

CITY OF HOUSTON FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET DEPARTMENT QUESTIONS

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HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, AT-LARGE POSITION 5

A NOTE

When the budget was released on May 16, my team and I got straight to work reviewing and analyzing the data. We scrutinize departmental line items and performance measures and come up with a number of questions. Some of these I ask during the budget workshops, and many more I submit in writing via the city’s SharePoint site. In the interest of transparency, I submit to you my written budget questions and the departments’ responses. If you are interested in learning more about the information submitted here, please email atlarge5@houstontx.gov or call us at (832) 393-3017.

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ADMINISTRATIVE & REGULATORY AFFAIRS

1. BARC Special Revenue – what is the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) proposed per capita spend for animal welfare? How does this compare to other large cities in Texas?

ARA’s proposed BARC Special Revenue Fund budget for FY 2024 is \$6.53 per capita. FY 2024 data is not yet available for the other large Texas cities, however, we have provided a comparison of per capita spending for FY 2022 and FY 2023 below:

City	FY 2022	FY 2023
Houston	\$5.90	\$5.90
San Antonio	\$12.59	\$14.44
Dallas	\$11.82	\$14.07
Austin	\$17.00	\$17.92
Fort Worth*	\$11.84	N/A
El Paso	\$13.25	\$13.81

* Budget information for other Texas cities is only available for FY 2022 and FY 2023. *FY 2023 budget information for the City of Fort Worth has been requested but had not been received as of the date of ARA’s budget presentation.

2. Has BARC seen an improvement in return to owner rates since mandatory microchipping went into effect?

Enforcement of the new microchipping ordinance began on February 1, 2023. To capture activity since the new requirement went into effect, BARC compared the period from February 1, 2022 – April 30, 2022 against the same period for 2023. Over that 90-day period, we observed a 19% increase in Return to Owner, as shown below:

- February 1, 2022 – April 30, 2022: 178 returns
- February 1, 2023 – April 30, 2023: 212 returns

3. What is the average salary of an animal control officer? What is the attrition rate for this position?

Using the current average bi-weekly salary for animal control officer classifications, the total annual salary for each, including pension and FICA is as follows:

Classification	PG	Bi-Weekly Base	Annual Base	Pension	FICA	Total Annual
Animal Enforcement Officer Trainee	12	\$1,618.58	\$42,038.08	\$12,225.13	\$3,219.36	\$57,527.57
Animal Enforcement Officer	14	\$1,715.54	\$44,604.04	\$12,957.47	\$3,412.21	\$60,973.72
Senior Animal Enforcement Officer	17	\$1,872.53	\$48,685.78	\$14,143.22	\$3,724.46	\$66,553.46

The attrition rate for Animal Enforcement Officer Trainees and Animal Enforcement Officers combined is 45%.

4. What is the average salary of a 311 call taker? What is the attrition rate for call takers?

Using the current average bi-weekly salary for the 311 Telecommunicator classifications, the total annual salary for each, including pension and FICA is as follows:

Classification	PG	Bi-Weekly Base	Annual Base	Pension	FICA	Total Annual
311 Telecommunicator	13	\$1,403.77	\$36,498.02	\$10,602.67	\$2,792.10	\$49,892.79
Senior 311 Telecommunicator	15	\$1,720.73	\$44,738.98	\$12,996.67	\$3,422.53	\$61,158.19

The attrition rate for 311 Telecommunicators is 24%.

5. If BARC was to receive an additional \$500,000, where would these funds be best spent?

If BARC received an additional \$500,000 in our FY 2024 budget, BARC would seek to purchase a new, large adoption trailer and up to three new enforcement trucks. BARC's current adoption trailers are nearing end of life, requiring frequent repairs and spending several weeks out of service. Currently, BARC's largest adoption trailer is at the Fleet Management Department's service shop awaiting repairs.

Anticipated costs for a new 24-foot adoption trailer range from \$125,000-\$175,000. BARC's fleet of enforcement trucks is in dire need of replacement. BARC has taken to "cannibalizing" existing trucks that are not repairable to keep other vehicles running. This is in large part due to the difficulty in finding parts for these older vehicles. Current estimated pricing for each new truck is approximately \$90,000 because each truck must be specifically outfitted with airconditioned kennels.

CITY COUNCIL

1. In FY 2022 and FY 2023, how many Council District Service Fund dollars were spent on sidewalk projects? Maintenance, repairs, and new construction.

Project #	Project Description	Budgeted Amount
C-17-22	Sidewalk Project-Bissonnet/Montrose	\$37,000.00
C-31-22	New sidewalk and sidewalk repairs at locations throughout District C, as approved by Houston Public Works	\$100,000.00
D-11-22	ADA sidewalk and ramp to accompany the new 4-way stop signs installed and the culverts with the dirt	\$6,000.00
D-13-22	Sidewalk replacement - 3412 Arbor St., 77004	\$3,000.00
D-2-22	Sidewalk Extension - Almeda Genoa at Furman	\$6,000.00
D-22-22	Sidewalk Repair	\$43,700.00
D-23-22	IssuelD00641D: Replace/remove sidewalk	\$19,500.00
D-24-22	Remove/Replace Sidewalk	\$61,800.00
D-25-22	Sidewalks on both streets and a safe path connection to Dixie street. Within the scope of work the following is also included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New sidewalk, approx. 2720 ft including driveways • Retaining wall (assumed 6in x 1ft tall) at 	\$270,000.00
F-16-22	Ashling Drive Sidewalk/Ramp Replacement	\$40,000.00
F-26-22	Remove and replace sidewalks on whole block and 8 ADA ramps	\$100,000.00
F-27-22	Remove/replace sidewalk	\$9,650.00
F-28-22	Sidewalks, pavement markings, and panel replacements	\$106,180.00
G-10-22	Expanding the sidewalk along the south side of Memorial going east from Brittmore to increase safety	\$35,000.00
G-23-21	South side of Memorial Drive. West of Brittmore to Wilchester BLVD - Improvement of sidewalk. widening	\$21,800.00
G-40-22	Sidewalk Repair	\$3,000.00
G-45-22	Sidewalk Replacement (2122 Woodland Park)	\$3,000.00
I-15-22	Remove/Replace Sidewalk - 4810 Walker Street	\$21,500.00
I-20-22	Remove/Replace Sidewalk - TDO IssuelD00731I - 5100 Claremont, 77023 - between Baird St and the RR tracks.	\$190,000.00
I-2-22	Remove/Replace Sidewalk along Meadowlawn. IssueID00531I is associated with this project.	\$75,080.00
I-3-22	Remove and replace sidewalk to ensure it is ADA compliance. Woodside from Eddington to Polk.	\$35,000.00
J-12-22	New Sidewalk - Westpark Traveling east between Royalton & Rice IssueID00731J	\$92,750.00
J-15-22	New Sidewalk: IssuedID00831J - adjacent to South Gessner (West portion) from Jason St to Nairn St	\$65,700.00

J-18-22	1 - Sidewalks on the east side of the Bering Ditch from Windswept Lane to West-park Drive 2 - Intersection safety improvements at the intersection of Fountain View Drive and Fairdale Lane	\$130,000.00
K-10-22	HPW Issue ID 00581K - Sidewalk replacement	\$79,125.00
K-15-22	To replace concrete sidewalks in District K - 5406; 5410; 5414; 5418 Spellman Court	\$22,500.00
FY 2022 Total		\$1,577,285.00
F-7-23	The additional cost for sidewalk through the medians along Stoney Brook Drive @ Windsept, Pagewood	81,175.00
F-9-23	Baneway dr (sidewalks/ramps) \$166,000 Imperial Point Rd (sidewalks/ramps) \$100,000 Langdon Ln (panels)	310,000.00
J-21-23	IssueID01091J - Sidewalk is needed on the west portion of South Course - Between Spice Lane and the ditch.	38,000.00
J-29-23	TIRZ 20 - sidewalk and ADA	50,000.00
J-45-23	New Sidewalk 1181 Remove/Replace Sidewalk Beechnut (McAvoy-Bintliff) (\$72.5k)	72,500.00
K-7-23	17210 Quail Glen Dr., Missouri City, TX 77489 - HPW ISSUE ID 00731K - Remove and replace sidewalk AT 17210	4,400.00
FY 2023 Total		\$556,075.00

EMERGENCY CENTER

1. I receive numerous complaints about very long wait times for non-emergency HPD calls. I have called myself and have waited over 20 minutes. The performance measures on p. III-17 of the budget indicate a goal of answering 80% non-emergency calls within 15 seconds. FY 2023 target was also 80%, but the FY 2023 estimate is just 42%. What specific measures is HEC undertaking to improve from 42% to 80%? How many additional call takers will be hired? What is the current average wait time for non-emergency calls?

The Houston Emergency Center (HEC) has been diligently working on hiring personnel to address staffing shortages, particularly in the 9-1-1 Telecommunicator position. This is an industry wide issue that continues to affect emergency call centers across the country. HEC has worked in partnership with City of Houston Human Resources to streamline the recruitment process and bring hundreds of applicants into the process. Current staffing levels have continued to improve as we strive to reach full staffing levels. HEC has also been successful in implementing several monetary incentives to not only attract new personnel, but to also boost retention of staff currently on board.

- HEC has always provided a target or goal to answer 80% of non-emergency police calls in 15 seconds or less.
- Based on current nationwide staffing issues, which HEC is not immune to, this non-emergency answer goal has been difficult to meet on a consistent basis.
- HEC currently has approximately 56 front line telecommunicator (answer fire/ police/ medical calls) FTE vacancies out of 182 positions. This is a 30.8% vacancy rate.

If we add in first line supervisors who also answer calls as needed based on demand, we have a total of 56 FTE vacancies out of 212 Full Time Employee (FTE) positions. This is a 26.4% vacancy rate.

- The same personnel that answer 9-1-1 emergency calls also answer the police non-emergency line. Priority staffing is given to answer 9-1-1 emergency calls and magnifies the staffing shortage for non-emergency police calls.
- HEC has received over 879,000 9-1-1 calls and over 260,000 non-emergency police calls for 2023 year to date. The average wait time for 9-1-1 Emergency Calls is 9 seconds and the average wait for non-emergency police calls is 3 minutes 26 seconds.

HEC is grateful to the current 9-1-1 Telecommunicators on staff for their dedication and commitment to working extra hours to address this staffing shortage. We ask much of these “First, First Responders” and they continuously rise to the challenge. Their commitment allows HEC to maintain its primary mission of responding quickly and efficiently to calls for emergency services from the Citizens of Houston.

2. Average wait times probably vary per time of day. Most complaints I get are about long non-emergency HPD call waits during nighttime hours. Please provide a breakdown of average wait times by shift. I am assuming wait times get longer at night.

The “busiest” times for police non-emergency calls vary day by day and hour by hour. Circumstances such as weather, special events or any other populated or broadcasted event tends to increase the calls. Also, “busy” times for police non-emergency calls often coincide with “busy” time for 9-1-1 emergency calls, which affects staffing allocations. HEC has three identified shifts for call takers:

- Day shift, which is 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Evening shift, which is 2 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- Night shift, which is 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

The following information is year to date Calendar Year 2023 (CY 2023).

- Day shift receives approximately 40% of the police non-emergency calls. Approximate average wait time is 4 minutes 38 seconds.
- Evening shift received approximately 41% of the police non-emergency calls. Approximate average wait time is 1 minute 35 seconds.
- Night shift received approximately 19% of police non-emergency calls. Approximate average wait time is 1 minute 42 seconds.

The number of HEC Day shift and Evening shift non-emergency calls are very close. The difference in answer times between the two shifts is attributed to the high school student interns who answer non-emergency police calls on evening shift during the school year. We usually have 20 of them working across evening shift to help with these calls. This is a long-standing program we have partnered with HISD High School for Criminal Justice that allows seniors to participate in this program and receive training as a call taker.

FINANCE

1. In Accounting and Financial Reporting - please explain the performance measure – collection rate for vendor managed revenues. Is 35% considered a good collection rate for this measure? Please provide an example.

The collection rate is based on historical trends. The target of 35% collection rate is for delinquent accounts that are placed with secondary collections vendors 90-120 days of billing and after initial attempts to collect by the primary vendor or the city. These accounts yield a lower return than the initial collection attempts/efforts.

Examples of revenue streams included in the collection rate are:

1. Parking (initially billed by the city and placed with secondary collections vendor after 90 days)
2. False Fire (initially billed by the city and placed with secondary collections vendor after 90 days)
3. Burglar Alarm (initially billed by the primary vendor and placed with secondary collections vendor after 90 days)
4. EMS (initially billed by the primary vendor and placed with secondary collections vendor after 120 days)

2. Please list all consulting contracts and associated costs associated with the Finance Department’s FY 2024 budget. When is it anticipated the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) trust consultant will be on board?

Below is the list of consulting contracts associated with Finance Department FY 2024 Budget:

Consulting Contracts	FY 2024 Budget
Gartner	\$43,461
Ecivis Inc	\$42,000
Weaver and Tidwell	\$345,000
University of Houston	\$20,000
Economist	\$2,400
Sales tax consultant	\$10,000

We estimate that the OPEB trust consultant will be on board by the end of CY 2023.

3. Is it possible to add a performance measure to Grants Management having to do with increasing the number of grants sought citywide?

It is hard to add such a performance measure to the FIN - Grants Management group as applying for grants is a decentralized function and is made at the department level. FIN - Grants Management currently tracks the number of grants applied for and the number awarded based on the process defined in the Administrative Procedure (AP) 4-1 “Grant Acquisition, Management and Compliance.”

Grant opportunities are provided to the departments via various means:

- Grants.gov email distribution
- Periodic emails from the Mayor’s Office with Notifications of Funding Opportunities (NOFO’s)
- Other industry-specific grant databases that departments have subscribed or have access to

4. Please explain how the recent Texas Supreme Court decision on Prop 1 v Prop 2 could potentially impact property tax revenues?

The below response has been provided by the Legal Department:

On April 21, 2023, the Texas Supreme Court reversed in part the judgment of the court of appeals invalidating Proposition 2, the citizen-driven charter amendment capping all city revenues that Houston has never enforced. It affirmed the trial court's ruling that the City has complied with Proposition 1, Houston's cap on *ad valorem* tax revenue and water and sewer rates, which is as Article III, Section 1 of the Charter. Because the Court held preempted and invalid that the clause in Proposition 1 that allowed Houston only to enforce the measure that received the greater number of votes [Proposition 1], the Court remanded the case to the trial court for further proceedings to determine whether and to what degree the Proposition 1 and Proposition 2 could be jointly enforced.

The Supreme Court, however, agreed with Houston that because Proposition 1 received more votes, under Charter, article IX~ Section 19, if there is a conflict between the provisions of Propositions 1 and 2, Proposition 1 will prevail. Houston has consistently argued that no part of Proposition 2 would be enforceable by this measure. If the trial court agrees, there will be no impact on property tax revenue.

Even if the Court allows non-revenue provisions of Proposition 2 to survive [providing standing and attorney's fees, for example], because Proposition 1 reaffirms that City Council has the authority to collect, "without limitation," all city revenues, excepting only *ad valorem* tax revenue and water and sewer rates, the trial court should allow Proposition 1's limitations on those revenue streams to remain in place without Houston's having to consider whether reductions in other revenues might be preferable. The State's recently-enacted revenue cap on *ad valorem* tax revenue will also limit the extent to which Proposition 2 can be enforced. Consequently, there may not be much change, if any, in property tax revenue.

GENERAL SERVICES

1. Maintenance Replacement and Renewal Fund (MRR)

a. The transfer from general fund is increasing from \$29.7M to \$38.4M, an \$8.6M increase. Is the General Services Department (GSD) staffing sufficient to handle the increase in funding?

Yes.

b. Already listed in the FY 2024 budget is an increase in 10 FTEs in Facilities Design and Construction and 45 FTEs in Facilities Maintenance. Are these increases in FTEs enough to handle the additional workload?

GSD did not receive an increase of 10 FTEs in Design and Construction nor did it receive an increase of 45 FTEs in Facilities Maintenance. The 45 FTEs listed for Facilities Maintenance may have been calculated by comparing the FY 2022 FTE actuals (144) to the FY 2024 budgeted number of FTEs (189). The FY 2022 FTE actuals represents the number of filled positions that GSD had during FY 2022 but does not include the number of vacant positions, while the FY 2024 budgeted number of FTEs includes both filled and vacant positions. To determine an increase in FTEs, GSD compares the FY 2023 budgeted number of FTEs in MRR (74) to the FY 2024 budgeted number of FTEs in MRR (96). The actual increase in FTEs is 22, which represents 11 maintenance FTEs that were transferred from Solid Waste to GSD and 11 new maintenance FTEs that were approved by the Mayor's Office in order for GSD to adequately maintain Solid Waste Department facilities. The same is true for Facilities Design and Construction. If you compare the FY 2023 budgeted to the FY 2024 budgeted there is no increase in FTEs.

c. Are additional funds for personnel needed, and if so, what is approximate cost and number of FTEs needed?

No, not for FY 2024 because as explained above, the number of FTEs have increased by 22, and this increase is within the FY 2024 budget.

2. MRR - Please describe the increase in "Other Rental" from \$450,798 to \$815,000.

This budget increase reflects the increase in costs for rental of temporary chillers and heaters used when an HVAC unit is down or being replaced. With longer lead times for new units and parts GSD must continue to rent temporary units for longer periods.

3. Energy Management – performance measures: Which four buildings will get energy assessments in FY 2024? Will this be done by third-party contractors or in-house?

