



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Dockets #0538-0539 Enviro Revolving Funds

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Working Session: Friday, April 30, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the Environment Department's budget at the Working Session on Friday, April 30, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

Recording here: <https://youtu.be/27MbPunbAuA>

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

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

Environment Department Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair, asked:

- Please discuss the details of the Green Jobs Retraining investment, as well as the plans for all funding for Green Jobs.
 - What models are being considered, and are you looking at a format similar to Philadelphia's Power Corps, whom we hosted for a working session back in March?
 - One thing we learned from Power Corps is that your first hire probably needs to be someone who will coordinate between departments and start to solve contract/procurement issues -- are we establishing such a point person?
 - How will existing local community partners that provide youth with green jobs training, including those who are part of our SuccessLink program (Codman Square NDC, Southwest Boston CDC, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, Speak for the Trees, etc.), be included in the discussions, so that we can create a meaningful career pipeline for Green Jobs? Can we start this summer by providing some additional resources to create a supportive 'connective tissue' for all these green jobs related youth programs?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Dockets #0538-0539 Enviro Revolving Funds

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Working Session: Friday, April 30, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

- How about involving the national partners -- like the US Forestry Service, American Forests, etc -- whom we have also talked to about best practices for urban forestry specifically?
- How will the Native and Indigenous communities be included? Often, they are left out of the discussion, but it would be good to involve leaders such as the folks at NAICOB in program design and to ensure that Native and Indigenous folks also benefit from this type of training and job opportunities.
- How are we planning to utilize our vocational school -- Madison Park -- to train students for green jobs we need now, for the next five years of the capital plan, and beyond?
- What is this green job pipeline for -- public or private jobs, or both? We have discussed the fact that it would be good to build up more city worker capacity in various green infrastructure work -- including at Parks, Public Works, and Water & Sewer -- even as we also train people for a private marketplace where we are poised to drive job growth through regulatory action (as with the Carbon Performance Standards). It would also be good to discuss with Public Facilities and OBM where the unrealized capital budget space exists to scale up certain green capital work.
- Does the City intend to create a green stormwater infrastructure plan? Cities like New York and Philadelphia have created and are implementing city-wide GSI plans, which they expect to save them money as compared to traditional grey stormwater infrastructure, in terms of reduced flood & storm damage.
 - Can we prioritize green stormwater infrastructure near affordable and public housing communities, and are we working with BWSC and BHA on this? We know that there is a great deal of overlap between flood risk and low income and public housing communities, and such work could also provide the mental health benefits of increased greenspace and reduce the heat island effect and pollution.
- Under Renew Boston Trust, how deep are the retrofits? What types of energy and water savings and emissions reductions can we expect to see at each Phase?
 - As we make these types of retrofits, are we also taking steps to improve the indoor air quality and other components of the indoor environment for those who utilize the building?
- Why exactly is Environment having difficulty attracting qualified candidates? What are the qualifications we are looking for that we can't find? What steps can be taken to diversify hiring?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Dockets #0538-0539 Enviro Revolving Funds

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Working Session: Friday, April 30, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

- Please discuss the revision of regulations for parking freezes under the Air Pollution Control Commission.
- Please discuss the status of Carbon Performance Standard development and formalization for our building stock? I am excited about this and would like to know the updated timeline.
- How is the Clean Air Community Grant program being publicized? Do we expect to receive a lot of applications? How much interest do we have so far?
 - Are there plans to monitor the success of these projects in reducing air pollution or carbon emissions and then scaling some of them up? Or hiring businesses to repeat their project in other communities throughout the city?
- Please discuss where we are in meeting our carbon goals, and how we plan to accelerate to meet our 2030 and 2050 goals.
- Please provide a list of the projects that have benefited from Green Bond offerings.

Re Landmarks-

- Please provide a budget breakdown for Landmarks specifically -- including number, titles, and salaries of personnel, and non-personnel allocations for its operations.
- I was pleased to see the addition of one person to help get the new districts up and running; can you speak in detail about their anticipated responsibilities?
- It seems to me that due to inadequate staffing, the BLC not only has a backlog of study reports to complete, but is often unable to be effectively responsive to requests of residents and certainly unable to be proactive and help get treasured buildings landmarked before there's a crisis. It feels as though the pace of development has outstripped the ability of the city's singular preservation agency to protect what it is tasked with protecting, due to a lack of resources.
 - What is the plan for catching up on the backlog of landmark applications?
 - My impression is that an applicant can speed the process for their petition by paying for the study report; is this true, and have we thought about the equity implications of leaving landmark applications without financial means behind them at the back of the line?
- Just last week, we heard about a pending landmark demolished in East Boston. Can we implement a change where demolition of buildings under pending landmark status is forbidden?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Dockets #0538-0539 Enviro Revolving Funds

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

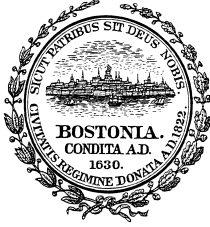
Working Session: Friday, April 30, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

- Historical sites are a key part of Boston’s tourist draw, and as we pursue the renewal of our tourism sector:
 - Has Landmarks and our historic sites been involved in conversations about the city’s plans to re-attract tourists and help drive an economic recovery?
 - Might this be a good time for a citywide historic building survey and preservation plan, as a one-time expense that would help boost our history-based tourism on a long-term basis?
- Where do conversations stand with the Community Preservation Committee and Treasury about how Landmarks can best collaborate with them to help leverage CPA funds for strategic historic preservation initiatives?
- Can you speak to the full combination of internal and external funds supporting our archaeology work, and to the extent that that work is grant-funded, how are we plan to extend (and expand) that capacity on a permanent basis?
- As you know, I have a home rule petition pending regarding local landmarking, which we intend to move forward in the coming months. But leaving that aside, what plans do we have to be more equitable about the sites that we landmark, so that we are landmarking sites that represent the diverse history of Boston? What tools or staff are needed to do this more successfully?
- I have several constituents who were nominated to the Mission Hill Triangle Architectural Conservation District review board, but have not been approved, I believe because we need a larger number of nominees to constitute a board. There are several other area stakeholders who are happy to nominate additional members; can Landmarks work with me to get a more complete set of nominees formally before the Council for approval?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

- Please provide an update on tree planting and the urban forestry project.
- In terms of green infrastructure, (rain gardens etc). Is this part of the environment department’s work or is it more up to Boston Water and Sewer?
- I’m concerned about hardscape paving over neighborhoods, with people creating parking spaces with asphalt and increasing runoff. What are we doing to increase the use of more permeable surfaces in order to address potential flooding?
- Please provide an update on green building codes and where the City is at with them.
- We’ve had conversations in the past about cemeteries and whether there are plans to do more sustainable/green burials? Especially given the increase in burial needs over the pandemic, how are we thinking about alternatives as we run out of space?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Dockets #0538-0539 Enviro Revolving Funds

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Working Session: Friday, April 30, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

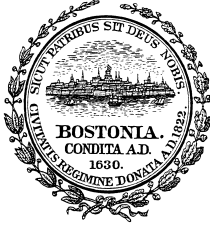
Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Re Landmarks-

- Re Landmarks, they're at capacity in dealing with backlog on studies of nominations for landmarks status. We should increase staff rather than trying to contract studies out. Can you speak to this?

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

- Can you provide an update on acquisition on city land for the purpose of green space, open space and affordable housing (esp. project in roslindale)?
- Please provide an update on the wetlands ordinance. I know we are still in the process of fine tuning the regulations, but can you provide more detail on where we are with that process and implementation.
- Please provide an update on CCE/CCA, which went into effect in February.
 - How many residents opted up to 100% renewable? How many opted down? How many stayed in the default category.
 - What do these choices mean in terms of revenue for renewable infrastructure?
- Please provide an update on the plastic bag reduction ordinance, especially given the pause last year due to COVID-19.
- Please talk about adherence and plans for net zero carbon construction on municipal buildings. What plans are there to codify the next iteration (e.g. large scale buildings)?
- Please provide some updates and details regarding BERDO. Where we are in terms of measuring and managing information and sharing that information? How can it be better publicized? How can we improve adherence to it? This is the most impactful way to reach our climate goals.
- Relating to trash and recycling pickup (and in coordination with Public Works), every year the cost increases. When I started we were getting paid \$5/ton for recycling, and we are now paying \$86/ton. This shows a need to move away from single stream recycling. We should be pushing for compost, textile recycling, and other alternatives.
 - How and when will we have curbside composting?
 - We should consider discussing building our own recycling facility with federal stimulus money.



