



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Neighborhood Development

Working Session: Wednesday, May 6, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

Hearing: Tuesday, May 12, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the Department of Neighborhood Development's budget at the Working Session on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. Recording here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VceizZUhKb8>

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

- 1) Verbally at the hearing on Tuesday, May 12th, at 10AM.
- 2) For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 12th, including budget book page numbers or other references where appropriate.
- 3) By deferring to another specific scheduled departmental budget hearing.

Please annotate and return this information request before May 12th, indicating how each question will be answered.

DND Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- DND has taken on more responsibility and more projects over the past few years, but over the same period there has been a slight decline in FTEs. Is the department at the right staff capacity to handle this infusion of resources and get these important projects done with the necessary speed?
- Please provide updates on the design of the city housing voucher program; in particular, please discuss the ways in which it can be geared to fill holes in who is served by the federal and state housing voucher programs.
- Please provide updates on the plan to invest in public infrastructure adjacent to affordable housing development opportunities; how will that new tool be allocated and used? Any other creative housing solutions being considered in connection with the capital budget?
- The \$5 million in capital funding to BHA senior housing is great, as it will help upgrade those properties for our seniors and also place those buildings on a more sustainable funding platform (RAD). Is there a possibility of expanding that investment, especially as we look to have a very robust capital budget as a countercyclical strategy over the next few years ahead? It strikes me that there are many backlogged maintenance projects at BHA that could be quickly ready to go if funding is available, and spending city capital dollars on public housing



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preservation and creation may help free up resources in the housing development pipeline.

- Is there a way to compile a recommended pool of contractors to be distributed to individuals receiving home repair loans, as a way of directing people to a more diverse contracting pool? These small-scale projects seem like a very accessible pool of opportunities for M/WBEs that don't require the same bonding capacity etc. as large ones.
- How do you plan to shift resources to the Office of Housing Stability during the current crisis, beyond what has already been allocated to rental relief?
- What effects do we expect so far on construction pricing due to the crisis?
- What effects do we expect so far on homeownership opportunities due to the crisis?
- Could we expand new publicly owned housing through the capital budget?
- Can you please report back on the new DND-supported co-op housing at Highland-Marcella? How close is that to completion, and what is the process for signing people up to participate in the co-op?
- There were prior plans to provide some co-op technical assistance courses, akin to the first-time homebuyer classes we offer, for potential co-op residents and organizers and managers – is anything being planned on that front?
- What directions do you expect to take the AOP program in this year – and what have we learned through our efforts to make acquisitions so far?
- What are the prospects of using the AOP program to expand co-op housing?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- DND has a significantly increased budget for FY21, what are the priorities for increase?
- Youth aging out of foster care are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, are there ways DND may be partnering with other departments or external groups and focusing on this group?
- Middle class housing is a huge need in the City, and there should be ways that we could support older homeowners who want to downsize but stay in the neighborhood and then use their homes for family housing. Can you speak to the development of any sort of framework for this?
- Increasing funding for de-leading could help to make homes more family friendly; what are our plans for this?
- Affordable housing for families and homeownership is vitally important. In Allston and Brighton homeownership is down to 10-20 percent. How is DND



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supporting nonprofits/CDCs/other work to build more affordable homeownership opportunities?

- What strategies are being used to preserve expiring use buildings? Thinking in particular of Reservoir Towers, Babcock Towers, and Warren Hall in Allston/Brighton, but also across the City.

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:

- What is DND doing with respect to middle-class housing? There seems to be investment in low-income and market-rate housing, but those who make too much to qualify for low-income programs but not enough to afford market-rate getting squeezed out.
- What does affordability look like in Boston? What is the affordability breakdown of units being built?
- Do you anticipate the cost of any affordable housing projects increasing due to delays from the construction ban?
- The City began using room occupancy taxes to build supportive housing. Please provide an update.
- Please provide more detail about the increased funding for the ONE+ Boston mortgage program.
- Please provide an update on the city rental voucher program and its implementation.
- Do you anticipate any changes to external funds as a result of COVID-19?
- Please discuss the possibility of adding a specific affordable housing line item – this seems like it could be an expeditious mechanism for receiving and expending funds from the federal and state level, including any anticipated if the transfer tax is passed.

