



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Boston Public Library

Working Session: Thursday, May 6, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Thursday, May 20, 2021, 2:00 p.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the FY22 budget for the Boston Public Library at the Working Session on Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Recording here: <https://youtu.be/X0dzcKqRpHM>

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

1. Verbally at the hearing on Thursday, May 20th, at 2PM.
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 20th, 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 20th, indicating how each question will be answered.

Boston Public Library Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- Contracted Services has a recommended increase of \$438,061 in FY22, compared to the FY21 appropriation. Can you tell us why and what this increase represents?
 - The total contracted services are \$3,018,649. What types of services are performed, and could any be brought in-house?
- Please provide more details on the Early Literacy Program including the demographics of its participants, its outcomes, and what collaboration (if any) there is on literacy efforts with BPS.
- Regarding research services personnel, there was a decrease, from \$1,859,936 in FY21 to \$1,811,903 in FY22. Please detail what this reduction represents and how the decision was made.
- What are the plans to support archival work? How can we utilize archival work in exhibits and in the BPS curriculum? How do library archivists work with community archivists to undertake projects that will preserve and catalog the diverse history of Boston? How are these resources made available for research, for schools, for exhibits, etc. Especially with the capital project on rare books and the overall revamping of the library's physical research facilities, I would love to hear what BPL's hopes and ambitions are on this front.
- The BPL Capital budget went down from \$29,045,000 (FY21 Estimated) to \$20,977,918 (Total Projected FY22). It seems like there should be more spending in FY22 than FY21, given the construction freeze in the early pandemic. Please explain the reason for the decrease.



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- *[This question already answered on May 11]* I've been attending planning meetings, so I know the process is underway, but what roughly is the timeline for the West End Library? Given that this is an enormously utilized branch that serves many communities, we want to make sure its well taken care of and has an aggressive timeline for completion.
- Are there plans to make our library facilities net zero carbon emissions? I believe new libraries will fall under the city's new rules for net zero carbon, but want to confirm.
- Are there plans to address any capital needs at the Parker Hill Branch? For example, I know there was an ongoing elevator issue last year.
- Please provide an update on the Central Branch - Rare Books project, and how these collections will be more accessible to the public and better cared for at its conclusion.
- Any progress on thinking through a revamp of the third floor of the McKim building?
- It looks like the research collections preservation and storage plan (\$200,000 total) is still to be scheduled. Is there a reason for the delay? How can we get this plan underway & what is the plan? Is \$200,000 sufficient to preserve the resources we have?
- Please explain the increased "contracted services" investments in Equity and Outreach Programming and Reopening with Expanded Services.
- From the budget materials: "Relative to the FY21 Appropriation, budgeted external funds are down \$300,000 and FTEs are level. We expect changes."
 - Does this mean that they expect to receive more external funds? Or do you expect an impact on FTEs?
- Do you expect the \$125,000 in revenue relief in this proposed budget, in the place of late fees, to become permanent?
- Regarding Tech Goes Home and related services, as we transition back to physical libraries opening, what is the plan for keeping the expanded technological capacities we've developed?
- Also, all patrons are eager to know when libraries will be reopening to the public. Where is the latest thinking on reopening branches? *[Please provide more detail on the latest announcement.]*

Councilor Ed Flynn asked:

- The Chinatown Branch Library is a top priority for me and for the Chinatown community. The FY22 budget allocates \$5M and the status in the budget book is



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“study underway”. Please provide an update on the timeline for this project. Where are some of the sites being looked at for the permanent branch?

- There seems to be funding for a library study at the South End Library. What are the next steps in improving this library? What will the community process look like for the study?
- The South Boston library is one of the oldest branches in the City. What are the short- and long-term plans for this branch? I would ultimately like to see a new library built.

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- Can you explain how hours of operation are determined for each branch? Some branches, such as the Roxbury Branch, are closed on Saturdays, and given that these are some of the only free spaces available to our community, how can we utilize these branches to be more intentional about creating a space for our community to just be?

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:

- Libraries are hubs of activity in our neighborhoods, especially for helping kids learn, and so we need to continue to invest in programming. What is BPL doing to partner with BPS to address lost learning during the pandemic?
- We’ve been advocating for a Chinatown Branch Library for many years and it’s very exciting to see this move forward. Please provide an update about the construction of the new Chinatown Branch?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

- How much of an impact will the elimination of fines for overdue materials have on BPL’s revenue?
- Why is BPL’s capital budget decreasing by 27%? Is this because of the completion of projects last year or for some other reason?
- Why does BPL have a 2.5% decrease in Research Services (under Personnel Services)?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- Purchasing for branch library collection – can local branch librarians have some control over purchasing? We have a very diverse city and each neighborhood is



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culturally very different. Local librarians should be able to purchase books for their collection – they know their population. Can we make this less centralized?

- When will work on the Faneuil Branch Library begin? The library closed in November and there is no sign of any work being done 6 months later.