



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

AGENDA ITEM #29  
May 5, 2020  
**Worksession**

## SUBJECT

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

## EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDATION

FY21 Executive Recommendation	\$1,070,180	7 FTE
Increase (Decrease) from FY20	\$182,173 20.5%	4 FTE 57.1%

## COUNCIL STAFF RECOMMENDATION – CONTINUITY OF SERVICES BUDGET

FY21 Council Staff Recommendation	<b>\$1,061,139</b>	<b>7.0FTE</b>
Increase (Decrease) from FY20	\$173,132 19.5%	4.0 FTE 57.1%
Increase (Decrease) from CE FY21 Rec	(\$9,041)	0 FTE

## EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDED ITEMS NOT INCLUDED IN CONTINUITY OF SERVICES

- Recommended budget includes FY21 compensation adjustment of \$9,041. Compensation adjustments will be considered for all of County Government separately. The FY21 adjustment is not included in the Council Staff recommendation above.

## CONTINUITY OF SERVICES FROM FY20

- The budget shows an increase in FTEs since decisions were made by the Council during FY20 to move 2 positions from contractual to full-time positions and to move one position from a Councilmember's office to the Communications staff.
- The recommended budget also adds a new PIO which is essential to the ongoing operations of the office and to enable the Council to continue communicating with residents regarding COVID-19 and other critical issues. Existing staff have been overwhelmed by their current responsibilities and cannot sustain this level of work. Although this is a new position, it is necessary for continuity of services.

## PROPOSED REDUCTIONS DUE TO SOCIAL DISTANCING RESTRICTIONS

None

## POTENTIAL ITEMS RELATED TO COVID-19

- The workload of this office has increased significantly during the COVID-19 crisis. There are likely to be additional expenditures in FY21 to support the office's efforts. They should be funded by the COVID-19 NDA to the extent allowed.

**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
<b>FY20 Approved</b>	<b>888,007</b>	<b>3.00</b>
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
<b>FY21 Recommended</b>	<b>1,070,180</b>	<b>7.00</b>