

Building Dept. (241) and Building Code Board of Appeals (242)

Interview with Department Manager Tom Evers - 3/2/23
Finance Committee: Nick Athanassiou and Lynn Bruneau

Operations:

The Building Department administers and/or enforces a number of building-related state and local laws/bylaws including: the town's zoning bylaws, MA zoning act, historical demolition delay bylaw, Old Kings Highway regional historic district, site plan review, architectural review, and outdoor lighting bylaw.

The Department makes sure that buildings are structurally sound with adequate means of egress and adequate light and ventilation to provide a minimum acceptable level of protection to life and property from fire and other natural disasters. They accomplish this by administering the state building code which includes by reference a number of other boards, associations, codes and amendments.

They perform detailed plan reviews, issue a great variety of permits and certificates of occupancy. They conduct half a dozen+ types of on-site inspections and witness acceptance tests for fire alarm and fire sprinkler systems. They conduct periodic building safety inspections where required and issue certificates of inspection. They also assist Fire and Police during and after natural or man-made disasters and are the department in charge following most disasters as required by federal and state standards. They participate in the FEMA national flood insurance program community rating system.

The Building Code Board of Appeals formally reviews and, if appropriate, grants relief from the literal interpretation of the MA state building code by the Orleans Building Commissioner. The Board operates under the criteria set forth by the MA Board of Building Regulations and Standards and is comprised of professionals from the fields of architecture, engineering and construction.

The Budget information noted here is from the FY24 Building Dept and Building Code Board of Appeals Budget material.

	<u>FY20 Expnd</u>	<u>FY21 Expnd</u>	<u>FY22 Expnd</u>	<u>FY23 Adpt</u>	<u>FY24 Reqst</u>	<u>Avg Incr FY20-24</u>
Salaries	\$205k	\$214.6k	\$212.9k	\$268k	\$283k	\$15.6k
Oper Exp	85.9k	104k	109k	95k	102k	3.4k
Totals	\$290k	\$318.6k	\$322k	\$363k	\$385k	\$19k

	<u>FY20 Expnd</u>	<u>FY21 Expnd</u>	<u>FY22 Expnd</u>	<u>FY23 Adpt</u>	<u>FY24 Reqst</u>
Salaries	\$68	\$0	\$0	\$450	\$463
Oper Exp	8	0	0	65	65
Totals	\$76	\$0	\$0	\$515	\$528

Building Department - Revenue and Expense History

The Department completed 727 gas inspections and 554 plumbing inspections last fiscal year for a total of 1281. They are on pace to hit that same number this year (+/-50) based on year-to-date numbers. They completed 954 electrical inspections last fiscal year and will likely hit the same number this year. Estimated annual FY24 revenue is \$390k.

Through January 2023, building-related permit revenue results are as follows:

Building permits:	FY23 \$139.1k	FY24 \$153.3k	10% increase
Plumbing permits:	19.7k	21.9k	11% increase
Wiring permits:	39.9k	41.4k	3.5% increase
Gas permits:	18.6k	22.4k	20.3% increase

Most “field” inspections are performed by contractors - a plumbing/gas inspector and a wiring/electrical inspector (shared with other Cape towns). Although the State requirement is for a 30-day turn-around on building-related permits/inspections, with the volume and the unmet need, the Department has trouble meeting that objective. Mr. Evers noted that he tries to help with the “quick” ones and any emergencies.

Regulations currently require that multi-family homes be inspected every 5 years. Other types of facilities require yearly inspections (eg, certain types of public buildings). Mr. Evers noted that it isn’t clear which Department might end up doing inspections if the Town passes a rental registration/regulation bylaw(s) that require periodic inspection of rental properties. Would the Building Department do those inspections - or the Health Department? He noted that his Department was involved with the follow-up after the recent fatal fire in Orleans when it was

discovered that the dwelling included an unauthorized/uninspected build-out of living space (too many apartments in a defined space). If the Building Department will be involved in more inspections, then certainly additional resources will be required.

Mr. Evers noted the jump in his budget from FY22 to FY23 when the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) was added to his budget. The FY24 line-item budget for ARC is \$13.8k - largely secretarial support. His suggestion would be for a full-time position overseeing a number of these similar boards (usually regulatory-related with their own paperwork demands) - eg, Architectural Review and Old Kings Highway, etc. - with additional secretarial support as needed - and their own overall budget.

He also noted the need for space. The Building Department is still required (by State regulation) to keep paper copies of most building-related documents - for the life of the building. His Department has been in the same space in Town Hall since this Town Hall building opened with no new space or storage space added for his Department. The Town's "Laserfiche" project may help with accessing older materials - but he will still need storage space for the required hard-copies of any of those older materials.

Mr. Evers talked about the need for well-qualified resources - and the competition among local towns for the same resources. He has lost the opportunity to hire and retain well-qualified resources when other local towns offer more compensation/better benefits. Another risk - the need for succession planning in this Department. Mr. Evers will be eligible for retirement in about 2.5 years.

He noted that he participates in the Southeastern Building Department Association (?) which provides education opportunities as well as roundtables for addressing common issues (eg, lack of resources).

Clearly Mr. Evers and the members of his Department are accomplishing a lot with very little. We reviewed the January month-end Appropriations Report and noted that a few of the budget line items may not make it to year-end (eg, Plumbing Inspector and Wiring Inspector) so we reminded Mr. Evers that Fin

Comm has a Reserve Fund that can help with extra funding if needed. He thought that he should be OK, by shifting budget amounts within his overall budget.

The Building Code Board of Appeals meets on an “as needed” basis - and as apparent in the budget detail, there hasn’t been much “need” of late.

Primary Concerns/Considerations as Noted Above

- Need for space for the Department - for working, and for storage
- Need for more, well-qualified resources, with competitive compensation that will support hiring/retention of these resources - and support a succession strategy
- Qualified secretarial support for Architectural Review Committee, Old Kings Highway
- Support/strategy for effective enforcement of Town bylaws (eg, signage, etc.)