

FY 2019 Borough Budget Consultations

Manhattan - Department of Buildings

Meeting Date 9/20/2017

AGENDA ITEM 1 : General Agency Funding Discussion

The purpose of holding the Borough Budget Consultations is to provide Community Boards with important information to assist in drafting their statement of District Needs and Budget Priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. As you know, Community Board Members are volunteers who may not be familiar with the budget process and how agencies' programs are funded. At the same time, Community Board members are very knowledgeable about local service needs.

This year's Manhattan agendas have Agencies begin the consultation with a presentation of their goals, funding decision process, and highlights of their funding needs.

Then, the agenda continues with Community Boards asking about specific program funding.

Lastly, the agendas include Boards' requests on district-specific budget questions. We request that the agency respond in writing, but have any further discussions on these items with the Community Boards outside of the consultation.

For the General Agency Funding Discussion, please provide written responses and please be prepared to present on the following topics for 10-15 minutes at the beginning of our Consultation:

1. Explain the process the agency uses to formulate goals and budget priorities.
2. What are the current proposed FY18 and FY19 service and operational goals and proposed funding?
3. Which programs is the agency adding, dropping, or changing for FY18 and projected for FY19?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

DOBNow is a new system to replace the department's antiquated system. This is is and public-facing.

The DOB FY18 proposed budget is \$185M, not \$185K

FOLLOW-UP:

AGENDA ITEM 2 : Staffing for Manhattan

Staffing for Manhattan Questions:

1. Will the increased funding for FY 2018 support staff include a much needed additional liaisons for Manhattan? Staff increases have not kept pace with the increase in construction in Manhattan. Is funding available to hire an additional much-needed liaison, to have three liaisons to serve Manhattan.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

is there additional funding for community affairs staff?

DOB -there is no additional funding, now or expected. We have grown substantially, keep in mind we are a relatively small agency.

FOLLOW-UP:

AGENDA ITEM 3 : Inspection Efficiency

Inspection Efficiency Questions:

1. There seems to be lack of coordination of information for efficient inspections—i.e. inspections of businesses after closing hours or inspection of business and construction sites after work hours. Will FY 2018 funded staff increases address this?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

FOLLOW-UP:

AGENDA ITEM 4 : Audits Report Times

Audits Report Times Questions:

1. Are there plans for FY 2018 and FY 2019 staff increases to enable DOB to audit the required 20% of professionally certified plans? What percentage of professionals certified plans were audited in FY17? Have I funds be allocated to increase this percentage in FY18 and are increases projected for FY19?

We do not have documentation of how long it takes for Community Boards to receive results of requested plan audits to resolve complaints—but we can document instances of over a month or longer. Additionally, some do not get audited at all unless there are follow up calls from community boards. It is increasingly difficult for Community Boards to resolve problems because of the increasing longer times to receive information from DOB. What will be done to resolve this?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

Mayor's audit report indicated DOB is doing well with service levels and goals for the coming years.

FOLLOW-UP:

AGENDA ITEM 5 : CB Complaint Resolution

CB Complaint Resolution Questions:

Will FY 2018 staff increases enable DOB to respond to requests to audit plans and complete inspections in a more timely manner to resolve complaints submitted by Community Boards?

We have followed 311 complaints where residents sent information. Inspections are not scheduled for several weeks until the CB follows up with the liaison to get inspections scheduled. What funding would it take for DOB to be able to respond immediately for various types of inspection?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

Hired 130 inspectors to conduct inspections are a more rapid pace, hopefully this will help

FOLLOW-UP:

AGENDA ITEM 6 : Budget Priorities

What budget priorities and staffing requests would DOB like Community Boards to support?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

FOLLOW-UP:

AGENDA ITEM 7 : Captial Tech Improvements

What were DOB's funding request for any additional capital technology improvements for FY18 and projected Fy19? How will these assist in department-wide effectiveness and transparency?

Is the BIS replacement project, as highlighted by DOB last year, on schedule and is it fully funded?

What is the status of the backlog of applications\plans being uploaded into the BIS system? Would capital improvements such as technology or expense improvement such as additional staff best resolve the backlog?

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

With DOBNow, are staff will no longer be tasked with engaging in this kind of work.

FOLLOW-UP:

AGENDA ITEM 8 : District Specific Questions #1

CB4: There has been a rash of improperly approved demolitions with demo-restricted special districts. DOB promised to update their BIS system to flag all sites that are within special districts. That has yet to happen. Please update us.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

it is projected that as we bring DOBNow further along, additional flags/checks will be added to sensitive properties.

