

## Finance Committee: General Fund Budget Hearings (Day 4, Part II)

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### Summary

- Staffing is a concern to meet the needs of the Health Department. There are 17 open positions (including important ones), some of which are not public knowledge, related to COVID response. All COVID tracer positions are being filled by a staffing agency.
- Budget for the Public Health Department is going up by 3.6 percent, including new staff positions, including a fiscal grants manager and assistant director of public health
- Data systems have challenges in the areas of lead and housing.
- Council Member Kevin Conwell and Council Member Joseph Jones state they do not get the help they need to support community environmental concerns overall but more specifically with the Safe Routes initiative.

### Follow-Up Questions

- What causes one ward to receive better service than another?
- If ward needs are different, such as homes and families affected by lead, I wonder if specialty services and budget line items are designated to help those wards. If not, why not, when historical data would show one community's needs being different than another's.
- Who controls how a ward is expanded? Greater University Circle, with its rezoning and recent activities, comes to mind.

### Notes

#### BEFORE

This is a continuing General Fund budget hearing to review budget line items.

#### AFTER

This meeting held much of its attention toward addressing questions toward Brian Kimball, commissioner of environment, Cleveland Department of Public Health. It was found that much of the documentation needed for participants to make or support informed decisions was not available to them, with time to review, prior to this important financial meeting. Many of the concerns were about housing health concerns and data.

At the onset Kimball was asked, "Do you feel that over the last year (of the pandemic) we have had the resources to address the need and response?" Yes, he reported. Overall, he felt that the department was able to overcome staffing challenges and challenges with birth-certificate and death-certificate processing, which was delayed and caused some irritation to Council Member Brian Mooney, Ward 11.

The [Identification Crisis Collaborative](#), led by a Ward 11 resident [Eileen Kelly](#), has concerns. Her organization is used to processing 300 to 400 certificates and claims but has only been able to process 150 to 180 per month. They examined the processes and exact delays and said that electronic systems are being explored. Per staff, the issue is around security paper and its issuance to the department. Since staff has returned to five days a week from two days, the backlog has been completed, per Kimball and staff. This is of concern per Mooney, because many service organizations doing work with emergency services such as housing require the certificates to perform service. Kimball said through October the staff processing the requests was only able to get into the office two days a week, it had vacancies and had to hire temp workers to clear up the backlog of requests. Cleveland also had to ask for assistance from the Ohio Department of Health to process the requests.

Revenues reported per Council Member Kerry McCormack, Ward 3, accounts for birth and death certificates.

Fiscal Lead is Tiffany Davis, presence requested. \$1.3 million in revenue for death and birth, workers compensation, vital statistics fees and state subsidies for vital stats, (yes those that they were not processing fast enough per local certificate service).

Weekly committee hearings will start again, with latest information about COVID will continue after budget hearings..

Council members Joseph Jones, Ward 1, and Kevin Conwell, Ward 9, both brought up issues with code enforcement on property and on the Safe Routes to School initiative. They asked why their wards do not receive the attention and service they deserve. Since a quality contact is no longer available, they do not receive service as needed. Jones

also requested that, in the future, information be presented by the Public Health Department on what has been done or works in action prior to submitting the budget for review. There is weakness in infrastructure or data that connects to the General Fund Budget, immediate reports do not appear to be able to be pulled at request.

Joseph Jones said he did not know anything about vaccine pods for his ward. Pods are pop-up stations to issue vaccinations. [Training was provided about 11 years ago](#). Nothing recent on "Pods" per the Cuyahoga County Emergency Preparedness website. Jones says that this information should be available ahead of time and cued to go. "We have no outcomes to review, with a request to sign off, as a professional courtesy. Records ahead of time, and then sign off. "

City Readiness CTI-funded public health public response, office of emergency preparedness funded 100 percent. Grant documents were requested. Received \$13 million million- \$14 million in emergency 2020-2021 grants funded.

Ward 15 Council Member Jenny Spencer asked if the health department has a role with Lead Safe Cleveland.

Kimball says that they are looking at options and will give recommendations as they move along in their collaboration, with hope that they may help with hiring qualified epidemiologists. Next question, health equity and social justice, strategic planning process, when will we hear more about its objectives, deliverables and desired outcomes? Kimball replied, they have not filled the position for this yet. Once they hire a commissioner and supporting staff, they hope to further explore collaborations. Three key positions are open (included in the 17 mentioned).

## HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Jasmin Santana, Ward 14, stated she is unable to retrieve data from tools to support her need for funding with health resources. The Department of Health has a new website with a form available to take complaints. It is constantly getting feedback and making updates, working with IT to better serve and collect information. In comparison to every other department, she noticed the budget is the least in comparison to the others. Is there an overall mission for public health? How can we get together to strategize what we are going to do to improve the health of our city? She states that it is time to review and consider feedback to assist in developing the strategic plan.

Chair Kelley mentions that Frances Mills, the director of the Cleveland Office of Minority

Health, is great, and will host a meeting for that strategic planning.

Council Member Michael Polensek, Ward 8, asks whether any establishments were shut down for health reasons. He mentioned what he calls the "Dr. Seuss stores" that do not have properly maintained refrigerators. He says "they cannot sell whatever they want." There are 12 grant-funded inspector positions. 12 inspectors on food program primary. These are not reflected in the General Fund budget. This is said to be sufficient coverage and a part of the food cost methodology for food inspections and food.

#### LEAD SAFE HOMES.

Polensek requests update on homes that have been tested and posted as unsafe homes. He requested specific addresses. He says lead levels are tied to violence, and he wants to be sure we are doing due diligence with LLCs and absentee landlords, for lead levels.

There are four people in code enforcement for the neighborhood and they are swamped with quality-of-life issues. With 1,214 tickets for violations last year, the city is not able to solve the issues. Joseph Jones mentions code enforcement tickets are getting nullified by prosecutors. He asks "Would you be opposed to adding six more people to inspections?" No direct answer.

Kimball states that the department investigates nuisance complaints. Clean Cleveland helped with moving staff across town.

Chief Tracy Martin-Thompson mentions that sanitary, lead, and food staff complaints are "also" responsible for responding to nuisance. J. Jones said they should do something different with staff to get caught up on 15 years of inaction. He said he has received no help from the health department.

Enough lead staff have been confirmed for the summer.

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