



April 17, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ingrid S. Watson, Chair
Government Operations and Fiscal Policy (GOFP) Committee

THRU: Joseph R. Hamlin 
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis

FROM: Roger G. Banegas 
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Office of Community Relations
Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Review

Budget Overview

- The FY 2025 Proposed Budget for the Office of Community Relations is \$5,760,200. This represents a decrease of \$457,000, or 7.4%, under the FY 2024 Approved Budget. This is largely due to decreased compensation in the form of FY 2024 mandated salary adjustments being offset by seven (7) unfunded positions in FY 2025, decreased operating costs as a result of the contract for 311 consulting services being removed, and a reduction in projected carpool charges, and a decrease in the fringe benefit costs due to removal of funding for seven (7) positions, and the fringe benefit rate decreasing from 34.7% to 34.5% to align with projected costs.
- The Office's expenditures are funded entirely by the General Fund.
- The FY 2025 proposed General Fund expenditures are \$5,760,200, which is \$457,000 less than the FY 2024 Approved Budget level of \$6,217,200, or -7.4%. The Office does not expect to request a supplemental appropriation in FY 2024.

Budget Comparison - General Fund

Actual Fiscal Year 2023 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2025

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2024 Estimated	FY 2025 Proposed	Change Amount	% Change
Compensation	\$ 3,104,234	\$ 3,861,200	\$ 3,636,300	\$ 3,654,500	\$ (206,700)	-5.4%
Fringe Benefits	1,019,564	1,339,800	1,225,500	1,260,500	(79,300)	-5.9%
Operating Expenses	905,542	1,016,200	1,065,100	845,200	(171,000)	-16.8%
Total	\$ 5,029,340	\$ 6,217,200	\$ 5,926,900	\$ 5,760,200	\$ (457,000)	-7.4%

Authorized Staffing - All Classifications					
	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2025 Proposed	Change Amount	% Change
General Fund	56	56	56	0	0.0%
Limited Term	0	2	0	-2	-100.0%
Total	56	58	56	-2	-3.4%

Staffing Changes and Compensation

- Staffing resources for the FY 2025 Proposed Budget decrease by two (2) positions from the FY 2024 Approved Budget:
 - The FY 2025 Proposed Budget includes authorization for 56 full-time positions, representing no change from the FY 2024 approved level.
 - The FY 2025 Proposed Budget does not include authorization for 2 limited-term positions, representing a decrease of two (2) positions under the FY 2024 approved level.
- As of March 14, 2024, the Office reported 18 vacant full-time positions, representing a 32.14% vacancy rate.
 - Out of 18 vacancies, seven (7) positions may be filled in FY 2024: The Office reports that five (5) Community Developer positions and two (2) Call Center Representative positions were requested to be filled in FY 2024.
 - Five (5) currently vacant positions will not be filled in FY 2024 due to a hiring freeze, and one (1) Administrative Assistant position has been proposed to be reallocated.
 - Five (5) remaining vacant positions are not funded in FY 2024.
- The FY 2025 Proposed Budget includes funding for 49 of the 56 full-time positions. In FY 2025, seven (7) positions are proposed to be unfunded in FY 2025.

- FY 2025 compensation is proposed at \$3,654,500, a decrease of \$206,700, or -5.4%, under the FY 2024 approved amount. The decrease in compensation is primarily due to the annualization of FY 2024 salary adjustments offset by seven unfunded positions in FY 2025.
- The Office has lost eight (8) employees to date to attrition. The Office reports that the key factor contributing to the attrition level is “workload and long hours”. The positions most affected by attrition are Call Center Representatives and Community Developers.
- Two (2) employees from the Office are assigned to the County Executive’s Office and will continue their assignment in FY 2025.

Fringe Benefits

- FY 2025 Fringe Benefits are proposed at \$1,260,500, a decrease of \$79,300, or -5.9%, under the FY 2024 approved level, due to seven unfunded positions and a decrease in the fringe benefit rate from 34.7% to 34.5%.
- A five-year trend analysis of fringe benefit expenditures is included below.

