PARTNERSHIP for FINANCIAL EQUITY

Responsive Banking Services/BankOn Massachusetts Committee
Wednesday, September 9, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

Co-Chairs:
Lena Buteau, Vice President, Retail Administration Officer, Monson Savings Bank
Rose Francois, Executive Director & President, Midas Collaborative

Meeting Summary/ Quick Recap

The meeting focused on discussing recent changes to CRA (Community Reinvestment Act) regulations and planning for an upcoming summit. Rose expressed concerns that removing certain community service requirements from CRA testing might reduce bank engagement with community partnerships, while Jason noted that banks might prefer simpler lending-only approaches over more complex community development initiatives. The group discussed PFE's ongoing work on regulatory comments due October 13th, with Tom mentioning that PFE's board subcommittee is evaluating the proposed regulations. The meeting then shifted to promoting the upcoming October 6-7 summit, featuring a virtual day and in-person event in Brockton at the Fuller Craft Museum, including an asset-building panel on "Building Wealth from the Ground Up" with experts discussing programs like baby bonds and Trump accounts. Tom also announced the third annual Elevating Equity Awards, recognizing successful bank-community partnerships in mortgage lending, small business lending, and banking services categories, with nominations due the following Friday. The final discussion centered on AI integration in retail banking, examining both potential benefits like improved efficiency and personalized service versus concerns about automation potentially reducing human teller positions and community representation in banking.

Community Development Rule Concerns

The group discussed concerns about a new rule that may reduce banks' incentives to engage in community development activities beyond lending. Rose and Jason expressed worry that banks might choose efficiency over community impact, particularly since smaller banking teams have limited capacity. Tom announced that PFE is preparing comments on the rule, with a board subcommittee reviewing the proposed changes and a deadline of October 13th for submissions. One attendee indicated that her institution, as a Fed member bank, will continue following the old rules and emphasized that their community investments are driven by both business sense and moral responsibility rather than regulatory requirements.

CRA Regulations

The meeting focused on discussions about regulatory concerns regarding CRA (Community Reinvestment Act) regulations and an upcoming summit. Participants discussed the need for

durable and sustainable regulations, with Tom noting that the new regulations may face legal challenges similar to previous Biden-era regulations.

Asset-Building Programs Discussion

The group reviewed an upcoming virtual panel on asset-building scheduled for October 6th, featuring experts discussing how financial institutions and community partners can help underserved consumers build wealth through programs like baby bonds and Trump accounts. Rose expressed enthusiasm about the panel and shared insights about similar programs in Connecticut and Vermont, while another attendee suggested exploring opportunities to implement baby bond programs through VITA sites. The discussion highlighted both the potential and challenges of these asset-building initiatives, particularly regarding public perception of programs named after Trump.

Summit Planning & Elevating Equity Awards

Jason announced details about the upcoming two-day summit on October 6-7, including a virtual day and an in-person event in Brockton at the Fuller Craft Museum. Tom also introduced the Elevating Equity Awards program, which recognizes successful bank-community partnerships in mortgage lending, small business lending, and banking services/asset building, with nominations due next Friday and winners receiving a $1,000 donation and promotional support.

AI in Retail Banking Discussion

The group discussed a new Prosperity grant that allows VITA serving organizations to combine services with Trump accounts, though details about implementation were limited. Jason mentioned this information would be shared with Boston Tax Help and MASCAP. The main discussion centered on the rise of AI agents in retail banking, with Jason sharing insights from consulting reports about AI integration in services like fraud protection, financial coaching, and loan processing. He raised concerns about how AI implementation might affect entry-level banking opportunities and physical branch access for communities, particularly older and less English-proficient populations.