

Town of Brookline
Advisory Committee Minutes – DRAFT
Tuesday, March 14, 2022

Meeting Recording:

https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/qXVSIbDxnVWN26VHG8Lv0GqKGNEbdMVEAmD2zgBuhEcxeR3Xo59XcczLKj-s6Ahw._lwIjaYzDtvUo8tp?startTime=1678834269000

Present: Ben Birnbaum, Harry Bohrs, Cliff Brown, Patricia Correa, John Doggett, Dennis Doughty, Katherine Florio, Harry Friedman, David-Marc Goldstein, Neil Gordon, Susan Granoff, Kelly Hardebeck, Amy Hummel, Anita Johnson, Alisa Jonas, Janice Kahn, Pamela Lodish, Joslin Murphy, Donelle O’Neal, Linda Olson Pehlke, Markus L. Penzel, David Pollak, Stephen Reeders, Carlos Ridruejo, Lee Selwyn, Alok Somani, Christine Westphal

Absent: Carol Levin, Carolyn R. Thall

Also Attending: Assistant Town Administrator for Finance Charlie Young, Brookline Firefighters Local 950 Brian Bergeron, President Brookline Firefighters Local 950 IAFF Lieutenant Paul Trahon, Vice President Brookline Firefighters Local 950 Patricia Cripe, Brookline Fire Department Chief John Sullivan, Fred Levitan and other members of the public.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Announcements: Pursuant to this Board’s Authority under 940 CMR 29.10 (8), committee members will be participating remotely via telephone or video conferencing due to emergency regulations regarding the Corona virus. The Chair has reviewed the requirements of the regulations. There is a quorum physically present and all votes taken will be recorded by roll call so all above listed Advisory Committee members will be allowed to vote.

7:00 pm Public Comment (no public comment was offered)

7:15 PM Report from the Public Safety Subcommittee, Discussion and Possible Votes on FY 24 Fire Department Operating Budget

Public Safety Subcommittee member David-Marc Goldstein gave the report on the Fire Department budget and the subcommittee’s deliberations on same. The full report is linked at the conclusion of these minutes. For further details on the Fire Department budget, see Section 4J, pages 67-75 of the Brookline FY-2024 Financial Plan, and online at <https://stories.opengov.com/brooklinema/published/AhrinmUJUON>

The subcommittee unanimously recommended favorable action on the Fire Department FY24 operating budget request of \$16,848,102.

The Chief thanked the subcommittee and David-Marc for the thorough report on the budget and shared additional comments. \$33,000 decrease in the budget due to the fact that one of their line items accounts for \$27,000 of that (reduction in diesel) thanks to a new purchasing agreement, expect to realize some savings. That leaves about \$6,000 more - \$5,000 of which was the reduction that we made in regard to the override, which came from several of our service accounts, which essentially are supplies. We are reducing supplies in a number of areas.

For FY23, the department is currently running an approximate deficit of \$541,000 in its overtime budget, which will have to be reconciled by the end of the fiscal year. Overtime deficit is due to overtime for backfilling slots for injured firefighters – move to retirement if no longer able to perform the job but at the behest of their physicians. Currently there are 18 members out IOD (injured on duty), which drives up overtime costs. Some offset savings in the long term in salary accounts that will take up some of that, even though a not huge vacancy factor. Only 5 vacancies earlier in the year.

We did ask for an expansion request, as we have every year for training money for our training division, \$45,000 to continue a very successful diversity, equity, and inclusion program that we were able to get funded through ARPA funds last year, and then an additional \$45K for professional development in our department that unfortunately, did not make the list this year.

Recently I've spent some time with our new Public Safety Business Manager, Michael D'Onofrio who came over from the School Department, which was a fantastic addition, and looking forward to working through the next the next year with Mike, and really, really getting into the weeds with this budget like we've never been able to before.

We do have a number of items that have increased over the course of the last couple of years. The vast majority of our accounts are level funded, so we do have a number of items that I think the increase in cost that we would expect to at some point adjust those numbers. But all in all, it's about a \$12,000 adjustment not do whatever we can to either move those firefighters along into the retirement system, if it if it seems as if that they will no longer be able to have capacity to perform the duties as a firefighter. However, we are at the behest of the physicians and their assessments, and so we continue to try to push those things forward and make sure that we are doing our due diligence on our side.