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

- What does our next phase look like once the stay-at-home advisories and shut-down orders are lifted in terms of how to address the (now even greater) need for affordable housing, new developments – how will we use public private partnerships, etc.?
- The City is already seeing significant impacts on its revenue collection. On the housing side, what are the short-term fixes and long-term opportunities that will be affected by revenue loss?
- Please provide an update on the city housing vouchers, and other ways DND is working to grow the pool of affordable housing opportunities.



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Councilor Kim Janey, President, asked:

- For DND projects, are they meeting BRJP goals? If not, what are the plans to increase those numbers?
- For any contracted services/goods, how many contracts are going to MWBEs/locally-owned business? What are the plans to improve those numbers?
- Please provide an update on the City-funded rental voucher program, including plans for rolling it out and what lessons will be applied from the rental relief program.
- Please provide an update on rental relief funding. Where is this investment reflected in the budget?
- Please provide an update on the City's housing goals. Will the timeline be impacted by COVID-19?
- Please provide a breakdown of the types of housing being built (affordable, market rate, etc.)
- There is a bottlenecking of spending due to the construction pause. What are the plans to carefully and safely phase work back in?
- Are we losing \$500M from various grants? What projects will be affected by that decrease?
- Please provide an update on affordable homeownership opportunities and the City's goal on this front.
- There is increased funding in this budget for the ONE+ Boston mortgage program. Where does the administration of that program sit?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- Were the OHS performance goals for averting evictions created prior to COVID-19? How will or should this measure change as a result of the crisis?
- One of your goals is to create twice as many homeownership opportunities in FY21 – how will that happen? How will the pandemic impact your goals?
- What role do nonprofits, community activists and others have in shaping DND's agenda?
- What kind of outreach is done to broaden engagement in the development process?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:



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- Please provide an overview of how COVID-19 is affecting the development of affordable housing, and in District 5 in particular. Which projects are continuing as planned, which will be delayed, etc.?
- Regarding DND contracts, of 133 only 5 are held by MWBE/locally-owned businesses. As we try to economically reconstruct our City, the mutual aid of these contracts will be even more important. What plans does DND have to increase these numbers and how will the contracting process change moving forward given the economic hit to many local businesses due to COVID-19? Diversity in procurement is not only an equity issue, but also an opportunity to reconstruct the City by directly supporting local businesses and hard-hit communities.

Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George asked:

- Please provide a breakdown of housing affordability – ownership and rental. Please discuss the increase in support to do the homeownership work.
- Please provide an update on the city rental voucher program.
- Please provide an update on down-payment assistance programs for first time homebuyers.
- Please talk about DND's support for women-owned business enterprises.
- What are the goals for expansion of the housing navigator program? How are we sharing/publicizing these resources with residents?
- Please discuss the investments in BHA.
- Please discuss planned investments in family homelessness. We should mirror the work that has been done for the chronically homeless and homeless veterans. Please discuss the prospects of writing a full city plan to end family homelessness.
- Can you explain more about the plan to appoint a new advisor on family homelessness?
- Is DND currently tracking families during this time? How can we better communicate and connect with families experiencing homelessness or who may become homeless?
- Please discuss the investments in youth homelessness.
- Please provide an update on the 4 homeless peer navigators DND received funding for in FY20.
- Please talk about the intensive/interagency case management happening during COVID-19 through DND, Pine Street, BHCH, BPHC, etc. What has changed over the last few weeks and what progress has been made?



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- Please speak to the increased investment in front door triage. What will that look like in practice?
- The City's 2030 housing goals have seen changes over the years. What are the current goals? Is the City accounting for the construction pause in tracking its progress?
- Will there be an economic analysis of the impact of the construction pause, and the impacts of unemployment on the City's housing goals?
- Two years ago I held a Council hearing regarding access to affordable units and their occupancy, since there was a long delay between units coming online and getting them. Updates on the speeding up of that process?
- Please provide detail regarding the breakdown of affordable units – current and projected, what percentage of AMI they are being built at, etc.
- What will be the effect of the construction pause on construction loans and mortgages, and will these be passed on to developments and affect affordable housing?
- Can you discuss in greater detail the increase in our investment in the Acquisition Opportunity Program, and how you see that program developing and changing?