The four facilities are 17000 Aldine Westfield, 9455 W. Montgomery, 8300 Mykawa (all HPD), and 8030 Braniff (HFD). Assessments are performed by third-party, similarly to the City's process in the current LoanSTAR Agreement with the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO). In a separate initiative with SECO, the City is looking to request no-cost Preliminary Energy Assessments (PEAs, performed by SECO) at up to 50 City facilities, including approximately 36 GSD-operated facilities. A majority of the GSD-operated facilities targeted for this initiative are occupied by HFD and HHD; all are in disadvantaged communities.

4. Energy Management - GSD lists as a short-term goal to conduct an energy assessment for various HPD and HFD facilities in order to seek SECO funding for low-interest loan to implement energy efficiency measures. Please provide additional information on this goal.

Facilities targeted for a PEA under SECO's LoanSTAR program include: 17000 Aldine Westfield, 9455 W. Montgomery, 8300 Mykawa (all HPD), and 8030 Braniff (HFD). Assessments will determine opportunity for Utility Cost Reduction Measures (UCRMs). If UCRMs meet SECO LoanSTAR criteria (with an assessed payback period no longer than 15 years), GSD intends to move forward with a LoanSTAR application in order to implement the recommended UCRMs.

5. Energy Management – when will the Request for Information (RFI) for piloting an energy performance contract to reduce energy use and cost be issued? (listed as short-term GSD goal)

The GSD team has met internally on this project a few times this year to consolidate scope and preferred outcomes. We are targeting early summer to issue the RFI.

6. Facilities Maintenance

a. Is it possible to add performance measures to address progress toward reducing the \$594M (and rising) estimate in deferred maintenance?

Yes, GSD is able to add performance measures through three new software packages the department is implementing for work orders in Property Management and Design & Construction project management. The software will provide critical data analytics and allow GSD to provide more meaningful performance measures.

b. How many priority 1 and 2 projects are there total?

We currently have \$75,988,068 in priority 1 scope items and \$172,142,332 in priority 2 items.

c. How many will be completed in FY 2024? More meaningful performance measures are needed in this category.

GSD's Design & Construction and Property Management divisions are targeting the completion of \$14.2M in FY 2024. The larger dollar projects require design, permit, construction; and take multiple years to complete. As a result, the larger projects funded in the FY 2024 CIP will not be completed this fiscal year.

7. Are there additional performance measures which could be implemented in the Real Estate Management division? Rental checks received every month is listed as a performance measure and that seems insufficient. GSD lists as a goal to develop and implement policies and procedures to expedite the acquisition, disposition, and leasing of the city's real estate portfolio. Is it possible to include a performance measure which demonstrates performance toward this goal?

It is difficult to include a performance measure for this since market factors determine how quickly these transactions occur and these market factors can vary greatly from one transaction to the next. With this in mind, GSD will work to develop meaningful performance measures for our Real Estate Program.

8. Facilities Design and Construction – in performance measures, number of projects per project manager is going from 12 (FY 2023 estimate) to eight (FY 2024 proposed). Is this because we are hiring more project managers because the number of projects is going from 350 to 400.

The number of projects per manager shown above is the average between the Major Projects, Parks, and Minor Projects groups. The ability to fill project manager vacancies has allowed us to reduce the number of projects each Project Manager is assigned. The reduction in projects per Project Manager allows us to align with industry standards, enables us to better retain project managers and reduce project risk. Approximately 350 minor projects were completed in FY 2023 and the goal is to complete 400 minor projects in FY 2024.

9. Which city departments does GSD not oversee facilities?

Houston Airports System (HAS), Houston Public Works (HPW), and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD).

HEALTH

1. Family Health and Human Services – Please explain this performance measure - Percentage of family cases that result in having a primary care clinic (medical home), health insurance and/or financial assistance.

Houston Health Department (HHD) employees provide screening for healthcare coverage and ensures that everyone that comes for assistance get enrolled in some type of health coverage (Medicaid, Healthy Texas Women, Harris County Gold Card, CHIP, etc.) and eventually a primary care home based on their eligibility.

2. How much money is estimated to be saved by joining the county on EPIC? Will this savings be realized in FY 2024?

We’re estimating a 4-year return on investment which would equate to about \$250k per year of savings. Note, this estimate is total cost of ownership including personnel. It is not all direct cost.

3. Family Health and Human Services – Is it possible to add performance measures aligned with the functions:

- Healthy Families Healthy Futures
- Care Coordination
- Client Access
- Veteran’s Services
- Adolescent Health
- Mental Health

I only see a measure for congregate meals.

Measure	Type	Description	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Target	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Target
Number of congregate meals provided to senior citizens	Output	Measures the number of congregate meals provided to senior citizens at three Multi-Services Centers.	1,495,940	1,500,000	1,600,000	1,500,000
Number participants in the Veterans Directive Care Program	Input	Number participants in the Veterans Directive Care Program	40	40	35	40
Number of transportation services from Rides older consumers received.	Input	Number of consumers who received transportation services from Rides	1,500	1,500	1,632	2,000
Number of Thanksgiving meals delivered to older adults homes.	Input	Number of Thanksgiving meals delivered to older adults homes.	2,167	2,200	2,200	2,100
Number of individuals referred to Community Cares	Input	Number of incoming referrals engaged with and provided assessments and increased access to care.	N/A New Measure	1,600	1,620	1,700

Number of at-risk adolescent males provided assessments, on campus support, linkage to community support and case management via Communities in Schools (CIS)	Input	Number of at-risk adolescent males provided assessments, on campus support, linkage to community support and case management via Communities in Schools (CIS)	N/A New Measure	45	45	45
Number of youth/family provided Tier 1 outreach and mental health awareness by connecting them to resources through the Peer Wellness Specialist Program -PWS, My Brother's Keeper Systems of Care -SOC, and Overdose Data To Action -OD2A	Outcome	Number of youth/family provided Tier 1 outreach and mental health awareness by connecting them to resources through the Peer Wellness Specialist Program -PWS, My Brother's Keeper Systems of Care -SOC, Overdose Data To Action -OD2A	N/A New Measure	250	1,216	1,700
Number of youth provided community mental health awareness and education service encounters -Peer Wellness Specialist Program (PWS) to larger audiences within the campus and adjacent communities.	Outcome	Number of youth provided community mental health awareness and education service encounters -Peer Wellness Specialist Program (PWS) to larger audiences within the campus and adjacent communities.	N/A New Measure	168	1,131	1,300
Number of participants completing the Abstinence Education in the Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program	Input	Number of participants completing the Abstinence Education in the Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program	N/A New Measure	400	168	400
Number participants in the Veterans Directive Care Program	Input	Number participants in the Veterans Directive Care Program	40	40	35	40

4. Please provide an update on the various elements of the scope of work in the interlocal agreement with Harris County passed in February 2023:

Under this agreement Harris County Public Health (HCPH) and HHD mutually agree that they will meet monthly to discuss current and future collaborations. This collaboration will help improve service delivery to residents and serve a public purpose. The areas of potential collaboration are as follows:

- Align community-wide planning
- Establish a community-wide coordinating council that includes HCPH, HHD, and other partners.
- Cooperative planning with ACCESS Harris, Violence Prevention and Maternal & Child Health
- Create a data sharing mechanism for patient-level and program-level data

CPH and HHD initiated monthly meetings last fiscal year. Due to competing priorities, meetings have been recently rescheduled. Both departments plan to resume collaborative discussions to continue development of the following:

- Community wide planning is an on-going discussion and strategies are in development.
- Community-wide coordinating council to be established.
- HCPH and HHD are currently coordinating in the areas of Violence Prevention and access to care. Discussions regarding Maternal and Child Health cooperative planning and sustainability will be initiated during this fiscal year.
- HHD created a shared data mechanism which allows HHD and HCPH to transfer case information electronically as opposed to facsimile.

5. Please provide an update on the Texas Southern University (TSU) research institute receiving funding from COH. Are these funds expected to be expended in FY 2024?

This initiative is a 3-year project. FY 2024 is year two. HHD started monthly collaboration meetings with the TSU team leading this initiative in March. The executed agreement is structured for quarterly invoicing. HHD received one invoice and TSU is working on submitting a project activity summary with that invoice as supporting documentation. It's possible that the first invoice will be paid by the end of June 2023. All other payments will be processed as deliverables are achieved and invoices with supporting documentation are received through of contracts end date of December 31, 2025.

HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Central Service Revolving Fund – Client Relations Group - Please explain increase in Management Consulting Services from \$187K (FY 2023 estimate) to \$710K (FY 2024 proposed)

The increase of \$523K in the FY 2024 budget is due to SAP Success Factors maintenance costs (\$510K), and for the new Arbitration and Grievance Portal (\$200K).

2. Central Service Revolving Fund – Contingent Workforce Services - Please explain increase in Temporary Personnel Services from \$13.9M (FY 2023 estimate) to \$17.9M (FY 2024 proposed). Which departments use the most temporary employees?

