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FY 2016 proposed budget should keep city's tax levy level or show slight drop

Public hearing will be 7:30 p.m. Aug. 17 at Nampa City Hall



We just finished three days of budget workshops for the city of Nampa and there is plenty of good news to share.



You may have read that the city is proposing the allowed 3 percent increase in its property tax budget, but that does not mean your property taxes are going up by 3 percent. In fact, thanks to growth and improved property valuations, the tax levy rate for Nampa city is expected to drop a bit. Keep in mind the city has not taken the allowable 3 percent increase in the property tax budget since 2011. That still leaves \$3.8 million in foregone property tax revenue on the table. But before I talk about the 2016 budget, I want to review the

current budget cycle.

The city has done a good job of holding the line even while dropping the tax levy rate by 13.6 percent for the current budget year. Everyone -- from the employees, division and department heads to the City Council -- has made many positive changes in our city

operations during the past 17 months.

A great deal of emphasis has been placed on delivering quality customer service and creating a business friendly community. We also invested in our capital assets and put more money into street improvements, along with much needed maintenance at the Civic Center and Ford Idaho Center.

Additionally, we were able to give all city employees a pay raise last January. We did all that AND managed to drop the tax levy rate by 13.6 percent. That is all a great start, but we still have many needs -- needs that have been deferred for too long.

The 2016 budget allows the city to further address some of the critical needs. This budget, with the 3 percent increase in the property tax budget -- not your property taxes -- allows us to do some of that.

I am pleased to see that the City Council supports my budget recommendations. I think these decisions will keep the city moving in the right direction. An incremental increase at this time should help us avoid a more dramatic increase later when various conditions have further deteriorated.

We are continuing to reinvest in our assets, keep our community safe and reduce traffic nightmares.

In the new budget -- up for a public hearing 7:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 17 -- the City Council gave the initial nod to the following:

- New staff to accommodate for growth, including
 - 3 new police officers,
 - A division chief of training for the fire department
 - An admin assistant to help with the explosion of applications in Planning and Zoning
- Two new dump trucks/plows/sanders, but they will not arrive until next summer
- 6 police cars will be refurbished
- New Human Resources and payroll software that will easily integrate with our accounting system and will pay for itself within four years
- Vehicle GPS tracking system in Public Works to measure efficiencies and effectiveness
- An emergency fueling system
- A solar school zone flasher at Birch and 11th Avenue North

We are fortunate to have three-year contracts in place for the Nampa Police Protection Association and Nampa Firefighters Local 804 so we do not have to wonder what the end result of negotiations will mean for the coming budget year or the next two after that. Many thanks to the negotiation teams for the city and police and fire departments for making this happen. It sets a positive tone moving forward.

PAY ALIGNMENT IN SOME POSITIONS: Since Oct. 1, the city has recruited for more than 50 positions. We are finding that with the improved economy it is more difficult to retain skilled staff, particularly staff in key positions. Human Resources Director Tina Combs recently completed an exhaustive market study with comparable positions and municipalities. It has been determined that we are not paying market rate in some positions. To be competitive and reduce the loss of experienced employees, several salary adjustments are planned in the new budget year.

HEALTH BENEFITS: We will continue to fund the current plan for non-union employees.

IT STAFFING AND HARDWARE/SOFTWARE UPGRADES: After completing an extensive audit, Eide Bailly presented us with a long list of critical recommendations. The city must increase staffing levels in the IT Department and align salaries in this highly competitive and rapidly changing market. Some much needed system and hardware upgrades have long been deferred and will be addressed in the new year. Our reliance on technology allows effective customer service in many areas, e.g. online services and payments, communication for 911 dispatch and email, electronic storage, payroll and payment processing, etc. We cannot afford to lag in this arena.

REDUCED SUBSIDIES: For the past several years, the city has had to dig deep to subsidize both the Ford Idaho Center and Civic Center when the economy took a dive. The management teams at both facilities have worked hard to improve revenue streams.

I am also very pleased with overall performance of our directors and division heads. These folks are good stewards of city tax dollars and work tirelessly to deliver effective and efficient city services to 90,000 people in the city.

If you would like to review the proposed budget, [click on this link](#). You will find my letter again. Just scroll down a bit for the budget details.

The public hearing will be held at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 17. That is your opportunity to comment on the proposed budget. The City Council will not be able to increase the amount of funding in the budget, but it could make changes in where the money is allocated or could reduce the amount of money spent.

If you have any questions concerning the budget, please email me at mayor@cityofnampa.us.



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