



March 21, 2023

**TO: Honorable Detroit City Council Members**

**FROM: James W. Ribbron, Director**

**RE: Board of Zoning Appeals (51) - FY 2023-2024 Budget Responses**

- 1) Please briefly explain the new expense initiatives the Board of Zoning Appeals is planning to implement in FY 2024. Please provide which appropriation/cost center the new initiatives will affect in FY 2024.

*The Board of Zoning Appeals does not have any new expense initiatives in FY 2024.*

- 2) Please briefly explain the new capital funding requests the Board of Zoning Appeals is planning to implement in FY 2024. Please provide which appropriation/cost center the new requests will affect in FY 2024.

*The Board of Zoning Appeals does not have any new capital funding requests in FY 2024.*

- 3) Please briefly explain the operational reform and savings proposals the Board of Zoning Appeals is planning to implement in FY 2024. Please provide which appropriation/cost center the new reforms/proposals will affect in FY 2024.

*The Board of Zoning Appeals is not planning to implement operational reform or savings proposals. The proposed budget allows the BZA to fully carry out its functions and meet departmental goals and objectives.*

- 4) Please briefly explain the new revenue initiatives/proposals the Board of Zoning Appeals is planning to implement in FY 2024. Please provide which appropriation/cost center the new initiatives/proposals will affect in FY 2024.

*The Board of Zoning Appeals is not planning new revenue initiatives/proposals in FY 2024. However, we do generate revenue based on the number of cases we hear each year. We have averaged 80-90 cases since 2019. Any pickup in development in the city will create possibilities for increased revenues for the BZA.*

- 5) On page B51-4, for FY 2024, Employee Benefits will decrease by \$4,985 or 5% (\$109,634 to \$104,649), but the FTE will remain at four (4) and there is no change in FTEs within each job title. Please briefly explain the cause for the decrease in Employee Benefits, while Salaries & Wages increase by \$7,553 in FY 2024.

*This change is primarily due to FY24 Fringe Rate decreasing to 31.93 from 34.24% in FY23. Any additional savings is due to one of the full-time employees opting out of city of benefits in FY 2023.*

6. 6) The recommended expense for Professional & Contractual Services has no change from the adopted FY 2023 budget to FY 2024 budget.

a) What types of contractual services will BZA have? *The Board of Zoning Court Reporter/Clerk is a contractual service.*

b) When will existing contractual services need to be renewed? *This contract is renewed 1-2 years.*

c) How much will BZA spend on litigation over various disputes through outside counsel in the current fiscal year? *Any litigation the BZA needs is handled by the Law Department. The expense we incur is related to request for official records. We are currently averaging 1-2 cases a year.*

*The Board members have not received any increase in their stipend since 2017. I want to propose a \$50 increase from \$250 per meeting to \$300 per meeting. We meet 9-12 times each month, board members are required to attend in person, and they visit each site that has an Apogee before the board. (Need Council resolution).*

*Additionally, Board members have raised concerns regarding their safety after a hearing once they leave the building and when someone finds their contact information through social media and begins to contact board members. I have been monitoring the City Council discussions around safety and request the BZA members be considered when any decisions are made.*

7. 7) For FY 2024, Operating Services will decrease by \$56,058 (\$71,523 to \$15,465) or 78%. Please explain the cause for the decrease. Please explain the impact of the large decrease in Operating Services on BZA operations in FY 2024.

*The decrease in operating budget is due to Building Rental (\$52,058) being removed from the Zoning Department budget to the Non-Department Budget and Parking fee as part of the new strategy of consolidating Office rent payments centrally for the City of Detroit. There is no impact on the operating services on BZA operations in FY2024.*

8. 8) One of the BZA's goals is to provide technical assistance to potential BZA applicants to ensure a thorough understanding of the City of Detroit Zoning Ordinance. Please describe how BZA educates and assists these potential applicants at the time of application.

*When an applicant applies to the BZA for an appeal; we contact the appellant to make sure they understand what they are appealing; their application is complete with the decision and reason for the appeal; who other than the appellant will be working on the case and most importantly; contact the community organizations and residents in the area impacted the appeal.*

*BZA staff reviews each case with BSEED, P&DD and LAW to prepare for the hearing. We contact the petitioner with any issues, clear up any issues and then schedule a hearing.*