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## **Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means**

*Dockets #0588-0596 FY21 Budget*

*Docket #0604 Parks Revolving Fund – Animal Care & Control*

*Docket #0597 Parkman Fund*

*Parks and Recreation Department*

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

***Hearing: Thursday, May 14, 2020, 2:00 p.m.***

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The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the Parks and Recreation Department's budget at the Working Session on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. Recording here: <https://youtu.be/VceizZUhKb8?t=39>

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

1. Verbally at the hearing on Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, at 2PM.
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 14<sup>th</sup>, 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 14<sup>th</sup>, indicating how each question will be answered.

### **Parks Department Budget Questions**

#### **Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:**

- Please expand on the exciting plans to double tree plantings. How will the current year's delays impact Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 planting? There has been constituent interest in opening up tarred-over tree pits – could there be a more streamlined process for people requesting this? How can we accelerate the increase in our tree canopy and do it in an equitable and socially sustainable way?
- Can you speak to how the various new investments in urban forestry planning, tree planting, and tree maintenance interact? Will we get any further arborist positions? Please discuss contracting regarding tree plantings, and efforts we can undertake to make more of our tree-related work internal rather than contracted out.
- NOAH pays young people to water trees in the summer; is that something we could be doing more broadly to benefit both our trees and our young people?
- Can you speak to other ways that Parks could add a corps of youth jobs for this summer? Is there any opportunity in relation to the Urban Wilds program?
- Please discuss the planned project at the Commonwealth Ave Mall Kenmore Block, specifically the security of its funding and coordination with the MBTA.
- How will the timeline for planning and execution of the exciting Back Bay Fens Pathways project and the Muddy River dredging project interact? How does the



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department plan to expeditiously launch a public consultation process on the Back Bay Fens Pathways in spite of COVID-19?

- Please discuss funding for the Park Ranger Mounted Unit. Constituents would love to see a dedicated line item for it, of at least the \$225,000 previously committed, so as to be able to measure whether it is adequately resourced year-to-year and think about how to grow our investment there over time. As we've been encountering new issues of mask wearing and social distancing within our parks, the benefit of having uniformed rangers present seems even greater.
- Can you provide details on the improvements slated for the Clarendon St Playground and the Mission Hill Playground? *(Previously asked 4/16)*
- How should we think about an updated timeline for the Boston Common Master Plan project, given the pandemic's impact on that public process?
- How are we incorporating more 'green and grey' infrastructure into parks (i.e. rain gardens, permeable pavement), especially when we are making major investments and tearing up prior asphalt anyways?
- What is Parks' strategy to increase racial and gender equity in procurement and hiring?

### **Councilor Liz Breadon asked:**

- How many active public City of Boston cemeteries are there and what does stewardship/management look like (e.g. who is in charge of maintenance, tree planting, etc.)?
- Please provide an update on Chandlers Pond in Brighton, and the possibility of doing a scope analysis, which would be needed to apply for CPA funds. Are investments being made at Chandler Pond already? *(Previously asked 4/16)*
- Are there opportunities to involve youth, including partnerships with BPS, in maintaining trees?
- When will construction begin at McKinney Playground? *(Previously asked 4/16)*
- What investments are being made towards Smith Field? *(Previously asked 4/16)*
- Any update on a study of Ringer Park? *(Previously asked 4/16)*
  - Is there a timeline for improvements?

### **Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:**

- Is the department running any FY20 surplus that can be redirected to COVID-19 response efforts?



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- Would like to see an assessment around new tree planting and current tree pruning. We receive constituent calls about the safety issue of uprooted tree roots, along the Southwest corridor and elsewhere, and it's frustrating not to be able to direct our public city staff to resolve those issues. For this type of work, is the City contracting it out, and to whom? Can we do tree pruning and planting in-house (create a division within the department)? How many people are there on staff that plant, trim, and prune trees?

### **Councilor Ed Flynn asked:**

- Moakley Park is an important space to District 2 and District 3, and I want to make sure resident voices are heard in its redesign. Can you speak to the access of youth sports to ballfields, especially for kids in the nearby public housing?
- Many constituents in Bay Village and Chinatown use the Boston Common and the Public Garden. Is there any long term plan, in coordination with BTM, to better connect those neighborhoods, along with Beacon Hill and Back Bay, with better slower street and pedestrian infrastructure, so that people can better access the Common and Garden in a safe way?
- The South End has many beautiful parks. What are the short-term and long-term plans for renovations?
- Please provide an update on the parks in and around the BHA development at West Broadway. Important that those parks have the resources they need.

### **Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:**

- Please provide an update on Billings Field and the prospects for getting it fully renovated.
- Please provide an update on park maintenance - at Billings Field and in general - specifically night and weekend coverage. How has or will maintenance be affected by the high park usage during the pandemic and moving forward?
- The mounted ranger unit is seeing a \$225k increase, which will go a long way to providing protection and maintenance, which are very important. We should continue to protect and grow this program.
- Please discuss Franklin Park, including updates on renovation and strategies on how to address current issues there.
- Please provide an update on the tree canopy. Important to ensure adequate resources. Are there any creative or unconventional methods we can be using to



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supplement tree canopy coverage? (e.g. partnership with Harvard's Arnold Arboretum in exchange for PILOT adjustments?)

