

City of Beverly
Special Budget Meeting of the City Council
Finance & Property/Committee of the Whole
Public Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 2, 2021, 7pm

This meeting was conducted under the ‘Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, §20’, signed on March 12, 2020. This remote meeting was held over Google Meet and live streamed by BevCam. Public access information for the hearings was provided on the meeting agenda.

Paul Guanci, City Council President, called the meeting to order at 7:00pm over Google Meet. Assistant City Clerk, Christine Dixon, took the attendance by roll call.

Members Present: Stacy Ames, Timothy Flaherty, Kathleen Feldman, Julie Flowers, Scott Houseman, Todd Rotondo, Estelle Rand, Paul Guanci

Members Absent: Dominic Copeland

Guanci made a statement about the meeting being recorded by the City of Beverly and streamed by BevCam on channel 99 and BevCam’s YouTube channel. He confirmed that all members present could hear and noted the remote meeting format and process due to Covid-19. He stated that this meeting does not have public participation, and the public hearing will be on June 14.

Guanci turned the meeting over to Councilor Flaherty, the Chair of Finance and Property.

FY22 Department Budget Sessions

Maryann Holak-Council on Aging (page 100 of the budget)

Holak thanked those who stepped up this year to help seniors. She stated it looks like over 9,000 residents in Beverly are ages 60 and over, so it is getting close to 25% of the population. Food accessibility is one of the things we at the Council on Aging have been most surprised by and concerned about. Our bus drivers started delivering food to people who could not come to the senior center to pick it up. There have been 27 housing crises in the last three months. The process for applying for public housing is a very long process. Two staff members are mostly devoting all of their time to it. There have also been 13 protective services filed in the last 90 days. We are primarily offering social services during this time, and our staff really has not taken any time off in the past year.

Rand asked about the decrease in line 51699.

Holak stated the decrease was because two part-time positions were merged into one position.

Rand asked how it compares to other communities staffing-wise.

Holak said Beverly has less outreach staff compared to Salem and Peabody. We have been able to really capitalize on interns and extend our reach. We care so much about the people that we serve, and we have lost a lot of people. Holak took a moment to acknowledge their passing.

Holak stated there will be two interns coming from Salem State, but there is still one fellowship that is usually 25 hours per week that has not been filled this year.

Ames expressed her appreciation for Ms. Holak’s comments and Councilor Rand’s questions, stating that it feels like so much of a generation has been lost and noting that the impact on the Council on Aging staff is really direct. Ames thanked Ms. Holak for the work she is doing and

spoke about how it seems like the work has changed so much due to the pandemic. Ames spoke about re-envisioning government so that resources are there to serve people as efficiently and thoroughly as possible.

Flowers acknowledged that the Council on Aging staff members act as caregivers and thanked them for what they do. Flowers asked about the Walk in the Woods program and if Ms. Holak envisioned seeking out more grants for that kind of programming or if programming like that would become part of the budget.

Holak stated that most of the programming budget usually comes from the enterprise fund because small fees are charged, not for membership but for events or activities. This past year, Eastern Bank gave a \$10,000 grant; Bootstraps and others really stepped up as well, so almost everything done for seniors this year was at no cost to them.

Flowers asked if there are any wish list items that the budget cannot accommodate right now.

Holak stated Beverly Hospital had reached out and the community benefits person offered to support the Walk in the Woods program and match the grant that was already received so the program can be repeated. Holak stated she really hopes to monopolize on outdoor programming and see where it goes. Everyone loved the Cook's Night Off program, so we hope to apply for grants or other opportunities like that. As far as a wish list, we are going to need a housing specialist, even if it is only temporary until Briscoe and some of the other things that are in the works become available. There is a small financial aid fund that people can apply for up to \$300 a year, and that kind of opportunity for people on a fixed income to apply for extra funding would be important. In Peabody, Habitat for Humanity has community preservation funds to do home improvement projects for elders, so if there is any way to find grant funding for that; we want people to stay in their homes as long as they are safe.

Houseman noted the physical plant issues, such as repairing the parking lot and sidewalk, and building repairs, like the air filter units, and stated that he hopes there can be greater speed in replacing those units. Houseman stated that on the housing issue, it seems like there is a lack of available resources, and he offered to talk offline about some possibilities and creative solutions that might be out there.