The increase is due to higher utilization in the Enterprise, Special and Grant funded contract, mostly incurred in the Health Department for related Covid projects. In the General Fund contract, the increase is primarily incurred by the Solid Waste Department.

3. Health Benefits Fund – Performance measures for participation in wellness program remain flat.

a. With an increase of \$165K in Wellness Initiative line item (from \$109K FY 2023 estimate to \$274K FY 2024 proposed) in HR Benefits Admin, shouldn't the wellness-related performance measures increase in FY 2024?

The FY 2024 Wellness budget includes funding for the new Wellness Center currently under construction, Family Wellness Days, Retiree Wellness Fairs, program mailings, banners, and posters to advertise the Wellness program and new initiatives to engage employees throughout the year. The performance measure relates specifically to the number of employees who complete the online health assessment.

b. Does HR plan to undertake any initiatives in FY 2024 to increase participation in wellness programs?

- In FY 2024, HR will strengthen the Wellness strategies to include increased communication, visibility, and access to quality health programs and services.
- HR will leverage BenefitFocus to communicate upcoming deadlines, events, and wellness program participation
- HR will streamline traditional communications such as broadcast emails and mailings, to target specific audiences
- HR will access COH sites on a consistent basis, engaging employees on the wellness program and its health resources face-to-face
- With new programming such as healthy eating initiatives, mobile annual physical units, and the opening of the Wellness Center, HR will be able to better engage the COH workforce and their families with new and innovative ways for them to become partners in their health and wellness, as HR's ultimate goal is to increase participation.

4. Client Services Program - Hiring

a. What is the current average time (number of days) from job posting to hiring?

The current average time to hire from job posting to hire is 112 days

b. What steps will this division take in FY 2024 to reduce this time.

- The FY 2024 budget includes funding to host additional "on the spot hiring events".
- HR will continue to track performance and hold verification vendor accountable for improving metrics.
- HR will work closer with hiring managers to expedite interviewing process.
- HR will take a targeted strategic approach to the recruitment of hard-to-fill positions.

c. What are the major reasons for delays in hiring?

Delays are mostly due to vendor verification delays, and due to delays in scheduling interviews by the hiring managers after receiving referrals.

5. Client Services Program – Vacancies

a. Which city departments are struggling the most to fill vacant positions?

Houston Emergency Center, HITS, and Solid Waste Department appear to struggle the most, as they have specific classifications that are hard to fill.

b. What does HR view as the primary reasons for difficulty in hiring?

The City is competing with higher salaries offered by other organizations in a highly competitive market.

c. What reasons do applicants give for not accepting city jobs?

Salary offered is lower than expected or accepted another position elsewhere.

6. How many employees by department participate in a hybrid telework work schedule? Which departments do not allow hybrid work schedules?

The current Hybrid-Telework Program went into effect on 5/1/2023. The approved authorization number is fluid and expected to increase as more employees complete requirements to participate in the program and as more departments are phased in according to the rollout schedule. At this time, the General Service Department and the Mayor’s office are not participating in the program. Please see below participants as of May 23, 2023.

Department	# Approved/Authorized Employees
Administration & Regulatory Affairs	32
HAS - Information Technology Only	3
Houston Information Technology Services	41
Legal	3
Planning & Development	6
Total as of May 23, 2023	185

7. Please provide FY 2024 average “all in” salary plus all benefits amounts for City of Houston classified employees and civilian/municipal employees.

Average Employer Cost		
	Municipal	Classified
Base Pay ¹	\$62,606	\$77,992
Pension	\$5,021	\$23,444
Benefits ²	\$14,357	\$14,243
Total	\$81,983	\$115,679

¹ Includes Full Time and Part Time employees, includes HOPE increases

² Includes FICA, Health Insurance, Long-Term Disability, Workers’ Compensation, and Life Insurance

8. HR Benefits – Cigna premiums up 5.6% in FY 2024. What will be the percentage premium increase in FY25? What is the duration of the Cigna contract?

FY25 Cigna premium rates have not been determined at this time. Medical rates for the following Fiscal Year are approved late Fall/early Winter.

The Cigna contract term is 5/1/2019 - 4/30/2024, with the option to extend for two additional one-year periods 5/1/2024 - 4/30/2025 and 5/1/2025 - 4/30/2026.

9. Workers Compensation Fund expenditures increasing \$5.4M in FY 2024 due to catastrophic claims increases. Please provide some background information on this.

The increase of \$5.4M is primarily due to reductions in the FY 2023 estimate for COVID related claims that that will not materialize as expected. The FY 2024 budget includes increases as determined by actuary valuation of claims.

10. Risk Management – performance measures – will the increase in facility safety inspections and work site observations expected to bring down the number of claims?

Facility inspections and work observations are part of the Risk Management Division’s objective to create a safe work environment for the City of Houston by identifying and removing workplace hazards, with the ultimate goal of reducing the number of claims.

11. Is it possible to add number of workers compensation claims to the performance measures? How many claims on average does the city of Houston receive annually?

The focus of the Risk Management Division is on leading indicators with emphasis on loss control and injury and illness prevention. Over the past five years the City has averaged 3,480 claims including COVID, which is expected to decrease as COVID claims decline.

LIBRARIES

1. How much FY 2024 expected revenue loss is attributable to the lack of Kendall Library FEMA reimbursement and how much is attributable to no longer collecting fines?

The one-time Kendall Library FEMA insurance reimbursement was \$1,693,583.00 and The FY 2023 estimated Fines are \$93,311. The projected total revenue loss in FY 2024 is \$1,786,894.00.

2. How much does the Houston Public Library Foundation contribute to HPL for operating expenditures annually?

The Houston Public Library Foundation does not contribute any dollars annually to HPL operating expenditures. Library operations are funded from the General Fund.

The amount the Foundation contributes annually strictly to support library programs varies annually based on donations received and interest received on the endowment investment account. For FY22, HPL received \$1.3M and in FY 2023 HPL received \$965,000 and in FY 2024 HPL is hoping to receive \$1M from Houston Public Library Foundation.

3. Besides the six people hired for the Montrose library, what additional HPL hires are expected for FY 2024?

HPL also plans to hire staff for the new Vinson TECHLink and to backfill all vacant positions.

4. Please describe any new library programming initiatives to be introduced in FY 2024.

HPL have two new major programs as listed below.

- One Houston, One Book, is a special citywide reading program that promotes literacy, diversity, and community conversations by encouraging Houstonians to come together, read, and discuss books with a common theme. The program runs through September 2023. Programs and events include Author Talks, Read-ins, Book Clubs, Story & Craft Times, Critical Conversations, Camps, Block Parties, Open Houses, and a special Grand Finale event!
- Houston Public Library celebrates its 120th year anniversary in 2024 with citywide community festivities and community events held January through September 2024.

5. Is it possible to add performance measures about attendance to specific programs, especially in the digital division? For example, what are HPL's goals for participation in the various TECHLink offerings and classes?

Yes, HPL targets specific audience attendance based on age range, program subject matter, and program locations. The system focuses its outreach efforts and marketing strategies to attract program attendance and participation to meet its targeted goals. One FY 2024 goal is to attract 30,000 visitors to its 5 TECHLink locations. Further, HPL estimates 2,500 TECHLink workshop participants in FY 2024.

6. How does HPL determine which libraries are open in evening hours and on Saturdays?

HPL carefully and strategically considers which locations are open in the evenings and on Saturdays to provide the most equitable community access to library materials, technologies, services, and programs. Nine neighborhood libraries are extended hour's locations, which means that they are open two evenings a week and on Saturdays. These locations are the Collier Regional Library, Heights Neighborhood Library, Hannington-Alief Regional Library, Kendall Neighborhood Library, McGovern-Stella Link Regional Library, Park Place Regional Library, Robinson-Westchase Neighborhood Library, Scenic Woods Regional Library (effective June 5, 2023), and the Young Neighborhood Library. These locations are open 12-8 p.m. on Monday, 10-6 p.m. on Tuesday, 10-6 p.m. on Wednesday, 12-8 p.m. on Thursday, 1-5 p.m. on Friday, and 10-5 p.m. on Saturday.

In addition, all other neighborhood libraries, for a total of 23, offer evening hours one day a week. The evening hours are determined based on proximity to other locations. As an example, the Flores Neighborhood Library is open from 12-8 p.m. on Tuesdays. The Stanaker Neighborhood Library, which is a short distance away, is open from 12-8 p.m. on Thursdays. This allows for customers to have more options in terms of accessing services throughout the week.

There are many factors impacting service hours, but adequate staffing rises to the top in terms of safety and quality of service provision. Currently our staff are assigned to work at “paired” locations or more than one location in an effort to provide as many open hours as possible across the city. Like other COH departments, hiring staff has been an ongoing challenge. Our salaries are not competitive in the industry, so attrition is also an issue. As staffing levels improve and stabilize, HPL will continue to strategically expand hours at additional locations.

