



# STAYING *in* TOUCH

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It's Budget Season

I have been receiving questions from many of you about the Mayor's statement on raising property taxes. This is a tough time for all of us, and hearing news about a raise in property taxes is especially difficult. We are all dealing with social distancing, concerns about health, job losses and disruptions to our normal routines. I describe myself as a fiscal conservative, and generally, that means I do not look at raising taxes as a way to solve funding issues.

The situation the city is facing is certainly grave. One of the big reasons that I ran for council last year was my concern about the financial state of our city. Long before the tornado, and the effects of COVID-19, the city had not balanced its budget for the previous two years. Years of overspending created over \$4B in debt. That works out to be about \$6,500 per person and is one of the highest debts per capita in the country. The condition was so severe that the State required the Comptroller to step in and monitor how the former mayor and council were managing the city's finances.

Decisions were made over the past several years that began a pattern of overspending on projects. Those decisions lead the city into deep debt.

On Tuesday, the Metro Council will get our first glimpse of the mayor's proposed budget. Mayor Cooper served on the Council for eight years before running for mayor, so he is very informed about the financial condition of the city. What we

will see from him and his Finance Team on Tuesday is the initial Operating Budget.

After that, each Metro Department will submit its budget information to the Budget and Finance Committee on which I serve. We will have the opportunity to speak with each department head and hear their proposed budget needs. From there, we can critically evaluate department budgets and consider cost saving measures.

As of today, we don't have a lot of the detailed information we need to discuss property tax increases. We don't yet have the Mayor's proposed budget. We have not yet gotten a reliable number for lost revenue from the COVID crisis. Federal funds will be coming to the city, but that number is not yet certain.

Even with all of the uncertainties, I can tell you that I am not comfortable with the idea that taxpayers have to shoulder the burden of years of poor stewardship. If we determine that there is not an alternative to a tax increase, I want to make sure that there are safeguards to prevent overspending in the future. There are options, such as sunset provisions, that would put a time limit on property tax increases.

As we go through the next several weeks of budget meetings and hearings, I will be gathering information to share with you all. As always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have.

**Here is the Budget and Finance Committee Operating Budget Hearing schedule:**

**Monday, May 11**

4:00 Emergency Communications 4:15 Fire & EMS

4:45 Sheriff's Office

5:00 Police

**Tuesday, May 12**

4:00 Parks and Recreation 4:15 Library

4:30 Arts Commission 4:45 Metro Water

5:00 Public Works

## Wednesday, May 13

4:00 Mayor's Office

4:15 Finance

4:30 Planning Commission

4:45 Codes Administration

5:00 General Services & Fleet Management

## Wednesday, May 20

4:00 ITS

4:15 MTA

4:45 Economic Development 5:00 Convention Center Authority 5:15 MDHA

5:30 Chamber of Commerce

## Thursday, May 21

4:00 Hospital Authority

4:30 Board of Education

### METRO COUNCIL BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE FY2021 BUDGET SCHEDULE

Tuesday, April 28, 2020	Operating Budget Ordinance and Tax Levy filed by Mayor (Charter § 6.04) <b>(3:30 p.m.)</b> Mayor and Finance Team Budget Presentation to Council
Tuesday, May 5, 2020	<b>(4:00 p.m.)</b> Deadline for departments to submit budget information/responses <b>(6:30 p.m.) Regular Council Meeting</b> First Reading of Operating Budget, Tax Levy, and CIB
Thursday, May 7, 2020	Department budget responses posted on Council website
Monday, May 11, 2020	<b>(4:00 p.m.)</b> Budget & Finance Committee First Operating Budget Hearing
Tuesday, May 12, 2020	<b>(4:00 p.m.)</b> Budget & Finance Committee Second Operating Budget Hearing
Wednesday, May 13, 2020	<b>(4:00 p.m.)</b> Budget & Finance Committee Third Operating Budget Hearing
Friday, May 15, 2020	Capital Improvements Budget (CIB) Ordinance filed by Mayor (Charter § 6.13)
Tuesday, May 19, 2020	<b>(6:30 p.m.) Regular Council Meeting</b> Sixth Reading of Operating Budget, Tax Levy, and CIB
Wednesday, May 20, 2020	<b>(4:00 p.m.)</b> Budget & Finance Committee Fourth Operating Budget Hearing
Thursday, May 21, 2020	<b>(4:00 p.m.)</b> Budget & Finance Committee Fifth Operating Budget Hearing
Wednesday, May 27, 2020	<b>(4:00 p.m.) Chair's Substitute Operating Budget Released</b>
Tuesday, June 2, 2020	<b>(6:30 p.m.) Regular Council Meeting</b> Public Hearing and Second Reading of Operating Budget & Capital Improvements Budget
Thursday, June 4, 2020	<b>(4:30 p.m.)</b> Budget & Finance Committee sponsored Budget Work Session on Operating Budget
Monday, June 8, 2020	<b>(4:30 p.m.)</b> Budget & Finance Committee sponsored Budget Work Session on Operating Budget
Tuesday, June 9, 2020	<b>(5:00 p.m.) Joint Meeting of B&amp;F Committee and Planning Committee</b> Consideration of Capital Improvements Budget and Amendments
Tuesday, June 9, 2020	<b>(6:00 p.m.) Adjourned Council Meeting</b> Third Reading of Capital Improvements Budget
Thursday, June 11, 2020	<b>(4:30 p.m.)</b> Budget & Finance Committee sponsored Budget Work Session on Operating Budget. <i>(if necessary)</i>
Monday, June 15, 2020	<b>(4:00 p.m.) Budget &amp; Finance Committee Regular Committee Meeting</b>

Consideration of Operating Budget / Substitute Operating Budget  
Tuesday, June 16, 2020 **(6:30 p.m.) Regular Council Meeting**  
Third and Final Reading of Operating Budget / Substitute Operating Budget and Tax Levy  
Thursday, June 18, 2020 **(4:00 p.m.) Possible Budget & Finance Committee Meeting (if necessary)**  
Consideration of Operating Budget / Substitute Operating Budget  
(if previously deferred)  
Tuesday, June 23, 2020 **(4:00 p.m.) Possible Budget & Finance Committee Meeting (if necessary)**  
Consideration of Operating Budget / Substitute Operating Budget  
(if previously deferred)  
**(6:00 p.m.) Possible Adjourned Council Meeting (if necessary)**  
Third and Final Reading of the Operating Budget / Substitute Operating Budget (if previously deferred)

The Departments expected to be invited for Committee hearings are:

- Arts Commission
- Board of Education
- Codes Administration
- Convention Center Authority
- Economic Dev., Chamber of Commerce
- Emergency Communications
- Finance
- Fire & EMS
- General Services
- Hospital Authority
- ITS
- Library
- Mayor's Office
- MOHA
- MTA
- Parks
- Planning Commission
- Police Department
- Public Works
- Sheriff's Office
- Water

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# Please stay in touch. Thom Druffel

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**Audit Committee**

**Budget & Finance Committee**

**Convention Committee**

**Education Committee**

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