

## **FY 2023 Budget Questions from Councilors**

Questions received by May 13, 2022

Updated May 17, 2022

### **General Questions:**

#### **1. What was the number of non-union employees included in FY 2022 Budget?**

There were 66.5 non-union employees in the FY22 City Operating Budget.

#### **2. What is the number of non-union employees included in FY 2023 Budget?**

There are 66.5 non-union employees in the FY23 City Operating Budget. Although there is an increase of 1.0 FTE overall (see below), one existing FT position was shifted from non-union to union.

#### **3. What new positions were created in FY 2022 and are there any new positions planned for in the FY 2023 Budget?**

There were 3 positions added to the Fiscal 2022 Budget, HR(152), IT(155) and Inspectional Services (241).

There are 2 new positions added to the Fiscal 2023 Budget: part time positions in the Mayor's Office (121) and Pine Banks (652).

#### **4. Where all new positions absorbed in the budget?**

The new positions proposed are part of the balanced budget for Fiscal 2023.

#### **5. Has any one-time money (ARPA) been used in FY22 or projected to be used in FY23 for any / new positions?**

Yes. ARPA funds are being used to pay the wages, benefits and insurance costs of two full-time positions:

- Social Services Coordinator in the Health and Human Services Department
- Director of Economic Recovery and Business Development in the Mayor's Office

As the position are grant funded, they have no effect on the operating budget for either department.

#### **6. Why do the Salary numbers seem so high for the Fiscal 2023 budget?**

For Fiscal Year 2023, from Friday, July 1, 2022 to Friday June 30, 2023, there are 53 Fridays. City Departments are paid on Fridays and must budget for 53 weeks to account for this. This does not result in an extra week of pay for employees. In addition, typically this occurs every five or six years in the budget cycle.

#### **7. How can I get a list of what the ARPA money has been committed to and that dollar amount?**

An update memo to the City Council has been provided which lists all ARPA-funded projects approved to-date. There are also resources available on the City website to answer questions about approved projects at <https://www.cityofmelrose.org/mayor/pages/ARPA>.

## **Budget 121: Mayor**

### **1. How many new positions were created in FY 2022 and are there any new positions proposed in the FY 2023 budget?**

One full-time, grant funded position was created in FY22: the new Director of Economic Recovery and Business Development position was created by the Mayor using ARPA funds.

One part-time position is being proposed for inclusion in the FY23 operating budget: a part-time (18 hours/week) administrative position is proposed to be added to provide admin and front desk support to the Mayor's Office and other City Hall departments in need of additional administrative support.

### **2. Are these new salaries accounted for in the budget or through one time money?**

The PT administrative position is included in the proposed FY23 budget. The ARPA-funded position is not.

### **3. Where in the Budget is the Community Development position?**

There is no Community Development position in the Mayor's Office. The Director of Economic Recovery and Business Development position is not in the budget, as it is being fully grant funded through the use of ARPA funds.

### **4. Can you shed some light on the 23% increase in dues and membership?**

For the past several years, the Mayor's Office budget has been carrying an outdated number for the cost of dues to the Massachusetts Municipal Association and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and because of this has regularly overspent this line item. These dues have been increased regularly, but the Mayor's Office budget has not kept pace with those adjustments. The increase for FY23 brings the budget in line with what is expected to be needed to meet these costs.

### **5. Can you explain the 15.8% increase in salaries?**

This is a combination of the cost of the addition of the 18 hour/week administrative position and the effect of the 53-week year.

### **6. Will the part-time assistant position be eligible for benefits?**

No. This will be a "Part-Time Employee Without Benefits" which is defined as an employee who is scheduled eighteen (18) hours or less per week regularly. These employees are not entitled to holiday pay, vacation pay, sick pay, group health insurance or any other benefits.

## **0100 Auditor**

### **1. Were there any positions created in FY 2022 and are there any new positions proposed in FY 2023 Budget?**

There are no new positions as part of the Fiscal 2023 budget for the Auditor's Office.

### **2. Can you shed some light on the 7.3% salary increase?**

The Auditor's office is proposing that our union position be increased from 30 hours to 35 hours, in addition to the 53rd week budget requirement for Fiscal 2023.

## **141 Assessor**

### **1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

No.

