

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

Thursday, November 7th, 2024

**EOB members present:**

Jim Kennedy, Lisa Hy, Carla Stovell, Betsy Neptune, Marilyn Forman, Esther Weathers

**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. Co-Chair Kennedy then called for a motion and Board members approved to adopt the minutes. Director Castelo provided an overview of the agenda.

Director Castelo provided a brief overview of the Participatory Budgeting process and a summary of the Visioning Forums hosted in the month of October. Chief of Staff, Cynthia Lin, provided context on the workshop components, including an overview of the criteria, equity scoring rubric, and an example of the proposal development guideline residents used to have a larger discussion at each table that was assigned a Community Priority. She continued by sharing initial reflections and lessons learned from the Visioning Forums and concluded by stating that some ideas and proposals were broad and would need additional input from the public and City Departments to ensure feasibility.

Director Castelo and Ms. Lin shared the 15 draft proposals residents drafted during the three Visioning Forums. Mrs. Lin gave an overview of next steps, which was to discuss the proposals, open to Board and public comment, and to work with the appropriate City Departments to help refine proposals and add costs.

Board co-chair Jim Kennedy had a question about how the proposals would be handled if the City already had a program in place, whether PB would provide additional funding or if the proposal would not be considered. Director Castelo shared that funding may help expand existing initiatives and in other cases, create new, one-time projects. Co-chair Kennedy then asked if proposals were not considered feasible, would the next highest voted proposals replace those to ensure there are 15 proposals on the ballot. Director Castelo shared that proposals that are feasible will be on the ballot, but that due to timing, replacing proposals that are not feasible will be a challenge. This is something that can be considered for the second cycle.

Board member Weathers asked for clarification on what the Board should be providing comments for during this stage. Director Castelo shared that the team would like to hear if any of the proposals are not clear, help identify if some of the proposals are too broad, or if Board members have questions about them. Board member Neptune suggested shifting the timeline for the voting phase to accommodate adequate proposal development and asked for clarification of the CFO's approval on

projects. CFO, Ashley Groffenberger responded that criteria used would include feasibility, cost, ensuring it is a one time cost proposal, and ensuring that projects are an appropriate use of public funds from the City's Legal Department.

Ms. Lin opened the meeting for public comments. A member of the public suggested screening for feasible ideas prior to Visioning Forums so residents have deeper conservation about projects during the next cycle. Director Castelo shared that it was intentional to keep all ideas to allow residents to review and discuss with City Departments, and will consider this next year. Another member of the public voiced concerns about determining feasibility of projects and discussed avenues to implement, such as contracts and grants with community partners. Director Castelo shared that the team is working with City departments to determine implementation.

A member of the public suggested that the proposal for a pilot non-police construction detail be revised, so that not only the Boston Police Department and Transportation Department determine its implementation. Board member Neptune suggested that the written proposals be reshared with residents to review what was drafted, and Director Castelo mentioned that online forms will be shared with the public to request input from residents.

Another member of the public suggested that OPB review the timeline and feasibility for developing proposals, and evaluate if the timeline can accommodate this process. Another member of the public shared their experience and some frustrations from the last Visioning Forum related to discussions with City staff about feasibility of a particular idea. Director Castelo acknowledged their concerns, explaining that the team at the forum shared considerations for feasibility during the discussion. Another member of the public shared their support for the youth jobs proposals and its feasibility. Director Castelo acknowledged that OPB is not the subject matter expert on youth jobs, and that the office will work with the department that oversees youth jobs to consider feasibility. Another member of the public shared that they appreciated the voice of the youth and how they are engaged in the political conversations. They shared that the development of these ideas needs time, and suggested that clear guidelines be shared with the public to help provide clear feedback on these proposals.

Co Chair Jim Kennedy adjourned the meeting at 8:02PM

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