

Special Meeting Minutes

Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, Board of Directors
Wednesday, November 20, 2024
8:30am – 4:00pm

Mintz
One Financial Center
Boston, MA 02111

In person Attendees: Jennifer Fang, Deniz Johnson, Conan Harris, Kirsten Hoffman, Rosalind Gorin, Carmine Guarino, Hilina Ajakaiye, Rebecca Lee, Michael Carragher, Sayed Salah, Tom O'Brien, John Shea, Bradley Snyder, Linda See

Rose Kennedy Greenway Employees : Chris Cook, Alex Rogers Pittman, Adina Astor, Brian Gibbons, Robert Stigberg

Board Members not in attendance: Jenny Harding, Matt Conti, Midori Morikawa, Conor Finley, Jessica Hughes

Board Orientation

Chris Cook welcomed all board members. Cook emphasized the importance of aligning future goals with the organization's values and expressed a desire to keep exiting members as stakeholders within the Conservancy. Chris also introduced Adina Astor, the consultant hired to facilitate the retreat and who engaged with several board members prior to the retreat. Additionally, Chris welcomed Conan Harris and Tom O'Brien as new board members.

Chris Cook called the meeting to order at 9:28 AM, with a motion by Brad Snyder and a second by Rebecca Lee.

Organizational Snapshot

Board members introduced themselves and shared their Greenway memories. Adina Astor reviewed the agenda and led a discussion on the Conservancy's evolution, starting with its 2004 incorporation. Astor highlighted the formation of the BID (Business Improvement District) in 2018 and the renewal of the MassDOT contract. Astor reviewed the MassDOT lease and related legislation, as well as the BID-Greenway Business Improvement District agreement, which includes a four-way agreement between the BID, MassDOT, the Conservancy, and the City of Boston (which agreed to draw its annual contribution from earnings on the Winthrop Square garage proceeds).

Astor also discussed the evolution of the Board's structure. Originally consisting of 15 members, the Board increased to 21 members following updates to the legislation and bylaws. The structure of Board officers, committees, and protocols was explained. Board members inquired about impending vacancies in 2025, and there was a reflection on possible legislative updates related to community-elected board seats.

Astor highlighted the opportunity to codify processes pertaining to Board committees, officer roles, and meeting agendas.

Astor shared the DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) statements, including the Greenway's land acknowledgment. The importance of setting time frames and renewal frequencies for the DEI statements was noted.

Several board members emphasized the need for excellence, visibility, and consistent public relations and marketing.

Astor reviewed the Greenway physical footprint today, highlighting attractions and partnerships. She reviewed a portfolio of the Conservancy's work and organizational chart, as well as financial overviews of the Conservancy's revenue model, expense structure, balance sheet, and capital planning. Astor also reviewed the goals of the 2019-2023 Strategic Business Plan and the status of each goal.

The board discussed various Greenway development concepts since 1991, including:

- Original concepts for cultural and recreational buildings that were never realized
- Greening of remaining unfinished parcels
- The development of new parklands near The Greenway
- The development of connective spaces in adjacent neighborhoods

Strategic Opportunities & Roadmap

The discussion then turned to climate resiliency, particularly in relation to sea level rise. The board reflected on the importance of managing these challenges and connecting efforts in unison, particularly in light of the projected 2070 flood projections. The board also discussed the potential impacts of climate change on transportation and local businesses, especially in relation to the Central Artery..

Rebecca Lee reflected on the prominence of the Greenway, noting that while it may not have the same protections as other Article 97 protected park lands. As MassDOT property, potential future political decisions could be detrimental to the park. Cook was assigned to follow up on this issue with legal counsel.

Astor provided a brief on Downtown Boston's economy, particularly commercial real estate. The market has improved but appears to have stabilized at a new normal. Board members noted that commuters are traveling to the city three days a week, with most of the commuting occurring on Monday through Wednesday. There was a discussion on commuter patterns and the location of vacant offices. The potential for Seaport life to impact the Greenway was also noted.

Astor provided high level overviews of other planning efforts along the Greenway, including:

- Downtown Plan (BPDA, 2023)

- Chinatown Master Plan (community-led, 2020)
- Imagine Boston 2030 (Mayor Walsh, 2017)

The discussion shifted to thinking about a framework for a potential strategic planning process.

Key Questions: Who are the audiences you want to serve, and how are you uniquely positioned to serve them? How can you think intentionally about your audience and what role you play versus what they do?

Design Elements & Potential Approach: The board discussed how to gather diverse and expansive input from key constituents, including the DOT, BID, the City and the public. They emphasized the importance of engaging current and prospective funders and partners in meaningful discussions while maintaining a commitment to the mission and vision of the Conservancy.

Hilina Ajakaiye suggested creating a timeline to structure the process. Astor noted that data gathering could begin in the spring, with early decisions made at that time and implementation planned for the fall.

The board discussed a potential approach to the strategic planning process:

- **Defining the structure:** Plan strategies, conduct conversations, and use a structured development and assessment process to inform decision-making.
- **Timeline:** Launch the planning effort by the end of January and complete and codify the plan ahead of the December annual meeting.
- **Implementation:** Board members reflected on the importance of progress led by the Executive Director, Board Chair, and a small committee. Lee proposed involving outgoing board members on advisory committees to support strategic planning implementation.

The board agreed that a proposed timeline at the end of 2024 would allow for quarterly plans to be ready for launch in January 2025.

Priorities and Roadmap

The board discussed governance mechanisms, focusing on how boards function, their roles, and why they matter. Astor shared a potential governance roadmap for 2025, which includes core activities and governance reviews. Ajakaiye proposed the creation of a board member portal where members can view and interact with one another's ideas.

There was also a discussion about a potential executive committee's role and the need for additional staff support.

Deniz Johnson emphasized that board expectations must be clearly outlined, with a plan for discussions and actions related to support contribution levels. Lee proposed formalizing a way

to capture the reflections of outgoing board members, and aligning this process with committee assignments and officer slates, in order to establish a clarity and a timeline for board transitions.

The board discussed expanding the lease to 99 years and keeping the discussion open to all aspects of governance.

Plans were made to have another retreat in the spring to continue discussions and refine strategies.

The meeting adjourned at 3:43pm with a motion to adjourn by Bradley Snyder and seconded by Hilina Ajakaiye.