Mark Foster-Emergency Management (page 64 of the budget book)

Foster gave an update on Covid-19, stating that one of the best things Emergency Management was able to do was to work with Bill Burke and the Health Department to deliver some of the first vaccines to first responders back in February. One of the disappointments was that the City could not get any more vaccines. Foster stated he would like to run some more vaccination clinics. The last clinic with the VA and some of the veterans last month went pretty smoothly. In the beginning, Emergency Management supplied the nursing homes with PPE before anyone could get it. The nursing homes in this city took the biggest hit. The largest percentage of people who died were in nursing homes and in the very first few months. Some of it would have been preventable if they had the proper PPE. We did the best we could. The other issue was that much of the funding we got was from FEMA through a grant program, and there was a changing floor level of what they would fund and a lot of confusion about what was eligible. We had experience with previous FEMA grants because of hurricanes and were able to work with Bryant Ayles and

Catherine Barrett to get some money, and we spent very responsibly and carefully. They did a great job. We also now have a PPE storage location for the city.

Daniel McPherson-Harbormaster (page 67 of the budget book)

McPherson said he is expecting a lot of people to be active and preparing for a busy season.

Rand thanked Mr. McPherson for his work with the Harbor Management Authority. Rand asked if there were more boaters and people out during the pandemic or any unusual things.

McPherson stated last year boating activity was up by 20%, so there has definitely been an increase in activity. It has been steady and this will be a busy summer.

Lisa Kent-City Clerk (page 12 of the budget book)

Kent stated there was not much difference in the budget and offered to answer any questions.

Houseman, Guanci and Flowers thanked Lisa for being responsive, helpful, friendly and easy to work with.

Matt Lipinski-Animal Control (page 49 of the budget book)

Lipinski gave an overview of what the department does, including enforcing dog licensing and animal immunization, handling complaints, wildlife calls, and animal cruelty and negligence concerns, as well as patrolling open spaces to ensure compliance and working with the Board of Health on rabies and inspections. During the pandemic, more people have gotten animals, but there has also been an increase in relinquishments. We assist with that and make sure it is done properly.

Houseman stated he had read about a hawk in Swampscott poisoned by rodenticide and asked if they had run into that kind of issue in Beverly. Houseman asked if the role is primarily public health or public safety.

Lipinski stated he would consider it both because it overlaps so much in day to day duties. With rodenticide, people think of the target species but don't think of the species that consider the rat prey, so we do our best to educate in terms of what may be better techniques and practices.

Houseman stated there have been people who have come to the Council on issues of rodent control. It is very difficult to control, but the best practice seems to be some kind of sustained program that is funded and has some staffing. Animal Control, which is that intersection between public safety and animals, would play an important role in trying to develop a systemic approach to rodent control in the City of Beverly. Houseman stated he looks forward to working on developing a proposed program that would implement something like that.

Lipinski stated Animal Control works closely with the Health Department on complaints, and when it comes to corrective action, guidance usually comes from the Health Department with Animal Control there as a helping hand as necessary.

Flowers asked why there are increased patrols under line 51310 for overtime.

Lipinski stated a big piece of that is homecoming events, and throughout the summer there are increased patrols given the additional restrictions during the summer. Looking back in that line a few years, it was usually up around what it is for this year. It went down during Covid so now it is being built back up for coverage.

Rotondo asked if 54000 and 54899 are just going back to pre-pandemic funding.

Lipinski confirmed.

Allison Babin-Library (page 106 of the budget book)

Babin highlighted some of the achievements during the pandemic. Over 172,000 items were checked out, the bookmobile delivered over 32,000 items; over 57,000 items have been checked out on e-drive, which is ebooks and digital audiobooks; over 20,000 patrons were served at the front door service, which was our curbside service during the pandemic and is now retired. 2,733 people came in to use the buildings by appointment between September and early May. The library offered 365 virtual programs. In addition to that, 146 virtual story times have been held and just under 6,000 people attended that range of virtual programs. There were a number of special initiatives this past year, including expanding our commitment to being more inclusive through programs, collections, and physical space. The library launched the BIPOC voices program in partnership with Abu Toppin; we provided a number of anti-racist training opportunities to our staff to focus on how to create an antiracist library culture. We replaced some outdated artwork in the children's room to feature prints by Christian Robinson, and we offered new name tags to staff so they can have their name and their pronouns if they so choose. We renovated our story time room and our arts and crafts room. We expanded our digital collection to include new platforms. We added a really robust set of holistic programming like yoga, art programs online, and walks in the area. We significantly expanded our library of things collection to include items that are really helpful for parents with increased time at home with their children, like coding robots, puzzles, a laminator and things like that. The library is now open in a much more traditional way. This proposed budget meets the minimum requirement for state certification and was prepared keeping in mind what it takes to provide regular services and adding back valued services.