Fringe Benefits Historical Trend					
	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Proposed
Fringe Benefit Expenditures	\$1,454,315	\$1,041,032	\$1,019,564	\$1,225,500	\$1,260,500
Compensation	\$4,177,752	\$3,263,452	\$3,104,234	\$3,636,300	\$3,654,500
Fringe as a % of Total Employee Compensation	25.8%	24.2%	24.7%	25.2%	25.6%

Operating Expenses

- FY 2025 operating expenses are proposed at \$845,200, a decrease of \$171,000, or -16.8%, under the FY 2024 approved level. The three (3) largest operating expenses categories included in the Proposed Budget are:
 - Office Automation \$ 658,500
 - General Office Supplies 34,900
 - Advertising 75,000
- The accompanying table compares the FY 2025 Proposed Budget operating expenditures with the FY 2024 Approved Budget operating expenditures. In five (5) of the categories, the FY 2025 Proposed Budget increases planned spending from the FY 2024 budget. In four (4) of the categories, the FY 2025 Proposed Budget decreases planned spending from the FY 2024

budget. In the remaining four (4) categories, the FY 2025 Proposed Budget level remains unchanged compared to the FY 2024 budget.

Operating Objects	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Budget	FY 2025 Proposed	FY 2024 - FY 2025	
				\$ Change	% Change
Telephone	\$ 14,127	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	0.0%
Utilities	6,190	4,700	7,300	2,600	55.3%
Office Automation	358,123	620,200	658,500	38,300	6.2%
Training	9,510	23,300	15,000	(8,300)	-35.6%
Advertising	186,128	57,000	75,000	18,000	31.6%
Mileage Reimbursement	184	1,500	-	(1,500)	-100.0%
Operating Contracts	214,832	245,000	15,000	(230,000)	-93.9%
General Office Supplies	79,157	24,200	34,900	10,700	44.2%
Other Operating Equipment	-	800	800	-	0.0%
Vehicle Equipment Repair/Maintenance	12,100	10,700	12,300	1,600	15.0%
Gas and Oil	3,969	5,000	2,600	(2,400)	-48.0%
Equipment Lease	3,535	2,500	2,500	-	0.0%
Miscellaneous	17,687	1,300	1,300	-	0.0%
TOTAL	\$ 905,542	\$ 1,016,200	\$ 845,200	\$ (171,000)	-16.8%

- The most significant dollar decrease between the FY 2025 Proposed Budget and the FY 2024 Approved Budget is in the Operating Contracts category (-\$230,000, or -93.9%,increase) due to a 311 consulting contract ending. The most significant increase is in the Office Automation Category (\$658,500, or 6.2%) to reflect the cost allocation for IT services associated with the Office.

Workload and Program Management

- The Office reports that it *“takes on an equitable regionalized approach to outreach throughout Prince George’s County. Each district and At-Large Councilmen are assigned an OCR Community Liaison who works to educate the community on existing programs and services, build and sustain interagency relationships, facilitate programs that support the OCR mission, and resolve challenges.”*
- As of March 14, 2024, the Office reports it has engaged more than 32,000 County residents and attended over 263 community meetings, programs and activities in FY 2024. The Office continues to conduct in-person and virtual activities. The outreach activities focused around COVID-19 recovery efforts, a new gun violence prevention initiative, and the Outreach and Programs Unit quarterly themed activities.
- COVID-19 recovery:
 - The Office reports that, working with various partners, the Outreach and Programs Unit has continued to disseminate donated items to the communities, including personal protective equipment, personal care items, cleaning materials, and home essentials.

