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City Council approves annual budget

City Council approved a budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, that invests in public safety, street maintenance and more.

On Monday, September 16, 2019, the City Council approved a budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, that invests in public safety, street maintenance and more. The City Council also voted to lower the property tax rate at \$0.720 per \$100 of assessed valuation, 1.50 cents lower than last year's property tax rate. Some property owners may see their city tax bills rise if the assessed values of their property increased.

"The adopted budget was developed over the last several months," stated Burleson City Manager Bryan Langley. "The budget is designed to accomplish the goals outlined in the City of Burleson's Strategic Plan, which was developed to meet the community's goals and adopted by city council."

The Strategic Plan is focused on four Strategic Focus Areas: Operational Excellence, Infrastructure, Community and Public Safety.

"The plan is intended to be a roadmap for achieving the long-term goals and objectives that have been articulated by the City Council," states Langley.

"Using the Strategic Plan as a guideline, staff focused the Fiscal Year 19-20 budget on cost containment, organizational efficiency, employee compensation and enhancing public safety response capabilities," Langley said.

The approximately \$100.2 million budget includes \$1.355 million to provide salary increases the city's public safety employees, who were previously significantly below market.

Other public safety response capabilities approved in this budget is the funding for three new police officers, a new police records clerk and victims assistance coordinator.

The approved budget includes \$73,733 for additional fire overtime funding which will improve staffing of the paramedic squad at Fire Station 1. The squad provides an enhanced service to the community by dedicating two paramedics at Fire Station 1 for emergency medical response. The budget also includes \$62,000 for funding an additional firefighter at the Johnson County ESD #1 Station 83 on the west side of the city improving overall emergency response to the western portion of Burleson.

The approved budget adds a pavement maintenance crew that will be responsible for enhancing the City's street maintenance program and will be partially funded by reducing an existing contract for concrete roadway repair services.

City staff reduced costs by eliminating a deputy city manager and senior planner position that were currently vacant. These reductions yielded a savings of \$373,000 compared to FY 2018-19 budget.

The adopted budget also encompasses organizational changes implemented by the city manager's office in May 2019. These changes have collectively improved the organization's responsiveness to issues, and it has also negated the need to add other resources (e.g. eliminated need to add an additional fire inspector position – an estimated savings of \$97,000).

Even though the city's property tax was reduced residents will see a six percent increase in the city's water/wastewater rates. These services are funded through user fees and those fees are adjusted accordingly to cover the cost of the services. This increase is necessary to pay debt service associated with the construction of a new sewer line that will serve our city. Water rates are proposed to remain unchanged for the upcoming fiscal year.

Residents will see a reduction in their solid waste rate. Both residential and commercial customers will see a \$1 per month reduction.

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