



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the Boston Emergency Medical Services/Boston Public Health Commission's budget at the Working Session on Monday, May 11, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. Recording here:

<https://youtu.be/2LdrTo1GtUA>

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

1. Verbally at the hearing on Thursday, May 21st, at 10AM (EMS) or 2PM (other BPHC).
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 21st, 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 21st, indicating how each question will be answered.

Boston Emergency Medical Services Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- In your RFI response, you shared information about hiring challenges. 111 people applied last year, but because of the various tests required, there were only 16 new hires. Please discuss the extent to which the City is thinking about solutions to this problem. Could an EMT cadet program be one solution?
- Please talk experientially about how COVID-19 has shifted things for this force, including updates on the implementation of new protocol. Please reflect on this in particular as it shapes how we look at the year ahead, for effectiveness, from a public health perspective, and for the health and wellbeing of the force.
- I have heard issues have come up for first responders with regards to workers comp and low reimbursement rates delaying needed operations. Can you discuss this issue?
- The state has been doing mobile testing using the Fallon ambulance service. Have we been thinking about mobile testing via BEMS? What would it look like, how would we put appropriate safety protocols in place for the force, etc.?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

*Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget
Boston Emergency Medical Services
Boston Public Health Commission*

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:

- What is the attrition rate for BEMS? Over the next few years we expect to see large waves of retirement in our public safety agencies; are we on pace to keep force numbers stable? This seems to be particularly important to think about as the pandemic continues to strain our public safety agencies.
- Please provide an update on the use of the Bragdon Street command center. Does the City have plans to buy this property and make the necessary repairs and upgrades?
 - What year of the lease are we in?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- BEMS is looking for a new station for ambulances. Please provide an update on new station plans in Allston/Brighton.
- There has been a significant growth in the population of Allston/Brighton over the last decade. Are there any plans to evaluate the need for increased EMS services in District 9? (*Previously asked 4/16*)
- Any updates on the new EMS station at St. Elizabeth's Hospital? (*Previously asked 4/16*)

Councilor Kim Janey, President, asked:

- Please provide an update on department diversity numbers, including a breakdown by race and gender.
- There are high levels of trauma that may experienced working in a public safety capacity. Please talk about services available and issues surrounding mental health for EMTs.
- Investing in our workforce is incredibly important. Please discuss training and professional development provided, including the dollar amounts that support these efforts.

Councilor Andrea Campbell asked:

- What trends have you been seeing with regards to domestic violence cases? Where is additional support needed?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George asked:

- Please discuss coverage in the Seaport, including traffic issues that affect access and response.
- A hearing order was filed regarding wellness for our first responder agencies and access to mental health services and physical health supports. Can you speak to this?
- The Bragdon Street space needs a lot of investment if we are to keep it, and we're spending upwards of \$30k/month on the lease. We should be looking for a new opportunity. Are there plans for an analysis on that property or looking for a new city-owned one?
- I had the opportunity a few months ago to ride with Squad 80 and was very impressed. They work closely with homeless services, as well. We could use additional investment in resources for work responding to substance use and recovery services.
 - Please speak to how often Narcan is administered by BEMS.
 - What volume of Narcan are we purchasing?
 - What is the typical dosage to reverse an overdose?
- What is the volume of 911 calls received. Please provide a breakdown by type of call.
- Please discuss the amount of reimbursement we've been successful in getting through BEMS and how much of a deficit the City picks up. If we're not being reimbursed, should we be thinking creatively about bringing residents in need of different types of services to locations other than the emergency room? This is a model we've seen in other cities, where EMS takes people in need directly to the service needed (e.g. recovery).
- What are BEMS practices around sharps removal?
 - How does it coordinate with BFD?
 - What is the volume of sharps pick up done by BEMS?
- BEMS should be an independent public safety agency and have an independent budget.
- There is a cadet-like program that offers some initial exposure to EMS training for young people and hopefully those participants continue EMS academy.



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

- Due to the cancellation of parades and festivals in the current and first half of the next fiscal year – will we see any savings? Have these already been associated with other costs for COVID-19 response?
- Will we lose some external funding due to the loss of some events and programming due to COVID-19? How will this impact the budget?
- Please provide an update on the capital investment in the EMS training academy.

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

- There is a need for a new EMS garage. More than 1/3 of our ambulances don't have a bay to go to, which is a staggering large number. We have an opportunity in Franklin Park to build a real bay for EMS. Having a garage is good for the environment and for the health and safety of our first responders. Please provide an update on this.
- Please share BEMS response rates. What percent of calls are Priority 1?
- The City's population has grown significantly over the past few years. Are we seeing responsive increases in BEMS hiring and staffing?
- Why are we anticipating a decrease in EMS revenue from last year? Is this just a conservative projection?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- What is the average response time for overdose emergencies? How many are there per year? How much Narcan is administered per year? How has this changed over time? Please provide a breakdown by season.
 - What is the interaction between BEMS and Recovery Services?