- The Office worked with the Department of Housing and Community Development to support the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). The Office assisted with *“direct engagement of those facing immediate eviction, Eviction Prevention Resources Fairs, one-on-one counseling, and an information helpline.”* The Office noted that with its assistance, DHCD maintains a hotline where over 159,000 calls have been received, with 23,841 YTD in FY 2024.
- According to the Office, it has provided over 73,000 pounds of fresh food to more than 1,500 families in need during the annual Stuff-A-Truck event.
- Hope in Action Anti-Gun Violence Project: In collaboration with faith-based and law enforcement partners, the Office launched the Hope in Action Anti-Gun Violence Project. The Project employs strategies that include deploying and utilizing Peacekeepers, diversion and reentry services, community and school-based wrap-around services, and developing a Violence Prevention Task Force that reviews crime stats, program benchmarks/goals and advises on critical need areas.
- The Outreach and Programs Unit organized various community events Countywide, including:
 - 100 Events of Summer,
 - Stuff-A-Truck 2023 (7th Annual Event),
 - 12 Days of Giving,
 - Winter Coat Drive,
 - Class Act, and
 - Forever Fit, formerly known as the Senior Health is Wealth Initiative.
- 311-On-the-Go! Unit
 - The objectives of this Unit are to increase visibility by bringing the County government to the community, improve citizen service satisfaction levels, educate citizens on the functions and services of County agencies programs, establish realistic expectations to ensure more positive citizen-to-government engagement experiences, build and maintain relationships with stakeholders (internal, non-profits, community leadership, etc.), develop the reputation as the “go-to” for community resource access and answers and work collaboratively across County agencies to address stakeholder concerns.
 - The Office hosted the 311-Go-Day of action at various locations across the County. The 311-On-the-Go! Team conducted a day of service for the residents of Beltsville Elderly Care Facility. The residents participated in a Forever Fit fitness activity and were provided gift baskets that included County information and resources. The Office also provided 410 reusable tote bags in support of the *Bag It Right Initiative*. *A list of 311 on the Go! Events,*

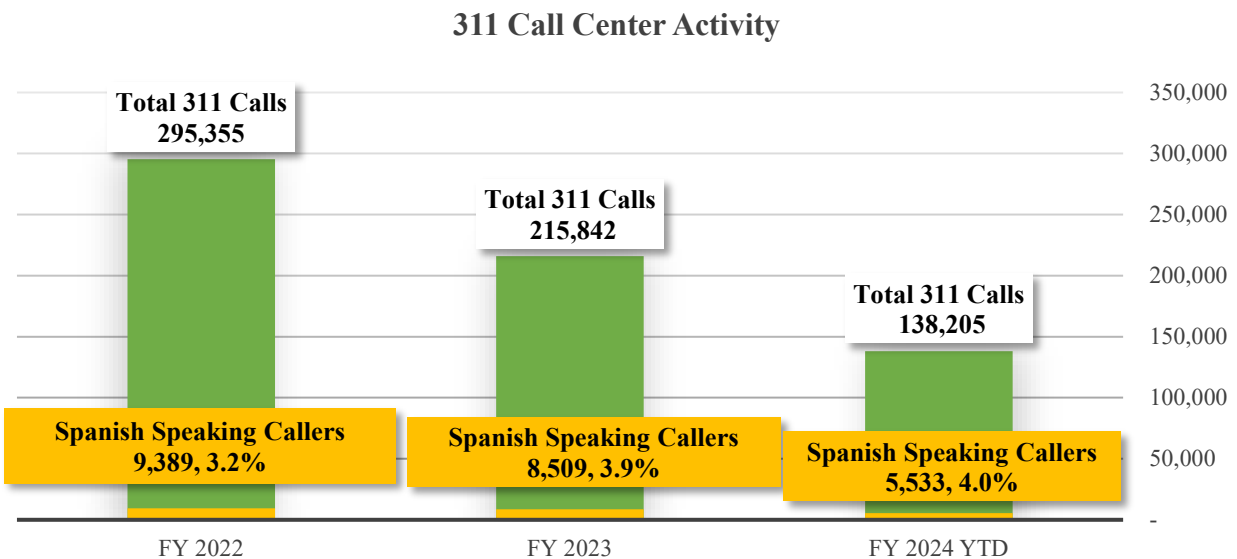
including locations and participants, are on pages 10 to 24 of the FY 2025 First Round Responses.

