



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Planning & Development Agency

Working Session: Monday, May 18, 2020, 11:00 a.m.

Hearing: Thursday, May 28, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the Boston Planning & Development Agency's budget at the Working Session on Monday, May 18, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. Recording here: https://youtu.be/mi_nf4U4e_I

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

1. Verbally at the hearing on Thursday, May 28th, at 2PM.
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 28th, 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 28th, indicating how each question will be answered.

Boston Planning & Development Agency Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- The guidelines for the Coastal Flood Resiliency Zoning Overlay District seem exciting – can you discuss these and speak to the speed with which we plan to actually make them effective in zoning? Often proposed guidelines sit too long prior to actually being codified, allowing a large amount of development to take place in the relevant zone without being subject to said guidelines. (This was true, for example, of the Stuart St Planning Study, never I believe actually codified in zoning.) (*Previously asked 5/6; Environment recommended BPDA respond*)
- What is the timeline for pursuing Carbon Neutral Zoning, and building standards that discourage or ban new fossil fuel infrastructure? (*Previously asked 5/6; Environment recommended BPDA respond*)
- As a follow up to conversation from the Landmarks hearing, how can we incorporate historic preservation and planning with history in mind more into our planning processes?
 - What resources does BPDA have internally, or on regular contract, to integrate a historical lens into its planning and development review processes?
 - How can we move historic preservation considerations up earlier in the process in general, when projects are still in conceptual phase?
 - In PLAN: Downtown, it seems like a historical inventory related to Chinatown, the ladder district, etc. might be a logical next step for refining



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the zoning proposal – does the BPDA have in-house or hired expertise for this component?

- Please expand on language access at BPDA, and the plan to integrate it more fully into your processes and staffing.
- Please discuss how the real estate department is changing how they structure ground leases in general, going forward, and whether there are any legacy ground leases we have or expect to be able to renegotiate in ways advantageous to the public interest?
- Is the inventory of LDAs that was conducted in relation to urban renewal easily accessible to the public, in both data and map-based formats?
- How does BPDA see its financial future next year in light of the coming economic climate?
- I represent a district with a large number of large institutions – hospitals and universities – where residential neighbors often feel that major land-use decisions have been negotiated and largely settled before they get a voice. How the BPDA believe the Institutional Master Planning process could be improved?
- Could you please speak to ideas about how PLAN: Downtown might shift the dynamics of mitigation negotiations for large projects, and whether that is a new framework that could be replicated elsewhere?
- How is the Office of Workforce Development planning to shift its resources in light of COVID-19 and entering a more recessionary economy?
- Does BPDA believe that the change in economic climate presents any new opportunities or challenges in regard to pursuing higher ratios of affordable housing?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- For project review under Article 80, it would be really helpful if the BPDA could require developers to complete a “cheat sheet” for each project with basic data, like FAR, green space, number of units, size of units, number of IDP units, and range of AMI. When trying to track projects in the neighborhood, it seems really difficult to track down all this basic information to help the public evaluate the project without having to dig through pages of reports.
- COVID-19 has shined a light on many issues. As more people may be working from home, we need live/work spaces that accommodate that, which is difficult in micro units and small studios that have been a focus of development, at least in Allston/Brighton; how is the BPDA reflecting on this?



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- I have concerns about the diversity of IAGs. How can we make sure we're diversifying the voices at the table?
- Regarding linkage, please provide a breakdown on funds generated in each neighborhood. How much is generated, and how and where is that money disbursed? The last figures I have are from 1995-2015- there was 17.75 million square feet of linkage development in Allston/Brighton, and I don't know how much money was generated and where the money went.

Councilor Ed Flynn asked:

- There are several large ongoing development projects in District 2. Please provide information about public meetings and process, and as the City starts thinking about restarting projects, is the BPDA planning on changing the public input process and how residents weigh in on projects?
 - What are the plans to include residents who may not have the technology to participate in a virtual meeting?
 - What plans are there to include residents who don't speak English, and improve language access?
- Please provide more information about language access. Please discuss how we formally notify a civic group about providing interpreters for an upcoming meeting.

Councilor Lydia Edwards:

- How much has been spent by the City of Boston (on outside counsel etc.) defending against the HUD lawsuit?
- How much money has been spent by BPDA (not by a developer) for language access (1) in general, and (2) specifically in Suffolk Downs. It seems that there could be a conflict of interest in the developer paying for the interpreter.
- What payments have been made for consulting on the AFFH report? What efforts have been made to comply with AFFH requirements? Can you show within the budget compliance with AFFH standards?
- For PLAN: East Boston, what is being done with community engagement budgets now that things will all be online? How much is being utilized for planning consultants?
- For PLAN: Charlestown, what is being done with community engagement budgets now that things will all be online? How much is being utilized for planning consultants?



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- I believe that the Charlestown Navy Yard is the number 2 moneymaker for the BPDA. How much was made off of Charlestown sales in FY19/FY20? Please provide a breakdown of where this revenue was spent in the neighborhood (or elsewhere).

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:

- Has the BPDA reached out to all tenants and subtenants to see if rental assistance may be needed in City-owned properties? What can be done to reach all tenants and subtenants beyond reliance on landlords?

Councilor Kim Janey, President, asked:

- Please provide a dollar breakdown for projects in District 7 and updates on timelines.
- Please provide an update on PLAN: Dudley/Nubian Square. What impact has the construction moratorium and nonessential business closures had on cost overruns and/or delays?
- We had a working session recently on planning. I'd like to reaffirm the need for equitable planning. For any projects or money being spent, please provide a breakdown based on diversity.
- For all BPDA projects, how much of spend is going to small MWBEs and locally-owned businesses?
- In my first few months in office, we worked to get PLAN: Dudley/Nubian Square to include equity and inclusion language, based on Massport's.
 - Did that language become standard for all projects? Where are we on equity and inclusion for all projects? Is it a goal or a requirement for all?
 - If a cheat sheet is developed moving forward, we should include this equity and inclusion information for each project, as well.

Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George asked:

- Please discuss ongoing work to support artists in their live/work spaces. We've done some work around creating more affordable spaces for artists that are also responsive to different mediums practiced – would love an update on this.

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

- The capital budget will increase \$1M this year over last, which is significant. Is this accurately reflective of the new real estate market we are expecting to



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encounter? What does the economic climate mean for the market, and for properties we've discussed in the past?

- Please provide detail about the strategy for carbon neutral building assessment included in Article 37. The BPDA planned to have a public process to develop new zoning requirements and a timeline of implementation to get to net zero carbon buildings. I celebrate that work, and would love to check in on that.

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- One of BPDA's goals is to establish and maintain a culture of professionalism.
 - What has led to this goal and how do you intend to go about creating this culture? How is this culture going to be created? Who helps define what that culture should look like? What role will the community play in defining that mission and vision?
- How is the BPDA going about identifying new methods of civic engagement in the planning process? How are you activating under-represented communities? Especially those who, in the past, have been targets of urban renewal?
- I'm interested in a community-centered approach to planning and development, where the community is not an afterthought, but is built into the infrastructure in ways that drive the process (e.g. the community identifies an opportunity, and the BPDA brings that vision to life). What, if any, opportunities exist to redesign the design process?
- Is the BPDA willing to ensure that childcare, food, and interpretation is offered at all meetings, in order to ensure that everyone who wants to engage is able to?
- What are we doing to ensure we're engaging small business, especially MWBEs in contracting bids?
- When thinking about planning and design, what role are small businesses playing in that process?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

- In our request for information, you state that in all major categories the BPDA is underspending for FY20: Why are you underspending in FY20?
 - Will these savings be reinvested in other projects or will they be carried over in FY21?
- How has COVID impacted the community process for the BPDA and what solutions or ideas have you worked on to ensure there remains a community process during COVID?