

BROOKLINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Human Services Subcommittee
Report on FY2019 FY2020 Budget
Veterans' Services

The Human Services Subcommittee held a public hearing on the FY 2020 budget of the Veterans' Services Department on Thursday, February 21, 2019 at 6:00 PM in Town Hall, room 103. The meeting was duly posted.

Attendees included Veterans' Services department head William McGroarty; DICR director Lloyd Gellineau, Ph.D.; assistant town administrator Justin Casanova-Davis; Advisory Committee member Neil Gordon (TMM 1); and Human Services Subcommittee members Ben Birnbaum (Chair), David-Marc Goldstein (TMM 8); Kim Smith (TMM 6); and Claire Stampfer (TMM 5).

BUDGET STATEMENT

The FY2020 budget¹ request represents a negligible \$207 (0.1%) increase over the FY2019 budget, all in the personnel category, due to a steps increase. Personnel costs account for 51.2% of the total budget. There are 2.0 FTEs, including a director, who also serves as emergency preparation coordinator, and a head clerk. About \$27,600 is budgeted for internships for veterans, which pay nearly \$14 per hour for part-time temporary work. The "Other" cost category, which accounts for 41.2% of the total, consists mainly of veterans' benefits (\$144.6K), along with funds (\$18.5K) to commemorate Memorial and Veterans Days. The revenue primarily reflects reimbursement from the state 115 benefit program and fluctuates over time.

PROGRAM COSTS - VETERANS' SERVICES					
CLASS OF EXPENDITURES	ACTUAL FY2018	BUDGET FY2019	REQUEST FY2020	FY20 vs FY19	
				\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE
Personnel	182,913 ²	175,295	175,502	207	0.1%
Services	1,988	2,388	2,388	0	0.0%
Supplies	636	650	650	0	0.0%
Other	117,799	163,535	163,535	0	0.0%
Capital	510	510	510	0	0.0%
TOTAL	303,845	342,378	342,585	207	0.1%
BENEFITS			103,269		
REVENUE	88,311	95,287	95,287	0	0.0%

An examination of departmental budgets over the five-year period from FY2016 to FY2020 shows an \$11,150 (3.4%) increase during this period.

¹ FY2020 Financial Plan, p. IV-104.

² The increased spending is associated with an employee leaving (unused vacation, sick time).

PROGRAM COSTS - VETERANS' SERVICES							
CLASS OF EXPENDITURES	BUDGET FY2016	BUDGET FY2017	BUDGET FY2018	BUDGET FY2019	REQUEST FY2020	FY20 vs FY16	
						\$ Δ	% Δ
Personnel	163,802	167,998	171,260	175,295	175,502	11,700	7.1%
Services	2,538	2,538	1,988	2,388	2,388	-150	-5.9%
Supplies	650	650	650	650	650	0	0.0%
Other	163,935	163,935	163,935	163,535	163,535	-400	-0.2%
Capital	510	510	510	510	510	0	0.0%
TOTAL	331,435	335,631	338,343	342,378	342,585	11,150	3.4%
BENEFITS					103,269		
REVENUE	101,513	110,883	95,287	95,287	95,287		

Discussion

The department, as mandated by state law,³ assists eligible veterans and their families with financial and medical assistance, and receives reimbursement for 75% of approved benefit expenditures. It also helps veterans obtain benefits from the Veterans Administration (VA) and other federal programs. Mr. McGroarty's efforts to serve Brookline's veterans are well known, as is his ability to connect with those experiencing the effects of PTSD. He highlighted some of the issues facing the department, including the desire for veterans to find a job. It has been a particular challenge of late to get authorization for reimbursement of benefits, due to staff changes at the state Department of Veterans' Services. Mr. McGroarty referred to his assistant, Claudia Leone, as a "Brookline hero," who has had considerable success in finding alternative sources of income for veterans. The department also has been able to help veterans navigate the VA system to expedite their receipt of health care. Mr. McGroarty spoke of the benefits to both veterans and the town of the aforementioned internship program, which provides part-time work on a temporary basis for those who are in school or searching for jobs. The department works with 30 to 40 veterans at any given time.

On Veterans Day, there was special mention of WWI veteran Albert Edward "Scotty" Scott, a Brookline newsboy who received a Distinguished Service Cross and was killed in action at the age of 16. Mr. Scott, a graduate of the school formerly known as Devotion, was awarded a posthumous Brookline High School diploma. A widow recently left the office \$100,000, which is currently tied up in probate, but will be placed into a special account once settled. The office would like to purchase a lift-equipped van. A detailed description of FY2019 accomplishments and FY2020 objectives appears on pages IV-104 and IV-105 of the FY2020 Financial Plan.

The Subcommittee voted 4-0-0 to approve the FY2020 budget of \$342,585.

³ Massachusetts General Laws, M.G.L. ch. 115.