Houseman said the bookmobile makes a big difference to those it serves who cannot get out to the library.

Feldman said she is very grateful for the work this year and her family was an avid user of the book pickup program.

Michael Cahill, Mayor, said Allison started as the director in the middle of the shut down and she has been absolutely top notch and has done wonderful work on behalf of our community and her leadership in the department has been great.

Chief Peter O'Connor-Fire Department (page 56 of the budget book)

O'Connor stated the department has been lean for quite a while. Since 2002, we have been running pretty much three apparatus. We have a fourth which means we will be able to operate a ladder truck in the City.

The budget required a bit of work. In the past, we had an overtime budget that stayed about level for the better part of 10 or 15 years. It takes looking at a lot of historical data and a lot of projecting at what we expect to see over the next year. Bryant Ayles has been phenomenal in helping figure that out.

There are a couple things going up this year. We are in the last year of the SAFER grant which paid for some staffing for the last three years and that will change in December. There is an increase in the shift coverage line, which represents keeping that fourth piece in service all year round. The biggest change in what that means is that we have a ladder truck that does ladder company duties and that we have an engine downtown that does engine duties. Looking at calendar year 2020, we had 94 fires and did about 4,715 runs. This calendar year we are already 440 runs above where we were at this time last year and three fires above where we were this time last year. The staffing makes all the difference in the world and the ladder truck has been a big help. This past year was one of the first times that we truly saw the benefit of having the company in service all the time. Engine one was only out of service 25 days out of the last year. In FY20, that truck was out of service for more than 180 days. We put a lot of thought into the numbers and are trying to get to the right place.

Houseman asked about the role that DPS plays in maintenance and how much specialized maintenance is involved.

O'Connor stated the Fire Department had a dedicated mechanic, Jack Morris, who retired, so when he retired everything transitioned to two mechanics from DPS, and they have been outstanding and have really stepped up and done a tremendous job. A lot of other things on the fire equipment side like self-contained breathing apparatus, we have doled out. It is amazing how much Jack Morris did while he was here.

Flaherty asked about the status of trying to fix up the fire station under capital improvements.

O'Connor stated we have had some of these conversations. The headquarters station is the one that is going to need attention in the next few years, and we will have to look at how to address that. As far as locations though, this is a great location for response times; the same thing could be said for North Beverly. One of the limitations of the station is that we are building the trucks for the height of the doors and that is a concern.

Ayles added that it is a topic that is discussed on a regular basis with Commissioner Collins and the mayor as well. The timing issue on some of this has to do with when free cash is certified. We certainly want to put resources towards the investment because we want to make sure to maintain that asset.

Cahill stated that we should ask it again when Commissioner Collins comes in next week because he has had people there looking at the needs. There are things that can be done in the meantime. We have had a lot of people step in this year like Chief O'Connor and Darlene who all stepped up during the pandemic and have done incredible work.

Chief John LeLacheur-Police Department (page 51 of the budget book)

LeLacheur presented a level service budget. Since March of 2020, officers have still responded to approximately 18,000 calls of service. We were tasked heavily with Covid compliance and

working with the Board of Health. We are looking forward to the move next month. The project is under budget and on time. LeLacheur stated that the harbormaster and animal control will be somewhat affected by the current police reform bill because they will not be able to hire part-time officers. There are no more part-time academies, only full-time police officers. It could have a financial impact in the future. We are really working towards going to electric or hybrid vehicles as the technology improves. We could get non-pursuit vehicles electric or hybrid soon, and we may want to wait to see how the pursuit-level vehicles test before purchasing.

Flaherty asked for more information on not hiring part-time reserves.

LeLacheur stated reserve officers used to be hired from civil service who would go to a part-time academy on nights and weekends and then become part-time certified. They would then be put through field training to be able to work in certain functions and they could replace officers who may be taking vacation or out injured and would save us a significant amount of money not having to pay a full-time officer overtime to fill that position. When we hired full-timers, we could get a temporary waiver to work up to 270 days before going to the next full-time police academy. Now, we have to wait until the next police academy starts and put them through the full-time police academy. For the harbormaster particularly, all of his officers are reserved certified. There are no more reserve academies. Police reform has eliminated it, so we are going to have to have more full-time harbormasters, or we are going to have to take police officers on overtime or assignments and put them into those roles in the future.

Cahill stated that, as the chief talked about, we will not be able to get waivers for officers to work until there is a spot for them in the next academy that has an opening, so what we have tried to do is anticipate retirements. Each time an officer is hired we have to wait for a spot in the academy. We can't always anticipate an opening, so in that case we could find ourselves short-handed and burning through some overtime, or we hire early and carry more positions knowing that an opening is coming. Management of staffing the department may get more costly.

LeLacheur stated currently there are two officers in the full-time academy, and the next academy is not until September. If someone retires in July, somebody cannot be hired until September, so then we would be three positions down until the two graduate from the current academy, which will be October, and then we would be able to add another position.

Rand asked if the lieutenant increase in line 51109 was due to promotions.

LeLacheur stated a position was added with the Council's approval back in December to assist with licensing and internal affairs investigations.

Rand asked how overtime is managed and stated she would be curious to see a breakdown of if it is used to cover time off and events or because of being short-staffed, as well as if it is spread out across departments and ranks. Going into the new building and the changeover to civilian dispatch, it would be good to have a sense of where overtime is being applied.

LeLacheur stated it is a little of all of the above. We have contractual obligations. It can be vacations or major crimes. The majority of overtime is filling vacancies in staffing and making sure we have a car in each neighborhood. The Police Department used to come to the Council every year asking for \$100,000 or \$200,000 to fill the overtime budget. LeLacheur stated he has not come to the Council to ask for that and has always been able to manage.

Rand stated she remembered that shift and it is a great budget practice. If it is possible to see in a spreadsheet, it would be helpful to look at or just however that information is organized. Rand asked if there is a concentration of need, why there isn't more coverage in that area.

LeLacheur stated we do have that in a way because the beats are much smaller in more concentrated areas; ward two and ward three are smaller areas than the other wards. Others are also working, like the community impact unit and the traffic unit, so even though there are the six ward cars, there are always other officers out there. One of the other things we have talked about is putting out some walking beats or bike patrols.

Rotondo asked for a description of how the new dispatch center is going to work.

LeLacheur stated there are some labor issues being worked through, but the job for the dispatch manager was put out there. The goal is to have combined fire/police dispatch in the new police station, and that will free up officers for other functions.

Cahill added that it will free up about one officer all the time over the course of every shift in a week and that will help with staffing on all shifts. The goal is to have transitioned over to the new dispatch by the second half of the fiscal year.

Flowers asked about the increase in line 53003 for accreditation on page 54.

LeLachuer stated Beverly Police Department is trying to become an accredited agency in the commonwealth. Part of police reform mandates a certain standard for every police department in the commonwealth, so we have been rewriting a lot of policies. We are in self-assessment right now. It is also about having best practices and the same policies as other police departments in the area for mutual aid.

Flowers asked if looking to the new police station and ways it might change the budget and looking at programs like the Denver STAR response team, how we could have more dedicated social workers or if that is something coming in the future. The community impact officers do an incredible job.

LeLacheur stated the police department has been working with Ms. Barrett for a grant on a second clinician. Clinicians often still want police backup; we want to make sure the civilians that go out are vetted and the calls are vetted because they can still be dangerous. It is something we are certainly going to look at.

Feldman asked if the change in line 1210151340 was because a lot of events were cancelled.

LeLeacheur stated it was partially because of that and also to engage more with the community. We felt it was important to bring that back to what it was in the past. It was cut last year knowing that there would be fewer events.

Feldman asked if it is now more on par with something from two or three years ago.

LeLacheur and Ayles confirmed.

Houseman asked about what kind of accreditation and training the dispatchers will get.

LeLacheur stated one of the things we are working on is there are certain crimes that could be reported by form on the website and get assigned a case number, like vandalism or unemployment fraud. A dispatcher will send officers according to priority. There are times

where officers are sent a call, then something more serious comes in and they are rerouted to another call. Dispatchers go through a 40-hour 911 program run by the state on how to use equipment, prioritize calls and handle text message alerts. They also go through another certification program as well as customer service training and annual continuing education training.