7. Is HPL considering combining purchasing efforts with Harris County library system to gain efficiencies? Specifically digital materials.

We have considered this idea. There are many challenges to review when working with another library organization that may have different standards for budget allocations, checkout limits, security of customer data, procurement processes, as well as other considerations. We will continue to investigate all avenues to provide materials to HPL cardholders in a cost-effective manner.

NEIGHBORHOODS

1. Code Enforcement - Is it possible to add a performance measure related to bandit signs?

Yes. We can measure the number of signs picked up and the number of citations issued.

2. Code Enforcement – How many bandit signs are expected to be picked up by the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) in FY 2023? How many bandit sign citations were issued in FY 2023?

We set a target of 42K for FY 2023. Thus far we have collected 54K, and we expect to close out the FY 2023 with at or around 59K. To date 655 citations have been issued.

3. Code enforcement FTEs show an increase from 49.3 to 51.9, yet targets go up in many categories. In the budget presentation, the director mentioned the need for 10 additional employees. Please explain this discrepancy. Please explain how the department will improve targets in weeded lots and junk motor vehicles.

We have moved from a historic over-reliance in citizen compliance to pursuing the necessary funding to perform the needed abatements when citizens fail to comply. This is the rationale behind the noted increases in our abatement budget to contracted vendors. Another aspect to improving our target and adding revenue to DON is following through on collecting our lien amounts. Regarding our junk motor vehicles, we have seen success in owner compliance and are exploring partnerships that may expand our ability to continue this trend.

4. What is the average salary for a code enforcement officer?

Job Title	Base Pay	Salary	Hourly
Code Enforcement Officer Trainee	\$1,533	\$40,002	\$19.16
Code Enforcement Officer I	\$1,758	\$45,889	\$21.98
Code Enforcement Officer II	\$2,013	\$52,529	\$25.16
Code Enforcement Officer III	\$2,307	\$60,218	\$28.84
Community Service Inspector	\$1,703	\$44,438	\$21.28

5. Code Enforcement – please outline initiatives associated with the increase from \$900K to \$2M in the lawn and maintenance service line item.

In FY 2023, DON only relied on three vendors for weed and debris removal abatements. The department is currently working to secure six new vendors through the Strategic Procurement Division. Mowing and debris removal as well as property securing cost are expected to increase by 20-30% as inflation has affected the cost of supplies, materials, vehicles, and fuel.

OFFICE OF BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

1. Minority/Women Business Enterprises (MWBE) Certification

a. Please list all governmental and other agencies which use the city's MWBE certification for their own vetting.

To our knowledge, the governmental and other agencies that use the city's MWBE certification for their own contracting opportunities are the following:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Port Houston Authority
- METRO
- Houston Independent School District
- Houston Community College System
- Houston Housing Authority
- Kellogg Brown and Root
- Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
- Harris County

b. Do you know if other cities which perform certifications charge the agencies which use them?

We were not able to find other cities that perform certifications that charge the agencies which uses them. However, we did find the following:

- The City of Chicago charges firms seeking a new certification a one-time fee of \$250.
- The City and County of Denver charge a non-refundable fee of \$200 for new certification applications and a \$50 non-refundable fee annually for certification renewals.
- North Central Texas Regional Certification Agency charges on a scale. (\$250 for businesses outside of their jurisdiction/\$150 for 1st application/\$100 for 2nd application/\$75 for 3rd application/\$75 for 4th application/\$75 for certification updates)
- South Central Texas Regional Certification Agency only charges firms outside of their jurisdiction. That fee is \$250 per application and a \$100 renewal fee.

c. If the COH charged agencies for this service, what would be an appropriate annual amount?

The City of Chicago's size and program is the most comparable to the City of Houston's, therefore, modeling their fee structure may make the most sense by charging an application fee of \$250 (\$200 at minimum) and a renewal fee of \$50.

d. Should it be based on usage?

No. It should be an application processing fee because usage will be challenging to track and verify.

e. Which agencies use the city's certifications the most?

Unfortunately, we do not track the other agencies' usage of our certification to be able to determine which are utilizing our certifications the most.

2. Please describe the process and associated timeline OBO has with regard to HPW construction contracts.

If a Bidder submits an MWBE Plan that does not meet the advertised MWBE goals, then HPW sends that Plan to OBO for review to determine whether the Bidder made good faith efforts (GFE), as per the City’s written policy, to arrive at the MWBE Plan they submitted. Once OBO receives the Plan, we process it within seven business days. If the GFE request is approved, HPW may immediately move forward with the award of the contract.

If the GFE is denied, OBO notifies HPW of the denial, and the department has three days to take exception and move forward to awarding the contract to the Bidder despite having a noncompliant Plan. (This hasn’t happened over the last seven years.) If the department does not take exception, the Bidder is notified of the denial via email. The Bidder then has three business days to request an appeal. If the Bidder does not request an appeal, the department may then move to the next lowest or responsive bidder.

If the Bidder does request an appeal, the appeal will be scheduled with the OBO Director. The OBO Director will hear the appeal and make an independent assessment of the Bidder’s GFEs. The Director will either uphold the denial or reverse the initial decision within 1 week of the hearing. If the Director reverses the denial, the department may move forward to award the Bidder the contract. If the Director upholds the denial, the department, and the Bidder are notified and the Bidder is given a final chance to appeal to Legal within three business days. The Legal Department’s decision is final. (Legal processes their review as quickly as possible, but the length of time can be affected by their existing workload.)

3. How much will OBO pay in FY 2024 for staff augmentation for contract compliance? From which fund does this money come?

In FY 2024 OBO will pay \$593,406 from Fund 1000 for staff augmentation for contract compliance monitoring.

4. When should we expect to see the disparity study currently underway?

The consultant will provide OBO with a draft study for review in early November 2023. We anticipate that a final study should be available within 30 days thereafter.

PARKS & RECREATION

1. Rec and Wellness – Temporary Employees – Please describe the increase in temporary employees from \$863K to \$1.6M. Broadly describe where these additional temporary employees will work.

This G/L code is for the seasonal department's Aquatic Staff (Lifeguards, Head Lifeguards and Aquatic Center Supervisors) the estimate of \$863K was due to all of the pools not being able to open due to staffing. The FY 2024 Proposed budget of \$1.6M includes budgets for all of the pools opening and the approved increase in hourly pay as well as the \$500 incentive pay for these positions.

2. Please provide current amounts in each of the 21 park sectors – Parks and Recreation Dedication Fund.

Current available balance in the 21 park sectors are: (1) \$1.9M, (2) \$179K, (3) \$1.6M, (4) \$392K, (5) \$19K, (6) \$196K, (7) \$2M, (8) \$649K (9) \$410K, (10) \$3.6M, (11) \$89K, (12) \$2.6M, (13) \$2M, (14) \$11M, (15) \$343K, (16) \$764K, (17) \$590K, (18) \$887K, (19) \$2.1M, (20) \$242K, (21) \$335K (Combined available total is \$31.4M)

3. Please provide plans and timeline for improvements to the three tennis pro shops – Lee LeClear, Homer Ford, and Memorial.

There are grants and fundraising efforts for all three centers. To date, there is partial funding identified for Lee LeClear and full funding for Memorial Tennis Center.

- Lee LeClear: The Friends of Lee LeClear and the Houston Parks Board have been working on raising funds. To date there is not adequate funding to move forward with the project. Court surface improvements underway through a memorandum of understanding with Houston Tennis Association.
- Homer Ford: The tennis center and courts are included in the fundraising efforts for MacGregor Park including a pending Texas Parks and Wildlife Department grant application which includes the tennis center. Courts-HPARD/GSD is pulling together scope for court surface improvements to bid. Funding is identified.
- Memorial Tennis Center: Astros Golf Foundation is funding design for Tennis Center improvements. We are also looking at addressing screening for the courts. Court surface improvements complete.

Additionally, a call for bids for tennis court improvements at 19 park sites will go out this week.

4. Greenspace Management – Land and Grounds Maintenance – Please explain the increase from \$504K to \$967K.

The estimate in Land and Grounds Maintenance is due to the contractor not being able to complete all work orders during the fiscal year, the FY 2024 Proposed budget adds at least one more contractor to handle all tree related issues (tree pruning, trimming, removal, and stump grinding) timely.

5. Greenspace Management – How many additional FTEs are needed in this division to provide optimal service? What is the average salary plus benefits of greenspace management employees?

The division will need an additional 21 FTE's (six grounds crews/3.5 per crew) to provide optimal service. The average salary plus benefits is around \$67,000 for a greenspace management employee.

6. I have been asked by constituents about the Westbury pool. What are the plans to improve and re-open this pool?

The filter plant at Westbury Pool failed in the summer of 2022. The design for the filter replacement package is in process with funding appropriation expected before July 1st. The filters have a 12-week lead time. The Filter Replacement is the most urgent and once completed will allow the pool to open, however other pool improvements are needed.

7. What additional funding is needed to reduce mowing cycles for park/plazas to get to 10 days?

It is estimated that the department would need an additional \$3M to get to a 10-day mowing cycle.

8. What additional funding is needed to reduce mowing cycles for esplanades to get under 30 days? What would the optimal mowing cycle for esplanades be (I’m sure this varies by time of year)?

It is estimated that the department would need an additional \$2M to get to a 30-day mowing cycle for esplanades. The optimal mowing cycle for esplanades is 15 Days during growing season (mid-March - October) & 30 days during winter season (November - mid-March).

9. Park Development – which seven park projects will have site restorations completed in FY 2024?

- Sylvan Rodriguez, Blackhawk Park – prairie phase III restoration
- Blackhawk Park – prairie and riparian restoration
- Ann Taylor – prairie & riparian restoration
- Furman Greenspace – riparian restoration
- Little Thicket Park – riparian restoration (habitat assessment and plan)
- Sims Bayou Park – riparian restoration
- Hogg Park – riparian restoration

10. Please provide pay scale to play at the five City of Houston golf courses? Are there plans to raise golf fees at any of the courses?

A Cost-of-Service study analysis supports greens fee increases at Memorial and Sharpstown Park Golf Courses. If approved, the revenue generated by the new green fees will offset the increased use of the facility, the additional operations/maintenance costs, and provide additional financial support for maintaining the golf courses to standards.

Fee Type/Category	Sharpstown Golf Course	Gus Wortham Golf Course*	Hermann Park Golf Course**	Melrose Golf Course	Memorial Park Golf Course	
					Resident Fee	Non-Resident Fee
Junior Weekday***	\$8.00	\$10.00	\$9.75	\$7.00	\$ 10.00	\$60.00
Senior Weekday	\$13.00	\$18.00	\$14.50	\$7.00	\$15.00	\$80.00
Weekday	\$18.00	\$33.00	\$27.00	\$12.00	\$30.00	\$120.00
Weekend & Holidays	\$26.00	\$41.00	\$37.00	\$10.00	\$38.00	\$140.00
Weekday Twilight	\$15.00	\$29.00	\$18.00	N/A	\$21.00	\$90.00
Weekend & Holiday Twilight	\$20.00	\$34.00	\$26.50	N/A	\$28.00	\$110.00

*Operated by Houston Golf Association (HGA)

**Operated by BSL Golf Corp.

***Weekdays are Monday through Thursday, weekends are Friday through Sunday.

Note: The First Tee of Greater Houston at F.M. Law Park is also operated by the Houston Golf Association

11. Is HPARD looking at increasing natural plantings and/or trees in esplanades to bring down mowing needs in FY 2024? If so, please describe these efforts.

Due to watering demands for our existing planting sites, HPARD is not targeting any esplanades for linear forest conversion this season. We will resume linear forest conversions in the fall season of 2025 as some our current sites reach the end of their watering period.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

1. Planning and Development Special Revenue Fund – Please describe efforts to improve review times for commercial and residential projects – 13 days for commercial, 10 for residential. Performance measures indicate the department plans to go from 3% to 80%. Will six more employees be enough? How will staff augmentation contracts help?

We believe that four additional planners at the Permitting Center and two at 611 Walker will be adequate to meet our performance measures. We are keeping our options open and will use the augmentation contract if we discover that these new planners are not sufficient.

2. Planning and Development Special Revenue Fund - What is the department’s current service level agreement (SLA) goals for plan reviews?

The Planning Department’s SLA is to review all commercial plans under 15 days and all residential plans under 10 days. Additional staff will assist in meeting this goal.

3. Are Planning and Development Department (PDD) plan reviewers able to review plans from home? Does PDD offer a hybrid option for these employees?

Since the pandemic, planning staff, including those at the Permitting Center, have demonstrated their ability to perform the same level of service at home with take-home equipment. Currently, none of the City employees working at the Houston Permitting Center are allowed to work from home.

4. Transportation Planning – How many Vision Zero goals have already been achieved? Out of how many total goals?

Vision Zero has one goal: Eliminate roadway fatalities and serious injuries by 2030. Vision Zero includes 50 actions; 44 actions are underway, including all 13 priority actions.

5. How many sidewalk lane miles will be constructed with the FILO in FY 2024 (four projects)?

Sidewalk lane miles will be determined by the total dollars available in the sidewalk fund.

6. How many sidewalk modification applications are expected to be reviewed in FY 2024?

The Department expects to review approximately the same number of applications for modification in FY 2024 as it did in FY 2023 – approximately 1,000.

7. Planning and Development Special Revenue Fund - What is the required amount to keep in reserves in this fund and how much (in dollars) over this required amount is shown in reserves in the FY 2024 proposed budget?

There is no required amount to be kept in reserves in the Special Revenue Fund. For FY 2024, the beginning fund balance is expected to be \$10,698,622 with FY 2024 revenues of \$10,229,561 and FY 2024 expenditures of \$13,369,872. The planned ending fund balance for FY 2024 is \$7,558,311.

8. How will current and pending staff augmentation contracts assist PDD with commercial and residential plan reviews? Could additional funding for staff augmentation contracts help reduce delays for plan reviews?

The recently approved contract includes funding for three FTEs on an as needed basis. This amount is sufficient to meet anticipated needs for FY 2024.

POLICE

1. Please describe the increase in building maintenance services in the executive chief’s command. It goes from \$446K FY 2023 estimate to \$738K in FY 2024.

For the General Fund, the FY 2023 Adopted Budget for maintenance services was \$755,506. Due to accounting guidelines, \$307,500 was required to be transferred to a general ledger capital expenditure account to pay for related maintenance services. The FY 2023 estimated spend when including the capital is \$755K (\$448K plus \$307K). The FY 2024 Proposed Budget mirrors the FY 2023 Adopted Budget of \$755,506.

2. I am glad to see additional 25 classified FTEs in the Investigations Division. Which specific areas of investigations will these additional FTEs work? Where is the most help needed to improve clearance rates?

The additional FTEs assigned to investigations correlates to the rise in violent crime that we experienced in 2020 and 2021. The Department reallocates resources as necessary to be responsive to investigating violent crimes such as homicides, non-fatal shootings, sexual assault and aggravated assault. As a result of the violent crime increase experienced nationwide, it was necessary to allocate the additional resources for investigative follow up to ensure that clearance rates stay above the national average for violent crimes. As staffing fluctuates, we will continue to allocate resources among investigations and patrol operations depending on need.

3. Performance measures for the Investigative Division include reducing NIBRS crimes against persons, property, and society. How does this translate to percentage clearance rates? What are HPD’s current percentage clearance rates for various crime categories? Is it possible to add percentage clearance rates as performance measures?

HPD’s current clearance rates (by category) are as follows:

	2021			2022		
	Received	Cleared	Clearance Rate	Received	Cleared	Clearance Rate
Murder	443	244	55.08%	421	291	69.12%
Sexual Assault	1,328	524	39.46%	1,212	453	37.38%
Robbery	7,817	1,233	15.77%	7,135	1,137	15.94%
Agg. Assault	16,131	5,578	34.58%	14,999	4,839	32.26%

	National Average
	Clearance Rate
Murder	61.40%
Sexual Assault	32.90%
Robbery	30.50%
Agg. Assault	52.30%

4. I sometimes hear complaints that victims have difficulty finding out the status of their case. Does the victim services division help with this? Are there any efforts underway to increase communication with crime victims specifically related to case status?

The Victim Services Division (VSD) refers criminal cases to the appropriate investigative division. They are dedicated to positively affecting the quality of life for the community and exist to provide assistance to crime victims and their families. VSD assists the victim with applying for Crime Victims’ Compensation and their chosen service providers to help them obtain benefits and services. VSD works closely with various social services and legal agencies within the City of Houston and Harris County and manages the U-Visa process.

Investigators keep victims apprised and updated of the case on a regular basis either via email, phone call or certified mail. Additionally, investigators frequently visit crime victims to conduct follow up interviews. However, should there be gaps in communication, we always encourage crime victims to contact the department so we can provide them the necessary update.

5. Please briefly describe the functions of additional 35 FTEs at the Joint Processing Center.

The Joint Processing Center (JPC) Unit Program includes the JPC contract, JPC Operations Division and the Juvenile Intake Division cost centers. The Juvenile Intake Division was established by transferring personnel from the Support Service Program to the JPC Program. This transfer is reflected in the JPC Program. There was not an overall increase in personnel.

6. Asset Forfeiture Fund – Non-Capital Equipment – Justice, State, Treasury – Please explain the increases in these categories. Numbers go from \$60,594 (FY 2023 estimate) to \$1,882,000 (FY 2024 proposed).

Expenditures are dependent on receiving additional funds during the 2024 fiscal year. The budget may vary each year and depends on the amount of one-time expenditure request and available resources. Purchases in this category may consist of tactical vests, technology upgrades specialty weapons, ammunitions, etc.