Councilor Ed Flynn asked:

- My number one priority for EMS is to get an EMS presence on the South Boston Waterfront. Are there Any updates regarding the ongoing study on getting a new EMS station for the South Boston Waterfront? Public safety city services are missing from this area and desperately needed for handling an emergency. *(Previously asked 4/16)*
- Health and wellness for our first responders is more important than ever. We need to ensure that they're receiving the resources, education, and time off to keep themselves healthy and continue to work. I am a member of the Gulf War Registry for veterans who were exposed to toxins in the air. The registry is used to track



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

people's health and get information about programs and resources available. Boston should create a registry of all first responders exposed to COVID-19, as this will likely be a long-term process. In addition to ensuring we study the impact of the virus on first responders testing positive, the City should plan to look into and plan for impacts on their medical insurance, potential long-term health issues, long-term time off, sick leave, retirement, etc.

- Please discuss training for EMTs specific to COVID-19. What are the short-term and long-term plans to deal with COVID-19 moving forward, including study and response plans. It is critical to study the current situation and work in partnership with colleges, hospitals, and other parties working on these issues.
- Mental health resources and support, including adequate counseling services, for first responders is critical. Please describe the supports in place.
- Please provide a breakdown of response times.
- Please discuss retention and retirement.
 - Please provide an estimate of the number of retirements anticipated over the next three years and the effect this will have on the department.
- Is there a way for veteran first responders to use a different pot of sick leave to go to VA medical appointments?
- I've been working with BPHC on the studies they do on public health in the neighborhoods. It would be great to work closely with BEMS to address these public health issues. What kinds of training does BEMS have with regards to the specific health issues in neighborhoods and how does this inform responses to calls?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

- What unexpected costs for FY20 has BEMS incurred since the beginning of the pandemic?

Boston Public Health Commission Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- There is some BPHC salary savings due to employment attrition, and there is simultaneously a forecast of increased overtime expenses. Obviously going to war with COVID has contributed to this, but can you speak to the hiring plan for more



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

FTEs to address this discrepancy, and any success in hiring over the past couple months?

- The number of folks on administrative and unpaid leave increased sharply from 64 to 125. This is a fairly large proportion of the department given it is 1,100 FTEs; please provide some detail for this number.
- What resources does the BPHC need for the upcoming year ahead to help deal with this crisis – not necessarily in terms of FEMA-reimbursable emergency expenditures, but in terms of departmental structural needs? In many ways this is a pre-COVID budget; are there shifts you’re expecting to make in the resubmission given what you know now?
- What have we learned from this public health crisis about how we may want to structure BPHC differently moving forward in order to be best equipped to handle a similar crisis in the future?
 - For example I don’t believe we have a Bureau of Infections Disease Director right now (which is in many respects bad luck, in terms of what vacancies you have when something like this hits) – would we want to think about more permanent infectious disease infrastructure going forward?
- Could you detail what we’ve learned in operating in coordination with FEMA and MEMA, and whether there are ways we may want to structure ourselves differently to work with those agencies better in the future (recognizing that some of that may be under OEM)?
- I know this may be more of an OEM question, but could you provide more information about the addition of an emergency volunteer coordinator position in this budget?
- Please walk us through the thinking regarding widespread testing – the stage that goes beyond the community health center roll-out, to possibly more mobile and work-site-based testing. We are hoping for federal money to back such a program I’m sure, but what do we need in terms of BPHC staff capacity to support that?
- The state has been doing mobile testing using the Fallon ambulance service. Have we been thinking about mobile testing via BEMS? What would it look like etc.?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- Please discuss the overall budget in the context of the current public health crisis. It seems obvious that BPHC will need more funding and personnel as COVID-19 will



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

likely be with us for a long time. What do you anticipate for budget impacts and needs, both for personnel and technological support?

- Beyond COVID-19, what other public health issues are still ongoing (e.g. substance use and recovery, youth gun violence in the city) and how are these priorities being affected in the budget? How do you balance funding and priorities in the context of COVID-19?

