



Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee Meeting
Monday, November 7, 2022
6:00 PM to 7:10 pm
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attendees

RSMPOC Members: Norm Stembridge, Valeda Britton, Charlotte Nelson, Dorethea Jones, Frank Williams, Frederick Fairfield, Lorraine Payne Wheeler, Marisa Luse, Nefertiti Lawrence, Steven Godfrey, Sue Sullivan, True-See Allah

BPDA Staff: Rebecca Hansen, Jonathan Short, Jamarhl Crawford, Yarisamar Cortez

Opening

On November 7th, 2022, Co-Chair Norman Stembridge of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee (RSMPOC) called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Yarisamar Cortez, BPDA Planner I for Roxbury, welcomed all and made initial announcements of meeting recording and Zoom and interpretation channel instructions. The Spanish interpreter gave their introduction and initial instructions followed by the Haitian Creole interpreter and Capeverdean Creole interpreter. Yarisamar continued with Zoom etiquette instructions and an overview of the meeting agenda. Yarisamar explained that the chat box function was going to be closed momentarily during the short presentation but remain open for the rest of the meeting. Norman then continued with greetings and reviewed the calendar of upcoming RSMPOC meetings over the year, gave a brief overview of the RSMPOC and its responsibilities and encouraged people to get involved and remain engaged.

Co-Chair Norman Stembridge handed the presentation over to Chief Segun Idowu.

Presentation Notes

Presenter: Chief Segun Idowu from the City of Boston's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion

Chief Idowu's presentation at the time were not available in the translated languages: Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole, but these translated slides were then made available on the website

- Chief Idowu made introductory remarks and thank you's. He's been a long time resident of Boston.
- The Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity & Inclusion was formerly known as The Mayor's Office of Economic Development. The reason for this name change was to encompass, ensure, and drive this office's work on equity.
- The vision of the Economic Opportunity and Inclusion Cabinet is of a resilient, equitable, sustainable, and vibrant city that centers people and creates opportunities to build generational wealth for all communities.
- The Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEI) Cabinet understands equity to be: *"the proactive process of providing historically excluded communities the resources they need to live and thrive in Boston. Our focus is on establishing racial equity as a means of addressing historic inequities across the city."* This

definition was put forth by the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEIO) and it is used by the OEIO cabinet for their decision making processes.

- There are 5 departments within the OEIO Cabinet.
 1. Office of Economic Opportunity & Inclusion (Chief Segun Idowu leads this department)
 2. Office of Small Business (Aliesha Porcena, Director)
 3. Office of Consumer Affairs and licensing (Kathleen Joyce, Director)
 4. Office of Supplier & Workforce Diversity (Andre Lima, Director)
 5. Office of Tourism, Sports, & Entertainment (Amy Yandle, Interim Director)
- Cabinet-wide Goals
 - Covid-19 Recovery
 - *Key Accomplishments:* Launched downtown revitalization, small business relief fund, expanded “all inclusive boston” campaign
 - *Supporting Roxbury:* Roxbury businesses received \$1.3 million in grants, the Jazz Urban project continues (in Boiling Building)
 - Neighborhood Revitalization
 - *Key Accomplishments:* secured \$5m for Main Streets program, developed permanent outdoor dining program, launches legacy business program (support for business that have been in the community more than 10yrs)
 - *Supporting Roxbury:* \$350,000 secured for Roxbury-based Main Streets, OEIO will develop a Roxbury revitalization plan (not only Nubian square but all of Roxbury with the understanding that Roxbury is the central commercial hub of the community),
 - Equitable Investments
 - *Key accomplishments:* launched citywide buying plan, awarded City Fresh Foods (Black-owned and Roxbury business) contract, adopted permanent Sheltered Market Program
 - *Supporting Roxbury:* Awarded City fresh Foods contract, a Roxbury businesses that employs so many in the community, Securing Bolling - specific liquor license,
 - Shared property - workforce development strategies
 - *Key accomplishments:* Distributed \$13 million to support 6,000 youth, served 10,000 Bostonians via OFE in early 2022, New cabinet for worker empowerment formed (formerly part of the OIE Cabinet; now their own office)
 - *Supporting Roxbury:* Co-convened 150 global leaders at Bolling Building, Nubian Ascends/P3 to connect job pipeline to life sciences
- Chief Idowu proposed discussion questions and space for feedback. Chief Idowu proposed this to be an ongoing conversation with his office RSMPOC and the larger Roxbury Community.
- RSMPOC Co-chair, Norm Stembridge, encourages continued collaboration in the Roxbury efforts underway from OEIO.