**2. When is the next re-evaluation? Was it in 2022? If so does FY 2023 need to be the same dollar amount?**

- The next Revaluation (Certification Review conducted by the Bureau of Local Assessments/Department of Revenue) will be in Fiscal Year 2027.
- Fiscal Year 2022 is a Certification year for Melrose.
- The Bureau of Local Assessment (BLA) conducts this comprehensive review every 5 years using statistical analysis to ensure that the assessed values in each community in Massachusetts are supported with current market evidence and are uniformly and equitably applied to all property, and that the assessors have applied mass appraisal practices according to the law.
- In interim years (years between Certification years), assessors are required to adjust valuations to reflect changes in the tax base due to new construction, alterations, demolitions, etc. If there has been a change in market conditions, assessors must also adjust their valuation schedules so that all property valuations reflect full and fair cash value as of January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Because the resources required to assess all property at full and fair market value as of January 1 remain the same in FY23, our budget requirements also remain the same.

**3. Why do we need \$4k in furniture if we spent \$2,200 in 2021 and \$29.98 YTD in FY 2022?**

The Furniture & Fixtures line in the Assessor's budget is intended primarily for the maintenance and support of public access to materials, records and resources in the Assessor's office. Due to restrictions associated with the pandemic, some of the projects covered under this budget line were temporarily suspended in FY 2022. The Assessor's Department is currently resuming work on and intends to continue work on these projects in FY 2023, starting with the reestablishment of a Resident Kiosk area. This kiosk will allow all residents and taxpayers easy access to Assessors Maps, Property Record Cards, Valuation information, historical information, etc., while Assessing Office staff may provide explanation and support as needed. The planning of this space incorporates a focus on ADA compliance.

**145 Treasurer/Collector**

**1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

No, there is no intent to add to the team in FY23. During FY22, the Head Clerk-RE retired and a Senior Clerk-W&S was promoted to Head Clerk. We recently hired a new Senior Clerk-W&S who has fit into the team very nicely and doing well on the learning curve. We are fully staffed and will focus on cross-training during the year.

**2. Can you shed some light on why there is a \$15k increase in printing cost?**

The increase in printing cost is largely due to a reallocation of a portion of the Kelley & Ryan fees that had been booked to the postage line. The Kelley & Ryan bills cover the costs associated with printing, stuffing envelopes, processing and postage costs for each mailing for RE, Excise, Personal Property and other communications. Which line item the expenses were booked to seems to have varied over time and the entire bill had ended up booked in Postage. After reviewing with the Senior Auditor, it was decided that only the postage portion of the bills will be booked to postage and the actual creation/processing of the items should be booked to printing to more accurately reflect the expense.

Other printing line items that are part of the increase include the cost of W-2 forms & envelopes which we had had an inventory of to use in 2022 and will need to purchase for 2023. Additionally, the costs of mandatory advertisements in the Melrose Weekly News for Tailings, Tax Titles and bids for services have risen and added to the increase.

### **3. Can you explain the new bank service fees that were not in the previous budget?**

There are two drivers to the new cost. The first is the near zero percent interest rates that are being applied to our bank balances, the second is a merger between two of our providers.

The City has been using Century Bank for processing lockbox payments for many years. Century's pricing model included that interest earned on the balances held in the lockbox account would be used to offset lockbox processing services. When interest rates dropped to record lows on the accounts, there was not enough interest generated to offset the fees, particularly during high spend or low collections periods such as when we fund the retirement pension or the month or so before the real estate payments are due and the account balances are lower than average. As the Fed tightens rates, the additional interest earned will help offset fees to a larger extent. This expense was not in prior years' budgets because the expense was not incurred in the past.

Century Bank was acquired by Eastern Bank in the late fall of 2021. Eastern Bank did not have a pricing model in place for lockbox and rather than adopt Century's, came up with a more restrictive pricing model from a client perspective. Additionally, they continue to apply the lowest interest rates to the accounts of all our banking relationships (.05%-.10%).

From a client perspective, the results of the merger have not been positive and I have initiated conversations with another lockbox provider to determine our best course for pricing and quality of service.

### **151 City Solicitor**

#### **1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

No.

#### **2. Can you please explain the 25% increase in the salary/wages line?**

The increase is to account for increasing the hours of the Assistant City Solicitor from 30 to 35 hours. Former City Solicitor's departure occurred right in the middle of switching this employee from 30 to 35 hours. For FY22, this position was budgeted for only 30 hours.

