

2021



Legislative Reference Bureau

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DPW-FORESTRY

2021 Proposed Plan and Executive Budget Review

Prepared by: Kathleen Brengosz, Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Budget Hearing: 10:30 am on Monday, October 12, 2020



\$14,215,889

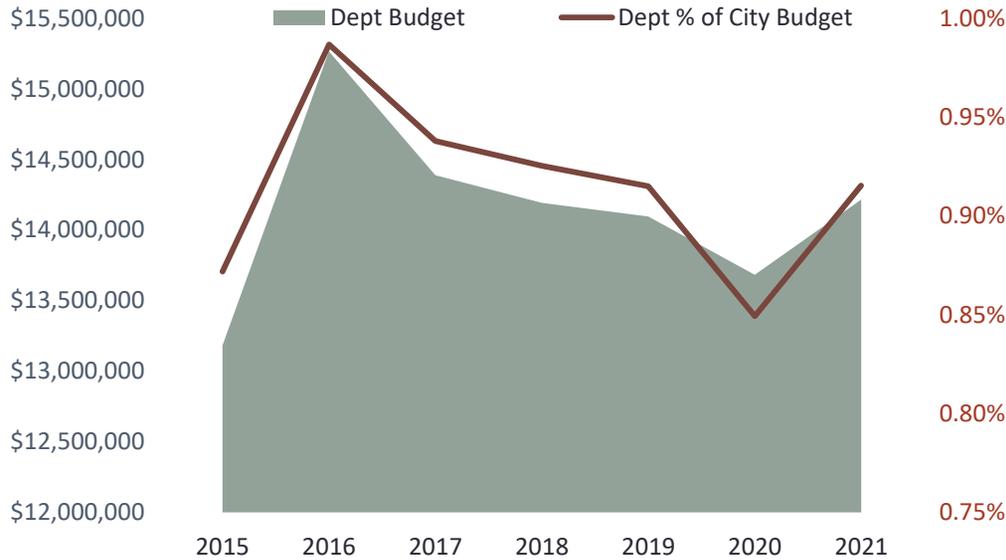
Proposed 2021 Budget

\$532,583

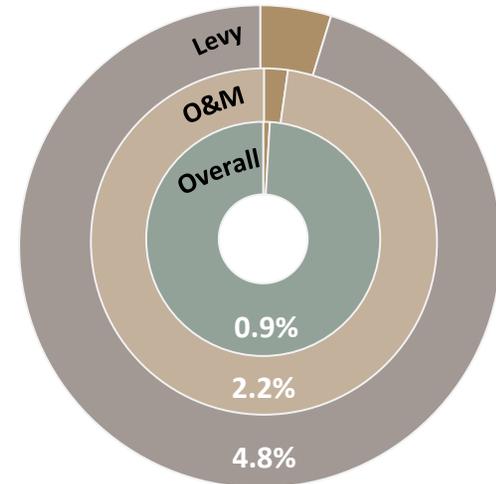
Change in Proposed Budget

3.9%

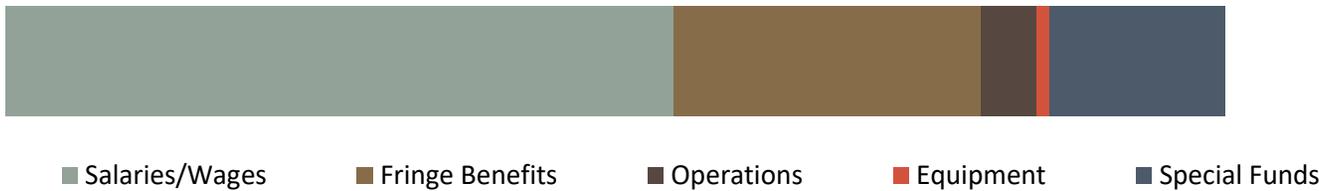
% Change in Proposed Budget



Departmental Budget Impact

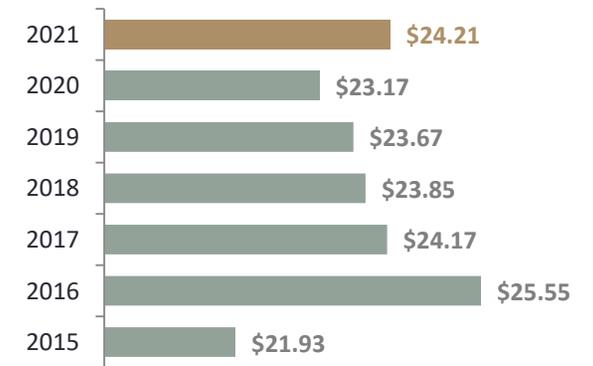


Departmental Budget Appropriation Category



	Salaries/Wages	Fringe Benefits	Operations	Equipment	Special Funds
\$	\$7,782,458	\$3,579,931	\$659,500	\$144,000	\$2,050,000
%	55%	25%	5%	1%	14%
Δ	4.9%	20.6%	-22.7%	0.0%	-10.9%

Budget per Capita



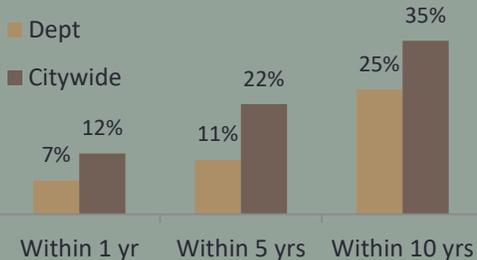
190,500

Forestry-maintained street trees. Inventory is down slightly due to COVID-related backlogs.

