



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Capital/Public Facilities Department

Working Session: Thursday, April 16, 2020, 11:00 a.m.

Hearing: Thursday, April 23, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the Capital Budget and Public Facilities Department at the Working Session on Thursday, April 16, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. Recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7O6gj-g2tQ>

The Administration is requested to respond to all questions in one of three ways:

- 1) Verbally at the hearing on Thursday, April 23rd, at 10AM
- 2) For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to April 23rd, including budget book page numbers or other references where appropriate.
- 3) By deferring to a specific scheduled departmental budget hearing

Please annotate and return this information request before April 23rd, indicating how each question will be answered.

Capital Budget – Financial Questions & COVID-19 Impacts

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- How closely has the actual year-by-year Capital Budget tracked the approved Capital Budget over the past five years, specifically in terms of overall dollars spent?
 - I.e., understanding that projects and timelines may change in the process, how successful have we been in actually executing on the scale of the annual capital plan that we approve?
- What is the point at which the debt gets engaged in the Capital plan? How close to the actual start of projects does that debt gets engaged?
- How do projects that should be underway but are currently paused due to COVID-19 affect the Capital dollars spent, and then therefore the debt service?
 - How should we think about the possibility that pause could persist into FY21?
- Should we be approving a larger capital budget, one that would theoretically incur a level of debt above the policy limit, if some portion of projects will move on a slower timeline?
- What portion of Federal and State funds are firmly committed to current Capital plan?
 - Which funds are vulnerable to a cut in State funds? What about MSBA funds?
- How will the Transportation Enhancement Fund be affected due to the decreased use of TNCs resulting in lower ride-sharing fees?
- Has the City consulted with the BHA about its history of ESCOs? How can we ensure that we are structuring our ESCOs so the City realizes financial savings from energy savings, even given unexpected moves in energy markets? (For example, the BHA's early ESCOs did not anticipate the permanent drop in natural gas prices. We should learn from this.)



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- If some other capital projects become harder to execute in the near term, is there potential to add more small BHA capital projects onto our capital budget, since there are many deferred maintenance and renovation projects that could potentially be quickly executed?

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- Are there deadlines for spending grant money for capital projects?
 - Will the suspension of construction sites threaten funding?
- Are we expecting a decline in state capital commitments?

Councilor Ed Flynn asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- How will the effects of COVID-19 impact the Capital Budget?
 - How will it affect Capital projects that are planned to begin within the next two years?
 - If there is a decline in the operating budget, will any City services be cut to shift funds to enabling Capital projects?
- Are there companies that we gave state or city tax breaks to that are laying off workers, and what impact could their downsizing or departure have on the capital budget?
- Are we encouraging companies to be more supportive of the city in terms of revenue so that we can continue to have an educated workforce? What role can the business community have in helping us fund the capital budget?

Council President Kim Janey asked: Answer in Capital Hearing or Economic Development Hearing

- How do the effects of COVID-19 impact the timeline and budget for Capital plans?
- Is there any prospect of getting more federal or state resources because of stimulus packages and therefore needing to dedicate less money from the City?
- What are the plans for minority contracting?
 - Are we meeting Boston Resident Jobs Policy goals?

Councilor Anissa Essaibi-George asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- How will the affects of COVID-19 impact long term planning of the city?
- What aspects of the capital budget were influenced by youth participatory budgeting initiatives or any other community engagement?

Councilor Frank Baker asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- How will projects that are slated to begin within the next two to three years be impacted by COVID-19? Should we expect them to be pushed back a year or more?



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Councilor Matt O'Malley asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- What will happen if the FY22 Capital Budget is much less than the FY21 Capital Budget?
 - Will it affect any Capital projects planned over the new few years?
- How do we balance the ongoing importance of capital projects to our constituents, despite the current economic crisis?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- Can you provide a consolidated list of what projects are new in this year's Capital Budget?
- How many capital contracts, for work or materials, went to MBEs or WBEs?
- Can you provide a breakdown of Capital projects by neighborhood?
- Can you explain the community engagement process for the City's Capital projects, and what money are we setting aside to make this robust?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- What impact will COVID-19 have on the Capital Budget, and could they meaning rationing out reductions by neighborhood, or giving priority to certain types of projects?

