



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice

Michael Flaherty, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

November 30, 2022

Dear Councilors:

The Committee held a hearing on November 14, 2022 regarding ***Docket #1247, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Four Hundred Forty One Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Five Dollars (\$441,825.00) in the form of a grant, for the FY22 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant-Local Allocation, awarded by the United States Department of Justice to be administered by the Police Department. The grant will fund a Domestic Violence Management Analyst at the Family Justice Center, a Hub & Center of Responsibility Coordinator and a Technology Coordinator for multiple data collection, reporting and records management systems,*** referred to Committee on October 19, 2022; and,

Docket #1248, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Three Hundred Fifteen Thousand Three Hundred Sixty Five Dollars (\$315,365.00) in the form of a grant for the FY2022 DNA Capacity Enhancement and Backlog Reduction Program, awarded by the United States Department of Justice to be administered by the Police Department. The grant will fund two Criminalist positions, lab supplies, equipment and continuing education expenses, referred to the Committee on October 19, 2022. Mayor Wu sponsored the dockets.

Summary of Legislation as Filed:

Docket #1247, is a Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) that the City receives annually. Director Cheevers explained that the FY22 JAG is a formula based grant based on crime rates where the amount is different based upon the statistics which the BPD sends to the FBI on an annual basis. The funds from the JAG will be used in order to continue crucial initiatives such as hiring of personnel, community policing related to technology, violence/domestic violence, and intervention programs.

Docket #1248, is a FY22 DNA Backlog Reduction Grant funded by the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs: National Institute of Justice. This grant will fund personnel costs for salary and overtime for criminalist positions as well as travel and training expenses. .

Information Gathered at the Hearing:

The Chair reviewed the dockets and summarized the use of the grant money. Maria Cheevers, Director, Office of Research and Development, BPD, joined the Committee on behalf of the Administration. Director Cheevers spoke in favor of the grants and reviewed how the funding will be used.

The Committee discussed Docket #1247 which is a Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) that the City receives annually. Director Cheevers explained that the FY22 JAG is a formula based grant based on crime rates where the amount is different based upon the statistics which the BPD sends to the FBI on an annual basis. The funds from the JAG will be used in order to continue crucial initiatives such as hiring of personnel, community policing related to technology, violence/domestic violence, and intervention programs. This funding will meet the following objectives: reduce crime in the City; employ data-driven, collaborative, community-oriented approaches to crime prevention, intervention, and enforcement; and, advance the BPD efforts in the areas of information sharing and technology. Director Cheevers stated that the funds are used for following three full-time critical civilian positions: the Domestic Violence Management Analyst (“DVM”); the Technology Initiatives Coordinator; and, a Hub n COR Coordinator. Director Cheevers described the responsibilities of the three positions. The DVM Analyst provides data collection and analysis specific to domestic violence incidents, identification of repeat offenders, and policy and research projects for the Family Justice Division. The Technology Initiatives Coordinator will play an important role in assisting the BPD transition from UCR to NIBRS reporting as well as project management and coordination of new applications and technology initiatives. This position will also provide support functions for applications and analysis of current business practices. The JAG funds will also be used for a Hub n COR Coordinator to bring this successful intervention program throughout the City of Boston. This position will provide a broad range of work for the Hub. Director Cheevers stated that the Hub works with families and individuals that are facing complex challenges and may need services from more than one community agency. The purpose of the program is to ensure families and individuals are safe, healthy and have the opportunity to thrive. Director Cheevers explained that services are provided within 48 hours. Director Cheevers also stated that the staff from community and government agencies meet on a weekly basis to address issues. Director Cheevers invited the Councilors to participate.

The Committee discussed Docket #1248 which is a FY22 DNA Backlog Reduction Grant funded by the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs: National Institute of Justice. This grant will fund personnel costs for salary and overtime for criminalist positions as well as travel and training expenses. Director Cheevers stated that it is important for the criminalist in the lab to have the necessary training. The funds from this grant will support the work of the criminalists and the DNA criminalists positions and will allow the BPD to meet caseload demands and reduce the backlog of cases. The funds will be used for testing supplies which will ensure maximum productivity to reduce backlog. The BPD will also use the funds to support the growing demands of the accreditation mandated continuing education needs of the DNA support staff by providing reimbursement for costs associated with registration and travel.

Councilors asked questions about the grants. With regard to Docket #1247, Councilor Flaherty asked if crime increase does the funding increase. Director Cheevers explained that the crime rate generally decreases each year and that the grant will provide funding for a new record management system which will allow the recording of crimes by category. The Councilors also

asked about the intervention and diversion services that are provided. Director Cheevers stated that diversion is not reported as a crime and that the services are risk factor driven. Director Cheevers stated that the services are offered based upon 18 risk factors and include support services for families. Councilor Flynn asked about the Family Justice Center and domestic violence services for immigrant communities specifically regarding outreach, communication and language access. Director Cheevers stated that the DV Sexual Assault Advocate typically speaks English as a second language and reviewed service providers that work in partnership with the BPD. Councilors asked about the structure and resources of the Crime Lab. Director Cheevers explained that the Crime Lab is located at BPD Headquarters and that there are four units under the Crime Lab. Councilor Flynn asked if there are any issues that the Crime Lab needs that could be addressed through the budget process. Director Cheevers stated that the Crime Lab could use more space and that some of the positions should be supported through budgeting.

Rationale and Recommended Action:

Passage of Docket #1247 will allow the funding to continue for critical intervention services based upon risk factors. These services will provide resources and support to those in need through the hiring of personnel, community policing related to technology, violence/domestic violence, and intervention programs.

Passage of Docket #1248 will allow for the continuing education of criminologists in order for the lab to maintain accreditation and will allow for the purchase of necessary supplies and equipment. The purchase of the testing supplies will allow for maximum productivity and will result in the reduction of caseload backlog.

By the Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, to which the following was referred:

Docket #1247, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Four Hundred Forty One Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Five Dollars (\$441,825.00) in the form of a grant, for the FY22 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant-Local Allocation, awarded by the United States Department of Justice to be administered by the Police Department to fund a Domestic Violence Management Analyst at the Family Justice Center, a Hub & Center of Responsibility Coordinator and a Technology Coordinator for multiple data collection, reporting and records management systems; and,

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submits a report recommending that these dockets ought to pass.

For the Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Flaherty". The signature is stylized with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Flaherty, Chair
Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice