

The Human Services Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee held a public hearing on Friday, March 12, 2021 by Zoom to review the FY22 budget of the Brookline Department of Public Health and Human Services (BPH).

In attendance were:

Human Services Subcommittee: Kim Smith (TMM6), Chair, and members David-Marc Goldstein (TMM 8), Susan Granoff (TMM 7) and Claire Stampfer (TMM5).

Health Department: Director Dr. Swannie Jett, Assistant Director Roland Lankah, and Office Manager Darlene Johnson

Town Administration: Melissa Goff, Justin Cassanova-Davis

Advisory Committee: Janice Kahn

TAB reporters: Mia Khatib, Jackson Machesky

FY22 Budget:

Expand All	FY20 Actual	FY21 Budget	FY22 Budget	2021-22 Variance	2021-22 Variance
▸ SALARIES	\$ 1,039,028	\$ 1,284,836	\$ 1,282,613	-2,223	-0.17%
▸ SERVICES	211,681	221,514	221,514	0	0.00%
▸ SUPPLIES	25,910	35,100	35,100	0	0.00%
▸ OTHER	3,795	4,120	4,120	0	0.00%
▸ UTILITIES	39,894	49,421	47,629	-1,792	-3.76%
▸ BUDGETED CAPITAL	4,005	4,785	4,785	0	0.00%
Total	\$ 1,324,313	\$ 1,599,776	\$ 1,595,761	-4,016	-0.25%

The FY22 operating budget information is found on pages IV-95 to IV-108 of the FY-2022 Financial Plan.

The budget proposal is for \$1,595,761, a decrease of \$4,016 (-0.25%) less than FY21.

Salaries at \$1,282,613 account for 80% of the FY 22 budget, an overall decrease of -0.17% compared to FY21 .

The categories of increase in this budget are due to Permanent Part-time Salaries increase of 1.95%, Longevity Pay increase of 19.89%, and Water increase of 1.96%.

Discussion:

The Health Department comprises six subprograms: Administration, Environmental Health, Mental Health, Child Health, Community Health, and Substance Use which are described and for which more detailed financial information is provided in the FY2022 Financial Plan.

This year our DPH has done a remarkable job of shepherding our community through the COVID-19 pandemic. The identification of cases and monitoring of quarantines continues and immunizations provided through our DPH are just beginning. This pandemic has created a much more stressful and risky work environment for all our frontline health workers. This includes almost all of our DPH employees, who found themselves working in situations in which there was a high risk of infection. All Brookline public work related to COVID19 was handled by our 12 fulltime DPH staff assisted by the town's 200+ volunteer Medical Reserve Corps with no help from state agencies. Indeed, without the volunteer Medical Reserve Corps, there would not have been a sufficient number of personnel to protect citizens of Brookline from Covid-19.

In addition to more than a year of emergency work due to the pandemic, the DPH has managed many other major achievements which are listed in the FY2022 Financial Plan.

In his presentation to our subcommittee Dr. Jett explained that as a result of the pandemic our community has learned what the mission of the department of Health and Human Services to preserve, protect and promote public safety in Brookline entails. He listed 10 essential public health services:

1. Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. Inform, educate and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Dr. Jett further explained that monitoring health status to identify and solve community health problems is necessary to know, for example, who is homeless and who is homebound, so that they can get COVID19 immunizations, or be evacuated during extreme weather such as a tornado or flood or other emergency, etc. A Community Health Assessment is necessary to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan.

In the coming year the DPH will be doing more to monitor health in day care centers and nursing homes, both of which can be subject to outbreaks of infectious diseases. Nursing homes accounted for 90% of the deaths from COVID19 in Brookline. One of DPH's goals is to prepare for the next pandemic. Future goals include increased use of telehealth.

Other goals highlighted were:

1. Seeking more grant funding this year with a goal of \$200,000 as compared to \$150,000 in FY 21.
2. New public health interventions based on data collected in the Annual Healthy Brookline report.
3. Enforce regulations concerning tobacco, plastics, and polystyrene.

4. Using marijuana mitigation funds to provide substance abuse counseling and to promote environmental health in Brookline.

Dr. Jett noted personnel changes in the department. The Assistant Director Roland Lankah came on recently. The medical director retired this year and has been replaced by Dr. Peter Moyer. Our nurse also retired this year and DPH is in the process of replacing that position, too. The DPH just replaced their Emergency Preparedness Manager. They are still trying to fill the new positions of epidemiologist (approved FY 2021) and environmental health policy analyst.

Susan Granoff asked what DPH could accomplish with increased funding. Dr. Jett explained that we need a health education program, more youth services, more work with the homeless. Dr. Jett also explained that the 200 strong volunteer Medical Reserve corps of Brookline played an essential role in DPH accomplishments during the pandemic.

Dr. Jett reported that, in contrast to some neighboring communities, Brookline's 12-person DPH seems understaffed. He noted that Newton's DPH has 45 staff; Cambridge's DPH has 60 staff; Boston's has over 1,000. A subcommittee member noted that it would be helpful if Dr. Jett could provide additional information on the staff sizes of DPHs in comparable communities to Brookline, and Dr. Jett said he would gather that data so that the town could better evaluate whether it needs to expand the staff of its DPH.

Recommendation:

By a vote of 4-0-0, the subcommittee recommends the requested Health Department budget of \$1,595,761.