

Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Boston Fire Department

Working Session: Monday, May 14, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Thursday, May 27, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the Boston Fire Department's budget at the Working Session on Monday, May 14, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

Recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNkRo2Yo8kc>

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

1. Verbally at the hearing on Thursday, May 27th, at 10AM.
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 27th, 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 May 27th, indicating how each question will be answered.

Boston Fire Department Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- Please give us an update on implementation of the new Fire Cadets program.
- When do we expect the Engine 33 project in the Back Bay and the Engine 37 project in the Fenway to get scheduled?
- What is the status of the Fire Alarm roof and the tentative design project in Fenway/Kenmore?
- Relative to the Fire Alarm building, as the muddy river gets revamped, do we need to capture so much space for Fire-related parking? Can we give some of that back to the park?
- Do you expect the HVAC boilers replacements to yield any energy and cost savings?
- There are some decreases to the training, Safety, Health & Wellness, and fire prevention budget line items. Please speak to the reductions in these areas.
- Where is BFD in its efforts to recruit women and folks who do not identify as male, and make our firehouses more welcoming?
- How is the BFD creating pathways to leadership for minorities and women?
- Please provide an update on the Knock and Talk program.
- What is the reason behind the decrease in the percentage of calls responded to in under four minutes? It appears it has gone down 20% since 2019 which is a bit concerning.



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- Some research came out last year about carcinogens in common firefighter clothing and equipment; does that have implications for the health of our firefighters?
- There are a very large number of fire calls that do not require a full large truck. Has the Fire Department thought about acquiring smaller nimble apparatus just for getting around the City streets in some of these cases? In my district there are a lot of historic streets that are narrow and might more easily accommodate a more van-size rapid response apparatus, which I understand is something other jurisdictions have moved towards; can you speak to this?

Councilor Ed Flynn asked:

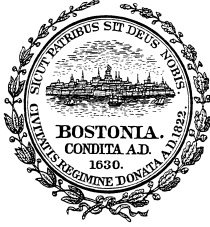
- Engine 3 in the South End is getting funding for design and construction of a firehouse. What is the timeline on that?
- Last year we had a lot of problems with fireworks in the City. Is there funding for outreach and education on the dangers of fireworks? What programs do we have on fire prevention and also preventing illegal fireworks? These are quality of life issues and are also important public health and public safety issues.
- The South Boston waterfront is 50% developed; there is now a need for basic city services such as the Fire Department. Are there any plans for that?

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

- What trends have BFD seen over the last 13 months and what do the statistics show, since people have been staying home? Have you seen a decrease in fire calls?
- Please discuss other trends you have seen over this time period.
- Please provide an update on BFD's staffing levels.
- What is the status on the fire station in Egleston Square

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- Can the Fire Department expand on its "Knock and Talk" program? How many of these "knock and talks" have been conducted and how are the locations chosen for where they are carried out?
- How are BFD members trained in multilingual communication in emergency situations?
- There are no women in the top 10 earners within the BFD, and only one person of color. What are we doing not only to hire a more diverse firefighting force, but to create professional development opportunities throughout the force?



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- Can you expand on the hiring challenges due to “vetting of candidates”?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- Can you expand on the Knock and Talk program?
- What is your progress on diversifying the fire department?
- How many BPD members and staff are multilingual in the department?
- Do you have diversity programs geared towards increasing women and women of color in the fire department?
- Is there a program for advancement for minorities and women in the command structure in the fire department? Can you provide a progress report relative to these issues, as this has been a long-time standing problem with the department?

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:

- When will the two district chiefs positions be restored in the West Roxbury area given the serious significant pipeline concerns from the residents, and also the district chief in the Longwood Medical area? This backfill will also serve to diversify the command staff as well.
- Chiropractic services should be part of the City negotiated insurance plan. This service is important as it helps to minimize lost manpower, lost work hours, and helps to quickly get folks back to work. What is the view of the fire department?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

- Why is the department’s BFD Training program budget decreasing by almost 9% in FY22?
- Can the department talk about moving the cadet program funding to contracted services?
- Compared to last year, BFD has the same percent breakdown by gender of its employees (6% female and 94% male): Can BFD talk about its efforts in trying to increase the number of female employees and reduce this gap?
- Last year there was a breakdown of 16 top earning employees, with 94% white, and this year there is a breakdown of 19 top earning with a similar 95% of them white: What efforts are being made to diversify BFD’s workforce so that it is reflective of the diversity of Boston, especially in terms of the top ten department salaries?
- Can the department talk about the elimination of the Safety, Health & Wellness grant from its external funding? What impact will this have?



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- Does the Firefighter Safety, Health & Wellness program include mental health support for firefighters? If not, what part of the budget includes these services?
- How many woman liaison positions does the BFD currently have? Are there any plans to expand the number of liaison positions?
- What additional resources has BFD allocated for the upcoming year toward making women feel safe and supported within the department? What policy changes has the department implemented since FY21?
- Does the department provide any kind of trainings or workshops to employees around workforce discrimination, harassment, and investigation/reporting systems?
- What percentage of BFD staff is fully vaccinated? How is BFD working to ensure that its staff is fully vaccinated? Will BFD require employees to be fully vaccinated to continue working?