chair Jim Kennedy called to order the External Oversight Board meeting and conducted a roll call. Co-Chair Mr. Kennedy then called for a motion and Board members approved to adopt meeting minutes from the April 18, May 15, June 17, September 18, 2025 meetings. Director Castelo introduced the newest Board member, Claire Teylouni. Ms. Teylouni lives in Dorchester and works in nonprofit advocacy.

Director Castelo shared the schedule for the next phase of the Participatory Budgeting cycle. The OPB team will review and incorporate public feedback on the 14 draft proposals and will meet with City departments to incorporate comments and estimate proposal costs. From mid-December to the beginning of 2026, OPB will work on setting up the online voting platform and arrange in-person voting logistics. The next Board meeting will be held virtually on January 6th, 2026 and focus on reviewing the final proposals for the ballot and outreach logistics for voting. The voting period will run from January 15th to February 15th.

A member of the Board asked where the link to the feedback form was sent to, and Director Castelo stated the link was sent to the Office's mailing list of approximately 500 people and the 19 community partners. If timing works, OPB plans to ask the Office of Neighborhood Services to share the link through their monthly newsletters.

Director Castelo shared a recap of the Proposal Development Forums held this fall. In October, there were three (3) forums hosted in Mattapan, East Boston, and Allston-Brighton, which helped to narrow and prioritize 1000+ resident ideas. In total, there were over 130 residents in attendance with the support of 10 community partners. These meetings had small group discussions, an equity and community impact evaluation chart, and voting to select the 15 top ideas. In November, there were two (2) Proposal Drafting Forums. These forums were held at Boston City Hall, where approximately 65 residents attended, along with 11 city departments.

Departments provided issue education and context via one-pagers, allowing residents to draft the proposal language with City Department input. Director Castelo noted that dividing the refinement process into multiple, smaller sessions was a successful implementation that resulted in a much higher quality of proposals compared to the previous cycle. Co-Chair Jim Kennedy agreed, noting a "world of difference in the focus and energy."

Director Castelo and Chief of Staff Cynthia Lin provided an overview of the 14 draft proposals generated during the November sessions: Support Programs for Seniors and Caregivers, Providing Fresh and Healthy Food for Residents in Boston, Community Partnerships that Support Immigrant Legal Services, Immigrant Stories Through Art: Weaving Intergenerational Connections, Workshop Development Programs Focused on Trades, Workforce Training with Integrated ESOL for Immigrant Communities, Financial Literacy for Young Adults, Entrepreneurship Centers to Support Small Businesses, Interest Free Loans for Small Businesses, Community Litter Reduction Campaign, Green My Block, Bridge to Equity: Voices of Experience, Art Recovery: Healing Through Creative Expression, and Housing Access for Vulnerable Communities.

Evan Kuras, from Data + Soul Research, shared an update on the mid-cycle evaluation for Cycle Two, summarizing findings related to participation and process from the October forums. Mr. Kuras shared that residents from at least 15 neighborhoods participated in the October forums, with East Boston and Allston showing the highest participation relative to their populations. Survey results indicated that the forums engaged higher proportions of Latinx residents, lower-income residents, and both younger and older residents compared to their share of the Boston population. The evaluation team observed four of the five forums, collected over one hundred participant surveys, and administered a staff and facilitator debrief survey with a seventy-one percent response rate.

Director Castelo provided a brief update on Cycle One, noting that funding for food access projects is already being utilized to support vulnerable families. He expects to provide a full update on the status of each winning project from Cycle One in the next Board meeting.

There were no public comments. Board Chair Jim Kennedy adjourned the meeting at 7:26pm.

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