### **Councilor Kim Janey, President, asked:**

- Please discuss Franklin Park, including updates on renovation and strategies on how to address current issues there.
- There are several parks that are either in the design phase or in the To Be Scheduled category such as Dewitt, Malcolm X, Crawford St, and Jeep Jones as well as Winthrop Playground:
  - Are any of these projects moving forward right now?
  - Are there any RFPs for these projects?
  - How was the community involved?
  - Which part of the designs reflects community input? (*Previously asked 4/16*)
- Following up on an issue from last week's BRJP hearing: for any City parks projects that require construction, what is the City doing to improve efforts with respect to BRJP goals?
- For any money spent on goods/contracted services, how much is going to WMBEs/locally-owned businesses.
- Who is conducting the Franklin Park Yard study? (*Previously asked 4/16*)
  - When will it be completed?

### **Councilor Julia Mejia asked:**

- Does the Parks Department have trouble hiring for certain positions? Please walk through your hiring process and recruitment pathways (who you talk to, where you go, how you keep track of outreach). What input do you get from nonprofit organizations like Careerlinks/Goodwill etc.? How do you find ways to fill these positions that qualified people in communities of color have usually been left out of? Please provide a sample of a job description. What are the barriers to hire more diversity?
- Regarding the goal to plant 2000 street trees, are there opportunities to create or support a network of black arborists and landscaping businesses? How are we contracting black arborists for these projects? What does procurement look like for tree planting?



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- Are there opportunities to activate young ppl to help maintain the trees? It's a good way for youth to learn about the environment and also create a pathway to a career option.
- Are there opportunities to tap into BPS and engage students in career exploration opportunities?
- Please provide an overview of WMBE contracts and opportunities.
- Are we making an investment in the Gertrude Howells Civil Rights Park in Roxbury? (*Previously asked 4/16*)

### **Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:**

- Of the 98 Park Department contracts, only 5 are held by WMBEs. What efforts are being made to increase representation of WMBEs in your procurement?
- What are the Department's plans for money that hasn't been allocated, as it relates to COVID-19 response?
- For the capital project parcel priority plan, what is the process for determining what land should be protected as open space? Are there any progress reports on this project, and if not, when can we expect one? Are there any plans to designate lands in District 5 as open spaces in order to address the heat island effect? To what extent is the community involved in the process?
- Regarding the capital plan for street tree planting, where are the trees being planted? Is there oversight to ensure that distribution is equitable?
- Regarding the urban forestry capital plan, is this citywide or concentrated in certain neighborhoods?
- Are there any plans by city to acquire the Neponset River corridor or the Oakland Driving Range and Crane Ledge and turn them into public protected open spaces? These are large swaths of land that recently hit the market pre-COVID-19 that local organizations are hoping we can look at acquiring for environmental protections.

### **Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George asked:**

- Please speak to the investment in the urban wilds. There were investments last year across the City, so looking to understand that true impact. We really have just one person managing these 35 urban wilds across the City – is there a capacity issue there at all? Do we need more resources for this?
- Please provide an update on the urban forestry master plan.



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- Please discuss sharps pickups across the City, in particular the cost associated with pickup in our parks.
- Please discuss the park ranger budget, and the budget for the Mounted Unit specifically and the care of the horses.
- Please provide information about our egg-adding efforts in regard to Canadian Geese. Where have goslings hatched this year? Did the pandemic affect adding this year?
- Please provide information about the athletic programming on our fields, including usage by private, for-profit organizations who charge for their programs. Are there opportunities to charge higher fees for adult and private organization use of our fields, especially when sometimes these organizations bring in their own lighting to avoid our lighting fees?
- Please discuss the availability of bathroom facilities in our parks. The lack of restrooms has a negative impact on women looking to take advantage of these spaces, especially young women.
- We have seen an unfortunate increase in burials due to the pandemic. Please provide an update on the effect this is having on our City cemeteries.
- Please provide a general breakdown of the types of permits Parks receives for use of our public spaces (e.g. weddings, private events, other athletics, etc.)

### **Councilor Frank Baker asked:**

- Any updates on the plans for Moakley Park, and how it ties into the state projects in the adjacent area (Kosciuszko Circle and Morrissey Boulevard)? Still in contact with the state? (*Previously asked 4/16*)
  - What about federal grant of \$1 million for resiliency study at Moakley Park?

### **Councilor Lydia Edwards asked:**

- Can you provide updates on the following projects: (*Previously asked 4/16*)
  - Doherty Playground
  - Edwards Playground
  - Foster Street Playground
  - The Greenway in East Boston