

2019-2020 BUDGET QUESTION

Response to Request for Information

DEPARTMENT(S): Financial Services - Budget

REQUEST NO.: 14

REQUESTED BY: Tovo

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REQUEST: Provide a list of all reductions in spending in the FY 2019-20 Proposed Budget compared to the FY 2018-19 Amended Budget.

RESPONSE:

Following are highlights of department efforts improving the efficiency and effectiveness of services to help keep the City on a fiscally sustainable path for next fiscal year and beyond. Highlighted are cost savings, reallocation of existing resources, implementation of new technologies to enhance services to the City and community, and partnering and collaborating with other departments and outside entities.

ANIMAL SERVICES PET NOTIFICATIONS: Starting in FY 2018-19, the Animal Services Office began utilizing new methods for using social media platforms to notify the community of lost or adoptable pets. Leveraging existing resources has proven successful in its initial deployment and is one more way the Department can connect people and pets at no additional cost to the taxpayers.

AUSTIN RESOURCE RECOVERY COST SAVINGS: Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) recently entered into an agreement with the Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) to accept cemetery dirt at the closed Farm to Market Road 812 landfill. This provides the landfill with much-needed soil to fill in areas which have settled over time at no cost. It also saves PAR approximately \$60,000 annually by eliminating landfill disposal and hauling fees.

Another cost savings effort pertains to ARR's past practice of renting uniforms for operational staff and providing laundry services for those employees who chose to participate. In recent years, fewer staff have utilized the laundry service and an investigation into uniform purchases yielded an opportunity for potential savings. As a result, ARR utilized the budget for clothing and laundry service in FY 2018-19 to purchase uniforms for all operations staff and projects it will see a savings of \$100,000 in FY 2019-20.

AUSTIN WATER OPERATIONAL INITIATIVES: Austin Water (AW) has taken numerous actions to improve efficiencies and effectiveness:

- AW will continue to subscribe to the JD Power Water Residential Customer Satisfaction Survey in FY 2019-20, using insights from this market research helps AW to better understand customer sentiment relating to water delivery, communications, price, and

customer service. These insights then allow AW to dynamically prioritize efficiency improvements and communications topics to address customer needs.

- Recent debt defeasance—funded with Capital Recovery Fee collections and operating funds—have allowed the utility to realize approximately \$115.9 million in net present value savings in FY 2019-20.
- The Wastewater Treatment program reduced electrical costs by an estimated \$324,000 for FY 2019-20 with the South Austin Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant blower efficiencies. Blowers are a necessary component to the aerobic treatment method and are often the most energy consuming driver for wastewater plant operations.
- The Information Technology Division decreased IT costs by reducing PC counts by over 200 units through end-user device efficiencies and connectivity optimizations.
- Austin Water created an Innovative Water Strategies Steering Committee to develop a guiding process and framework for the evaluation and implementation of innovative decentralized water and wastewater systems. AW is also partnering with the City's Development Services Department to pilot on-site reuse in a planned new development center.
- AW is implementing an automated employee review process in response to comments in the Listening to the Workforce Survey. This automated process links individual performance to the City and departmental business goals, provides a mechanism for continuous feedback between supervisor and employee, and reduces paper.

BUILDING SERVICES PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES: Manpower investment in additional preventive maintenance procedures over the past three years are providing benefits through FY 2019-20 and beyond. As the reliability of facilities equipment improves and fix-on-failure calls are reduced, it results in more comfortable work environments for staff and community members and lower facility maintenance costs over the long-term.

CAPITAL CONTRACTING PERFORMANCE OPTIMIZATION: The Capital Contracting Office added a Performance Optimization Team with the purpose of aligning the Office with SD23 through evaluating performance metrics; examining internal systems including workflow processes and information systems; facilitating process improvement efforts and implementing best practices.

CITY AUDITOR SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION: During FY 2018-19, the Office of the City Auditor (OCA) implemented the TeamCentral system, which is used to manage the status of audit recommendation implementation. This system will streamline the process for updating the status of implementation, thereby increasing transparency. It will also reduce staff time on follow up projects by improving communication between the Auditor's Office and departments. This will enable OCA to more effectively and efficiently update the City Council and the public about government improvements resulting from audit recommendations.

