



Staff: Marlene Michaelson
Purpose: To make preliminary decisions – straw vote expected
Keywords: Legislative Branch NDA, FY21 Operating Budget

AGENDA ITEM #7
May 13, 2020
Worksession

SUBJECT

FY21 Operating Budget for the Legislative Branch Communications Outreach NDA, which provides communications services for the entire Legislative Branch – PIO staffing

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Barry Hudson, Department Director, PIO

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS

- Whether to reduce funding associated with a vacant position in the Executive Public Information Office as an offset to the additional Public Information Officer the Council supported for the Legislative Branch Communications Outreach NDA.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The Council indicated its interest in looking at resources for public information across County Government at a later time.
- The Council approved the addition of the new FTE for Legislative Branch Communications Outreach NDA and believes it is critical to allow for continuity of services, particularly due to the Office's role in providing information to residents about COVID-19 and other critical issues. The Council asked Staff to determine whether there is a vacancy in the Executive Branch in a PIO position that could be shifted to offset costs.
- There is a vacancy in the PIO office at the PIO II level. The associated cost is \$133,469. The Council budget assumed a new PIO II would be hired at the mid-point for an FY21 cost of \$114,735.21, including benefits.

This report contains:

Memo from Legislative Information Officer to Executive Director
Relevant section from the proposed FY21 Operating Budget

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

MEMORANDUM

May 1, 2020

To: Marlene Michaelson, Executive Director, Montgomery County Council

From: Sonya Healy, Legislative Information Officer

Issue: Legislative Branch NDA

The Council began evaluating ways to enhance communications operations in the context of the National Academy of Public Administration's Report in January. At that time, deficiencies were identified in the ability of eight, full-time public information staff members to provide information to a diverse community with more than one million residents.

The COVID-19 public health crisis has only exacerbated this issue, with workloads doubling for many of the staff. While the communications team is doing their best to push out accurate, ever-changing information across multiple formats during this crisis, it is clear that this pace is not sustainable. Work is ongoing with the multicultural communications team that was spearheaded by Councilmembers Nancy Navarro and Gabe Albornoz. This communications model should be formalized and become standard operating procedure after the public health emergency has concluded.

Many of these staffers are also ensuring that Council meetings and Councilmember outreach is being conducted using virtual technology, which has been expanded to help keep residents informed during the global pandemic. It is expected that many of these additional communications methods will continue into the future, and new investments may be needed to keep pace with demand. Finally, the team has also worked with Montgomery College and the Public Education and Government (PEG) Channels to launch and provide ongoing content for the Corona Montgomery Channel, which provides information about County and community services, programs, and other important news related to the pandemic.

Legislative Branch Communications Outreach

This NDA provides funds to strengthen the capacity of five Legislative Branch offices (the Council Office, the Office of Legislative Oversight, the Board of Appeals, the Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings, and the Office of the Inspector General) to inform constituent communities of issues that directly affect them and to ensure that these communities' concerns are effectively taken into account. Communications efforts supported by this NDA include expanded outreach in Spanish and other languages, greater use of web and social media resources, Open Government initiatives, and improved management of constituent requests.

FY21 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY20 Approved	888,007	3.00
Enhance: Charge Three New Council Staff Positions to NDA	230,853	3.00
Increase Cost: Charge One Existing Councilmember Staff Position to Legislative Branch Communications NDA	94,591	1.00
Increase Cost: FY21 Compensation Adjustment	9,041	0.00
Decrease Cost: Reduce Operating Expenses	(219,845)	0.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	67,533	0.00
FY21 Recommended	1,070,180	7.00