I think Charlie (Young) will be able to give us a better number down the line as to the anticipated total overtime for the year and if that's going to require us to come back for a Reserve Fund Transfer. Anticipating 5+ retirements in the next fiscal year so in the position of hiring again. Civil Service has changed their practice, and we will be getting on what's called a "merged list" so instead of every two years, we are going to get a list every year, and they will merge the lists on a yearly basis which should give us on a running list of new firefighters for us to choose from.

Last thing I will add is that we have ordered the PFAS-free foam. We're waiting for it to come in so at that point all of our foam would be PFAS-free. We're still working with the manufacturers on the national level for the advent of PFAS-free gear. Once that is readily available and meets the standards, we'll have another conversation with regard to how we go about replacing that. The only thing with the PFAS foam is that we will still have to maintain the stock of the legacy foam that we have in anticipation of another amnesty program through the State. It literally costs about eight times more to get rid of a five gallon pail of legacy PFAS foam than it costs to buy it in the first place. It is a large quantity of money, and there's really not a great way of getting rid of it. There's one company in Canada that is doing it, but they have such a backlog that they have stopped accepting it, and for the disruption of the legacy fast phone. Ah, so ah! Every fire department, not just the Brookline, is kind of in a holding pattern with their legacy foam.

The Chief then took questions from committee members.

Comments, Questions, Discussion

Alisa Jonas: Q: Would it make any sense to hire a few more fire fighters to work as floaters to see if it was financially advantageous and do a cost/benefit analysis?

Charlie Young responded that at this time they are unable to look at this in depth. Initial analysis may be too expensive to do and may not offset the cost of the overtime. Not showing a real benefit. We will have to do more digging to come up with better answers. Increased number of calls and what contributed to that.

Janice Kahn: Thinking down the road with increase in population especially in South Brookline maybe consideration of needing another ladder company. It would be ideal to have that ladder on the south side of Route 9 to be more accessible to the density there and along Route 9. Our fire fighters have specialized trainings around specific medical needs and have a critical role to play in these medical emergencies.

Patty Cripe shared details about special training she went through for those who no longer have a heart but a pump and battery pack keeping them alive until a transplant. These are specialized trainings due to our proximity to the hospitals and are tasked with more education than most fire fighters of the state.

The Chief addressed a couple of comments. One of the things that I have proposed in the long-term plan for the Fire Department to this committee over the past several years was the idea of a ladder company in South Brookline permanently in the future, and I still maintain that position. During the renovations we will be fortunate in one aspect to be able to do those renovations, and as we do them after Station 4 as David-Marc pointed out Reservoir and Boylston is the kind of the lynchpin of this whole project in terms of my ability to be able to safely manage the pieces during the renovation. That station will be done first and will set the tone for everything else in terms of what we learn during that process, for all of the issues that we hope to address specifically, the health and safety of our firefighters being able to separate the living quarters through different types of heating and ventilating measures, to be able to separate those areas so that carcinogens and the toxins they'll get from the Apparatus Bay, and where we store our uniforms, our gear to where the living quarters are, but also to address the equity issue with our female firefighters, which is also another huge piece of the puzzle.

After Station 4 is completed, and we move to our second iteration of renovations at Station 2 in the Village, Ladder 2 from Station 1 will be displaced to Station 4 where we would hope to put a ladder in South Brookline in in the long term, and so for the period of time that Station 1 is being renovated, Ladder 2 will be in that position in South Brookline, or at least in Central South Brookline at Station Four, and will remain there during the time that we are in the process of rebuilding Station 5. This could be for probably one and a half to three years that that ladder company will be in position in South Brookline. It would be my intent during that process to be seeking a safer grant from the Federal Government to fund the 20 positions that it would take to be able to augment / add an additional ladder company. The safer grant provides a seventy-five and twenty-five split for the cost of those firefighters. The Federal Government for the first two years would provide 75% of the salary and benefit money and the Town would be responsible for 25%. In the third year that number flips around, and we would pick up 75% and 25% would be the Feds, and then in the ensuing years it would all fall on the Town.