#### **3. Why such a large increase in professional services?**

Increase of \$15,000 for Professional Services: Increase reflects cost of specialized Labor Counsel this coming fiscal year to assist in Main Table Collective Bargaining Negotiations for 3 Public Safety Contracts and continued use of Outside Counsel for Cable License Negotiations with Verizon/Comcast.

#### **4. Can you shed some light into the considerable increase in the property and casualty Insurance? Did we experience a lot of claims?**

Increase in Property Insurance coverage to reflect new pole chargers that were not part of the FY22 budget due to timing. Increase in coverage is also reflective of capital acquisitions in process on a regular basis and insurance cost increases to cover liability/defense of public safety employees. This number is also reflective of a 5% assumed increase across existing policies.

### **152 Human Resource**

#### **1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

No.

#### **2. Can you give a little background into the 6% salary increase?**

The 6% increase is due to step movement and having to budget for 53 payroll cycles in FY23.

## 155 Informational Technology

### **1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

There are no new positions included in the FY23 Budget. I do need another position to fulfil some of the Public Safety workload and cybersecurity issues but since I was allowed a new position for FY22, it was not prudent to add another position at this time. During the discussions for the IT Project Manager position in 2020, 2 positions were identified to be added to the IT Dept. The first was the Project Manager and the second was a technician to address the aforementioned items.

### **2. Can you give us a little background into the large increase in software licenses?**

The city has moved to an Microsoft 365 (M365) platform for all of our MS Office products with the addition of Teams and email hosting (which is required for M365). This product will cost the City roughly \$60,000/year. In FY22, the amount paid for M365 is \$58,200.00. However, we have already needed to add licenses for departments and employees so I predict this will grow. Additionally, adjacent products are required to facilitate the use of M365. We are using a Barracuda product to backup all of the data now stored in 365 as well as screen and archive our email for legal compliance. This product is \$24,898.64 for FY22. We will be renewing our antivirus this year for a three year terms which accounts for the rest of the increase. I predict the increase in these online platforms to rise in price 3-5% annually.

### **3. OSDBA support contract line. We have been budgeting \$10k a year but have not come close to using that dollar amount over the last two years. Is this the correct amount could it be less?**

The OSDBA contract line has been in place for a while. Initially, this was for an actual Operational Services DataBase Agreement (OSDBA) which was a maintenance contract with Tyler (Munis) for anything related to emergency fixes and database issues. We have since discontinued that agreement which was for over \$15,000 but kept in place a \$10,000 amount to use for any emergencies that may arise and for Tyler upgrades etc. During the pandemic, we were focused on all tech needs surrounding the pandemic and school operations and there was not much done in Munis. Now that we are coming out of the pandemic (sort of) we have refocused our efforts on Munis maintenance upgrades. By the end of June, we will have rolled out the new 2021.3 version of Munis which is a major upgrade with many new features. Additionally, we will be rolling out new features with Tyler ESS in the coming year. The 2021.3 version will deprecate in 2023 at which time we will need to do another upgrade so this funding will be necessary.

## 161 City Clerk

### **1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

There are no new positions included in the FY 2023 budget for City Clerk 161, Clerk of Committees 112 or Elections 162

### **2. Can you give some insight into the 33% increase in the overtime budget?**

It is anticipated that the voter access protocols will be back reinstituted in some fashion possibly with additional measures. With two fall elections the Elections Administrator will be working more than 35 hours to accommodate the work and this union position is eligible for overtime. Additionally, the senior clerk who shares some elections responsibilities is eligible for overtime as well. The FY2021 budget reflects high overtime costs where that budget line was spent along with an additional \$739.01 due to the additional voter access processes. Overtime will be carefully managed. Previously the City Clerk and Assistant City Clerk (not overtime eligible) were handling election functions.

## 162 Elections

### **1. Where is the Elections Administrators salary? It does not look like it is in this budget.**

The elections administrator salary is paid from the City Clerk's salary and wages line (Department 161).

## 171 Conservation

### **1. What falls into the conservation maintenance line?**

The conservation Maintenance line is what we pay out all of the pond treatments from. It currently has our regular maintenance contract for all three ponds (Ell, Swains and Towners). The current treatment contract (Algaecide and Alum treatments at Ell, herbicide treatments at Swains for submersed vegetation control and floating vegetation control at Towners) totals over \$10k and is a separate contract from the Water Chestnut treatment contract.