12 years

Effective pruning cycle.

Retirement Eligible



-80

Change in Positions

-29.4%

% Change in Positions

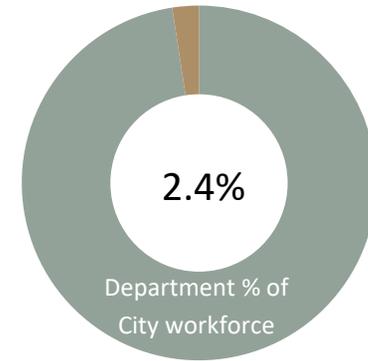
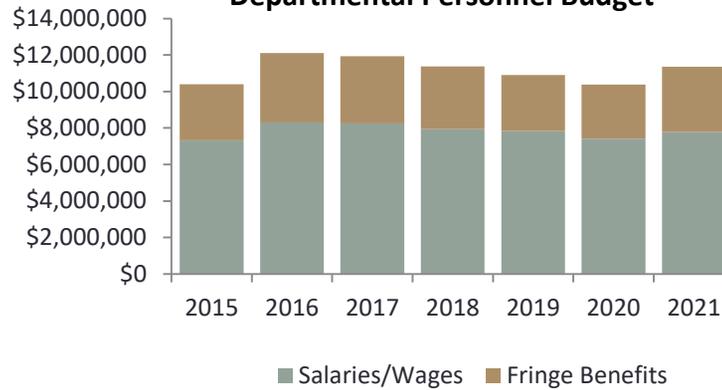
29

Current Vacancies

11

Voluntary Separations

Departmental Personnel Budget



Staffing Changes

- +21 Urban Forestry Laborer
- 21 City Laborer
- 7 Landscape Laborer

Vacancies

- 1 Office Assistant IV
- 1 Equipment Mechanics III
- 2 Urban Forestry Crew Leader
- 1 Nursery Specialist
- 24 Urban Forestry Laborer

Auxiliary Positions Eliminated

- 20 Urban Forestry Specialist
- 3 Urban Forestry Crew Leader
- 4 Urban Forestry Laborer
- 30 Urban Forestry Laborer Seasonal
- 4 Urban Forestry Technician
- 15 City Laborer

All of these positions were unfunded in 2020. Sixteen unfunded auxiliary positions remain in the Proposed Budget.



**Department Positions
2015-2021**

91

Number of Urban Forestry Specialist positions, unchanged from 2020.

3.24

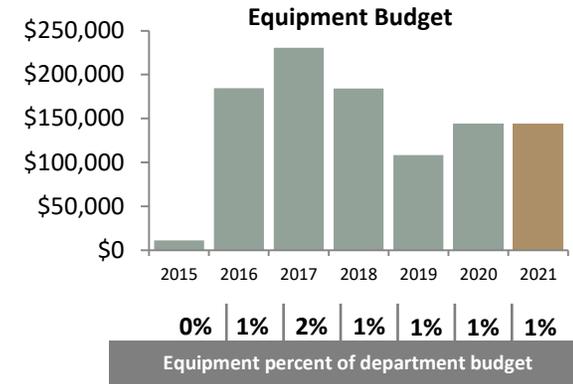
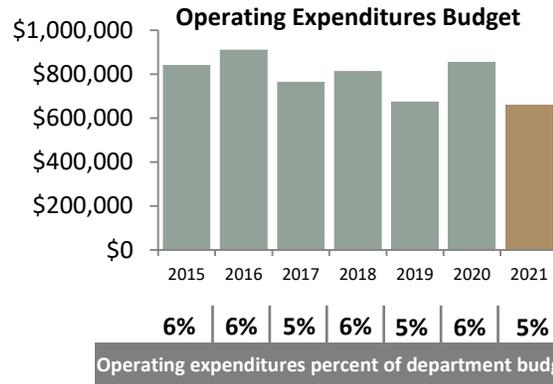
Average work hours per tree in 2020. Up from 2.0 hours in 2010.

11

The number of mowing cycles for vacant lots proposed for 2021.

450

Number of properties expected to be cited for hazardous trees in 2021. Over 1,500 properties have been cited since 2018.



Revenue

Forestry will receive a \$27 million transfer from the Sewer Maintenance Fund to support tree production, planting and pruning. Other revenue sources include ordered snow and weed removal and other charges related to street removals. Actual revenue from these sources can be highly variable. COVID is not expected to have a significant effect on Forestry revenues in 2021.

Special Purpose Accounts

This department has no special purpose accounts.