Obviously, you know, Charlie and Melissa (Goff) and I would have to work out the numbers to see what the impact on the budget.

To your point earlier about the increase in runs over the past four to five years, we're seeing an increase of approximately 200 to 250 runs per year in large part because of the increased population and the density which is expanding into South Brookline, where we believe we need those additional resources. But also, the EMS runs account for the vast majority of the increases along with our Central Station alarms which are part and parcel of new housing stocks. It's not a huge number per day but it does over time start to tax the system. Those responses have to be commented on about the specific trainings that we have for not only our emergency Medical service runs, but also our technical rescue. This is the case for why I come before you every year and ask for training money to be able to bring these special trainings at a higher level. Oftentimes we can get these trainings from the State to start out and get the initial training. But it's the sustainability of these additional abilities that we are necessary to be able to meet the needs of the town.

We have no additional funds to be able to bring in any outside vendors to be able to do any additional trainings. We rely on our neighbors in Cambridge and in Boston, who have sufficient funds within their budget to be able to bring in these experts to augment. We're fortunate to have the facility and Cambridge has used our facility, and as a quid pro quo for using in our facility they allow our firefighters to go through their specialized trainings. But that doesn't that doesn't cover everything and \$45K doesn't go a long way. As I mentioned in my budget expansion that did the: diversity, equity and inclusion training that we just had, which was tremendously well received and absolutely should have been done ten years ago, and every year since then and every year in the future was almost \$45K to be able to do that. We can't afford not to do and something that I think we need to take seriously as we move forward.

Joslin Murphy: Q: Ladder truck in South Brookline – when can South Brookline expect to have a ladder truck in Service? A: We have a Committee of 7 now determining qualifications for a design team. First, we will start with renovation of Station 4 on Boylston Street in Fall of 2023. That project will be 8 months to a year, and as we are doing that we will be in design phase for Station 1 in the Village and begin renovation in early 2025. Essentially the contractor will move from one station to the next station seamlessly. The project will also include the complete replacement (onsite) of Station 5 on Babcock St.

Q: Regarding IOD employees, is there one injury more than another and what is occupational health doing about it? A: We do see trends and they have taken an aggressive stance on those orthopedic injuries. Addressed with augmented training. Orthopedic injuries to joints – knees, shoulders, backs. We have implemented changes with our new EMS provider that unless there is a specific emergent issue where our assistance is needed, we let the contractor do the vast majority of these lifts. It runs the gamut. Frustration with the time it takes from initial injury through diagnosis, authorization for PT, completing PT and when we can get the person back to work. Some physicians' offices are not very responsive.

Susan Granoff: Q: Why did we decide to change our ambulance suppliers? A: The ownership of the company we have a contract with changed.

Q: Denser construction, fossil fuel buildings, etc. Energy efficiencies. How will these changes impact the ability of fire fighters to address fires? A: Fire Department will be fully fossil fuel free post renovations. Each heating system,

oil, gas or electric all come with challenges. The more electrification that is done the more likelihood that you will have more electrically induced fires. Take away natural gas element, oil spill element and eventually there will be none of that but that will take decades so we will continue to have those issues. With more density you increase risk to humans.

Q: Greater risk to residents in those buildings? A: No expertise in this area. Highly regulated industry and confidence that whatever innovations proposed will be vetted through plans review and will meet industry standards and have safety factors that come with the codes for citizens to feel confident.

Q: Rescuing people 60 and 85 and older, impact on staffing needs? A: Depends on the circumstance. We rely on mutual aid partners as they rely on us.

Q: Transfers into or out of the department in the last year or two? A: One fire fighter who left to be closer to family but came back.

Harry Bohrs Q: Have you thought about effects on department if population increased by 20%? A: Yes, we are beginning to have those conversations at the administrative level but haven't done a deep dive. MBTAC issue is relatively new. Potentially large impact on the Town's population which would necessitate us to have a response to that. Depends on where the growth is and how it plays out. We would have to do a study with Planning and Community Development to identify where the population trends would end up and then study the impact on what we would need to do to meet those needs.