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

- The most pertinent and pressing question for BPHC and the divisions of HHS is how will their missions change as a result of COVID-19. Specifically, at Age Strong, Fair Housing, VETS, the Shelter Commission, how will the focus and portfolio of work these departments oversee change? (**OTHER – HHS?**)
- We are going to be seeing increased and incredible demand on the public health aspects of our budget. I would expect the resubmission to add a bigger cushion for HHS depts serving vulnerable populations. (**OTHER – HHS?**)
- There is a \$9M increase for BPHC, that can be traced mostly to BEMS. However, there is a decrease in budgeted revenue. BEMS typically generates at least \$30-40M in revenue. We are investing heavily in BEMS, but we are budgeting less than last year for revenue. Why are we budgeting less for revenue while simultaneously growing the budget?

Councilor Andrea Campbell asked:

- Please talk about the City's plans, response and preparedness for reopening and testing.

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- What is the average response time for overdose emergencies? How many are there per year? How much Narcan is administered per year? How has this changed over time? Please provide a breakdown by season.
 - What is the interaction between BEMS and Recovery Services?
- One of BPHC's goals is to make their department a model for racial equity. What is the strategy for this? What opportunities are there to involve community voices and the City Council in that process? Please talk about the level of engagement as it relates to these efforts, in particular outreach for those who don't usually have a seat at the table.



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

- How many Narcan trainings been done by ORS?
 - In terms of training, how often are there trainings? Where do these trainings happen? What partnerships are there with nonprofits to train outreach workers?
 - What other ways are we talking about to utilize Narcan?
 - How much Narcan was distributed this past year?
- For all performance measures listed in the budget narrative, how will they shift given the impacts of COVID-19, especially those regarding substance use programs and homeless services?
- What opportunities exist to have a more integrated conversation to talk about mental health across all City departments and include mental wellness as part of the overall well-being for all City employees? (**OTHER - OHR?**)

Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George asked:

- BEMS, through public health at the State level, has authorization to do some testing. What would be the implications of BEMS doing this work, especially as the curve hopefully continues to flatten?
- BEMS should be an equal partner as one of three public safety agencies in the City. Why is BEMS a part of BPHC?
 - What is the role of Chief Hooley at the table at BPHC in terms of decision-making – is it similar to or different that the Police and Fire commissioners? How does that relationship function both in practice and with regards to the budget process?
- Please provide some additional line item detail for the Homelessness Bureau.
- A lot of resources and assets are currently focused on the pandemic response. What role will BPHC play moving forward in terms of preparedness for the future? What policies and procedures being written as we deal with this? I recognized OEM will be a large part of this. I hope community health centers will also play in active role in this preparation for future preparedness.
- Regarding homelessness, mental health, and recovery, it's important for BPHC to have a seat at the table when talking about family homelessness. I've been advocating for the City to invest in studying and writing a comprehensive plan to end family homelessness. BPHC plays a critical role in supporting individuals experiencing homelessness, so should be a part of the work to end family homelessness also.



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

- Is there funding included in this budget to study the implementation of current respite shelter beds for those experiencing homelessness, and the impact on those experiencing substance use disorders. Please discuss this full picture, including future planning.
- I continue to advocate for increases in the mobile sharps team. The enhanced response of the mobile sharps team in outreach and connecting with individuals that need additional supports is critical. We should increase their capacity and support their efforts.
 - How many needles are picked up?
 - How many individuals are connected with.
 - What are the greater needs?
- Accessing mental health services is incredibly important, and I think there should be an independent mental health commission. I think BPHC would play an informative role in the formation of this commission, and that an independent body would help ensure access to mental health services across the board in the City.
- Please discuss BPHC's prevention efforts regarding youth use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, and vaping.
- Please discuss the capital investment in the Long Island Bridge and the recovery campus.
 - What is the role of BPHC in these plans?
 - Please review the facility preservation effort, and the development and redevelopment of the campus and building of new programs and facilities.
 - What is the status of the current study and current program developments?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

- Is there any part of the budget that will look at addressing health inequities based on race/ethnicity?
 - Are there any programs for FY21 that will look to address these?
- What role will BPHC be playing in the recovery from COVID and how is this reflected in the budget?
- Currently, BPHC is about \$550,000 over budget as of March 31st: How much more unexpected expenses do you estimate have occurred since then?
 - What portion of the expenses that led to being over budget is due to the COVID pandemic?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget

Boston Emergency Medical Services

Boston Public Health Commission

Working Session: Monday, May 11, 2020, 3:00 p.m.

Hearing BEMS: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing BPHC: Thursday, May 21, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

- If a significant portion is not due to COVID, then what led to exceeding the budgeted amount and was this taken into account for FY21?
- How will BPHC be supporting residents' mental health during/after the pandemic and how is this reflected in the budget?
- Is there anything not funded by this budget that you would like additional funding to do?