- Special Projects Division
 - The Special Projects Division (SPD) provides innovative and creative initiatives and programs while supporting the mission and goals of the agency, as well as the overall mission of the Prince George’s County Government. For the FY 2024 reporting period, the SPD continued the management of its projects and initiatives while also providing inter-agency support to the Office of the County Executive and the Department of Social Services. The SPD has also continued with its partnership with the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and the Department of Family Services. The Office states, *"for this reporting period, the SPD has been in the exploratory phase of establishing a partnership with the American Cancer Society (ACS) to bring cancer awareness and outreach to the constituency of Prince George’s County, Maryland"*.
 - In FY 2024, the SPD achieved the following:
 - Continued to maintain, support, and facilitate the CEX’s Community Meeting Tour, serving upwards of seven-hundred fifty (750) residents.
 - Continued (third cycle) of teen dating violence virtual training, known as the “2023 Safe Dates Digital Academy”, and served over seventy-five (75) youth.
 - Secured and attended Safe Dates Facilitator Training provided by Hazelden in conjunction with the Department of Family Services, certifying five (5) staff members as Safe Dates Facilitators.
 - Served as contributing partner/vendor for the 10th Annual “No Excuse for Dating Abuse”, with over four thousand (4,000) residents served.
 - Served as United Way Coordinator for Prince George’s County Government’s Combined Charities Campaign (CCC) for the third consecutive year.
 - Created, developed, and hosted the Office of Community Relations’ first Red Jacket Awards, wherein ninety-two (92) awards representing twenty-seven (27) award categories were issued, including “Super Senior of the Year” and “Male Mentor” of the Year.
- Common Ownership Communities (COC) commission provides services to governing bodies, owners, and residents of homeowner’s associations, residential condominiums, and cooperative housing corporations. The Office reports that there are 950 communities registered on the Website.
 - EDvantage serves to educate members of homeowners’ associations, condominiums, and cooperative housing corporations of their rights and responsibilities as unit owners. The Office reports that there are 409 enrollments in the EDvantage Online Training Program.

The training includes eight (8) modules that cover subjects such as board meetings, budgets, legislation, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and mediation. The COC produced training in both English and Spanish.

For additional information on the Office's COVID-19 recovery, gun violence reduction, Outreach and Programs Unit operations, Special Projects Unit operations, Common Ownership Communities commission, and the 311-On-the-Go initiatives, please see response to the *FY 2025 Budget Review First Round Question No. 22* (pages 7-25) and *FY 2025 Budget Review Second Round Questions No 1 to 5* (pages 1-5).

- 311 Call Center:



Data Source: *FY 2025 Budget Review First Round Responses, Question No. 28* (pages 26-27).

- As of March 22, 2024, the 311 Call Center received a total of 138,205 inquiries/calls.
- Of the total calls received in FY 2024, 5,533, or 4%, were received from Spanish-speaking callers. The Office has reported it has one (1) Spanish-speaking Call Representative on staff, which is a decrease of one (1) from the previous year. The Office reported that it is recruiting to add more Spanish-speaking Call Representatives.

Attachments A and B to the *FY 2025 Budget Review First Round Questions* provide a breakdown of the 311 calls for service data, including request types by Councilmanic districts and services provided data by Councilmanic districts.

- The Office's FY 2025 top priorities include:
 - Increasing the efficiency and responsiveness to County residents.

- Maintaining and sustaining the new PGC311 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
 - Expanding resource services to all residents through the 311 On the Go! Program to include interagency collaboration.
 - Expansion of the basic needs distribution program provided to County residents.
 - Improving the quality of life in all County neighborhoods that face significant economic, health, public safety, and educational challenges.
- Lastly, The Office reports that the workload challenge it foresees for FY 2025 is a work-life balance for its employees. The Office has had to make small restructuring changes to account for attrition and separation of employees. This has added to the workload of current employees.