Ben Birnbaum Q: ARPA funds for diversity, equity and inclusion. What kind of success did you have and do you intend to acquire additional funds to continue? A: Yes, I would love to have continued funding for this or a similar program. Response of fire fighters helps me gauge the success of this training. Training is delivered by fire fighters who have special training in diversity, equity and inclusion. Insular community and while it helps build camaraderie it can also have a downside. In order to get buy in important that this training be profession specific. Tremendously successful and would love to see it continue.

Linda Olson Pehlke: Q: Any uptick in fires related to e-bikes? A: No but lithium ion batteries are accounting for a spike related to those types of things. Damage or overcharging without proper ventilation.

Q: Same number of inspections on multiunit housing buildings. Is that a net positive for the department or a wash given personnel, time and transportation? A: Fee is controlled by the State and we can only charge up to a certain amount, increases with the number of units. We are capped by the State on how much we can charge and it doesn't cover all the costs but we are at the maximum so no room for expansion.

Q: Asked to review development proposals whether safe from fire standpoint. Do you get reimbursed for that? A: Depending on the situation, if straightforward plan, our Deputy Chief can do the review in house but we have provisions for larger projects, the developer has to pay for a 3rd party fire protection engineer that has to do the review for us.

Comment: People have asked good questions about impact of growth and other services and facilities, there is a proposal EDAB and HAB and Planning Board have an idea of "linkage fees" – assessed to commercial properties

and used to fund affordable housing. Think about having a linkage fee for market rate residential that helps us pay for this expansion of services that we will need.

Charlie Young commented about the training budget and request yearly. The reason this was not included in the budget despite the budget constraints, we have a new Learning and Development Coordinator position and the new coordinator needs to settle in and determine department needs, then make a comprehensive request to the Town. We did see a great savings in the fuel account but didn't have an opportunity to direct that to training but rather used it to lower overall deficit.

Patty Correa Q: Baptist Hospital? A: Been a struggle over the last couple of years – new vendor didn't turn out as we hoped. Actively pursuing a new provider in this next year's plan for HR. Hopeful new vendor will be able to fall back into pattern that we had with the Brigham.

John Doggett Q: Injured on the job, the line item in the salaries budget – zero budgeted in FY 22 and 23. Can you provide clarity? A: That is always a zero budget so when you look at 2022 that is the actual amount that got charged to that. The number is offset by the salary. The IOD line is not the problem, the overtime is the problem.

Charlie Young clarified what we have to offset the IOD is an injured-on-duty trust fund. It is a zero-dollar line item and we transfer out of the injured-on-duty fund to both fire and police and is located in the unclassified budget. We contribute to it to keep it at a certain level. Typically, salary savings that is offsetting it and the medical expenses would come out of the fund.

Carlos Ridruejo Q: New development projects – Waldo Durgin, CHR Hotel and residential building 13 -14 floors, does it trigger the need for different kind of equipment as we build taller buildings? A: The additional ladder company will help augment that in the future. High rise fire is labor intensive and it would be impossible for Brookline to staff at a level to handle it ourselves so we rely on all of our resources and partners. We have what we need to address these and training is revamping our high rise SOG.

Lee Selwyn Q: Expecting 9100 calls this year? A: That was the total for last year, expect 9300 or so this year. The break down 60-65% are medical calls, after that response to alarms, technical rescue then smaller numbers for car fires, building fires and so for the.

Donelle O'Neal Q: If someone is disabled, how do we get someone out of the building if elevators are down? A: It all depends. In many cases we shelter in place, depends on extent of fire and we can keep it in check. If in the apartment or same floor, we will evacuate. Work with partners at BHA to be able to identify who needs assistance when we arrive on scene and they provide a comprehensive list. Can also be stored at our dispatch center so incident commander can be updated by dispatch. Stair chair, utilize elevator or carry down floors. Those lists don't stay updated very well and that is a problem so some time is wasted. Rely on building managers to provide the information to the department on a regular basis. Our public education campaigns encourage people to let us know if they have special needs in the event of a fire.

