



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published June 3rd, 2015

Budget Bonanza

By Cathy Tyson

It's always a good thing when revenues exceed expenses. The 2014-15 fiscal year is poised to end on a "very positive fiscal note," reported City Manager Steven Falk, with \$1.2 million over and above expenses.

Looking forward to the new proposed budget for FY 2015-16 that starts on July 1, both Falk and Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson expect a continued surplus for the coming fiscal year and see this sustained robust situation in the 5-year forecast, even after funding the remaining road repair backlog.

This annual exercise is important because it "allocates the city's treasure toward your priorities," said Falk, presenting the proposed fiscal year 2015-16 budget to the Lafayette City Council. He proudly pointed out that even with anticipated revenue of \$14.5 million and expenses of \$13.5 million for FY 2015-16, "there are no new programs and no new employees," along with a very healthy general fund reserve, or savings account, of \$8.4 million to use in case of emergency or natural disaster.

City staff recommend that reserves exceeding the general fund target amount be divided between money to the parking fund and toward a fund to pay for city offices in the future. Right now, the city pays \$325,000 per year to a landlord in rent. Over the long term, purchasing city offices would be more economical.

While there are no immediate plans to move the city offices, staff along with an independent blue ribbon committee crunched the numbers and deduced it makes good financial sense over the long haul to own and not pay rent for municipal operations. Putting additional money in this savings account while there is a surplus means that the city will need to borrow less down the road.

The parking fund would go toward paying for additional parking, a popular concept. Assuming this transfer is made, the cash available in the fund will be \$1.1 million.

Robinson attributes the vigorous finances to a 9 percent increase in property tax revenue and an extra \$400,000 in waste management impact fees. The garbage truck fees go exclusively to fund road repair.

The budget for next year includes two unique special requests from the chief of police, Eric Christensen, and the program coordinator for Lamorinda Senior Transportation, Mary Bruns. The police want funding to install cameras in their police cars, called Mobile Auto Video. Christensen acknowledges that "over the last few months, the need to record officer-citizen contacts in the field and arrestee transports has clearly been demonstrated." He recommends, at a cost of \$6,000 per vehicle, the Panasonic Arbitrator 360; the entire project should not exceed \$65,000. It's already being used in Pittsburg and Danville.

Bruns is searching for more money for the Spirit Vans that serve seniors. In a detailed report, she outlined the success of the program that started in 2006. Now in 2015, the program serves double the number of original passengers, service hours have grown from 20 hours per week to 64 hours per week, and now the program has four handicap accessible vans. Bruns is asking for funding of \$40,000 from Lafayette, \$15,000 from Moraga, and \$25,000 from Orinda.

Council members had some discussion about specific items including core area maintenance funding, sweeping revenue from the Parks, Trails and Recreation Department at the end of the year, and a modest sinking fund for public art. Ultimately they voted 4-1 to approve the proposed budget as presented. To read the extensive, detailed budget report, go to the city website at www.lovelafayette.org and click Hot Topics.

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA