

**CITY OF BOSTON**  
**Office of Participatory Budgeting External Oversight Board**  
Virtual Meeting

**Meeting Minutes**

Monday, December 18, 2023

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

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

Director Castelo called the meeting to order, called the roll, and introduced external presenters Tarson Nunez from People Powered and Eliza Parad from the Center for Economic Democracy and the Better Budget Alliance.

Director Castelo proceeded to the first agenda item, which was the election of the Co-Chairs for the Board. He mentioned that over the past week the office received four nominations for this role: Jim Kennedy, Carolline Pontoppidan, Lisa Hy, and Betsy Neptune. Due to professional and personal commitments, Board member Betsy Neptune decided to withdraw her nomination. Board member Lisa Hy was out of the country and could not confirm her interest in serving as Co-Chair. Director Castelo asked if members of the Board had any questions or concerns about the nomination process, and asked for a motion to appoint Jim Kennedy and Carolline Pontoppidan to serve as Co-Chairs of the Board. Board member Jarret Wright seconded the motion and Director Castelo called for a vote. All present board members voted in favor.

Director Castelo proceeded to invite Tarson Nunez to start his presentation, which covered his experience and best practices designing and implementing the first participatory budgeting process in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Tarson shared key challenges faced given their particular approach, expectations, and implementation of participatory budgeting. He highlighted the need for transparency in process, having City Hall staff dedicated to run the process, and being mindful of the complexity of adapting City processes to work with participatory dynamics. He highlighted that in addition to the outputs of the PB process, another dimension must be considered, which is participatory budgeting as a tool to foster democracy, building citizenship and trust in local government, and fostering civic culture in the city.

Members of the Better Budget Alliance (BBA) proceeded with their presentation, sharing the history of PB in Boston and local efforts to promote participatory budgeting. Presenter Kathy Henriquez shared the Coalition's goals for the process, which match the City's goals of advancing of racial and social justice, deepening democratic involvement of residents, and embedding equity in city practices. Presenter Eliza Parad shared a comparative analysis of how other municipalities have centered equity in their processes. Presenter Vikiana Petit-Homme highlighted the importance of embedding evaluation in every phase of PB, as well as including City staff in conversations with residents when prioritizing viable project ideas for voting. Presenter Vicki DiLorenzo shared BBA's broader goals for PB in Boston, including addressing

unmet needs, strengthening community decision-making, civic empowerment, trust and transparency. Director Castelo thanked BBA presenters for their time and partnership.

Director Castelo shared with Board members key highlights of how Somerville, Cambridge, and New York City have implemented their own PB processes, stating that there is no single solution for PB implementation and that the Board and the Office, based on the Ordinance guidelines, will need to identify the appropriate approach to match the needs and resources of the City.

Board member Jarret Wright asked how we can confirm that votes come from actual Boston residents. Director Castelo responded that some municipalities place more emphasis on knowing who is voting, while others care more about ensuring that participation is easy and accessible by being less restrictive about voting eligibility. This will be a decision the Board will need to make.

As next steps, Director Castelo will send an email to coordinate the Board's next meetings, including the presentations and rulebook examples of other municipalities.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:30PM, was seconded, unanimously voted to adjourn.

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