Ben Birnbaum asked what do people think about an initiative to raise \$45K to continue the training in diversity, equity and inclusion?

Janice Kahn: The subcommittee notes that the one department we built a training center for does not have a training line item. Fire fighters need to keep their skills up to date. This is different from fire suppression training but these other types of training are necessary especially while there is public contact. There is another piece to this that the Town is also not unaware for the need for training in this and other departments and has hired someone to follow up on this.

David-Marc Goldstein: This is not a new issue. We have had discussions about this and how one asked for \$60k, it is use or lose it in terms of skills because they have to always keep their skills up to date. It goes back a lot of years and it is a necessary thing.

The Chief commented: Understand the budget process and I get it and the need to balance needs. I am not saying I don't want funding for the training. I ask for it, I ask for it every year. I think it is important and an essential part of the ongoing best practices for what we do. Budget has not sustained it. I am not looking for AC to put the budget out of whack to find this money from someone else's budget but would welcome it in a sustainable budget going forward. We will continue to look for alternate funding and get it done in the interim whatever that will look like. The position added for training and education in HR I have met with him and discussed this and I don't know if it will meet this need in the long run but willing to give it time to germinate. Appreciates everyone's concerns but don't want it on the back of another department.

Neil Gordon: In terms of process to suggest we cannot sit here and throw the budget out of whack because we don't know where it is going to come from because we haven't assessed all priorities of all other departments is not right. We don't want to put the burden on any other department but for establishing priorities. If we don't put in some formal way the things we think this department needs, and other departments need, through the amendment process, it just becomes a wish list and we never get back to it. At the end we have to go back and weigh all of the items and balance the budget before Town Meeting. If Ben wants to make an amendment to "unbalance the budget" and then we vote on it, I'm for that.

Harry Friedman Q: If you were to do the diversity training and invite fire fighters from other Towns could you charge them for that? A: In theory yes, but wouldn't advocate for it. We have traditionally had quid pro quo relationships with our partners. If we have capacity we invite them in, if they have capacity they invite us in. They don't charge us, we don't charge them.

Harry Bohrs Comment: Would like to hear from HR first to get a better understanding of the training and development initiative before voting on an increase.

Katherine Florio Comment: If we do not put this \$45K back in for continuing the training and the HR person isn't up to speed quickly enough or data gathering doesn't get to the Fire Department, I would like to have the back up.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for favorable action on the base budget of \$16,848,102 for the FY24 Fire Department budget.

An **AMENDMENT** was made and seconded to add \$45K to the budget for continuing the diversity, equity and inclusion training for the Fire Department.

Charlie Young added we still have a third round of ARPA expected to come around and an opportunity to give an influx of one-time funds. DEI training was originally done with one-time funds. Finishing up ARPA Round 2 and we will know how much will be available in ARPA Round 3 once projects are up and running. Not sure of the timeline, based on how soon we start getting money back from ARPA 2 projects. Fairly certain the Select Board would be prioritizing this pot of money.

Cliff Brown Q: Is this a program that the fire department will want to do every year? A: Yes, and build on basis we started last year.

Cliff Brown Comment: ARPA is not a good source of this since it is one-time. If we are going to start voting on this when we don't know where the money is going to come from, we need to start developing priorities and need to do that with some rigor so I can't support it.

By a **VOTE** of 14 in favor, 2 opposed and 8 abstentions, the **AMENDMENT** carries.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded for Favorable Action on base budget of \$16,893,102 for FY24 Fire Department budget. By a **VOTE** of 22 in favor, none opposed, and 2 abstentions, the Advisory Committee recommends favorable action on \$16,893,102 for FY24 Fire Department budget.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded that in the event of a successful override add \$5,000 to the FY24 Fire Department Operating budget as adjusted.

Questions were raised whether we should just put this \$5K for supplies back into the original (as adjusted by recent vote) budget.

Charlie Young noted that this may seem odd but the reality is some departments are facing larger cuts. One of the main drivers of the deficit is collective bargaining and fire is part of that. Those are the costs driving the deficit. We are cutting two positions in the Police Department and we are trying to share the pain and there was very little else we can cut.