FOLLOW-UP:

AGENDA ITEM 9 : District Specific Questions

CB7: Last year DOB announced they will be making changes to the AHV policy at the end of October 2016. Please explain these changes and what impact DOB believes they have had on the community and the construction industry.

AGENCY RESPONSE:

MEETING NOTES:

COMMENTS:

FOLLOW-UP:

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Bob: speak more to the revisions of AHV, specifically the increased technical review or additional administrative approvals?

DOB: we will follow up, however, AHV looks more closely at the job scope.

Bob: when you look at the number of denials re AHV, it would be helpful to show trended data. Who is being denied, and how does this impact communities.

Your written response states it is no "generally easier" to approve AHV, this is only on the first application...is this correct? How does this apply to situations with a "stop work order"

If there is an identified issue, DOB is informed, and an AHV would not be granted.

AHV does not address the following:

-the same property may well be the subject of a AHV, it is our experience that once a property is granted AHV on weekends or whatever, these are usually granted in perpetuity. The way this process used to work, a list of anticipated AHV's would be given to CB DMs, for comment and planning purposes. Why cant we go back to this process?

DOB: We can go back? Re AHVs for holidays, events, etc... the Code does not have stipulations re work on holidays. So there is not much DOB there, however, in terms of regular work...how many renewals can one applicant get before an agency review/approval, DOB is still determining that threshold.

The statutes are very board...and I am a little bothered that the way this process currently happens, it puts the responsibility to have a compelling reason to not grant an AHV on weekends, rather than the applicant presented DOB with a compelling reason as to why they need AHVs.

Susan: We are VERY frustrated with your agency. This is not personal, however...

instead of writing a letter to DOB, we should send this to the Mayor's office. I think that would be most effective.

Does DOB investigate fully re what the business is, prior to granted an COF?

DOB: Re regulating the use of a property - Zoning take effective here, meaning certain districts are zoned for particular businesses.

Performance spaces??? Folks are selling tickets and having performances. What happens in this situations?

DOB: DOB would engage the applicant to determine the current and long-term use of that building/business, and we would require that they confirm and send that to current and future use, prior to an issuance of a COF.

Does DOB specifically ask the applicant, What Are You Doing here??

DOB: Not at the moment, however, just thinking out loud, DOB can add a line to the COF to state the type of business allowed.

Even though yall are very much overworked, and I am always frustrated with your agency... it is much better than five years ago. so thanks!

JB:

Can you give us specific number for Manhattan plan examiners? Also, please make sure to break these out by borough.

DOB - We will get you this information. Note that inspectors are citywide.

In terms of DOBNow, can you provide a general timeline for when we can expect to see these additional flags/advancements in the system re AHVs?

So longs as the administrative code reads as it currently does in relation to AHVs, the department's hands are tied, we cannot require developers to check in with CBs to determine appropriateness for AHVs, cause that is not how to code reads today.

Every DOB transaction will go through DOBNow. Everything is being mapped, and the idea is that all of this type will be available online.

Every property within a special district should be flagged so that it does not get demoed, does this currently happen? We were told this functionality would exist.

DOB: internally this information does exist in the form of a Commissioner's report. This report is create by our risk team, and its purpose is to identify those properties that need special scrutinize.

Susan: So someone would have to identify which properties are vulnerable? this is invitation for error.

This is backward, and needs to change. Software can EASILY flag

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AGENCY RESPONSE: The Department works with the agency's senior staff and the Mayor's Office agencies to formulate goals and budget priorities.

While construction and building safety is our central purpose, operational goals for FY18-FY19 include improving processing and enforcement response levels with enhanced technology tools. Funding is proposed for \$184,717 in FY18 and \$164,400 in FY19.

Since 2016, the Department continues making headway on the long-term process of redesigning its online presence, with the new public-facing web interface called DOB NOW. This new system will replace the antiquated Building Information System (BIS) and seamlessly interface with our other technological initiatives. When completed, the new system will allow customers to conduct all transactions online, including filing applications, making payments, checking the status of their projects and having virtual interactions with staff.

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AGENCY RESPONSE: Manhattan Community Affairs staffing levels are projected to remain unchanged for FY2018-2019. However, staffing Department wide has increased to 1,500 total staff members compared to 1,000 five years ago. Last year, the Department hired 140 new inspectors and 130 new plan examiners. Resource capacity has also increased with improved technology, all of which should invariably translate to improved service levels.

