

City of Boston Office of Participatory Budgeting

External Oversight Board Meeting

Thursday, May 7th, 2026

EOB members present:

Jim Kennedy, Carla Stovell, Lisa Hy, Jarrett Wright, and Claire Teylouni

OPB Staff present: Renato Castelo, Director, Office of Participatory Budgeting; Blanca Teixeira, Senior Finance and Operations Manager

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

Mr. Castelo mentioned that since the Participatory Budgeting process now follows a regular structure and timeline, he proposed sharing regular email updates to the Board and meeting for important moments throughout the PB cycle. Co-chair Kennedy suggested that Board members should let Mr. Castelo know if there is an upcoming meeting they cannot attend. Board member Wright asked if the PB ordinance allows for this change. Director Castelo shared that there is no mandatory schedule for Board meetings under the ordinance.

Director Castelo announced that Board member Carla Stovell accepted the nomination to become the new Board Chair. Board members voted unanimously on this nomination.

The presentation moved to an overview of the recommended Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2027, listed at \$1,891,561. This amount represents a reduction of 11% from the previous year. These reductions came in the form of a role reclassification for the Office (previous Chief of Staff position now becoming an Outreach Coordinator role), as well as a one time deduction to the Special Appropriations line. He shared that this will not directly impact the work of the Office or the amount of funding for projects for the upcoming PB cycle. Board member Wright pointed out that OPB does not have the best model in place to keep sustainable funding for projects. Mr. Castelo shared that the City would have to put in more funding in the next 2-3 years to keep the Office's level funding of \$2 million for projects.

Co-Chair Kennedy shared his thoughts on the Office's City Council hearing, mentioning that some council members were very enthusiastic about the program, and that Director Castelo was clear on answering questions from City Council members.

Board member Teylouni asked if Mr. Castelo had any concerns about staff capacity, and he said that our Chief of Staff helped build a structure for our process and left the office in a good place. He continued by saying that the new role will help expand our communication and outreach and that he feels good about the capacity of the office.

Evan Kuras from Data+Soul Research presented general findings from the last cycle of Ideas in Action. Mr. Castelo shared that Evan and his team are drafting a final report summarizing all findings from the PB process. Board members will have access to the draft report to review and provide feedback (See D+S presentation on the website's minutes section.)

Mr. Kuras pointed out the diversity in participation, including the range of race and age among participants, and indicated how neighborhoods were engaged in different phases of the process. Board member Stovell was curious about the 11-19 year olds being engaged at the beginning of the process but not so much during the voting phase. Mr. Castelo shared that the office is being very intentional with engaging residents during Idea Collection and Proposal Development Forums to help draft the proposals that go on the ballot. He continued by saying that we still need to figure out how to increase the engagement during the voting phase.

Mr. Castelo shared four proposed updates to the Rulebook of the upcoming cycle of Ideas in Action. The board did not have questions or requested any changes. Mr. Kennedy made a motion to vote on these changes and the Board approved unanimously.

Finance Manager Blanca Teixeira provided a status of the winning proposals from the past two years. Mrs. Teixeira let the Board know that winning projects from this past year are in the planning phase, and that the Office is having regular meetings with City Departments to ensure prompt implementation. Board member Wright suggested that the Office highlight the impact that PB funds have on other City departments that have won PB funding through Ideas in Action. Mr. Castelo agreed with the comment, mentioning as an example that the Office of Returning Citizens has expanded their work with youth after winning a project last year.

Co Chair Jim Kennedy adjourned the meeting at 7:29PM

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