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Final Budget Modifications – FY 2020/2021

June 26, 2020

As Mayor, I have the duty to prepare and deliver to the City Council the Mayor's Final Budget Modifications for the Draft Budget. The draft final budget was provided to me on Tuesday, June 23, 2020. Under our City Charter, the Mayor has specific duties related to the budget such as this message.

As is obvious, COVID-19 virus-associated costs and lost revenues have had a dramatic adverse effect on our City budget.

But we cannot forget that the virus crisis has had an even more devastating financial effect on non-governmental entities, employees, and families. Our citizens and businesses have suffered through loss of jobs, loss of business revenue, and loss of livelihoods. How many businesses will be closed, and homes lost to foreclosure because of this crisis?

For next year's City Budget, our City Manager, our Budget Director, and I developed and agreed upon many proposed budget solutions. Tough choices were made, and I thank the City Manager and the Budget Director for their hard work on the Draft Budget. It is no easy task.

We asked our labor bargaining units for help. With most of our labor bargaining units under 4-year contracts, they are not required to "open" their contracts for negotiation. Unfortunately, any solution that would actually cut the City's cost structure like deferring next year's scheduled raises was rejected by the labor groups.

I agree with the City Manager that it is time for the unprecedented adjustments included in the Draft Budget. The one item I cannot agree with in the Draft Budget is eliminating 30 positions for sworn police officers, the boots on the ground who protect our citizens.

This proposal would reduce our budget allocation for sworn officers from 240 to 210.

More remarkably, it would reduce our current actual police force from 218 to 210 officers through retirement and attrition.

It is a time of looting, property destruction, and mayhem across the country. While we have been spared the worst of it, part of our good fortune certainly has been the current staffing level of our police force.

Cutting our actual, current numbers is short sighted and puts our citizens and police officers in harm's way and invites an explosion of unrest, provocation, and crime. Our most important responsibility to our citizens is providing for their safety.

As Mayor, my main goal in this current budget process has been to protect our Police Department budget.

To continue my efforts to protect public safety, I will be making two motions prior to final consideration of next year's budget at our budget hearing.

First, I will ask that the elimination of 30 positions for sworn officers be changed to "frozen" positions. This action will allow us to rebuild our police force at the first moment the budget allows without bureaucratic delay or interference. If such action requires budget modifications, the request will include that the City Manager return to Council within 60 days with such changes.

Second, because I do not believe we should reduce our current force, I will ask that we establish a policy of not allowing our police force to fall below the current staffing number of 218 sworn officers and request that the City Manager return to the Council within 60 days with additional budget modifications that allow us to maintain our police force at a minimum of 218 actual officers.

I am always open to better ideas on how to achieve our goals and will always be happy to receive any input from you, the City Councilmembers entrusted by the citizens and taxpayers with these decisions. Of course, I also welcome additional input from City staff and any other concerned citizen or group in our community.