



TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Ed Van Eenoo, Deputy Chief Financial Officer *EV*

DATE: April 28, 2017

SUBJECT: FY 2017-18 Public Engagement Plan

The Budget Office is strongly committed to a budget process that is transparent and accessible to all residents and stakeholders. Public input on the City's budget is sought year-round, with a special emphasis from May thru July during the budget development process.

This year, residents can provide their funding priorities and preferences through an interactive online budget simulator, by attending one or more Board and Commission meetings, or by signing up to speak at one of the several public hearings on the City's budget, tax rate, and utility rates. Information on these opportunities and a new budget engagement video are available at www.austintexas.gov/budget. Detailed information on each of these opportunities is outlined below. In addition to these efforts, staff is available to assist with individual council member's town hall meetings on the topic of the City's budget.

Council District Outreach Support

Council district town hall meetings have proven to be a useful tool for informing participants about the City's budget, gathering input on community budget priorities and preferences, and increasing awareness of the various opportunities to participate in the City's budget process. Many of our past public engagement efforts, such as Budget-in-a-Box and the Austin Budget Simulator, have been utilized to facilitate group discussions. Last year, staff participated in five council district outreach meetings. If you are planning to host a budget-specific meeting or include a budget discussion at a district town hall meeting, staff is available to facilitate the discussion, provide a short interactive presentation and/or to simply answer questions. Please contact Katie Stewart at 974-7887 if you would like staff to attend an upcoming community meeting in your district.

Austin Budget Simulator 2.0

An online, interactive budget simulator, Austin Budget Simulator 2.0 will allow residents to increase or decrease resources allocated to eleven City service areas that are primarily funded from the City's General Fund. This tool will show in real-time the change to the General Fund Budget and include a statement regarding the estimated impact to taxes and fees based on a

participant's chosen funding preference. Participants can utilize the open-ended comments to provide detailed feedback to help us better understand their funding preferences. Staff designed this tool to be accessible and inclusive, offering a version in English and Spanish, as well as, ensuring the tool is compatible with screen-reading technology. The tool is also designed to be fully compatible with all types of computers, tablet devices, and smart phones. The Austin Budget Simulator is available at www.austintexas.gov/budget.

Boards and Commissions Meetings and Public Hearings

Department staff will have the opportunity to present budget information at the City's various boards and commissions meetings throughout May, June, and July. These stakeholder discussions will be summarized in the Annual Public Engagement Report. In addition, in the month of August and September, seven public hearings will be held for public discussion on the tax rate, utility rates, and the City budget.

Budget Priority Survey

To complement public input gathered through our public engagement opportunities, this year, a third-party vendor has been commissioned to conduct a budget prioritization survey of Austin residents. The survey will be randomly stratified and the results will be statistically significant and demographically representative of the Austin community. The survey will solicit information about residents' budget priorities and funding preferences for the upcoming budget year.

A Public Engagement Report detailing the results of these engagement efforts and the public feedback received will be provided to Council in early August. An array of resources is already available to assist each Council Office throughout the decision-making process. The [Council Budget Question](#) (CBQ) site is a public tool to request budget-and finance-related information. Brad Sinclair will continue to be your liaison in the Council Budget Question request process. You can contact him directly at Brad.Sinclair@austintexas.gov or 512-974-2735. Another avenue, [Austin Finance Online](#), contains a wealth of historical budget information and data. This includes annual budgets from FY 2001-2017, monthly and quarterly finance reports, downloadable budget data by line item, annual performance reports, citizen survey data, public engagement reports, and Capital Improvement Plans (CIP).

cc: City Manager
Assistant City Managers
Chief of Staff
Chief Financial Officer