

Town of Brookline  
Override Study Committee  
Municipal Services Subcommittee  
Summary Report

The Municipal Subcommittee of the Brookline Override Study Committee (the “Subcommittee”) was tasked with reviewing municipal operations of the Town of Brookline (the “Town”) in order to determine whether there are operational efficiencies that could be achieved and/or service reductions that should be considered by the Override Study Committee that would reduce operational expenses of the Town and, as a result, reduce the size of any override or debt exclusion that would be needed to reduce the School’s operating deficit and/or fund school expansion projects.

In 2008, the Town formed an Efficiency Initiative Committee (the “EIC”) in order to conduct a comprehensive review of Town operations and to recommend efficiencies and service reductions. The EIC released its final report in 2009, and many of the recommendations from that report have been implemented over the past four (4) years. The Subcommittee used the EIC report as a starting point and guide for its work and did not attempt to duplicate the level of line item budget analysis performed by the Advisory Committee and Town Meeting.

The Subcommittee chose to focus its review on the eight (8) Town departments with the largest budgets: the Police Department, the Department of Public Works, the Fire Department, the Building Department, the Library, the Information Technology Department, the Health and Human Service Department and the Recreation Department. Based on numerous meetings and conversations with department heads and the Deputy Town Administrator, the Subcommittee identified the following areas of potential savings for further review by the Selectmen and Town staff. The Subcommittee recognizes that these items, if implemented, often represent reductions in service, and that there may be unintended consequences of budget cuts that the Subcommittee cannot foresee.

Police Department –

FY 15 budget of \$15.3 million; EIC recommendations implemented except for targeted staffing reductions which will be completed through attrition.

Identified Options

1. Hire part-time crossing guards to perform crossing guard activities currently performed by Parking Control Officers.
  - There are currently 9 Parking Control Officers that spend upwards of 3 hours a day serving as crossing guards during which time they cannot write parking tickets. Estimates based on limited data suggest that the Town could generate an additional \$120,000 to \$150,000 per year from parking tickets if these 9 Parking Control Officers were replaced with part-time crossing guards (\$200,000 to \$230,000 in additional ticket revenue less

approximately \$80,000 for part-time crossing guards).

- Changing the duties of the Parking Control Officers that currently perform crossing guard duties requires collective bargaining because it involves changes to job classification. Consequently, this option can only be implemented in the short term if these Parking Control Officers are replaced through attrition, enabling the Town to hire part time employees to perform crossing guard duties.
2. Modify Police Detail Procedures for Town Projects Using Private Forces
- Town projects performed with private forces are required to have a police detail by Section 7.3 of the Town By-law unless such requirement is waived by the Police Department. The Town spends approximately \$344,000 per year for police details for such projects.<sup>1</sup>
  - The Town By-law could be modified to make some or all Town projects performed by Private Forces exempt from police detail requirements. It is not possible to evaluate the potential savings from such a change because the number of Town projects fluctuates annually and, inevitably, Town departments will (and should) request details for certain projects where the danger to traffic, the workers or both is significant.
  - Police Department has concerns that eliminating the requirement for police details for these Town projects would result in decreased safety, particularly since projects involving private forces are generally larger scale than projects involving only Town forces.

#### Department of Public Works (DPW)

FY 15 budget of \$14.1 million; EIC recommendations implemented.

#### Identified Options

##### 1.Rebid Fleet Maintenance Contract With a Clearer Scope

- The contract, which was previously bid in 2008, included significant cost risks (i.e., uncapped amounts for certain repairs, lack of clear cost definitions)
- Potential savings cannot be determined unless and until bids are received for this work.
- DPW and Police Department staff have concerns that outsourcing would result in a lower level of service

##### 2.Solid Waste Contract

- The Board of Selectmen recently approved a new contract to dispose of solid waste for approximately \$479,000 per year. This represents an annual cost savings of \$200,000 versus the prior contract. In addition, the Town has elected not to continue to outsource the metals disposal contract. Performing this function with Town forces will save the Town approximately \$85,000 per

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<sup>1</sup> Computation of this average excludes costs of details reimbursed by the MWRA in connection with the lower Beacon Street MWRA project.

year. These savings will be factored into the FY 16 budget process

- The Town continues to review both a hybrid pay-as-you-throw program for curbside waste pickup that would involve a standard toter and "overflow" bags, and an automated toter collection system, which would reduce labor costs over time. If these options are adopted, the Town would incur initial costs associated with the lease or purchase of toters and new garbage trucks, but would result in additional long-term savings. Short- and long-term costs will be incorporated in the five-year plan which is updated annually as part of the budget cycle.

### 3. Outsource parks and open space maintenance operations

- Outsourcing of parks and open space maintenance would result in savings of \$45,000 to \$73,000 per year.
- Concerns exist as to whether outsourcing would result in lower quality maintenance

### Fire Department

FY 15 budget of \$13 million; EIC recommendations implemented except for reduction in fire suppression budget and adoption of written training standards.

### Identified Options

#### 1. Reduce firefighter staffing from 4 to 3 firefighters per apparatus or from 4 to 3 firefighters for engine companies (5 of the Town's 7 companies are engine companies).

- Reducing minimum manning would result in savings of approximately \$2.9 million per year if implemented for all apparatus and approximately \$2.1 million per year if implemented for engines only.
- Collective bargaining is required to implement any change to minimum firefighter staffing.
- Reducing minimum staffing to 3 would make Fire Department staffing more consistent with the vast majority of Massachusetts communities and would not significantly impact response time. Other than Brookline, only Boston has universal 4-firefighter staffing.
- Reducing firefighting teams to 3 would likely increase the amount of time it takes firefighters to perform fire suppression activities.
- Smaller firefighter teams could result in decreased firefighter safety and increased firefighter injuries. If increased rates of injury occur, costs for overtime, workers compensation, etc. would correspondingly increase.

#### 2. Eliminate 1 fire company (there are currently 5 engine and 2 ladder companies housed in 5 fire stations).

- This change would result in savings of approximately \$1.7 million per year
- No collective bargaining is required to eliminate a fire company.
- Eliminating a fire company could result in closure, repurposing and/or sale of a fire station

- In at least one scenario, a fire company could be eliminated without significant impact on response time. Other scenarios have not been tested.
- If a ladder and engine company were replaced by a quint (i.e., an apparatus that can function as either a ladder or engine, but not both at the same time), there would be some loss in ladder capacity in situations in which the quint is functioning as an engine. Under such circumstances, the Fire Department would have only 1 ladder company instead of 2 which could hinder the Fire Department's ability to perform fire suppression activities. Chief Ford believes that a quint is operationally inferior to an engine or a ladder truck.
- The elimination of a company would reduce the ability of the Fire Department to respond to a second emergency call that occurs during a working structure fire by reducing the number of "reserve" companies from 2 to 1.

### 3. Tiering of emergency calls

- The Fire Department currently responds to all emergency calls, the majority of which are for medical emergencies (i.e., not fire or rescue).
- Tiering of emergency calls so that BFD only responds when there is a clear need for BFD personnel could result in savings due to decreased wear and tear on fire equipment. However, further in depth study of fire equipment maintenance would need to be performed in order to identify the potential level of savings.
- Some large cities have begun using a tiering system without adverse consequences.
- Decreased response to emergencies could result in delays in emergency response.

### Building Department

FY 15 budget of \$7.0 million; EIC recommendations implemented but anticipated staff savings from new permit system did not materialize.

It is anticipated that the Department's workload will increase significantly in the next few years as proposed school capital projects are implemented. Consequently, the Subcommittee identified no areas of potential savings at this time.

### Library

FY 15 budget of \$3.8 million; EIC recommendations implemented

### Identified Options

#### 1. Reduce book funding

- The Library purchases approximately 28,000 to 30,000 new items each year with a material budget from the Town of approximately \$500,000, supplemented by allocations from the Library Trust funds.
- A 10% reduction in the materials budget resulting in savings of \$50,000, would decrease availability of new materials to Library users unless offset by additional funding from the Trusts.

## 2. Close Putterham Branch Library

- The Public Library of Brookline operates at three locations, while most of its self-identified peer communities operate only one or two sites.
- The Putterham Branch has the smallest circulation of the three library sites, and serves the highest percentage of non-Brookline residents (40% non-residents as opposed to 30% non-residents in the other branches).
- Closing the branch would eliminate 3 FTE positions resulting in savings of approximately \$300,000 in staff, benefits, and utilities.
- The site could potentially be repurposed to house BEEP or other Town services.
- Closing the branch would adversely affect most residents of south Brookline (approximately 20% of the Town population) as they would need to travel significantly further to access the Main Library or the Coolidge Corner branch library.
- Authority to close a branch rests with the Library Trustees.

## 3. Shift Sunday workers to non-overtime rate

- The regular shift of many full-time Library staff includes work on Sunday. Per their union contract, employees hired prior to July 1, 2002 are paid at an overtime rate for work on Sunday. On average, 5 FTEs are paid at the overtime rate each Sunday.
- There is no state or other requirement that requires that Sunday library workers be paid at an overtime rate.
- Change to this policy would require collective bargaining.
- The potential savings of eliminating Sunday overtime would likely be less than \$50,000 per year, (the overtime budget line in the FY 15 budget).

## 4. Reduce hours

- The PLB operates a total of 162 hours per week, significantly more than the 63 unduplicated hours per week required to qualify for full state funding, and more hours than any of its self-identified peer communities except Cambridge..
- Operating hours and geographic overlap between the Main and Coolidge Corner locations may permit a substantial reduction in total hours without adversely impacting service.
- Potential savings from hours reductions cannot be determined unless an actual modified schedule is developed.
- Authority to close a branch rests with the Library Trustees.

## Information Technology

FY 15 budget of \$1.8 million; EIC recommendations not accomplished.

## Identified Options.

### 1. Increase Training

- The level of technology and basic computer training of administrative and other staff across Brookline Town departments is uneven.
- Increased training could create greater efficiencies and, perhaps, allow for staff reductions.
- Potential savings from increased training cannot be determined without a comprehensive review of the technological skills of Town staff.

## 2. Outsource Help desk positions

- The Town/School Help Desk consists of 5 FTEs (1 FTE manager and 4 staff FTEs) who work together with 1 contractor. The Schools pay for the Help Desk and would benefit from any savings realized through staff reductions.
- One Help Desk position was eliminated as a result of the EIC.
- There is a potential to eliminate an additional 1-2 FTE positions and replace with outside consultants.
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## 3. Clarify Governance

- In 2001, the Town issued a mandate for consolidated governance of technology with the expectation that it would lead to higher efficiencies, lower operational costs, better planning, and lower implementation and future replacement costs.
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- The Town should consider establishing an MOU between the Building Department and ITD similar to those between ITD and other Town departments (Schools and DPW). to foster improvements such as better key card systems, better energy management systems and imaging systems in buildings.
- The Town and Schools should consider revising the Town-School information technology MOU to better coordinate information technology activities Town-wide.
- Potential savings from improvements to Town information technology governance cannot be determined at this time.

### Health and Human Services

FY 15 budget of \$1.3 million; EIC recommendations implemented. Most services provided by HHS are mandated.

### Identified Options

#### 1. Reduce or Eliminate Brookline Mental Health Center Grant

- Mental health services in Brookline are provided by the Brookline Community Mental Health Center, a private non-profit organization funded through service fees, philanthropy, and state and local grants.
- The Town budget includes a \$167,000 grant to the Center to provide outreach and crisis intervention services to Town residents.
- An additional grant from the School Department supports the reintegration

into PSB of children who have been absent from school because of mental health or behavioral problems.

- Because outreach and crisis services are not reimbursable through third party fees (private health insurance, Medicaid, Medicare), reduction or elimination of the HHS grant would result in the reduction or elimination of these services and potentially increase costs to other Town departments.

## 2. Eliminate Community Health Manager Position

- Because the position is partially grant-funded, potential savings are only \$37,000 per year
- Eliminating the position would result in a reduction in women's health screening, disease prevention programs and elderly services.

## 3. Eliminate Local Day Care Inspections

- Brookline is the only Massachusetts municipality which performs its own inspections of private day care facilities instead of ceding this responsibility to the State.
- Semi-annual inspections are performed by two part-time, non-benefit eligible staff with a combined salary of \$28,500.
- Because State inspections are scheduled bi-annually, eliminating local inspections would result in a 75% reduction in service, and a possible decrease in child safety. Timely responsiveness to resident complaints would also be reduced.

## Recreation Department

FY 15 budget of \$5.3million; review of the business model of the Putterham Golf Course cited by the EIC has resulted in full cost recovery through Golf Enterprise Fund revenues.

### Identified Options

1. Increase cost recovery in the Recreation Revolving Fund.
  - Exclusive of the Golf Course, all programs offered by the Department are funded through fees consolidated in the Recreation Revolving Fund. Costs in excess fees are subsidized by the Town.
  - In FY 15, the Town subsidy consisted of \$584,000 for departmental administration and \$422,000 for operation of the Aquatic Center.
  - Cost recovery targets for individual programs are based on a pyramid model of the community benefit of each program.
  - The extent to which pool costs are not recoverable should be identified and removed from the cost recovery target.
  - The cost recovery model should include additional consideration on the price elasticity of individual programs as well as the level of community benefit.

## Municipal Budget Considerations

In addition to specific programmatic efficiencies and service cuts, the Town could consider reducing the overall municipal budget by a specific dollar amount or

percentage, leaving it to the Town Administrator, working in conjunction with Department Heads, to make the most appropriate budget choices. Excluding benefits and reserve funds, the sum of the municipal departmental budgets is \$64,672,028, so even small reductions would be significant. .

#### Other Observations

Currently, civil service rules require managers in both the Fire and Police Departments, other than the Chiefs and their immediate deputies, to be hired from a list based primarily on scores from a written examination. In addition, managers, like patrol officers and firefighters, have the right to appeal disciplinary matters to the Civil Service Commission as well as to the local grievance and arbitration process. These rules diminish the Town's overall flexibility and management discretion. Although it is unclear whether any changes to the civil service rules would result in savings, the Fire and Police Departments should consider whether converting management positions to non-civil service positions through collective bargaining could lead to better management practices within the Department.