### **2. Can you explain the 60% increase in salary and wages? Is this additional hours?**

Yes. The Conservation Commission requested an increase in the salary and wages line of \$5,700. This will allow the Conservation Agent to work 16 hours weekly versus the current 10 hours weekly.

### **3. Will the current conservation agent remain in the position for 16 hours a week?**

Yes, that is the expectation.

### **4. Does this increase from 10 to 16 hours change any benefits?**

No.

## 175 Planning Board

### **1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

No.

### **2. Can you shed some light on the 14% increase in salary and wages?**

There are no new positions in the Office of Planning and Community Department in the FY2023 budget, but there have been staff changes that have resulted in an increase in salaries and wages. The Senior Planner left the organization and was replaced by the Planner who held the part time Planning Coordinator role for the past six years. During this transition, the job description for the Senior Planner role was reviewed and the salary was adjusted to reflect market conditions. When the promotion occurred and the part time Planning Coordinator role became available, the Planning Director consulted with the Mayor, the CFO and HR and received support to upgrade the Planning Coordinator role to a full time Assistant Planner position. The hours were adjusted from 24 hours per week to 35 hours per week, the job description was updated to reflect additional responsibilities and there was a corresponding increase in salary to reflect the additional hours, responsibilities and market conditions. This additional capacity and skill level will help with the implementation of the Housing Production Plan and help us better respond to the complexities of the work we do in the Office of Planning and Community Department.

211 Police

No questions received.

221 Fire

No questions received.

#### 241 Inspectional Services

**1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

No.

**2. Do you have enough support in terms of staff?**

I am continually assessing the needs for additional ISD staffing. Currently I am not pursuing any additional staff. However, given the volume of large mixed use residential/retail projects in the pipeline, I anticipate pursuing an additional local building inspector sometime during the FY 23 Budget period.

291 Emergency Management

No questions received.

#### 296 Parking

**1. What falls under professional services line?**

The professional services line for Parking includes the services provided by Kelley & Ryan. This includes and entering ticket data and maintaining the parking ticket system, mailing notifications regarding additional fees (demands) added to the amount due for late payment and for marking outstanding tickets at the registry of motor vehicles. The expense is driven by the number of parking tickets issued.

#### 399 Regional School Assessment

**1. Do we know what the enrollment is for next year?**

56 at Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School and 7 at Essex Agricultural

**2. What is the increase in students?**

Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocation School is increasing by 12 students for Fiscal Year 2022 to Fiscal Year 2023. As of right now, there are 7 students attending Essex Agricultural in 2023. Enrollment remained the same from Fiscal Year 2022 to Fiscal Year 2023. For informational purposes, these enrollment numbers can and do fluctuate after the budget has been adopted as they are not under the purview of the City's control.

**3. When does the assessment begin for the new school?**

The Assessment for the Northeast Metropolitan begins in Fiscal Year 2023.

401 Administration and engineering

No questions received.

#### 402 PW Facility Maintenance

No questions received.

#### 422 Public Works Highway

No questions received.

#### 423 Public Works Snow Removal

No questions received.

#### 433 Public Works Sanitation

No questions received.

#### 475 PW Park and Forestry

No questions received.

#### 485 PW Automotive

No questions received.

#### 491 Cemetery

No questions received.

#### 511 Health

##### **1. Are there any new/additional positions included in FY 2023 Budget?**

No.

##### **2. Do you have any positions funded through ARPA?**

We have one full-time position supported by ARPA: the Social Services Coordinator.

##### **3. Can you shed some light on the 5.8% increase in salary and wages?**

The 5.8% increase in salary and wages reflects two phenomena: new personnel are early career professionals, which entails Step increases on the union scale, as opposed to long time employees that may have maxed out on the union scale and are only receiving COLA each year. The other reason for the increase is due to the starting salary range for Health Inspectors being moved up. Health Inspectors are a difficult position to fill in the State of Massachusetts due to their unique skillset requirements and lack of a state funded formal training program. To remain competitive in the market, we needed to increase our salary range to attract and retain qualified Health Inspectors. And like all departments, our salary and wages budget is also affected by the 53-week year this fiscal year.