Public Comments & Questions

Community Member: Comment - community would benefit from compilation of survey, data collection that has been previously done from various institutions. Question - How do developments underway are cohesively contributing to the fabric of the community?

- *Chief Idowu Response:* As we are redeveloping commercial hubs (across Boston) it's important to do a study or report because most reports were done pre-covid. Analysis of what's going to work in a post-covid world to best inform decisions.

Councilor Anderson's attendance is acknowledged. Councilor Anderson briefly introduces herself.

BPDA Staff Member: Economic center revitalization should be closely tied with a public safety or public health plan so families feel free and safe to shop there. Currently, lack of safety and accessibility getting to Nubian square is a barrier to access to businesses.

- *Chief Idowu Response:* OEI is conducting weekly business walks and engaging with the community directly, especially small business owners. In the future, OEI plans to conduct their own walk of the Newmarket area and Nubian Square. OEI is looking at what monies are available to put in these areas. Acknowledgement of short-term strategies, longer term strategies will require ongoing conversations with community stakeholders and elected and government officials.

RSMP OC Member: How do you see your revitalization plan fitting in with the larger Roxbury Strategic Master Plan (RSMP)? In support of local ownership and businesses. Support these businesses to improve their facades via grants.

- *Chief Idowu Response:* On the facade improvements - the OEI has a program called Restore, to improve signage and general facade improvements. However, the OEI is working on redesigning this program to meet the needs. For example, instead of lending low-interest loans this will switch over to grants. On RSMP Connection - A revitalization report will play as an implementation plan for OEI and other cabinets to help realize what the RSMP OC has come up with through the RSMP.

RSMP OC Member: There are a lot of sober homes in Roxbury and that has increased over the years. There are safety concerns like needles and car break-ins. It is important and needed to make investments/improvements in all of Boston, not just the South End and Townsend. 2) Concerns of overall cleanliness in the neighborhood. Can the city make more of an effort to put in public trash cans?

- *Chief Idowu Response:* How can we bring development and investment into the area without displacing the people that are there? This work requires multi departmental collaboration, communication, coordination so these various strategies work together and complement each other for the advancement of the community.

Councilor Anderson: Acknowledgement of discrepancies in access when it comes to safety transportation improvements and concentration of sober homes along racial lines due to city government processes that need reform. Councilor Anderson encourages transparency and collaboration with members of the public and City agencies to transparently and equitably move the neighborhood forward. In terms of capital improvements, Councilor Anderson calls for transparency with budget and capital improvements.

Community Member: Economic and workforce opportunities for the youth? Ensure that there are diverse workforce opportunities available to them for their long-term career success. How will these programs in the pipeline be marketed to the community so they can be used?

- *Chief Idowu Response:* OEI working on initiatives that assist People of Color own businesses in downtown and commercial hub areas to attract Black and brown youth as well. Continue to support the Summer Youth Program, in conjunction with the Office of Workforce Development, for young people to work and get paid at various companies in the city. Also the OEI is working on year-around programs for young people not only in big corporate companies but also local businesses to understand how business ownership works.

RSMPOC Member: There are spaces available that should be local businesses. Priority to allow Roxbury businesses and people to be in Roxbury business spaces.

- *Chief Idowu Response:* Revitalization Study in Roxbury and then for the OEI to respond to the needs of the community. Many of the programs mentioned are currently pilot programs. Ensure that these programs are proactive rather than reactive.

Community Member: 1) Former president of Roxbury Main Streets, this organization has previous information about surveys. 2) We don't have street workers meaning social workers directly on the ground assisting people experiencing homelessness and addiction. Overall, there is a need for community clean-up in the area.

- *Chief Idowu Response:* Street worker piece - Chief of Human Services reforming the program more to come on that. Part of the reason for increasing the Main Streets Program is to support these cleaning efforts.