

Boston Ward 5 Democrats
Minutes - January 17, 2020 Meeting

Call to Order

The regular and duly noticed January meeting of the Boston Ward 5 Democratic Committee was called to order by Chair Sharon Durkan (the Chair).

Smoki Bacon Memoriam presented by Boston City Councilor Kenzie Bok

Approval of Minutes

Rob Whitney moves that we amend the draft November minutes by fixing a typo in the Treasurer's Report section - change \$2,0000 to \$2,000, and then accept the minutes. The motion was seconded by Kathy Judge and passed by acclamation.

Treasurer's Report

Ward 5 Treasurer Bob Binney presented a statement of our current assets on hand, and a projection of the income and expenses expected in a presidential election year. If there is no adjustment made, there would be a deficit of \$500 at the end of the presidential election year. The Chair and members of the Executive Committee discussed plans to adjust expenses to fit with more current election support methods, and to expand the Ward's membership and fundraising activities. For example, there is a plan to add a new summer fundraiser to be held on June 14, which is Flag Day. Details will follow.

The body which discusses the Ward's finances in detail, and makes budget decisions, is the Executive Committee. Executive Committee meetings are open to any member who wishes to attend. Members do not have a vote on the Executive Committee, but they are welcome to attend and participate in discussion. Any member who would like to attend Executive Committee meetings, including discussing the budget in more detail, should email the Chair who will make sure they receive notice regarding when and where the Executive Committee meetings are held.

Sen. William Brownsberger - Transportation Discussion

Senator Brownsberger is the President Pro Tempore of the Massachusetts State Senate, and represents just about half of Ward 5. Sen. Joe Boncore represents the other half, and is the Chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation in the Senate. Sen. Brownsberger came to discuss the status of certain transportation programs and discussions going on in the Senate, and to seek feedback from the Ward 5 Democratic Committee members.

Topics addressed:

- Electric Cars

- T and Commuter Rail Fare Reduction

- Transportation resiliency

- Transportation and neighborhood safety

- How to build MBTA capacity to engage in effective capital planning

How to plan and build future transportation routes and management Uber fees and other congestion planning

Senator Brownsberger asked the Committee for feedback regarding prioritization of transportation spending. Massachusetts is planning to spend billions on improving T, rail and bus systems. The Senator's current thinking is to focus on areas of congestion, which is also where the opportunities to have positive environmental impacts lie.

The MBTA isn't grappling with prioritization and congestion in ways that are helpful. Currently the MBTA is focusing on increasing ridership. Massachusetts drivers drive about 60 billion miles each year. If we added up all passenger miles across all of our public transit, the total would be on the order of 2 billion passenger miles. Even if we quadruple ridership, we can't replace 90% of that travel. We have to look to other options in addition to increasing ridership. Ridership does need to be addressed, as a certain level of ridership is necessary to make bus routes viable (about 10-15 passengers per bus). However, we need additional options.

What works to alleviate congestion? Commuter Rail has possibilities. During peak hours, Commuter Rail carries about one third of the load of commuters through busy corridors. That's a large share. We need to grow that share to benefit the environment and alleviate congestion.

At rush hour congestion is a problem. It's a problem in all of the radial routes coming in and out of Boston, and in the core of the city. Commuter rail is carrying about a third of the load of humans through that corridor. Although transit may be a smaller amount of the transit, during rush hour it's a very large share. We need to grow that share to benefit the environment and congestion. We need to focus on congestion in the regional rail project.

We also need to expand the MBTA's planning capacity. That could be accomplished through changing the way we do procurement. Rather than having the MBTA do all of the planning and put their plan out for bid, we could leverage public/private partnerships and instead put out a bid package that states what outcomes we want, and ask firms and consortiums to plan how to meet those needs and bid accordingly. They could be contracted to build a new rail system and run it for the next 30 years.

And, a controversial conversation, what kinds of new revenues will we put on the table to address transit issues right now? We need to put dollars into safety and resilience and fare reduction and building up planning capacity even if only to manage the public private partnerships. The Governor has money in his capital plan but it's too far out. We need to identify money we can put into these areas right now. Getting money out the door is difficult.

Two big items on the transportation event horizon:

The Governor's transportation and climate initiative could add half a billion dollars in funding to this effort per year.

Fair Share Ballot initiatives: we need to fix the fair share tax and then separately put a box around that revenue so that it goes for transportation.

Committee Discussion with Sen. Brownsberger. Senator Brownsberger asks that any committee member with feedback on the issues discussed to please email him with their thoughts and suggestions.

Jarred Johnson - COO of Transit Matters

Transit Matters has been around for 5-7 years. It started as a podcast and a blog when they thought that the issues that were important to them weren't being covered in the ways that mattered. They have a good working board and good volunteers and have grown enough that the MBTA now listens to them.

Issues they've been working on/are working on:

- Late night bus service
- Electrification of bus lines
- Bus network redesign
- Regional rail congestion and electrification
- Bus garages

Q&A with the Ward 5 Committee

Membership

Kenzie Bok nominated Lucy Rivera for membership, which motion was seconded by Gretchen Bennett. Motion passed by acclamation. Lucy will be eligible for a vote to membership at the next meeting she attends.

Gretchen Bennett moved that we elect Boston City Councilor for District 8 Kenzie Bok as an Ex Officio member of the Ward 5 Committee, which motion was seconded by Pat Amend. Motion passed by acclamation.

The Caucus - Update

The Massachusetts State Democratic Convention this year will be a nominating convention. It will be held in Lowell on May 30. The Ward 5 slate will be formed at the February meeting. If you want to be on the slate, please email the Chair and come to the February meeting. We also need volunteers to help out at the Caucus, which will be held on February 29.

Announcements

Gretchen Bennett addressed the committee and explained that she will be working to protect the vote in Ohio for the next 10 months. For that reason, she will be resigning before she leaves, at which time her position on the Executive Committee will be open. The Chair and the Committee expressed thanks for her work with the Committee, and wished her well in her new endeavor. We look forward to having Gretchen back with us after the election!

Adjournment

Diane Barry moved that we adjourn the meeting, which motion was seconded by Kathy Judge.
Motion passed by acclamation.

Attendance

Members

Pat Amend
Hilary Bacon Gabrieli
Diane Barry
Gretchen Bennett
Bob Binney
Kenzie Bok
David Crossman
Kate Gallivan
Mike George
Molly Hitt
Sharon Hucul
Kathy Judge
Carol Krupa
Landon Lemoine
Jay Livingstone
Pat McDonough
Kristen Mobilia
Rajan Nanda
Enid Pope
Dan Smith
Rob Whitney
David Xiao
Adrienne Zak

Guests

Lucy Rivera
Madley Segal
Sandra Singer
Susan Smith