Ames stated she was going to give her annual pitch for the community impact unit. The work those folks do in the community is priceless. They build trust, and the more of that we can get along with the social workers' work are worth their weight in gold.

LeLacheur stated the goal is to add to the community impact unit so there can be someone all the time on a day shift and all the time on a night shift. Salem has 99 police officers and Beverly has 71. We do a tremendous job with the amount of people we have.

Paul Guanci left the meeting at 9:07pm.

Darlene Wynne-Planning/Community Development (page 39 of the budget book)

Wynne stated two of the professional staff have received their credentials from AICP (American Institute of Certified Planners) and one is on the way. The department staffs ten boards and commissions. Daily activities fall into five categories- development and permit review, long-range planning, short-term projects, maintenance and enforcement, and customer service. There are a couple minor changes in the budget. Overtime went up a little. It seems like everyone is home and wants to do work on their houses during the pandemic, so there are more permits. In 2020 conservation filings were up 40%, and in May of 2021 there are the same number of permit applications as there were in all of 2020. Those require site visits, inspections, follow-up meetings and paperwork. The other line is for a recording secretary. It has been a struggle to get recording secretaries who want to stay on, and it is really important to have a great recording secretary. The proposal is to increase the hourly pay rate. Hopefully that will help quality candidates stay. The consulting line is a little bit smaller this year; we get a lot of grants and are lucky to have technical assistance from different entities. We still would like to use the consulting line for zoning changes and implementing recommendations from the master plan, preservation plan or the climate action plan, or in case projects or grant matches come up.

Rand expressed her appreciation for Ms. Wynne and her department's work. Rand stated she hoped to discuss sometime what other communities are doing for planning processes that include young adults like 13-20 year olds and if there are initiatives that help connect with that age group.

Wynne there are some things that have been done and there are other opportunities to make them a little more successful. They are the future of Beverly and we want them to feel invested to help set what the community is going to look like.

Rotondo thanked Wynne for all her work and stated that the office is great with customer service.

William Burke-Health Department (96 of the budget book)

Cahill, Ayles, and Doig stated they were available for questions as Bill Burke could not attend the meeting.

Ames asked about an overview in terms of what budgetary normalcy is. Ames stated she has worked with the mayor on public health projects where public health and where people live have intersected in negative ways and had an adverse effect on neighborhoods. Ames asked about the vision for the Health Department's role moving forward and if there are areas for investment.

Cahill stated the Health Department has been at the front lines and was really taxed. The department is staffed in a way that works in a normal time. They are involved with a number of things, but this year they had to get involved with all the shut down and reopening. It fell to the Department of Health to fill that inspector role and help interpret guidance from the state. Fortunately the resources that came to help came quickly so we were able to hire on several part-time positions.

Ames stated she appreciates the thoughts and all the effort and spoke about the importance of working collaboratively together across departments and as a community and not siloing organizations. Health is important across the board to all of us and it is a matter of better communication and coordination of resources.

Flowers noted line 54261 for office supplies is up and asked if that is looking artificially lower because there were cuts in 2021, so these are just being rebuilt to previous amounts.

Ayles confirmed, stating there was concern about revenues, so end of the year spending was limited in an effort to preserve the City's stability going into a pandemic and brought down some levels for the FY2021 budget. Now that we are seeing the revenues at a more typical level, we are able to bring those levels right back up to where they were pre-pandemic.

Rotondo commended the work of Mr. Burke and his staff. Rotondo suggested, going forward, maybe re-thinking how the board of health works with the community.

Cahill stated there is going to be time to reflect a little bit as we are moving ahead. They have done incredible work for sure.

Cahill stated he had information on McPherson budget discussed at the last meeting. The total budget is \$122,787,000 or \$122,797,000. So the City of Beverly funds are about \$68,000; the Y matches about \$54,000. It is a combination of full and part-time staff year round and seasonal; this only includes programming out of McPherson and does not include programming out of the Douglas Stevens Teen Center or the summer basketball league.

Rand motioned to adjourn Finance and Property. Flaherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (2-0).

The motion was made and seconded to adjourn the Committee of the Whole. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (7-0). The meeting adjourned at 9:36pm.