Grants

Forestry has 2 on-going grant-funded projects to replace a total of 1,200 ash street trees with alternate species. A new grant was recently awarded to replace an additional 450 ash trees.

A grant application for the implementation of a tree inventory management system at the Municipal Nursery is pending.

Capital Funding

Replace Irrigation Taps	\$ 200,000
Tree Planting & Production	\$ 1,250,000
Stump Removal	\$ 360,000
Emerald Ash Borer Program	\$ 950,000
Hazardous Tee Removal	\$ 0
Total	\$ 2,760,000

All capital projects in Forestry are financed through the Sewer Maintenance Fund.

5,816

Trees pruned so far in 2020.
A total of 14,481 trees were pruned in 2019.

37.6%

Percentage of Norway Maple trees in the street tree inventory.

3,472

Street trees removed in 2019.
On average 2% of trees are removed and replaced each year.

83%

Tree replacement ratio in 2019.
The 5-year average is 83.2%.
Expected to be lower in 2020 due to COVID.

COVID

The COVID-19 outbreak required DPW to reprioritize and concentrate its workforce on essential services. In addition to staff re-deployments, 26 field employees were furloughed for 6 weeks. The pandemic also delayed the recruitment of Urban Forestry Laborers. Some Forestry operations were delayed causing unanticipated year-end backlogs for pruning, stumping and tree planting.

Tree Pruning

The 2019 Budget funded a 10-year pruning cycle. Backlogged trees were absorbed into the new pruning cycle at that time. 19,500 trees were scheduled to be pruned in 2019. The year ended with a backlog of 5,000 trees.

COVID delayed Forestry operations in 2020. To date, 5,800 trees have been pruned.

In 2021, the department will inspect all trees every 5 years. Trees that are smaller than 12” in diameter will be pruned every 5 years. Trees that are larger than 12” in diameter will be pruned as needed and as scheduling allows. Concentrating pruning efforts on smaller trees will encourage the development of proper branch structure. Better branch structure helps street trees tolerate the harsh conditions of the urban environment.

There are approximately 21,000 trees that will be regularly pruned. The number of larger trees that will require pruning each year is unknown.

Vacant Lot Maintenance Special Fund

Forestry has one special fund for *in rem* property and vacant lot management and maintenance. The proposed funding for 2021 is \$2,050,000, a reduction of \$250,000 (12%) from the 2020 Budget and \$491,000 (20%) from the 2019 Budget.

Expenditures from this fund are driven by weather and by the amount of illegal dumping activities. Unless actual snowfall removal or illegal dumping costs in 2021 are below the historical average, the proposed funding will not be enough to support:

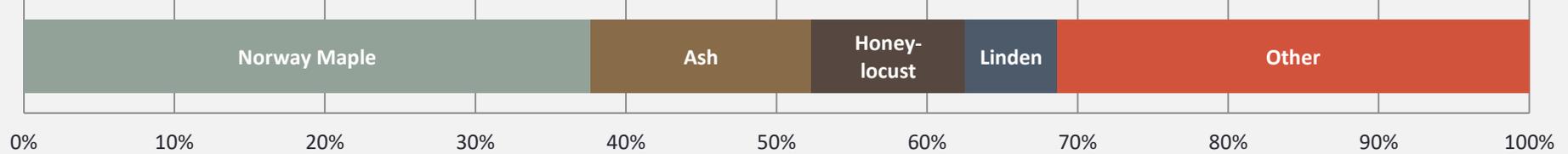
- Mowing along interstates
- Multi-use trail maintenance
 - Mowing
 - Snow removal
- Dead/hazard tree removal on *in-rem* properties

The Proposed Budget also reduces Other Operating Services by \$140,000. This reduction will impact the department’s ability to contract for emergency landscape and tree maintenance projects.

Stumping

In 2020, all stumping was done by City forces. Due to COVID, stumping operations were not able to start until late August. Stumping will continue until the end of November. The department expects a year-end stump backlog of 3,528.

Street Tree Distribution, Oct. 2020



Hazardous Tree Removals

The arrival of EAB has significantly increased the number of hazardous trees on private property. In 2014, 75 properties were cited for hazardous ash trees. A survey in 2018-2019 identified 863 additional properties.

Since 2014, 44% of property owners using City contractors for hazard tree abatement have elected the extended payment option. The average deferred cost per property since 2014 is \$1,350.

The Hazardous Tree Removal capital account has a balance of \$230,900. No funding is provided in the Proposed Budget.

Transition from City & Landscape Laborers to Urban Forestry Laborers

The transition from Urban Forestry Specialist positions to Laborer positions was done in the 2020 Budget. Early in 2020 it was determined that the title of City Laborer was too general. The 2021 Proposed Budget more appropriately classifies the positions as Urban Forestry Laborers.

The positions will continue to be assigned to boulevard-mowing and maintenance. They will provide ground support for pruning crews, performing activities such as brush chipping, clean-up operations truck driving, debris hauling and equipment transport. In the winter months, they will also participate in snow and ice control operations.