Capital Budget – Citywide Project Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- When will the doubling of the street tree budget start to take effect – will there be a doubling of plantings by the fall?
 - Will it lead to reopening more street tree pits that have been asphalted over?
 - Thrilled to see investment in urban forestry plan, maintenance funds as well – can you explain more about this overall effort?
- What is the timeline for decision-making in regard to the BuildBPS reserve, how is that coordinated between the Budget Office and BPS, and when can Councilors be involved?
 - The Councilor has specific proposals to increase school facilities in District 8.
- How will sidewalk repair funds be allocated?
 - What is the plan for accelerating our rate of achieving a state of good repair?
 - Will there be a shift towards replacing the bricks for whole stretches of brick sidewalk at once?
- Where will the new dedicated bus lanes be?
- Will the new investment in crosswalk restriping really get us to a 3 year replacement cycle?
- Can you provide more details on the street light survey?
 - Also, how does the city decide where more light is needed?
- Does the reference to getting pedestrian ramps to a state of good repair by 2030 refer only to repairing existing ramps, or also to adding ramps?



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- The plastic pads for pedestrian ramps appear to be deteriorating at an alarming rate; is there a plan for improving the quality of these?
- Not all areas that need to slow speeding are functionally eligible for the Neighborhood Slow Streets program; is there funding in this budget for deploying more tactical slow-streets elements (speed bumps, pedestrian activated lights, raised crosswalks) across the city to places not included in Slow Streets?

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked: [Answer in Capital Hearing](#)

- Any updates on Phase One of City Hall Plaza renovations? When will it begin?
- Please provide an update on the Long Island Bridge.
- Can you provide details on investments to crosswalk and lane markings improvements?
- Can we have a review of signage and signaling, from a Vision Zero perspective?

Councilor Ed Flynn asked: [Answer in Capital Hearing or Streets Hearing or BPS Hearing](#)

- Looking for updates on the Long Island Bridge project.
- Will the City Hall Plaza renovation ensure that we have one of the most open & accessible & friendly areas leading into a city government for persons with disabilities?
- Can we invest in adding school facilities for the downtown neighborhoods, including in District 8?
- Sidewalk repair needed citywide, & some utility poles moved to make them accessible.

Councilor Kim Janey asked: [Answer in BPS Hearing](#)

- Any maintenance plans for Madison Park beyond electrical work, including the roof?
 - Are we thinking about swing space in the school to do a larger renovation project?

Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George asked: [Answer in Capital Hearing or Streets Hearing or BPS Hearing](#)

- Any updates for a new crime lab for BPD?
- Any information on future investments for BuildBPS?
- Any updates regarding Long Island Bridge?
 - What does the timeline look like?
 - Where are we in the permitting process?
- Would it be possible to make more Capital improvements for the City's homeless shelters?
- Any updates regarding the renovation or construction of new fire stations?
- Are there new investments being made in coastline protection across the whole city?
 - Where will these happen and over what timeline, beyond East Eagle St?

Councilor Frank Baker asked: [Answer in Streets Hearing](#)



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- Any updates on the Long Island Bridge?
 - How will the affects of COVID-19 impact the timeline of the bridge?
- Will the sidewalk repair budget be negatively affected by COVID-19?
 - Are sidewalks slated for repair or construction still going ahead as scheduled?

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked: Answer in Streets Hearing

- Any update on Long Island Bridge?

