



CityPage

\$396.3 million budget proposed for 2008-2009

City Manager Lee Garrity has recommended to the City Council a "hold the line" budget of \$396.3 million for 2008-2009 that foregoes any significant expansion in city services and keeps the city property-tax rate unchanged.

Overall the proposed budget allocates \$304.7 million for operations and debt service, and \$91.6 million for capital improvements, resulting in a 1.9 percent increase over 2007-2008.

The City Council's Finance Committee will begin reviewing the budget this week. The council is tentatively scheduled to hold a public hearing and vote on the budget on June 16. By state law, the council must adopt a budget for 2008-2009 by June 30. The budget would take effect July 1.

Slowed growth in the tax base because of a downturn in housing starts and lagging car sales has led the city to project a 1.5-percent increase in the tax base over the coming year. This

is substantially less than the robust growth of the past two years, and well below the average growth of 2.5 percent a year since 1994.

This weak revenue growth, combined with rising prices for gasoline, diesel fuel, asphalt and other petroleum-related commodities, forced the city to seek savings elsewhere, Garrity said in his budget message to the City Council.

"Balancing the general fund budget without a property tax increase required a commitment on the part of all departments to effectively provide the same levels of service without substantially increasing expenses," Garrity said. "Service enhancements that were particularly difficult to leave out of the budget were more police officers to focus on street-level drug crime, more grounds maintenance crews to respond to high-volume litter locations, and additional funds to replace vehicles and equipment on a more frequent basis."

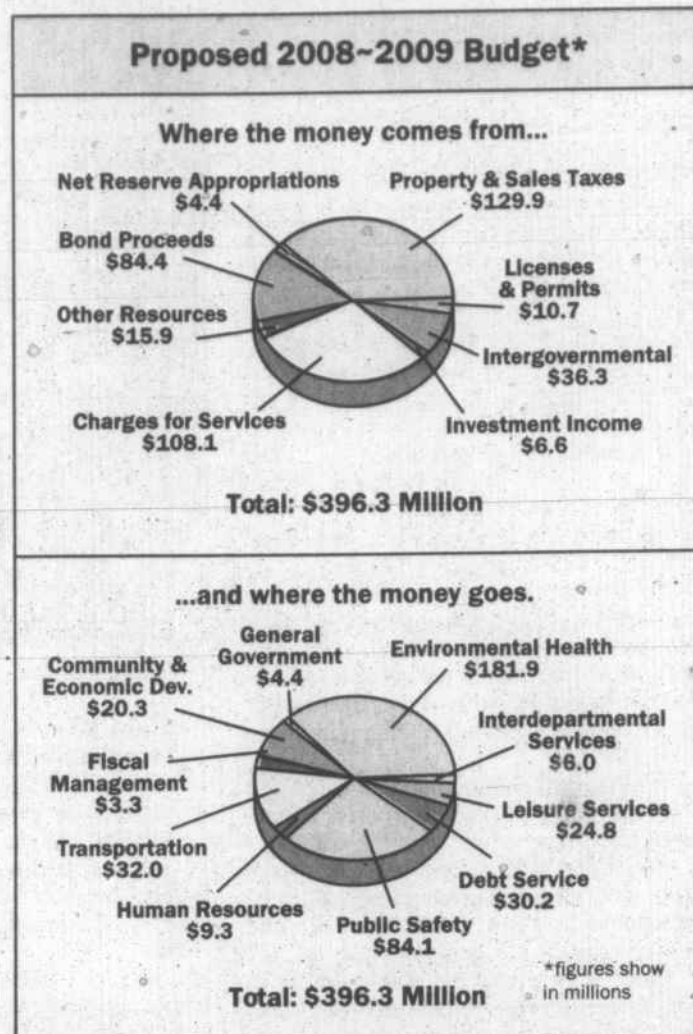
In addition, the proposed budget would leave unfilled three vacant positions in the Planning and Inspections departments, a step made possible because of reduced workload in the wake of the downturn in the housing market. Overall, the city's annual operations review identified savings of \$462,280 that were incorporated into the proposed budget.

Despite the squeeze on revenues, the proposed budget maintains the current level of city services and makes a few enhancements:

- City Link, the city's centralized call center, would be expanded to respond to all calls placed to the city, except for highly specialized areas, including revenue collection and non-emergency police and fire calls. This will be accomplished by transferring 12 positions to City Link from other city departments.
- The Fire Department budget would allow more firefighters to attend specialized training in rescuing operations, computer skills and hazardous materials.
- The Utilities Division would add six positions to create two additional crews for cleaning sewer lines, allowing it to meet a federal requirement that 10 percent of all sewer lines be cleaned annually.

Most user fees would remain unchanged, with some exceptions:

- A \$2 state disposal tax will be charged for every ton of waste disposed at the Hanes Mill Road and Old Salisbury Road landfills. Disposal fees for yard waste will also increase by \$2 a ton.
- The annual yard-cart collection fee will increase to \$55 from \$50 to meet rising fuel and disposal costs. The new fee would take effect next year and would not apply to stickers for 2008-2009. The fee has not been raised since the



How to participate in the budget process

Copies of the proposed budget are available for review at public libraries and City Hall, 101 N. Main St. Suite 30. Copies of the budget are also available online at www.cityofws.org.

- The City Council's Finance Committee will hold workshops on the budget May 22, 27, June 3, 5, 9 and 10. All workshops will start at 4 p.m. in the Council Committee Room (Room 239) on the second floor of City Hall, except on June 10, which will start at 2 p.m. These workshops are open to the public but are for the purpose of allowing council members to study the proposed budget.
- The Finance Committee will hold a public hearing on the budget at 7:30 p.m. May 29 in the Council Chamber, Room 230 on the second floor of City Hall.
- The Public Safety Committee will review the budgets for the Police, Fire and Emergency Management departments on June 9 at 6 p.m. in the Council Committee Room (Room 239) on the second floor of City Hall.
- The City Council will hold a public hearing on the budget at 7:30 p.m. June 16 in the Council Chamber, Room 230 on the second floor of City Hall.

It's time to renew your yard cart sticker

City residents with yard-waste carts must purchase 2008-2009 stickers by June 30 if they want the city to continue to empty the cart with no interruption in collection.

The fee is \$50 to have the cart emptied once a week. Households are limited to three carts and each cart must have a sticker.

Residents can now order and pay for stickers online. Go to www.cityofws.org and click on the "Pay Bills" link.

Stickers may also be purchased at the revenue center in the Stuart Municipal Building, 100 E. First St.; at the Black Phillips Smith Government Center, 2301 N. Patterson Ave.; or at the City Warehouse, 1550 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Residents may also have the sticker mailed to them by calling 747-6953 and paying with their VISA or Mastercard.

Stickers are good from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009 and must be purchased to have a cart emptied for the year or any portion thereof. For more information call City Link at 727-8000.



New Historical Marker

The city's newest historic site marker was unveiled May 18 to commemorate Maynard Field, the first commercial air field in North Carolina. The field, established in 1919, bears the name of Belvin W. Maynard, a North Carolina native, World War I test pilot and ordained minister who earned national fame after the war as "the Flying Parson." The marker is on Kernersville Road opposite the intersection with Maynard Drive.



Keep our streams clean...

If you're in the lawn-care business, make plans to be at the N.C. Cooperative Extension Center in Forsyth County on June 19 for the next "Clean Streams" training program.

The program teaches lawn-care professionals practical ways to ensure that fertilizers and chemicals do not harm water quality in urban counties. All attendees who are licensed will receive two pesticide credits for recertification, a Clean Streams program certificate of completion, and recognition as a "Clean Streams-certified" business on the city's Stormwater Division Web site.

Clean Streams is a joint initiative of the city Stormwater Division and the Cooperative Extension Center. The program will be held from 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Thursday, June 19, at the Cooperative Extension Center at 1450 Fairchild Drive in Winston-Salem. The cost is \$10 and will include lunch. Preregister by June 18. For more information or to register, call Wendy Hartup at 703-2850.

Help some hungry kids

The city and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools are again collaborating this summer to ensure children who need breakfast and lunch during the summer months are served by the school system's summer nutrition program.

Volunteers are needed to help transport children to schools that will serve as feeding sites, and to monitor the cafeterias. No cooking, serving or cleaning will be involved.

The inaugural "Summer Feeding Program for Hungry Children" last summer brought a 17 percent increase in the number of lunches served compared with 2006. The 2007 program offered breakfast for the first time, and the average number of meals served per day increased by more than 200 compared with 2006.

This year the summer feeding program will begin June 16 and end Aug. 8. The program will provide both breakfast and lunch. Volunteers are needed for both meals. For more details and to volunteer, call the mayor's office at 727-2058 or fill out an application online at www.cityofws.org and link to the mayor's page.

City Link now staffed 24/7



City Link agents are now on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to serve city residents. City Link is the city's call center that gives city residents one number to call, when they want to request a service, report a problem, get information or make a suggestion.

The public works telephone number for after hours emergencies is still in service, but is being answered by City Link.

Gone, but not forgotten

This year's Memorial Day observance will include a special presentation of "A Table Set for One" by Ida Mae Neal to remember the fate of those members of the armed services who remain missing in action or prisoners of war.

A roll of the names of all the Forsyth County servicemen killed in action will be read following her remarks. There also will be a Color Guard provided by the East Surry High School Army JROTC, and two buglers will play Taps.

This year's Memorial Day observance will begin at 6 p.m. Monday, May 26, in the atrium of Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum. The ceremony is sponsored by the Triad Vietnam Veterans Association in partnership with the city of Winston-Salem.



Collection Changes for Memorial Day

Garbage: no change
Curbside Recycling and Yard-waste carts: collections will be postponed a day; Monday collections will be made on Tuesday, etc.
 For more information go to www.cityofws.org or call City Link at 727-8000.

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