

Brookline Advisory Committee
Human Services Subcommittee
FY2021 Budget Report: Department of Health & Human Services

The Human Services Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee held a public hearing on Thursday, February 20, 2020 in Room 308 in Town Hall to review FY21 budget of the Brookline Department of Public Health and Human Services (BPH).

In attendance were Dr. Swannie Jett, Director; Justin Cassanova-Davis, Assistant Town Administrator; Cornelia “Kea” Van der Ziel (TMM 15), subcommittee members Harry Bohrs (TMM 3), David-Marc Goldstein (TMM 8), Kim Smith (TMM6), and Claire Stampfer (TMM5).

FY21 Budget:

The FY21 operating budget information is found on pages IV-75 to IV-84 of the FY-2021 Financial Plan. The figures for FY20 differ from those on the Open.gov portal, and thus, the latter are used.¹ The budget proposal is for \$1,598,907, an increase of \$193,456 (13.77%) over FY20. Personnel, which accounts for 78.41% of the FY 21 budget, is expanding from 20.82 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in FY20 to 22.32 FTEs² in FY21 and increases \$134,079 (11.98%). Costs for services increase 1.66% and supplies 74.64%, primarily due to the addition of \$15,000 in “special program supplies”, covered by the Host Community Agreement (HCA). Utilities expenses, which are projected to increase 25.75%, are based on a 3-year average of use and include the purchase of additional renewable energy credits (RECs). The hefty capital cost increase is due to an expenditure of \$30,000 to replace on old vehicle with an electric one.

Program Costs - Department of Health & Human Services					
Expenditure Class	FY19 Actual	FY20 Budget	FY21 Budget	FY20-21 \$ Δ	FY20-21 % Δ
Salaries	1,144,361	1,119,620	1,253,699	134,079	11.98%
Services	213,832	217,902	221,514	3,612	1.66%
Supplies	20,692	20,100	35,100	15,000	74.63%
Other	6,931	4,120	4,120	0	0.00%
Utilities	48,282	39,515	49,689	10,174	25.75%
Budgeted Capital	21,496	4,185	34,785	30,600	731.18%
Total	1,455,593	1,405,442	1,598,907	193,465	13.77%

Discussion:

The Health Department comprises six subprograms: Administration, Environmental Health, Mental Health, Child Health, Community Health, and Substance Use. An extensive list of BPH programs and activities appears on pages IV-75 to IV-79 of the FY-2021 Financial Plan. In addition to its myriad of responsibilities, BPH works with other Town departments to develop, implement, and oversee policies related to medial and recreational marijuana retailers.

Most of the budget discussion centered on the BPH’s HCA funding proposals, which account for the bulk of its expanded budget. The HCA funds cover two new positions (i.e., 1 FTE health

¹ The data were from a download generated on 2/27/2020, adjusted to correct the variance percentage calculation.

² Per Justin Cassanova-Davis, FTE counts in the new software now include grant-funded positions.

policy analyst at \$70,000 per year, a 0.5 FTE epidemiologist at \$60,000 per year); existing positions that have shifted to this source (i.e., part-time substance abuse counselors, 1 FTE school substance abuse counselor, 1 FTE community health specialist); and related group health benefits, as well as related supplies noted above.

Dr. Jett spoke about the need for a community health assessment to determine the impact of legal recreational marijuana on Brookline, which is unknown. This information is required by the Cannabis Control Commission and is not available elsewhere, including the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). Boston data cannot be extrapolated to Brookline. The epidemiologist would conduct surveys, collect data, and investigate the health status of the community. This position, as described by BPH, would establish standards for a public health performance management system and baseline data on marijuana before a retailer opens. The epidemiologist would describe population demographics, identify pertinent health problems, conduct surveillance activities, and identify acute and chronic conditions or other adverse outcomes. The health policy analyst would study the health and environmental impact of Town policies, evaluate policy outcomes, determine their costs, and recommend potential policies.

The group discussed BPH's plans to pursue additional sources of grant funds for its activities, given that several current grants were at the end of their funding cycle. The Town's tobacco control coordinator position, which is funded by the state Department of Public Health, covers seven towns. The group recommended that BPH determine its total costs of providing oversight to marijuana retailers, tobacco compliance checks, and enforcement of the plastic bag and polystyrene bans so that adequate fees can be set for licenses and permits.

Recommendation:

By a vote of 4-0-0, the subcommittee recommends a Health Department budget of **\$1,598,907**.