CONVENTION CENTER WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS: Enhancing available information for attendees and local residents to improve their experience has long been a department priority. With the revamped websites, users can easily and efficiently locate all information they need, including event calendars, parking locations, and online maps. Additionally, clients and attendees can now order services online and submit requests for proposals. Future improvements will continue to focus on the customer's ability to order more services online.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS: Several areas are planned to be addressed in the FY 2019-20 budget to enhance resident and customer experiences. The utilization of third-party contracts for review and inspection services will allow the Department to meet and exceed goals for performance measures. The expansion of the Electronic Plan Review process and the digitization of documents will decrease reliance on paper, thereby reducing costs for both customers and the Department. Finally, the Department will relocate to the Planning and Development Center where, with the co-located partner departments, customers will encounter a true “one-stop” shop.

DIGITAL TIMESHEETS: The Human Resources Department (HRD) partnered with Communication and Technology Management and Controller’s Office to develop a digital timesheet system through Kronos. This system will be fully operational for all City employees in this fiscal year. HRD also plans to continue to expand the way employees receive training by creating eLearning courses to ensure all employees have these opportunities.

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN COMMUNITY COURT PILOT WORK CREW PROGRAM: The DACC is planning to pilot a work crew program associated with Court’s program garden which provides an array of vegetables and chicken eggs, all of which are donated to local social service agencies that provide meals to homeless individuals. The pilot program will utilize existing clerical staff to supervise individuals that are interested in completing their community service hours specifically at DACC’s program garden.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SURVEY: In FY 2019-20, a cross-departmental Cultural Events Survey will collect information pertinent to SD23 to ensure services meet customer needs. Seven inter-divisional and one inter-departmental working groups have been developed to pursue efficiency gains.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPOSIT PROCESSING: The Billing and Finance units increased efficiencies in processing deposits with the City’s first lockbox program. This program will improve the receivable process for payments sent through mail and reduce the deposit time for received payments.

FLEET MOBILITY SERVICES ANALYSIS TO MITIGATE FUEL AND MAINTENANCE INCREASES: Fleet Mobility Services (FMS) is repurposing funds in the FY 2019-20 budget to invest in a best in class GPS device and a robust software package to allow a greater level of analysis geared towards mitigating increasing fuel and maintenance costs. This software manages asset tracking, geo-fencing, predictive failure on vehicles and equipment, and driver safety and fuel efficiency reports to help determine which vehicles may be candidates to be replaced with electric vehicle/plug-in hybrid electric vehicle. FMS will be able to collaborate with departments to review driver scorecards and reduce accidents. The data will provide an opportunity to identify vehicles that are potential candidates to be replaced with electric and electric hybrids. Additionally, FMS will be able to review idle time, routes driven, and fuel consumption trends for opportunities in reducing costs. Finally, this new system will allow for improved ability to perform predictive maintenance that can help prevent significant failures which are costly and lead to significant vehicle downtime.

LAW DEPARTMENT REALLOCATING RESOURCES TO ASSIST MUNICIPAL COURT: The Municipal Court requested the Law Department increase the number of prosecutors to accommodate the need to staff more courtrooms in the new courthouse facility. The Law Department was able to

identify areas to streamline services, which included the transfer of an existing vacant attorney position from the open government, ethics, and compliance section to the prosecutor's office to address this need. Additionally, the Law Department continues to cross train attorneys in an effort to allow for flexibility when needs occur.

MUNICIPAL COURT EXPANDING SERVICE AVAILABILITY: Court conducted various outreach events so individuals have more access to court services outside of the downtown corridor and outside of regular business hours without increasing costs. These events included driver's license recovery clinics, warrant amnesty, and mobile assessment locations for youth offenders. Additionally, the Downtown Austin Community Court was able to expand access to an array of substance use treatment services, peer support services, and access to 20 Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units utilizing existing resources and funds.