7. With continued ARPA funding, is HPD still keeping 125 additional patrol officers on the street at all times? What is the average number of patrol officers on the streets on any given shift?

If ARPA funding continues, HPD will use those monies for overtime and other initiatives to combat violent crime as detailed in One Safe Houston. The daily FTE’s will fluctuate based on the funding available. The daily average of patrol officers on the streets is determined by multiple variables to include type of shift, geography, and crime trends. HPD assigns available resources through a data driven approach; therefore, staffing will vary by patrol region.

8. For mental health division performance measures, I am confused by the numbers presented in the performance measures. If the goal is to increase daily outreach to homeless, why is the number down from the FY 2023 estimate? Same for increasing number of calls taken to citywide mental health crisis. The number is less than FY 2023 estimate. Similarly, reducing chronic consumer repeat calls annually is actually an increase from 37 to 100 and reducing number of officer responses to non-law-enforcement events annually also shows an increase over FY 2023 estimate. Can these measures be adjusted or reworded to more accurately reflect the desired goal or outcome? How many CIRT teams and homeless outreach teams are active on each shift?

Regarding the performance measure to increase the daily outreach to homeless communities and individuals, the FY 2024 target of 9,000 contacts is less than the FY 2023 estimate but in line with the FY 2023 target. The goal is to reduce the number of unhoused individuals through contacts, outreach and connection to services. Achieving this goal should result in the number of daily contacts going down. Similarly, this is true for performance measures related to annual calls for city-wide mental health crisis and number of officers responding to non-law enforcement events. On average, there are 4 Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) officers on duty, primarily working the Day Shift.

CIRT Team has the following officers on duty:

	Weekdays	Weekends
Days	2	1
Evenings	3.5	3.5
Nights	2	2

9. Traffic Enforcement – performance measures – increasing traffic enforcement to 100,000 is actually less than FY 2023 estimate. Reducing vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian fatalities is also an increase over FY 2023 estimate. Is it possible to include actual numbers of fatalities and injuries on Houston roads in these performance measures so we are better able to see what progress is being made each year to reduce them?

The FY 2024 Targets for both traffic enforcement counts and pedestrian fatalities are in line with the FY 2023 Target. The FY 2023 Estimates are an indicator as to where we plan on finishing this current fiscal year. Below tables show the actual number of fatalities and Injuries for FY2021 and FY 2022:

	Fiscal Year 2021		Fiscal Year 2022	
	Fatalities	Injuries	Fatalities	Injuries
Motor Vehicle	435	41,233	439	36,788
Bicycle	10	309	9	285
Pedestrian	110	1,251	89	1,004
Other	21	992	24	868

PUBLIC WORKS

1. Dedicated Drainage and Street Renewal Fund (DDSRF) – ad valorem. Please list the 380 projects for which \$5M in Chapter 380 – transfers to other funds will go in FY 2024.

Please see the breakdown below of the 380 projects included in Fund 2311.

Project Title	FY 2024 Disbursement
Studemont Kroger	\$89,214.20
City Park	\$1,045,858.00
OMB	\$469,071.94
Reserve at Clear Lake	\$1,363,180.60
Westchase	2,064,254.69
Total	\$5,031,579.43

2. DDSRF – ad valorem. Please explain why HPW spent just \$445K for cap exp- vehicles when we budgeted \$13.5M in FY 2023. FY 2024 proposed is \$18.4M – please list (in general terms) the types of vehicles purchased in this category.

HPW spent just \$445K for cap ex-vehicles because vehicles were not delivered due to supply chain issues/constraints. FY 2024 proposed budget of \$18.4M includes \$13.4M in rollovers and \$5M for new/replacement vehicles. In general, the types of vehicles purchased in this category include: excavators, medium/heavy duty trucks, pavers, backhoe, dump trucks, loaders, tractor/mowers, and trailers.

3. Transportation and Drainage Operations (TDO) – are there performance measures which could be listed for this division other than “curb miles of gutters swept?” How many curb miles of gutters are there in total in the city? What additional measures could demonstrate progress on drainage-related maintenance?

As this is the first year of Outcome Based Budgeting, HPW is still refining the performance standards associated with each of its programs. Future years will include more performance standards that are measurable and that can be tracked. Additional measures that could demonstrate progress on drainage related maintenance would relate to roadside ditch maintenance, major off-road channel maintenance, street mowing, and the maintenance of the City’s storm sewer lines and the associated devices that are part of the City’s closed drainage system infrastructure.

There are approximately 6,400 curb miles in the City of Houston, and HPW sweeps approximately 3,495 curb miles each year.

4.TDO – are the 50 additional FTEs in DDSRF-Metro and 33 additional FTEs in the FY 2024 Storm Water Fund budget sufficient? Are more personnel needed to keep up with increased project funding? CIP - same question - project cost recovery fund shows an increase of 60 FTEs. Are 60 additional FTEs sufficient? If SWAT funding increases another \$20M and LDP funding also increases \$20M, will these divisions have adequate staff and equipment to handle?

The 50 additional FTEs that you mentioned above for DDSRF-Metro (2312) and the 33 additional FTEs in the Stormwater Fund (2302) are not true increases, as they are an increase from the FY 2023 estimate. The increase from FY 2023 adopted budget to the FY 2024 proposed shows minimal increases in FTE’s.

FTEs are budgeted in terms of need and budget availability. There are always issues with high turnover and ability to recruit. Many of the projects use contractors and are managed by project managers employed by HPW. We are hoping the proposed funding will allow us to accomplish the goals set forth in the FY 2024 budget.

5. Describe efforts to reduce time between notice of selection and contract execution for project design.

What is HPW's goal for this timing?

Currently, the average time has been 10 to 11 months. Our collective goal is to get the average down to six months. The process requires negotiation with the consultant on scope of work and level-of-effort. After that the process of bringing the Council Action to execute the contract takes multiple efforts and coordination with HPW, OBO, Legal, Finance, and City Secretary's Office.

6. Describe efforts to reduce time between construction contract award (low bid) and when the actual construction job begins. What is HPW's goal with regard to this timeline?

The process of construction contract execution after bid opening is 90 days contractually. Within the 90 days period it takes multiple efforts and coordination by HPW, OBO, Legal, Finance, and City Secretary's Office. There have been some awards that have gone beyond the 90 days; therefore, our collective goal is to award all contracts within the 90 days.

7. Commercial, Residential & Public Infrastructure Plan Review (Plan Review) – FY 2023 estimate FTEs is 148; FY 2024 proposed is 150. I was under the impression we were trying to hire more people than this to address increase/backlog of applications. Please explain.

For FY 2024, there are 178 positions budgeted but only 150 proposed FTEs, which includes many partial year positions, to allow HPC to utilize anticipated vacancy savings to fund overtime and staff augmentation. This allows for HPC to advertise and hire vacant positions while maintaining and improving associated performance metrics.

8. Plan Review – performance measures - please describe efforts to increase percentage of public infrastructure reviews completed in 10 days from 24% to 60%. Same question for residential plans from 38% to 55%. Will the city be relying on third-party staff augmentation contracts to achieve these goals?

The percent of reviews completed in 10 business days is currently much higher than the actual for the full FY 2023 year. For more than half of FY 2023, the plan review section of the Houston Permitting Center had extremely high vacancy rates due to retirements, resignations, and deaths. As recruitment efforts were not addressing vacancies, outside resources were procured. Between new hires and staff augmentation, percent of reviews completed in 10 business days is on track and should remain on track during FY 2024. Please note that because development does have seasonal cycles, there will always be some backlog during those heavier seasons.

9. Does HPW have plans in FY 2024 to increase fees in any HPC category?

HPC has immediate initiatives in development to increase fees related to 1) methodology changes and 2) new fees for existing services. Later in FY 2024, HPC will pursue an RFP/RFQ for third party analysis to ensure all permitting and inspection operations are recovering the cost of services provided. HPC also anticipates a review of existing pay scales to ensure comparability to other government markets and plans to reinvest future revenue increases to fund these pay adjustments.

10. Building Inspection Fund – what is Alternate Method Review Fee revenue of \$26,800? Is this for expedited review? If so, how many applications does this represent? Is there a demand for additional expedited reviews?

Alternate Method Review Fees are for specialized and specific construction code reviews for projects that require variance/accommodation. Typically, these alternate method reviews are in most demand immediately before and after a code adoption/change.

11. Building Inspection Fund – expenditures – Please describe increase in miscellaneous support services from \$2.3M (FY 2023 estimate) to \$2.8M (FY 2024 proposed).

The increase in Miscellaneous Support Services is for additional FY 2024 funding for staff augmentation contracts (Versa & BVNA).

12. Building Inspection Fund – expenditures – Please describe increase in construction site work services from \$110K (FY 2023 estimate) to \$582K (FY 2024 proposed).

The increase relates to the building wide improvements at HPC to create efficient employee workspaces for additional staff and improve security measures for public and employee access.

