



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice

Henry Santana, *Chair*

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

February 26, 2024

Dear Councilors:

The Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice was referred the following dockets for consideration:

Docket #0282, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Ninety-Two Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty-Five Dollars and Fifty Cents (\$92,735.50) in the form of a grant, for the Federal FY23 Emergency Management Performance Grant, awarded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, passed through the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, to be administered by the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The grant will fund the enhancement of operational capacity at the Boston Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and promote the professional development of OEM staff.

Docket #0283, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Sixty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$65,000.00) in the form of a grant for the FY23 Community Mitigation, awarded by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission to be administered by the Police Department. The grant will fund investigations that are coordinated between the Boston Police Department Human Trafficking Unit and other law enforcement entities.

Docket #0344, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Twenty Three Thousand Four Hundred Dollars (\$23,400.00) in the form of a grant for the FY24 Municipal Road Safety, awarded by the United States Department of Transportation, passed through the MA Executive Office of Public Safety & Security, to be administered by the Police Department. The grant will fund high-visibility enforcement of motor vehicle laws, including but not limited to, speeding and aggressive driving, distracted driving, impaired driving and occupant protection.

These matters were sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu. Dockets #0282-0283 were referred to the Committee on February 7, 2024, and Docket #0344 was referred to the Committee on February 24, 2024.

Summary

Docket #0282 authorizes the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of \$92,735.50 in the form of a grant, for the Federal FY23 Emergency Management Performance Grant awarded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, passed through the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, to be administered by the Office of Emergency Management.

The grant would fund the enhancement of operational capacity at the Boston Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and promote the professional development of Office of Emergency Management staff.

Docket #0283 authorizes the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of \$65,000 in the form of a grant, FY23 Community Mitigation, awarded by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission to be administered by the Boston Police Department.

The grant would fund investigations that are coordinated between the Boston Police Human Trafficking Unit and other law enforcement entities.

Docket #0344 authorizes the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of \$23,400 in the form of a grant, FY24 Municipal Road Safety, awarded by the United States Department of Transportation, passed through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, to be administered by the Boston Police Department.

The grant would fund high-visibility traffic enforcement of motor vehicle laws, including but not limited to, speeding and aggressive driving, distracted driving, impaired driving, and occupant protection.

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a public hearing on Dockets #0282-0283 and #0344 on Wednesday, February 21, 2024. The panelists in attendance were Shumeane Benford, Chief of Emergency Management at the Office of Emergency Management; Andrew Bloniarz, Assistant Deputy Chief of Administration at the Office of Emergency Management; Maria Cheevers, Director of Research and Development at the Boston Police Department; Sean McCarthy, Lieutenant at Boston Police Department at Area A; and Stephanie Gaines, Detective at the Boston Police Department's Human Trafficking Unit.

Chief Benford discussed **Docket #0282** stating that the Emergency Management Performance Grant is an annual noncompetitive grant awarded to all municipalities in the Commonwealth to provide financial support for emergency management activities. Boston receives the largest share of this funding each year. The grant is administered by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and is awarded to and managed by the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The City has consistently received this grant and requires a dollar-for-dollar cost share using operating funds for acceptance of this grant. This funding is critical for expanding service delivery and building additional capacity, and enables OEM to offer programming while freeing up vital operating funds for other key City initiatives. OEM has used this funding to procure several goods and services in recent years including technological upgrades to the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), professional development opportunities for OEM staff, facility upgrades at the EOC to ensure security enhancement responses, to acquire critical box trucks and other resources to help deliver resources during the pandemic, staff uniforms, efforts for equitable and inclusive community engagement, and strengthening preparedness for the ongoing conversations around climate change and resilience.

Chief Benford highlighted equity goals adopted by OEM to ensure preparedness to engage and support diverse communities, climate change preparedness and resiliency, and promote and sustain a ready partnership with FEMA and MEMA.

He also discussed recent major incidents including large fires in Brighton, East Boston, and Dorchester; flooding in the Back Bay and Allston; preparing for large civic events; the Edison Plant collapse; supporting migrants in Boston; the closing of dorms at the Massachusetts College of Art; carbon monoxide leaks at a hotel in Chinatown; and a motor vehicle accident in Roslindale.

Lt. Sean McCarthy discussed **Docket #0283** and stated that the neighborhood of Charlestown has been negatively impacted by an increase in traffic due to the opening of the Encore Boston Casino, which has led to an increase in motor vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian accidents. In addition, there has been an increase in car thefts and motor vehicle larcenies. To combat the continuance of these incidents, Area A requires high-visibility patrols during high-impact times. These funds would support BPD Detectives who need additional time to implement strategies to combat these thefts and larcenies. These strategies include surveillance, attending community meetings, and providing additional hours to investigate crimes.

Detective Gaines discussed BPD's Human Trafficking Unit stating the Unit investigates criminal enterprises that profit from the sexual exploitation of vulnerable persons, identifies who drives the sex trade and factors that increase demand for these activities, and follows up on referrals that come into the Unit by family members and service providers who identify people who may be exploited and used for sex trade. She stated that this grant would provide support to the Human Trafficking Unit to perform joint surveillance activities with other law enforcement agencies that help to protect casino staff and patrons, implement buyer demand deterrents, and other enforcement and investigation duties.

Ms. Cheevers discussed **Docket #0344** and stated that this is an annual grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and is called the Municipal Road Safety Grant. This money will go to three areas including \$9,360 to be used for overtime costs associated with traffic mobilizations, \$9,360 for pedestrian and bicycle safety mobilization, and the remaining \$4,680 will be used to purchase two LIDAR speed devices to determine the speed of drivers.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice, I recommend moving the listed dockets from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At that time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that these matters **OUGHT TO PASS**.

Henry A. Santana

Henry Santana, Chair
Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice