
MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Brian Haddix, City Administrator
Tel: (559) 665-8615 x100
Fax: (559) 903-8079
Email: BHaddix@CityOfChowchilla.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chowchilla City Council Passes a Balanced Budget that grows Reserves and Funds Vital Programs

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During the most recent meeting of the Chowchilla City Council, its members approved a balanced \$24.86 million city budget, including a General Fund budget of \$7,195,485. This budget continues its progress toward in achieving the Council's key goals while growing its General Fund Unappropriated Fund Balance to 27.83%.

"The City Council has worked hard to pass a balanced budget that funds the public's expressed needs that we heard so clearly during our goal setting workshops, townhall meetings on the budget, requests in the city newsletter for suggestions and input through social media," said Mayor Waseem Ahmed. "I am also pleased that the strength of our budget has allowed us to meet the needs of our staff through increases in salaries while investing in our streets and sidewalks, economic development, completing grant funded projects and improving the City's ability to address infrastructure needs.

FY2016-17 Budget Highlights

For the past 8 weeks, the City Council, staff and public have participated in developing the priorities for this budget. The question was proposed to Council members and the public "What are the most important things for the City to accomplish this year?" Based upon the input from City Council, staff and the public the budget was prepared with expenditures in balance with our available revenue. The Council received feedback from residents, business owners and taxpayers at public hearings and email, as well as through newsletters and social media.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS IN THE 2016-2017 ANNUAL BUDGET

- JOB CREATION REMAINS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR THE CITY

Over the past fiscal year, Chowchilla saw the loss of jobs at a major manufacturer and the gain of new jobs added as new retail businesses open up in our City. The loss though drives home the need for job creation. Over the course of the new fiscal year the City will draw upon the “tools” put in place by Council to incentivize new business recruitment as it aggressively pursues new business opportunities in the areas of hospitality, fuels and energy, processing, and retail. The City plans to continue to actively reach out to prospective business through trade shows and events. Finally, efforts to revitalize the downtown will remain a key focus of the City.

- **LINKED TO JOB CREATION ARE THE UPGRADING OF CITY PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING PRACTICES**

This requires an update of planning and zoning documents, including planning/zoning into the annexed areas. As growth is forecast, processes will be initiated for a water storage tank and new well, SCADA system, evaluate upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant, work with housing developers on development agreements, and streamline the planning review process.

- **CIVIC PRIDE IS ENHANCED BY AN AGGRESSIVE CODE ENFORCEMENT**

During the previous fiscal year, code enforcement was operated with no change in staffing, though its duties have expanded into a more aggressive level of code enforcement, including use of receiverships. There has been an expressed interest by the public and Council that this program be enhanced. As a result, this budget places additional funding in code enforcement so as to maintain an attractive appearance of the City.

- **PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS OF CITY PARKS**

Family friendly parks are vital to the quality of life in Chowchilla. Through utilization of grants and private donations, the City can look forward to increased protection and improvements to its parks, including construction of the Barragan Family Performance Stage. Additionally, this budget includes community partnerships for our Movies in the Park, Concerts in the Park, community aquatic events, and recreational programs.

- **THIS BUDGET PROVIDES FOR CONTINUED STREET REPAIR, SIDEWALKS, AND ADA COMPLIANCE**

The budget provides for the development of a pavement management system. This includes evaluating the placement of stop signs in and around schools. Additionally, traffic analyses will be conducted, including truck routes and truck parking.

- **VITAL TO A 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY IS AN UPGRADED CITY WEBPAGE AND COMPUTER SERVER**

The goal is to increase community and business involvement through a revised webpage that lists community events and as well as facilitate the recruitment and development of new business to Chowchilla. Additionally, the webpage will provide for easier access to Council meeting recordings.

- **UPDATE THE MUNICIPAL CODE**

This will provide for the modernization of the city code and the associated regulations that accompany it.

As Part of the Budget Process, the Council also:

- Approved step increases and cost-of-living increases in salaries for all City employees.
- Funded the recently created Community and Economic Development Department.
- Fully funded all positions in city government, with particular emphasis on the police department and public works.
- Embraced its new Reserve Policy passed in April 2016 by the City Council that establishes a minimum fiscal reserve level of 17%, which is the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommendation of two months of operating expenditures. What is unique to this budget is the size of its reserve, 27.83%. This surplus is mainly due to settlement money from a lawsuit with the County. This anticipated revenue is not included in the budget's spending plan until staff comes back to the City Council with recommendations for prioritization of the City's unmet needs.
- Funded the new Cost Allocation Plan. As new equipment depreciates over time, this account grows over time, allowing for replacement of equipment when required.
- Forged ahead the efforts with Johnson Controls Incorporated (JCI) to begin Phase I of the projects previously brought to Council for approval. These projects address numerous areas of need for the City, such as water meters, increased water pressure and storage, corporate yard facilities and more. Phase I projects will be primarily self-funded from energy cost reductions from the installation of solar panels.
- Continues to aggressively promote several major economic development programs designed to stimulate job creation by providing fee incentives to promote the development of industrial and office construction, a program designed to revitalize underperforming retail facilities by providing a sales tax rebate to retailers that move into currently vacant properties and, most recently, an infill incentive program designed to attract new housing and retail onto vacant lots within the older, established region of Chowchilla. The City's economic development efforts are attracting new business opportunities and enhancing current business activity.
- The City will invest in plans for developing industrial lands already within its city limits. The City will also work with businesses locating in the downtown so that they comply with the Downtown Design Standards approved by Council.

According to City Administrator Brian Haddix, "The 2016-2017 Annual Budget maintains public safety service levels; continues to provide substantial investment in planned installation, maintenance and upgrades to roads and sidewalks; directs resources to economic development and job creation; and proposes to maintain partnerships with volunteers and community organizations to meet community service needs. This budget also works to take care of the employees the Council depends on to achieve its goals while driving forward toward a stronger City."

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