OFFICE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SITE PLAN REVIEW PROJECT: Under the leadership of the Office of Performance Management (OPM), a cross-functional team with 19 members representing 15 City departments was established to analyze timelines experienced by customers and staff as part of the site plan review process. Using a combination of data and fact-driven approaches, this team will research drivers of the current timelines, leveraging sources including internal data systems, user experience, and staff work experience. After a period of analysis and synthesis, the team will design changes to the site plan review process. Through a fast-moving and iterative process, the team will test and assess the effectiveness of the changes, implementing those that positively impact performance. Additional teams within the Library, Austin Fire Department, and Animal Services Office are beginning similar activities to design new ways of working easier, faster, less costly, and more human centered for the city and community.

POLICE SWORN AND CIVILIAN BUDGET REALLOCATIONS TO ENHANCE SERVICES: Austin Police Department (APD) reallocated \$1.2 million of existing funds to create a new aggravated assault unit composed of eight investigators with the aim of building the strongest cases possible in instances of serious assaults, which often involve weapons. APD reallocated detectives from regional investigations citywide to create this new unit.

APD has made wellness a high priority by reallocating \$835,000 internally to create the Wellness Bureau to engage in improving the health, wellness, and quality of life of APD employees. This Bureau is comprised of five sworn and four civilian employees, including two psychologists.

Additionally, in an effort to improve efficiencies within the Communications Center, APD converted six part-time 911 call-taker positions into full-time by reallocating existing temporary employee funding in the Communications unit. This resulted in an increase of 1.75 civilian positions. By converting these positions to full-time, the Department expects to see improvements in the Communications unit's ability to fill these positions on a permanent basis. The part-time call-taker positions did not align with the overall demand and expectations of the position and were detrimental to maintaining the skill level required of a professional call taker.

PUBLIC HEALTH EFFICIENCIES: Austin Public Health (APH) evaluated multiple positions vacated during FY 2018-19 to ensure the Department properly allocated resources for current and future needs. This evaluation process highlighted several operational needs within current

funding levels. For example, APH implemented these needs by including mobile inspection software, enabling Environmental Health Officers to conduct real time restaurant inspections, eliminating duplicate data entry, allowing more real-time data availability, and increasing the use of video and remote meeting technologies to decrease travel time and expense. APH is also transitioning to the current enterprise software (eCOMBS) for performance measure management, eliminating the cost of third-party software and reducing staff time spent entering data into two different systems.

PURCHASING SOLICITATIONS: The Purchasing Office completed the initial design and roll out of an eResponse system for vendors to electronically reply to the City's solicitations. This will allow for better tracking of vendors related to the Anti-Lobbying Ordinance and make the solicitation process greener by way of less paper and reduced travel since there will be no need to physically drop off offers.

REAL ESTATE SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN DEPLOYMENT: Through continuous collaborative efforts with Financial Services and Building Services, the Office of Real Estate Services (ORES) developed a plan to replace aging facilities by utilizing an exclusive negotiation agreement model with third-party contractors. This model is a public-private partnership that allows the City to negotiate property and property improvements in a far more timely and cost efficient manner.

ORES continues to collaborate with a development advisor on an occupancy strategy analysis, including a lease exit strategy, which will provide a plan on utilizing existing City-owned facilities as well as any new administrative space needs that could be pursued using the existing public-private partnership model. Strategically co-locating and executing a single lease agreement when possible as opposed to several individual leases will result in significant savings to the City and will address current space needs until City-owned facilities are available.

SMALL AND MINORITY BUSINESS RESOURCES (SMBR) UPGRADES: SMBR continues to explore ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's certification and compliance functions. The Certification Division has implemented the Electronic Document and Imaging Management System to begin digitizing all certification records. In addition, the recent acquisition of the new software will allow SMBR to implement an online certification process to track staff workload and aging of compliance and certification documents to ensure ordinance timelines are met to avoid project delays.

WATERSHED PROTECTION ELECTRONIC PURCHASE REQUEST PROCESS: The Watershed Protection Department implemented an electronic purchase request process which permits easy access and sign-off capabilities for staff in different physical locations. It also streamlines the tracking of various purchases to allow for more informed decision-making.