MEETING NOTES:

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AGENDA ITEM 3 : Inspection Efficiency

Inspection Efficiency Questions:

1. There seems to be lack of coordination of information for efficient inspections—i.e. inspections of businesses after closing hours or inspection of business and construction sites after work hours. Will FY 2018 funded staff increases address this?

AGENCY RESPONSE: Manhattan Community Boards and elected offices are valuable partners when it comes to assisting Community Affairs to arrange after-hours inspections. Information obtained from CBs and elected offices increase the chances that inspectors may witness conditions of concern. E-mail has also facilitated the communication of special needs, especially during non-office hours and/or during weekends and holidays.

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AGENDA ITEM 4 : Audits Report Times

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We do not have documentation of how long it takes for Community Boards to receive results of requested plan

audits to resolve complaints—but we can document instances of over a month or longer. Additionally, some do not get audited at all unless there are follow up calls from community boards. It is increasingly difficult for Community Boards to resolve problems because of the increasing longer times to receive information from DOB. What will be done to resolve this?

AGENCY RESPONSE: All professionally certified applications are subject to an audit. During FY 2016-2017, 23% of self-certified applications were audited, vastly exceeding last year's percentage of 14.5%. The Department expects to continue this trend of increases in audits of self-certified applications in the year to follow.

Audits requested by Community Boards and other community stakeholders may require several weeks. Upon the request of such audits, the requesting party is e-mailed an estimated time of completion and asked to follow-up at the stated time. Manhattan Community Affairs is committed to resolving plan exam audit questions in a timely fashion while recognizing that plan reviews can be resource intensive.

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AGENDA ITEM 5 : CB Complaint Resolution

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We have followed 311 complaints where residents sent information. Inspections are not scheduled for several weeks until the CB follows up with the liaison to get inspections scheduled. What funding would it take for DOB to be able to respond immediately for various types of inspection?

AGENCY RESPONSE: Complaints are triaged based on their level of priority. A complaints, receive the highest priority with response times of between 12 to 24 hours; B+ complaints, 20-days; B complaints, 30-days; C complaints, 40-days; and D complaints 90-days. Inspections requiring immediate responses are assigned an A level priority.

MEETING NOTES:

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AGENDA ITEM 6 : Budget Priorities

What budget priorities and staffing requests would DOB like Community Boards to support?

AGENCY RESPONSE: DOB has been granted to the necessary resources to meet service delivery targets. As the

agency continues to engage in technology initiatives to improve transparency and the permitting process, we ask CBs to support agency & Mayoral legislative agendas to reach these goals as stated in the Building One City Initiative.

MEETING NOTES:

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AGENDA ITEM 7 : Capital Tech Improvements

What were DOB's funding request for any additional capital technology improvements for FY18 and projected Fy19? How will these assist in department-wide effectiveness and transparency?

Is the BIS replacement project, as highlighted by DOB last year, on schedule and is it fully funded?

What is the status of the backlog of applications\plans being uploaded into the BIS system? Would capital improvements such as technology or expense improvement such as additional staff best resolve the backlog?

AGENCY RESPONSE: DOB has no set capital budget for technology, as funding is provided as needed by OMB. The agency also works closely with DOITT on all technology projects, including DOB NOW.

DOB NOW, the program that will eventually replace BIS, is on schedule and is fully funded. DOB Now will allow all business to be done online, improving service times and increasing transparency.

Application documents are uploaded between 3 to 5 business days. Plans are uploaded in 10 to15 business days. Current performance numbers indicate existing staffing and technology is adequate to meet service needs.

MEETING NOTES:

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AGENDA ITEM 8 : District Specific Questions #1

CB4: There has been a rash of improperly approved demolitions with demo-restricted special districts. DOB promised to update their BIS system to flag all sites that are within special districts. That has yet to happen. Please update us.

AGENCY RESPONSE: To ensure demos are permitted only when appropriate, the Borough Commissioner receives a regular report regarding proposed demolitions, permitting the borough to scrutinize and flag locations for further auditing and enforcement, if required.

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AGENDA ITEM 9 : District Specific Questions

CB7: Last year DOB announced they will be making changes to the AHV policy at the end of October 2016. Please explain these changes and what impact DOB believes they have had on the community and the construction industry.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Beginning in the Fall of 2016, the Department revised the internal processing of initial AHV applications, to require applications with active violations, stop work orders, vacate orders, cranes applications and within 200 feet of residential properties, to undergo additional administrative and/or technical reviews.

MEETING NOTES:

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