Councilor Michelle Wu asked: Answer in Capital Hearing or Environment Hearing or BPS Hearing

- Where are the plans to move the City towards 100 percent renewable energy?
 - We previously got specific costs from the Administration on moving to 100 percent renewable energy through credits, solar panels etc. – how are those decisions being made, and how factored into the capital plan?
- Any updates on BuildBPS? Is it on track or not on track? Any new buildings being added?
- To get back to basics, in general across our capital assets, how often are we planning maintenance, to make sure we don't build up large deferred maintenance needs?
- How are we thinking about swing spaces with new projects and renovations?
- Are there any plans for the 26 Court Street building?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked: Answer in Capital Hearing or BPS Hearing

- Any new repairs slated for Madison Park?
- Any updates on increasing the City's tree canopy, especially in the neighborhoods that disproportionately lack trees and experience heat island effects? If so, where?
- How are we ensuring in general that we invest in neighborhoods with high needs?
- Any new investments in senior housing?
- Any investments in transitional housing for children aging out of foster care?
- Are we beginning to plan for post-COVID-19 investments in regards to our parks and other public spaces (installing hand sanitizer stations, etc.)?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- Is there any new funding for traffic calming measures in general (speed bumps, street lights, etc.), which is a leading thing that the Council hears from our constituents about?

Councilor Lydia Edwards asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- Is there any new funding for police details for construction projects, especially the bridge projects? Any consideration of using the BPD school crossing guards?



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Capital Budget – Specific Project Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- Any updates on the West End Library study?
 - When will the study begin? Says ‘to be scheduled’, but had understood it to be planned for this year.
 - In addition to needed library facilities, can the RFP include assessment of possible outdoor programmable space, possible kitchen and food bank facilities, community center space, and the massing potential to support affordable housing?

Parks Answer in Parks Hearing or Streets Hearing

- Excited to see the City investment in the work on the final Kenmore Square block of the Commonwealth Ave Mall – what is the nature of the MBTA’s participation in this project and how confident are we of whatever funding or cooperation we need from them on this?
- Pleased to see the Back Bay Fens Path prioritized, would make a huge difference to make the treasures of the Fens physically accessible to more people; could you provide more detail on this (timeline & project specifics)?
- Can you provide details on the improvements slated for the Mission Hill Playground?
 - Which of its multiple levels will be improved?
- The Boston Common Master Plan & the Muddy River project are both significantly dependent on external grants and sources – what’s the security of those sources?

Streets Answer in Streets Hearing

- While conducting the street lighting survey, is it possible to also survey types of fixtures so as to promote better consistency, vs. the random mix that have come in throughout the Fenway in recent years?
- With the overall crosswalk restriping investment, can we expect restriping specifically where the non-visibility of crosswalks is promoting dangerous speeding and bad conditions for pedestrians in the East and West Fens (as on Hemenway St and Boylston St)?
- What effect will the slowdown of the public process have on the timeline for improving bike facilities connecting the Southwest Corridor path to downtown?
- With more pedestrian ramps now in place, what is the timeline for resurfacing of streets on Beacon Hill?
- What is the timeline for putting in raised crosswalks at the corner of Mount Vernon and Walnut St. to slow speeding?
- There is an investment committed for surveying and repairing city-owned stairs etc.; could this please include the staircase between 141 and 129 Fisher Ave in Mission Hill?
- Does the work implementing safer bicycle accommodations on Boylston St in Fenway require DCR participation?



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- The extra-wide Dartmouth St mall (Boylston to Beacon) recently got some spot repairs, but can it be prioritized for a wholesale brick replacement? It connects Copley Square to Newbury St to Commonwealth Ave to the Esplanade, gets a ton of use but is not in good condition from an accessibility perspective.
- We saw some work happening on Blossom St already – what has happened already and what is going to happen there?
 - Will project improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of Blossom & Parkman?

