

## Lower Roxbury Outreach Advisory Group Meeting

June 8, 2023

**Notetaker:** Ashley Pierre-Louis, HSH

### **In Attendance:**

Andre Jones, Nuestra Comunidad

Ron Whitaker, People's Baptist Church

Godfred Afeghera, City of Boston D7 Council Office

Jamarhl Crawford, former/current resident, Boston Planning and Development Agency

Ashley Pierre-Louis, HSH

Lorraine Payne Wheeler, former/current resident, City of Boston D7 Council Office

Councilor Fernandez Anderson, City of Boston, D7

Kiesha Santana, former/current resident, Boston Office of Neighborhood Services

Jen Rowe, Boston Transportation Department

Louisa Gag, Boston Transportation Department

Huong Nguyen, Boston Streets Cabinet

Michael Miller, City of Boston Administration & Finance Department

### [Slide deck](#)

### **Agenda**

- [Refresher](#)
- [Equity in contracting](#)
- [Keeping up awareness](#)

### **Notes:**

*Refresher - presented by Jen Rowe*

Note: see [slide deck](#) for additional content

- Project goal: build a collaborative process with community members to:
  - Highlight neighborhood assets
  - Create positive changes to your streets in Lower Roxbury
- Project area: bounded by, but does not include Columbus, Mass Ave., and Melnea Cass.
- Outreach Advisory Group goal: Help us communicate and collaborate with the communities in Lower Roxbury right now.
  - Note: This is not the place where decisions about outcomes will be made.
- Expectations for BTB:
  - Host outreach advisory group meetings quarterly, with ample notice.
  - Be accountable to you with regular communication.

- Respectfully engage with the outreach advisory group and community members.
- Incorporate your advice and recommendations about outreach, as best as we are able.
- Make decisions transparently.
- Group expectations:
  - Make a good faith effort to attend outreach advisory group meetings.
  - Engage respectfully with one other, with the project team, with community members.
  - Share your knowledge and experience.
  - Share back to your communities about the project.
- Recap of project to-date
  - Fall 2019 through 2020 - We asked community members: Where do you find joy in the neighborhood? What would you change about the streets?
  - 2021: We confirmed with community members: Which locations rose to the top as priorities; information about the tools we could use to make changes on the streets.
  - Spring - Summer 2022 - Shared proposed changes with community members; Heard what residents liked, had questions about, and how they felt about any trade-offs
  - Fall - Winter 2022 - Refined the designs based on feedback from public outreach and other City departments; shared the final designs with community members; heard what residents liked and where they had questions
  - Spring 2023 - Finalized engineering plans; Prepared to bring plans to the Public Improvement Commission (PIC) in July
- Project timeline – design is almost complete, bringing plans to Public Improvement Commission (PIC) in July 2023; putting the project out to bid in late winter; aiming to start construction in spring 2024; keeping awareness of the project going
- Michael will give a presentation about what happens between design and construction

### *Equity in Contracting – presented by Michael Miller*

See [slide deck](#) for additional content

- How do we make it so that the city becomes a better customer? Tight partnership between economic opportunity (Segun) and Finance
- Before the bid is released
  - Develop the pipeline – so businesses can bid
  - Buying plan
  - Opportunity fairs – connect businesses with city depts
  - Capacity building grants for m/wbe bidders
  - Simplified m/wbe certification

- Plan and release bids
  - Sheltered market program – under chapter 30b; designate contracts only to m/wbe businesses
  - Equitable procurement process outreach – specifically search for m/wbe to do this job; any office is required to do outreach for it
  - Contract specific goals – set percentages
  - Inclusive quote contract – you can request 3 or more quotes from businesses, you can increase the budget
- Award and contract
- Services rendered
  - Looking at ways to cut down time between services and payment
- Invoice received
- Reporting & payment
  - Based on actual values of payments, rather than the value listed on the contracts
- Ongoing strategies
  - Based on disparity study
  - Race and gender conscious measures, in a perfect world, X% must meet that requirement
- *Councilor Fernandez Anderson*: This is really important stuff, but I think the group is really small for who would benefit from this meeting. Who's in the meeting?
  - *Louisa Gag*– this Outreach Advisory Group is a smaller group of members from the community and stakeholders
  - *Jen Rowe* – we openly invite anyone from the community to join this group. It's about how we do outreach–this group doesn't make decisions about the design of the project. We host quarterly meetings to keep touch points with folks.
- For this specific contract in Lower Roxbury
  - What work is being done?
  - What can we set as a disparity goal?
  - We're working with the project team to understand potential elements that they're looking to include in the package
- Buying Plan - a projection of what the City will be buying in the future for businesses to view and plan for
- Standardized RFPs
  - Looking to simplify the beginning
  - Putting the “baseball card” style synopsis of info on the front page
- *Ron Whitaker*: Out of the total number of contracts, what's the percentage of m/wbe's currently?
  - *Michael Miller* – In 2022, 2,500 vendors and 60 m/wbe and 85 including wbe's (just women owned) (14.5% of dollars spent). In 2019, ~5% of vendors at in m/wbes.