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Dockets #0538-0539 Enviro Revolving Funds

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Working Session: Friday, April 30, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

- I'm concerned about the impact of climate change on small businesses. What kinds of work is the City doing to support small businesses to address the impacts of climate change? Are you working on green business initiatives?
 - On Columbia Road and other places, some businesses are being impacted by flooding. How can these businesses impacted by climate change be looped into this work?
- A report in 2019 revealed that Chinatown had the worst air quality in MA. Since that report went public, please summarize what efforts the City has made to mitigate this problem.
 - What steps are being taken to improve air quality in Chinatown and throughout the City, and when can residents expect to see improvement?
- Has the department done any research about the correlation between violence and heating patterns in the City? Are there opportunities to address this through cooling spaces or other environmental solutions?
- Please provide an update on Melnea Cass 2.0 and street trees.
- Is the dept looking at ways to support green building at Madison Park?
 - What plans are there to educate and engage youth, and support youth internships in green building?
- What else can we do to better educate the community around environmental issues (e.g. composting)? In other countries composting is a way of life, but it seems to be difficult to incorporate for people here. What opportunities exist to educate the public about steps they can take to improve their footprint, and how can we be intentional with PSA campaigns?
- What does an environmental green building look like? Similar to with BuildBPS, are there any talks about rebuilding BHA with a green lens? If so, what does the dollar amount look like for this?

Councilor Andrea Campbell:

- What is the City's approach to conserving privately owned lands/urban wilds? How are sites researched, valued, approached, and reviewed with an equity lens?
- What is the City doing to expand the tree canopy in certain neighborhoods? What is the process and strategy to ensure we continue to expand it with new development and renovations?
- What do we currently have in place to oversee waterfront and river sustainability and access projects?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Dockets #0538-0539 Enviro Revolving Funds

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Working Session: Friday, April 30, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

- How will the new investments in climate ready boston be directed?
- The new heat resilience study, will that be citywide?

Re Landmarks-

- Regarding the Landmarks Commission, how are we expanding capacity to address the backlog and have the commission play a role earlier on in development?

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:

- It's long overdue, whether through Parks, Environment, or Public Works, for the City to fund its own, in-house tree pruning division, with up to date technology and equipment. It is important to plant trees, but we also need to take care of our existing trees. We have some arborists, but not enough.
 - How much have we spent contracting out tree pruning, trimming and planting services?
- Environment is received a \$1.2M increase, \$1M of which is to work with organizations to develop job training programs, especially in green industries. Please provide more detail about what these programs will look like.
- Reiterating, in support of a point made by the Chair at the Law Department hearing, the Groundwater Trust needs more support from the City, especially legal.

Re Landmarks-

- Re Landmarks, the time has come to give them the resources they need to be on the front end of development. Many residents reach out early in the process, but the Commission's hands are often tied until it's almost too late to save a space. I would like to see more resources to get BLC involved earlier in these processes.

Councilor Michelle Wu asked:

- The operating budget is set to increase by \$1.2 million, including a \$1 million initiative to work with organizations in the City to develop job training programs in the renewable energy and green infrastructure industries. What staff will be dedicated to managing this program? What funding, if any, will be provided through collaboration with City departments like OWD?
- The budget includes an annual authorization of \$50,000 for the Conservation Commission to secure outside consultants to aid in the review of proposed projects. What outside consultants were contracted to review the proposed Eversource substation in East Boston, and what were their findings?



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

Dockets #0524-0531 FY22 Budget

Dockets #0538-0539 Enviro Revolving Funds

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Working Session: Friday, April 30, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Hearing: Monday, May 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

- There seem to be quite a few external funding sources that have been discontinued in FY22: Can the department explain why many of these grants have been discontinued in FY22?
- For FY22, there is an external funds allocation for the MVP Heat Resilience Study: can you talk a bit more about that? How long will the study last, how is it conducted, and when can we expect to see the results?
- Why are there no planned expenditures for the Climate Resilience Reserve for FY22?
- How is the department working to make sure their employees are reflective of the City of Boston? How is the department working to diversify its workforce?
- Can the department talk a little about the impact that the pandemic has had on the environment in Boston?
- Out of 17 contracts, none are SLBE, MBE, or WBEs: How does the department plan to diversify its contracts?