13. Building Inspection Fund – HPW lists a long-term goal to streamline commercial and residential plan review processes to include pre-development strategies and improve online service channels – what steps will be taken in FY 2024 to advance this goal?

The new permitting system being developed, HouPermits, will automate manual tasks to ensure the quality of data collected while efficiently monitoring & analyzing permitting & inspection activities. HPC also has pending initiatives for continuous improvement to the customer service model by re-introducing the Plan Review Express Program, streamlining processes by formalizing a robust Pre-Development Meetings program, implementing a Customer Feedback System, and adding customer education and outreach resources.

14. Metering and customer service operations – The FY 2024 proposed budget shows an increase from 362 FTEs to 422 FTEs in the water and sewer operating fund. Please broadly describe in general terms the functions/responsibilities of the additional FTEs.

There are 25 new FTEs, to be added in FY 2024, will have various responsibilities, including:

- Two Customer Service Representative II positions in Inspections and compliance to assist with the back log of processing permits within New Services. Currently Taps and Meters has increased the staff which has led to an increase of new service connections permits. The increased volume has impacted the operations of New Services.
- 15 Water Service Technician I positions in meter reading to address the need for additional resources in the commercial accounts group for the replacement and preventative maintenance of water meters to collect lost revenue due to understated estimates from damaged equipment and the inability to get accurate meter readings.
- One Water Service Technician Supervisor in meter reading to address the need for additional resources in the commercial accounts group for the replacement and preventative maintenance of water meters to collect lost revenue due to understated estimates from damaged equipment and the inability to get accurate meter readings.
- One Water Service Technician Supervisor in Meter Operations to assist with the back log of processing permits within New Services. Currently Taps and Meters has increased the staff which has led to an increase of new service connections permits. The increased volume has impacted the operations of New Services.
- Five Customer Service Representative I positions to assist in taking the following call types: Intent to Turn Off (ITTO), payment arrangements, and general collections calls.
- One Customer Service Supervisor to be a permanent trainer for the Billing Section of CAS, providing training for new employees and ongoing OJT for seasoned reps. Currently one supervisor is responsible for training over 150 employees across multiple business sections. This allows for extremely limited training opportunities beyond the initial job training for new hires.

15. Metering and customer service operations. What is the timeline to catch up on replacing outdated water meter equipment? Describe how the city is working to address large bills received by customers who had estimated bills and now are getting much larger bills.

CAS is installing Sensus endpoints (devices attached to a meter which transmit the meter readings) that have near real time information available for monitoring. We currently have 45,000 installed and plan on installing roughly 140,000 over the next two years. The overall project of replacing the outdated automated remote reading devices is 10 years. In addition, CAS/HPW has implemented an improved manual meter reading prioritization metric to reduce consecutively estimated water bills and back-billings from a maximum of 24 months to three months.

16. Metering and customer service operations – Would it be possible to add a performance measure related to solving customers’ water bill issues within a certain number of days? Are there FY 2024 initiatives aimed at improving customer service?

The main issue attributing to low services levels was staffing. We have since moved to almost full staff at the contact center. Since January, our numbers have gone from an average of 40% to over 80% of calls answered in five minutes, with an average answer time of less than two minutes. We have also implemented the following initiatives:

- No back-billing of customers for more than three months;
- Changes in the bill format to help customers recognize when their accounts have been estimated;
- Prioritizing accounts that have been estimated for more than three months for manual meter reading;
- Increased staffing levels in the Contact Center and Billing department to meet customer demand

17. CIP – is it possible to add performance measures indicating the number of lane miles of streets reconstructed? Also, could HPW add a metric for drainage-related projects in the performance measures?

Unlike the rehabilitation efforts, e.g., lane miles of street rehabilitated; reconstruction efforts for street and drainage does not provide predictable and repeatable performance measures. The primary reason is because it is impossible to isolate street and/or drainage benefits from a given reconstruction project, because the benefit will widely differ project to project. Therefore, our recommendation for large scale projects is to concentrate on the efficiency of implementation which directly translates to better maintenance and operation experience to the owner of street and drainage infrastructure. Although, it will not tell us the efficiency of dollar invested to benefits; square miles of benefited area could be presented on projects that are going to construction within a given fiscal year.

Previously, HPW has researched KPIs for reconstruction. This is a challenge industry-wide and there is no uniform measure used. HPW will continue to seek performance measures beyond efficiency of implementation and welcomes any examples the CM has seen.

18. Building Inspection Fund - I understand HPW will need to dip into reserves for operating expenditures in FY 2024. What is the required amount to keep in reserves in this fund and how much (in dollars) over this required amount is shown in reserves in the FY 2024 proposed budget?

The proposed FY 2024 CIP reflects \$20M of City funding, and the carryover of General fund and County contributions. Please refer to the Administration regarding further funding from Harris County.

19. How will current and pending staff augmentation contracts assist with OCE functions, specifically traffic and storm. Could additional funding for staff augmentation contracts help reduce delays for traffic, storm, and other HPW reviews?

The ending fund balance for FY 2024 is \$6M. As per Financial Policy Ordinance 2019-447, the required amount in reserves should be between \$28M and \$30M, which is four months of operating reserves. The Building Inspection Fund balance is currently 77% below this requirement.

20. It is my understanding in FY 2023 the additional \$20M for SWAT was obtained from the county. Is the plan for FY 2024 to also obtain additional SWAT funding from Harris County?

Currently HPW-HPC has staff augmentation contracts to assist with OCE reviews. Additional funding is budgeted in FY 2024 to accommodate the increased demand for review across HPW-HPC to maintain and improve associated performance metrics.

SOLID WASTE

1. Describe efforts the department will undertake in FY 2024 to reduce routes from 1,300 homes to a 700-900 home average.

In FY 2024, SWMD will utilize Geographic Information System (GIS) data to acquire the most accurate house count in communities throughout the city. The density of neighborhoods and geographic constraints will also be evaluated during this process. Upon completing the route optimizations, the SWMD will evaluate the current staffing levels to determine the appropriate number of additional positions required.

2. Describe efforts the department will undertake in FY 2024 to provide longevity/incentive pay to retain drivers and other solid waste employees.

During the previous fiscal year, drivers received an additional 6% pay increase to address the some of the pay discrepancies incurred during the pandemic. This year, the SWMD is working to re-institute a performance-based incentive program to retain drivers and other Solid Waste employees. In order to reduce the vacancy rate, the department has increased the signing incentive pay from \$3,000 to \$5,000 to attract and retain qualified applicants.

3. Landfill capacity is listed as a department challenge. Describe efforts the department will undertake in FY 2024 to address this challenge. What is the remaining capacity (how long) of the city's municipal landfills? Please list each landfill and number of years for each.

SWMD in collaboration with the City of San Antonio and the City of Austin will regroup to address each municipalities long term disposal needs; then determine the feasibility of developing regional disposal options. According to the most recent Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) projections, the average remaining life expectancy of the three Type 1 Landfills in Harris County is approximately 19 years (McCarty Road Landfill – 13 years, Whispering Pines Landfill – 24 years, Atascocita Recycling and Disposal Facility – 20 years.) Reminder: The closure of one landfill in the Harris County region, will decrease the projected life expectancy of the remaining landfills in the area. Please reference page 57 of the TCEQ report [Municipal Solid Waste in Texas: A Year in Review \(2021 Data Summary and Analysis\)](#).

4. How much in General Fund does the department intend to spend in FY 2024 for outside contractors to assist with residential collection/junk waste/tree waste? How much is anticipated to be spent for these functions from ARPA?

At present, the FY 2024 SWMD General Fund Budget does not include funding for outside contractors to assist with residential collection/junk waste/tree waste. Should the department require contractor assistance, we will then ask the Finance Department with the approval of the mayor, for the additional funding. Concerning ARPA, we anticipated \$9.3M in spending for Bulk Waste, Illegal Dumping and litter abatement services.

5. What is the average number of hours worked per week for truck drivers and other residential collections personnel? What is the average length of service of these collection employees?

The average number of hours worked per week for truck drivers and other residential collections personnel is ranges between 55 – 65 hours per week. Averages may increase during holiday work weeks or declared emergencies. The average length of service of these collection employees is five years and three months.

6. Overtime for NE collections goes from \$7.6M FY 2023 estimate to \$1.7M in FY 2024 proposed. Please explain. Overtime for South collections goes from \$1.6M in FY 2024 proposed. Please explain.

The SWMD Overtime (OT) budget does not calculate properly by individual section (i.e., NE collections, South collections) but by total only. The total FY 2023 OT Estimate is \$6,930,061 and the FY 2024 Proposed OT Budget is \$3,917,978. SWMD OT is an area that is underfunded.

7. What is the city’s “all in” per residence per month cost for trash collection?

The City’s “all in” per residence per month cost for trash collection is approximately \$24 - \$26 per household.

8. Are current SWMD operations sustainable without additional revenues?

No, without additional revenues, SWMD Operations is not sustainable.