



STAYING *in* TOUCH

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

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

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

Please stay in touch. Thom Druffel

Councilman Thom Druffel- District 23 | 615.767.6458

Audit Committee

Budget & Finance Committee

Convention Committee

Education Committee

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