540 Beebe Estate

No questions received.

#### 541 Council on Aging

**1. Are any positions covered under ARPA?**

No.

**2. Where does the transportation cost fall within this budget?**

- Original purchases of busses were grants from the Friends of Milano Center.
- COA transportation costs are driver salaries.
- Passenger service fees go to the COA revolving account as well as expense-related to trips
- DPW assumes cost of vehicles (repairs , insurance, maintenance, and gas).

543 Veterans

No questions received.

544 Human Rights Commission

No questions received.

545 Disability Commission

No questions received.

#### 611 Library

**1. What is the plan to relocate the library and will this have any impact of the budget?**

With the School Committee's approval, the library will relocate to the Beebe School in mid-August. The cost of the move is included in the project budget, and will have no impact on the library's operating budget.

**2. Has any ARPA money been used for the relocation of the library?**

No.

**3. Will there be any cost saving from this budget while the library is relocated?**

Because the library is required to maintain its normal hours open in our temporary space and maintain spending on new material for patrons, there are no significant changes to the budget.

**4. Will there be any services not provided while the library is relocated?**

Normal library programming will continue but will be located in partner locations or hosted virtually. As we did during COVID, we will modify our services to ensure that we are still providing service to the community. A small percentage of the library collections will be browsable by the public, and the remainder will be accessible by staff. We will also continue our interlibrary loan program. There will be a few computers available in the temporary space for the public, as well as wireless internet access.

## 631 Recreation

### 1. Is this budget enough to provide the programs?

The proposed FY23 budget for the Recreation Dept. allows us to continue our current level of programming and events for the community.

### 2. Has any ARPA money been allocated to the Recreation Department?

Yes. Money has been allocated to help support mental health and wellness programming. These funds are being used to offer specific types of trainings and workshops in Mental Health First Aid, mindfulness, and other programs that promote health and well-being.

### 3. What were the participation numbers pre Covid, during Covid and currently?

- Pre-Covid = 7,000+ participants
- During Covid = 3,000+ participants
- Currently = 5,000+ participants
- FY23 = Expecting increase to 8,000+ participants (our programs are in extremely high demand)

### 4. Do you have any new programs you are looking to create that cannot be funded within this budget?

Yes, however any new programming would require additional professional staff such as a second Recreation Coordinator. At this time the Recreation Department is at capacity with our current programs and events. In order to provide more programming to the community in the areas of athletics, fitness, arts, music, STEM, trainings, wellness, nature, clubs, gaming, adventure, inclusive, and events we would need the staff to provide appropriate coordination and oversight. Quality offerings are important for our residents and we need to have the staff available to do it properly. The first proposal would be to promote one of our part-time roles to a full-time position. The additional funds necessary would be in the ballpark of \$50,000 per year to cover their full-time salary and benefits. We're working on meeting this need through non-operating sources including our Revolving fund and by using ARPA funds and Free Cash to meet the department's capital needs as prioritized by the Rec Director.

652 Pine Banks

No questions received.

## 692 Community Events

### 1. What is planned in 2023? Why was not money spent in 2022?

We anticipate a full return of the Memorial Day parade in 2023, and that the budgeted community event funds for 2022 will be spent before the end of the Fiscal Year.

## 693 Memorial Hall

### 1. How do the bookings look for the rest on calendar year 2022?

For May 2022, we have 28 events and June we have 27 events. Total events for FY22 = 225 events

711 Municipal Debt

No questions received.

751 Municipal Debt Interest

No questions received.

752 Projected Temp/Debt Interest

No questions received.

911 Pension

No questions received.

912 Worker's Compensation

No questions received.

913 Unemployment

No questions received.

914 Employee Benefits

No questions received.

916 Medicare Tax City Portion

No questions received.

930 Departmental Equipment

No questions received.

**931 Capital Outlay**

**1. We budget \$50k last year and spent \$2,600. What goes into this line item?**

This line item is used for IT upgrades for both the City (\$50K) and School (\$50K). Previous things this line item have been used on includes upgrades to projectors and whiteboards.

**2. Wouldn't this go in the IT or School budget?** These lines represent annual investment in the City and School's IT infrastructure. These items are considered Capital and put into a separate Capital budget outside of the department's operating budget.

942 Stabilization Funds

No questions received.