

6/3/2021

Statement for budget committee

We now know the budget shortfall is an issue with all of the general fund programs and services. In other words, there are not enough revenues from taxes, contracts, state shared revenues, etc to cover our expenditures in the general fund.

Knowing this was coming, last year the police and fire departments made cuts, including reducing the amount of time per day that we have police on duty, and losing the ability to replace our fire chief. It was proposed then to make cuts in other programs in the general fund, such as administration and the WAC but instead it was decided to ask the voters for a levy to increase our tax revenue.

We all know the levy did not pass. 1621 citizens voted and it failed roughly 2 to 1 against it. I personally feel that there was not enough information out there for the voters to understand the actual scope of the position we are in financially.

For us to circumvent that vote by imposing a fee is not right in my opinion. We should bring this back to the ballot again, and this time do a better job educating everyone where we are at financially and explaining what it would really look like if we do not increase our revenue.

We need to be honest though, our city's financial crisis does not fall solely on the Emergency Services department like it has been sold in recent years. Fire and Ambulance shortfalls have been minimal in comparison to the total shortfall in the general fund.

Thankfully we will be receiving the Cares Act Grant from the federal Government because of Covid-19. Without that revenue budgeted we would be over 900k short instead of aprox 540k. Imagine what the imposed fee would look like then. The good thing is that after we pay back our loans from the water and wastewater this coming year, we won't be so short in the general fund in the following years.

In the meantime, I propose we look harder at ways to reduce spending in the non public safety arena. As we saw Sunday and Today... we need every Officer and EMT FF/Paramedic we have.