

**BROOKLINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Administration and Finance Subcommittee**  
**Report on FY2020 IT Department Budget**

The Administration and Finance Subcommittee held a public hearing on Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, to review the Information Department budget. In attendance were John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, and Neil Gordon for the subcommittee, and Kevin Stokes, Director of the Information Technology Department, and Justin Casanova-Davis, Assistant Town Administrator.

The Advisory Committee’s proposed operating budget information appears in summary form at II-7 and in detail at pp. IV-11 to IV-15 in the FY2020 Financial Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION**

By a vote of 3-0-0, the Administration & Finance Subcommittee recommends that the budget the Advisory Committee includes funding of \$2,032,347 for the Information Technology department in the fiscal year 2020 budget.

**Discussion**

The proposed 2020 budget totals \$2,032,347 an increase of \$4,005 (0.2%) over FY19 budget of \$2,028,342. The Budget details as follows:

<b>PROGRAM COSTS - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT</b>					
CLASS OF EXPENDITURES	ACTUAL FY2018	BUDGET FY2019	REQUEST FY2020	FY19 vs. FY20	
				\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE
Personnel	1,154,803	1,186,569	1,190,574	4,005	0.3%
Services	474,535	545,773	545,773	0	0.0%
Supplies	10,299	10,350	10,350	0	0.0%
Other	15,237	17,550	17,550	0	0.0%
Capital	268,019	268,100	268,100	0	0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,922,893</b>	<b>2,028,342</b>	<b>2,032,347</b>	<b>4,005</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
<b>BENEFITS</b>			<b>635,336</b>		
<b>REVENUE</b>	<b>810</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

Mr. Stokes, the Director of Information Technology (DIT), reviewed the IT Department budget which, other than a modest increase in personnel STEPS costs, is flat.

The DIT noted that technology providers are moving toward a business model which is based on charging by the number of users per month, rather than purchasing a software license for a given number of users for a longer period of time. This model has the effect of moving costs from capital to operating, so we are likely to see operating budget pressures increase more than usual in this area over the next few years.

For example, Microsoft office (750 users overall) is currently purchased for \$149 as part of a PC package. That total cost is amortized over the 4-year life of the host computer. Microsoft announced a proposed change to switch to a monthly per user fee, but pressure from many large users resulted in postponing of that change for a year or maybe two. The

proposed monthly fee was \$10, a significant increase over \$149 amortized over 4 years. Note: The non-administrative Schools side mainly uses Google, which currently is free.

The Subcommittee asked about possibly changing to either Google, or OpenOffice, a free open source product that emulates the Microsoft Office products could be considered.

The DIT said there were support issues concerning both products that need to be looked into before any change could be made. He agreed that these options should be looked at if Microsoft makes a definitive change announcement.

The Subcommittee also inquired as to whether the Town was part of any organization that either because of its aggregate clout, could either exert pressure on Microsoft, or other suppliers, or even do bulk licensing. The DIT said that we already try to use leverage wherever possible, but efforts have had mixed results.

For example, the state has a model where they try to aggregate communities for the Accela software product. This attempt did not work out as it was taking too long to get agreement, so Brookline eventually chose to sign its own contract. On the positive side, 13 other communities around Boston via UASI, representing (about 13,000 seats in total, were able to combine forces for a grant for the Wombat security product.

The DIT discussed with the Subcommittee the School Department's IT needs which are increasingly complex. We have more "smart" buildings, which require increased monitoring and maintenance. The Town has 22,000 "things that beep and blink", which not only includes computers and phones, but smart "chalk" boards and loudspeakers. Already the IT Department's budget has absorbed a \$9,500 increase as a result of the building automation for the CC School.

There was a discussion of the School Department's technology needs and the ability of the IT Department to meet them. One Subcommittee member noted that we hear at AC all the time "What does it really cost to run the schools?" It's complicated. Hardware belongs to the Town; software belongs to the schools. The IT Department has standards and controls in place to enable it to provide a continuous utility service. The School Department has different standards and implementations at different school sites. This sometimes raises a conflict between user needs and utility needs. The IT Department would like to centrally manage any device on the network from its central location, with full access and full control, to provide the expected level of service and support. We are not there yet on the school side.

A discussion of technology oversight ensued. On the financial side we have the Town/School partnership Committee; there is no Town/School partnership for infrastructure. Perhaps this should be addressed. The Information Technology Advisory Committee has no members appointed and (perhaps because it has no members) hasn't met in four years. It was noted that the IT department has a written objective to convene meetings of ITAC and that the Subcommittee would be looking for progress in achieving that objective.

On a vote of 3-0-0 the Subcommittee recommends FAVORABLE ACTION on the budget as printed.