

City Council approves budget proposal, discusses ARPA funds

By Lou Fancher

Having heard a June 14 presentation of the city's fiscal year 2020-21 proposed budget and workplan, the council approved the budget proposal at its June 28 council meeting. Presented at the earlier meeting by City Manager Niroop Srivatsa and Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson, newly hired Economic Development Manager Thomas Myers joined Srivatsa and Robinson at the June 28 council meeting at which the budget was approved unanimously. Myers outlined in a PowerPoint presentation the terms and possible applications related to the \$6.37 million American Rescue Plan Act funding the city of Lafayette will receive in two installments during 2021 and 2022.

Srivatsa, in the earlier report on the budget proposal, said the city faced exceptional challenges during the pandemic. She credited the city's "conservative fiscal policies and swift action to cut almost \$1 million from the budget" with allowing the city to "weather it well."

Four priorities set by the council in the face of revenue loss and the economic downturn during the COVID-19 public health crisis are upheld in the proposed budget. Work to maintain pedestrian safety and safety around schools has the traffic and street maintenance budget increased by \$140,000 for striping walkway and pathway projects and other measures. Wifi protection and utility safety measures received \$250,000 through a grant that was deposited into the emergency preparedness budget and will fund the purchase of radios and other emergency related equipment. Srivatsa said the city engineer is working with the capital projects assessment committee to incorporate a utility safety overview in the goals and future recommendations established.

A third priority, to reduce traffic congestion and promote multimodal mobility injects \$93,000 into the fund going to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for traffic calming projects. Staff recommended that because the CIP sinking fund is depleted, the council should make additions to the Traffic Calming and Public Safety Sinking Fund. Srivatsa said such preventative action could prove essential, should

an emergency situation or event cause a need for capital to respond immediately.

The fourth goal set by the council, to create a vibrant downtown and support the business community, touched on the ARPA funding aimed at restoring and revitalizing the local economy. Robinson said the reserve at the end of fiscal year June 2021 is estimated to be \$13.4 million, or 88% of reserve. With an anticipated expenditures increase in FY2021-22 of \$2.5 million, the projected reserve at the end of the fiscal year June 2022 is \$11.7 million, or 68% of reserve. (The city's targeted reserve historically has been 60%; a target met many times over the past several years prior to the pandemic.)

In his presentation, Myers emphasized the eligible applications and distribution terms established for ARPA funds. The payments arrive in two tranches, one in July 2021, the other other July 2022, and must be used by Dec. 31, 2024. Cities receiving the funds may use the payments for government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue they experienced due to the COVID-19 health emergency.

Myers said the approved application of funds included allocations related to direct response to COVID-19's negative impact on households, small businesses, nonprofits and others; premium pay for essential workers employed during the pandemic; government services related to the loss of revenue collected in the most recent full fiscal year (which for Lafayette is the year ending June 30, 2019); and investments in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure.

With total revenue losses between December 2020 and December 2023 projected to be \$8,113,674 and exceeding the amount received from the ARPA fund, Myers said the council will need to determine the best use of those funds. Options include placing the entire amount into the General Fund, directing it into the business community overall or specifically targeted to individual businesses -- and broader considerations, such as whether to provide immediate relief or take steps to preserve the city's long-term economic viability by applying the funds to provide basic city services.

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Music fills the air in Lafayette



Photo J. Wake

Music and sounds of merriment filled the air at Plaza Park June 22, courtesy of local '60s, '70s and '80s cover band The Tuneriders (Duane Campbell, Rick Abbott and Ken Cooper), which kicked off the return of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce's sold-out Taste of Lafayette event.



Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, July 12, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's You Tube Channel:
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Planning Commission Meeting

Monday, July 19, 7 p.m.
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Design Review

Wednesday, July 14, 7 p.m. Zoom
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>



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