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked: Answer in Capital Hearing or Environment Hearing

- Any updates on the East Eagle Street shoreline stabilization project in East Boston
 - Schematics available of the plan?
- Any updates on the Curley Rec. Center, and the climate resiliency aspect of the project?
 - Schematics available of the plan?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked: Answer in Capital Hearing or BPS Hearing or Public Health Hearing or Parks Hearing

- How will the Capital plan or budget reflect the recommendations from the Allston/Brighton Mobility Study?
 - Any updates on the study?
 - Any plans for new pedestrian safety and Traffic calming measures in Allston/Brighton?
 - Any plans for bus shelters with live arrival times?
- Any specific plans for the Jackson Mann School & the Horace Mann School for the Deaf?
 - When will projects start?
 - How will the community be involved?
- What are the plans and updates for the Jackson Mann Community Center?
 - Is there funding committed to identify and prepare swing space for this while the schools are undergoing reconstruction?
- Are there plans for playground improvements at Baldwin Early Learning Center?
- What investments are being made for low-income family housing in Allston-Brighton specifically?
- Any updates on the Faneuil Library Branch renovation – is the financial commitment to do that still there despite the economic situation?
- Any plans to improve outdoor lighting at Brighton High School?
- Any updates on the new EMS station at St. Elizabeth's Hospital?
- Are there plans to renovate the Patricia White Apartments?
- What is the City doing to address heat island effects and extended heat waves in Allston/Brighton? Can these be counted as part of climate resiliency efforts?



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- Are we making investments in HVAC systems for our schools and city-owned buildings?
- Any update on assessment of the tree canopy in Allston-Brighton?
- Are there plans to study the need for increased Fire and EMS stations in Allston/Brighton?
- When will construction begin at McKinney Playground?
- Are investments being made at Chandler Pond?
- What investments are being made towards Smith Field?
- Any update on a study of Ringer Park?
 - Is there a timeline for improvements?
- What investments are being made towards urban wilds in Allston/Brighton?

Councilor Ed Flynn asked: Answer in Capital Hearing or BPS Hearing or Public Health Hearing or Parks Hearing

- Any updates regarding the ongoing study on getting a new EMS, Police, or Fire Department for the South Boston Waterfront? These city services are missing from this area and desperately needed for handling an emergency.
- Looking for updates on the following:
 - Curley Recreation Center in South Boston
 - Building of a new Josiah Quincy School in Chinatown
 - Sidewalk repair in and around Villa Victoria – desperately needed for seniors and residents with disabilities in the area.
 - What are the plans for capital investments in the Blackstone School?

Councilor Kim Janey asked: Answer in Capital Hearing or BPS Hearing or Streets Hearing or Parks Hearing

- Where are we in the timeline in terms of completing the Dudley Branch Library?
 - Year one or year two?
 - Is the project currently meeting the requirements for the Boston Resident Jobs Policy?
- Who is conducting the Franklin Park Yard study?
 - When will it be completed?
- There are several parks that are either in the design phase or in the To Be Scheduled category such as Dewitt, Malcolm X, Crawford St, and Jeep Jones as well as Winthrop Playground:
 - Are there any RFPs for these projects?
 - How was the community involved?



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- Which part of the designs reflects community input?
- Will the HUD grant for the Whittier Street Housing Dev. Roadways project be affected due to the pandemic?
- Regarding the Melnea Cass Blvd., Warren Street and Blue Hill Ave., and Ruggles St. Complete Streets Projects.
 - What is the timeline for each project?
 - Do they include any funding from the State or Federal government?
 - Who was contracted for the Warren and Blue Hills project?
 - How many POC, women, and Boston residents working on these projects?
- Any update on plans for the O'Bryant School?

Councilor Frank Baker asked: [Answer in Parks Hearing](#)

- Any updates on the plans for Moakley Park, and how it ties into the state projects in the adjacent area (Kosciuszko Circle and Morrissey Boulevard)? Still in contact with the state?
 - What about federal grant of \$1 million for resiliency study at Moakley Park?

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked: [Answer in Parks Hearing](#)

- Any investments or plans to fully renovate Billings Field in West Roxbury?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked: [Answer in Streets Hearing](#)

- Can you provide updates on the local transportation projects at Cummins Highway and Mattapan Square, and how their state funding may be affected by COVID-19?
- Any plans for investment at Hyde Park Ave, beyond design study funded by the MBTA?
- Can you provide an update on projects at the Hyde Park & Mattahunt Community Centers?

Councilor Lydia Edwards asked: [Answer in Capital Hearing or Streets Hearing](#)

- Any update on how the traffic taskforce for East Boston that was announced in the State of the City address in January will be funded?
- Can you provide updates on the following projects:
 - BCYF Paris Street Pool – is this still starting as planned?
 - Senior Center in East Boston – is this still starting as planned?
 - McArdle Bridge – is this still starting as planned?
 - North Washington Street Bridge – any delays or concerns?
 - Edwards Middle School – will planned retrofit still happen?
 - In Charlestown – is the investment in the school kitchen still happening?
 - The new BPD station in East Boston – is planned timing of this the same?
 - Doherty Playground
 - Edwards Playground
 - Foster Street Playground (see also public testimony at 4/16 6pm hearing)



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- The Greenway in East Boston
- Nazarro Center – again, is the timing still on track?
- Near the proposed police station in East Boston, some conversation about acquiring a parcel of nearby land for safety reasons – is that a potential capital budget line item?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked: Answer in Streets Hearing or Parks Hearing

- Would also like to see investments in sidewalk repair at Villa Victoria.
- Are we making an investment in the Gertrude Howells Civil Rights Park in Roxbury?

Public Facilities Department

Councilor Bok asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- (The question above about the West End Library RFP parameters and timing may be a matter for PFD specifically; can watch this at 1:14:20 of the recording.)
- Given the lack of a Director and vacancies in certain senior staff positions at PFD, how do we ensure that we execute on a robust Capital budget in FY21? Will PFD be properly staffed to oversee all Capital projects? Do we need a plan to accelerate PFD hiring, or to increase the capital project implementation capacity of other departments to compensate for the staffing shortage, given the importance of actually spending this capital money this fiscal year as a form of economic stimulus?

Councilor Anissa Essaibi-George asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- Has PFD begun to think about how we are adjusting designs and renovating buildings due to shifts in human behavior and how we interact with the public as a result of COVID-19?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- Given COVID-19, are we including an increased budget line item for deep cleaning City-owned buildings (at BPHC, 1010 Mass Ave, BPS, etc.)?

Councilors Flaherty and Flynn asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- (The questions above about an update on the City Hall Plaza Renovation Project may also be a matter for PFD to address specifically.)

Councilor Michelle Wu asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- (The questions above about maintenance planning, planning for swing space needs, and plans for 26 Court Street, may also be matters for PFD to address specifically.)



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Revolving Funds

Councilor Julia Mejia asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- What kind of third-party property damage are we typically seeing generate funds for the Law Department's revolving fund?
- Who decides how the funds in each revolving fund are spent?

Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George asked: Answer in Capital Hearing

- How does the City decide to create a Revolving Fund?
- Could we create a revolving fund for the money we recover from non-resident families that illegitimately enroll their children in BPS?

Other Questions

For Post-Audit Hearing Ordered on FY20 Budget Surplus

Councilor Julia Mejia asked: Answer in Post-Audit Hearing

- Will unspent snow removal funding from last year be diverted, and if so, how & where?

For FY21 Budget Hearing with the Office of Economic Development

Councilor Julia Mejia asked: Answer in Economic Hearing

- What money does the city budget for tourism to city neighborhoods outside the downtown?

To Add to Council's RFI for Law Department

Councilor Lydia Edwards:

- How much does the Law Department pay for outside counsel?
- How much is the Law Department spending to defend discrimination lawsuits?
 - Can you provide a breakdown, by City department or agency, of involvement in lawsuits—including defending against discrimination, sexual harassment, etc.?