- *Ron Whitaker*: When is the plan to reach out to m/wbe? Most contracts go out to white women owned businesses. Businesses of color don't get these contracts. What steps are being taken to reach out to these groups?
  - *Michael Miller* –
    - As part of our equitable compliance and procurement process, the department is required to search for BIPOC businesses and reach out to them. Opportunity Fairs and Building Capacity Grants
    - We're also building policy tools, as previously mentioned
    - City Council measures depts on how their spending is diverse
    - We need more help with this from the community
    - As an example of a win, City Fresh Foods: only 2% was spent; when they won their contract it was the largest reward to a BIPOC business non-construction in the history of the City. We needed to combat the idea that BIPOC businesses couldn't win. Afterwards, the phones were ringing off the hook from m/wbes looking for more opportunities.
    - If we can't figure out under existing systems, we'll create new tools.
    - We need more help to do the outreach
- *Question - Ron Whitaker* - Some businesses don't qualify for the bid requirements. Do you use a pre-bid process of any kind, where you can talk to businesses prior to releasing the RFP?
  - *Michael Miller* –
    - We have a lot of meetings like this. Part of this work is not only increasing access to city contracting but also increasing services in your neighborhoods.
    - Sometimes the qualifications are way too high, we're working to minimize arbitrary requirements
- *Question - Lorraine Payne Wheeler*: we have a situation where people have been left out for a long time. Have you reached out to organizations that work with Black entrepreneurs and small businesses (ex: Mill City Community Investments, Boston Impact Initiative). There must be a connection between your work and theirs.
  - *Michael Miller* – we're actively looking for every opportunity; would love to discuss further

*Keeping up awareness - presented by Jen Rowe*

See [slide deck](#) for additional content

We'd previously discussed with you plans to:

- Visit abutters to share final design
- Send quarterly emails to project list
- Send another postcard when a timeframe for construction

- Table at neighborhood events - let us know if there's an event we can join!
- Learn to Ride events this summer - six upcoming in Lower Roxbury. We'd love your assistance in advertising!
- Connect with residents about green infrastructure and our new national certification program
  - First cohort is complete, has a planting day, and prepping for exam
  - Could you help us connect with residents who might be interested in this opportunity? The email to direct folks to is: [green.infrastructure@boston.gov](mailto:green.infrastructure@boston.gov)
- We also will share information about the project at events for neighboring projects:
  - [Albany Street](#); separated bike lanes in the South End and part of Lower Roxbury
  - Columbus Avenue (Mass - Arlington); parking protected bike lanes from Arlington to Clarendon coming soon as part of the [Berkeley Street Bike Lane](#) project
  - [Frederick Douglass Peace Plaza](#) - photo updates
- Question: *Jamarhl Crawford* - who is doing the sculpture?
  - *Jen Rowe* - they presented the info in a previous meeting, we will send that out with the notes
  - *Louisa Gag* - sculptor Mario Chiodo [designed the artwork](#) based on a drawing by Roxbury painter Paul Goodnight
  - *Jamarhl Crawford* - good, just wants to make sure the artists are connected to the community
- Question: *Lorraine Payne Wheeler* - can you talk about how you'll keep the project going? Do you talk to Friends of Melnea Cass Blvd.?
  - *Jen Rowe* - yes, I've spoken to members of they are aware, some have attended our tabling events
  - *Ron Whitaker* - I'm trying to get more people to attend again from the community
  - *Ron Whitaker* - can you send multiple reminders to encourage people to attend? We're reaching a point where things will be happening, and people should be engaged
- Question: *Ron Whitaker* - should we start recording meetings? To support credibility and validity of the group.
- Question: *Ron Whitaker* - wanted to ask Michael if they did reverse auctions on bids to save money and make w/mbes more competitive bc it brings the price down
- Question: *Ashley Pierre-Louis* - have you looked into the new languages for public materials?
  - *Louisa Gag and Jen Rowe* - we'll flag it for new materials
  - *Jen Rowe* - we can look into translating the meeting notes
  - *Ron Whitaker* - Mandarin or Cantonese might come up
  - *Louisa Gag* - Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole are top 3 threshold - can look more into Lower Roxbury

- *Jamarhl Crawford* – It's a melting pot in that area, it's worth looking into
- *Lorraine Payne Wheeler* When you say the meetings are full of agencies, you can get the sense that you're only talking to people who travel through the community and are not part of it
  - *Jamarhl Crawford*– he's at your service to help flyer, canvas, do a walk through, kiosk, signage, put up new posters
  - *Jen Rowe* – the posters probably need a refresh before construction starts

**Next Steps:**

- Next meeting September 21 at 11:00 AM