

Dear neighbors,

I've been stewing (not just my leftover Thanksgiving Turkey!). Really, I've been stewing over budget issues for a few years. Last Saturday I attended the first of two budget planning retreats; the second one will be January 8th.

Each year since I've been on Council the budget projections show that we have fewer dollars coming to the City's coffers. Each year there's a tension between optimistic forecasts and reality. No one likes hard choices or bad news -- but the City really has been cutting costs for a decade. And still, I'm trying to figure out how we could do a much better job of serving our community.

So, I've attached the worksheet all members of Council were given at our retreat. PLEASE don't send this worksheet back to me. I want you to look it over so you know what I know. For many of us on Council, this was the first time there had been a list of services presented like this -- and for the staff members who were at the retreat, some of these services were new to them, as well. Some services were left off of the list, for that matter -- Street Lights; Communication (in its many forms, from web site management to CTN to public announcements); Administration (including legal services) -- but I'm certain these oversights were caused by nearsightedness. Sometimes people get too close to their work and just don't see it any more.

DON'T add up the budget amounts to derive our annual budget -- the numbers won't match. There's a lot of overlap in this worksheet, because it wasn't for financial purposes.

The Council's task was to talk about the community value of each service rather than the budgetary cost.

Between today and December 21st I'm going to be creating a list to send to the City Administrator, Roger Fraser, which highlights which City services I believe can be modified (done in a different way) in order to save the City money. To do this, I hope you will help me. I'll create a survey instrument that will let you go through the services on this list -- and recommend more that aren't included, because we forgot. I'm still thinking it through, but will send it out later this week. I hope you will respond (anonymously, of course!) and help me create a list of core services, priority services, and services that could be modified by having someone other than the City provide them to you. We'll see where this takes us.

On the Agenda tonight

For final vote:

A public hearing on rezoning a set of properties from various zonings to Public Land (PL) so these properties can be included officially in the list of Park properties and in the PROS plan. These properties have been treated as parks by the City; it's time to make their status official. This is part of an ongoing effort to clear up zoning of land the City and residents consider parks, but that isn't zoned as public land (PL).

Area, Height and Placement rezoning. There is an amendment to this zoning change being offered; this amendment would allow taller buildings in areas where there isn't nearby residentially-zoned property (within 300 feet). In the First Ward, this particularly affects North Main near M-14.

Ordinances for First Reading (final vote later)

An ordinance to re-adopt the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code, which will impact the speed limits on certain roads and streets in Ann Arbor. The City chose not to adopt the revised MVC in 2008 because the new regulations affected speed limits; the City Attorney recommends reconsidering that action.

An ordinance to license medical marijuana dispensaries, cultivation facilities, and medical marijuana as a home occupation. (I anticipate this ordinance language will change before it is adopted.)

Resolutions (these are one-time votes)

A motion to reconsider the Council's decision to reject Heritage Row, a Planned Unit Development proposed for South Fifth Avenue. This project was rejected in June, reconsidered in July and rejected again. If this passes (it requires 2/3 of those present to vote "yes") then the project will be reconsidered.

A series of agreements with the Washtenaw County Water Resource Commissioner for improvements to various watersheds within Ann Arbor. These are planned expenses, in the budget for this year, and the City and County anticipate that the loans used to pay for these improvements may be partially forgiven by the State of Michigan.

A proposal to enter into a contractual agreement with a commercial operation to manage the compost operations -- this doesn't affect compost pick-up at the curb, and is not supposed to affect the quality or availability of compost. Compost for residents of Ann Arbor is guaranteed in the contract.

Other issues:

I'm hearing from a lot of people about the **RFP for Huron Hills Golf Course**. Do you want to share your opinion with me?

I'm hearing from others about the report that's back supporting the proposal from Valiant LLC to build a **conference center and hotel on the Library Lot**. Have you seen the report? Do you want a copy or want to give me your thoughts?

I have received copies of all of the deeds to the Fuller Road property where the City has proposed building a new **transit center** (with parking deck that the University will fund and use). If you have questions about deeds or easements and want to be certain the City has clear title to this land, let me know.

As always, you can call or email me about any issue.

Sabra
Sabra Briere
First Ward City Council
sabra.briere@gmail.com
sbriere@a2gov.org

www.sabrabriere.org
995-3518
277-6578 (cell)