Chris Westphal Comment: This is symbolic; everyone takes a hit and I think we should keep it as separate vote.

Joslin Murphy suggested finding this money in the Town Counsel's outside counsel budget. Charlie Young added they are cutting that legal consulting budget by \$33K this year and the rest of the funds are for potential litigation and there are some issues that could implicate that budget.

Carlos Ridruejo commented it is misleading to the public that these funds would have anything to do with fire safety so I think it should be in the main budget.

The original motion was withdrawn and then restated.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded that in the event of a successful override add \$5,000 to the adjusted FY24 Fire Department Operating budget as adjusted.

By a **VOTE** of 16 in favor, 5 against and 1 abstention, the motion carries.

A **MOTION** was made and seconded to add \$5,000 for supplies to the Fire Department FY24 base budget and rescind the vote on our override recommendation.

Katherine Florio Q: What are the supplies in question? A: \$1700 office supplies, \$2000 general supplies, \$1300 public safety supplies. The total supply budget- office supplies \$8,700 reduced to \$7,000, station supplies cleaning and paper products \$17,000 down to \$15,000 and public safety supplies \$25,678 reduced \$14,300 down to \$24,307.

By a **VOTE** of 8 in favor, 9 opposed and 5 abstentions, the motion fails.

8:30 PM Other business

The Chair reminded subcommittee chairs to begin scheduling hearings on warrant articles. Only two have not yet been assigned – Black ‘N Brown Commission and an amendment to 6.6 of the bylaws about discharging weapons and would add a new section about carrying firearms in Town-owned properties.

Upon a **MOTION** made and seconded to adjourn, and voted unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 9:34 pm.

Documents Presented

<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/3906>

2023 03 09 Public Safety Subcommittee Report FY24 Fire Department Budget
FY23 Fire OT

Vote Tally Sheet - 03/14/2023					
	Vote 1	Vote 2	Vote 3	Vote 4	Vote 5
# Votes Yes	0	14	22	16	8
# Votes No	0	2	0	5	9
# Votes Abstain	0	8	2	1	5
Vote Description:	MAIN MOTION: FAVORABLE ACTION on FY24 'base' Operating Budget for Fire Department of \$16,848,102	BIRNBAUM AMENDMENT: Add \$45,000 to the Fire Department FY24 Operating Budget for the purposes of DEI training	MAIN MOTION: FAVORABLE ACTION on FY24 'base' Operating Budget for Fire Department of \$16,893,102	MAIN MOTION: In the event of a successful override, recommend adding \$5,000 to the Fire Department FY24 Operating Budget (adjusted)	SELWYN MOTION: Add \$5K to 'base' budget for FY24 and rescind our vote on the override recommendation.
	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>	<i>Enter Y, N or A</i>
Ben Birnbaum		Y	Y	Y	N
Harry Bohrs		A	Y	Y	N
Cliff Brown		N	A		
Patty Correa		A	A	Y	N
John Doggett		A	Y	Y	N

Katherine Florio		Y	Y	Y	Y
Harry Friedman		A	Y	N	A
David-Marc Goldstein		Y	Y	Y	Y
Neil Gordon		Y	Y	Y	N
Susan Granoff		Y	Y	Y	Y
Kelly Hardebeck		N	Y	Y	A
Amy Hummel		A	Y	Y	N
Anita Johnson		A	Y	A	A
Alisa Jonas					
Janice Kahn		Y	Y	Y	A
Carol Levin					
Pam Lodish		Y	Y	Y	A
Joslin Murphy		Y	Y	N	Y
Donelle O'Neal, Sr.		Y	Y	N	Y
Linda Olson Pehlke		Y	Y	Y	Y
Markus Penzel		Y	Y	Y	N
David Pollak		A	Y	Y	N
Stephen Reeders		Y	Y		
Carlos Ridruejo		Y	Y	N	Y
Lee Selwyn		Y	Y	N	Y
Alok Somani					
Carolyn Thall					
Christine Westphal		A	Y	Y	N
Dennis Doughty					