

Budget Committee Study Session - April 10, 2019

I'm befuddled. During the last budget process citizen members of the budget committee raised their concern about the 2017-2019 budget 18% increase. The citizens on this committee raised their concern about spending more money than we had. Obviously, their warnings were not taken seriously and the city faces a \$2 million deficit. I sincerely hope that the council members on this committee will take seriously what citizens on and off of this committee are saying.

In addition to this, I can say that from four months of campaigning in 2018, knocking on doors all over Ashland that the overwhelming concern from the working or retired Ashland citizen was one thing - stop raising my utility bill - I can't afford it. When I hear the public works director ^{starts} considering a 4% increase in both water and waste water and the electric director contemplating a 4-6% increase, I have to say - You don't ^{seem to be getting the message} get it!! First, capital projects can't be funded by fees/rates - we've done our fair share with a 130% increase in utility costs over the last ten years. ^{second} It is time for the city to tighten its belt and own up to the facts.

This means facing the third rail of looking at not hiring more employees but laying off employees, which is our most expensive line item in every department budget. PERS and health care costs are just going to increase that line item. ^{in that foreseeable future} To do this kind of realistic budgeting takes leadership! ^{so far} When not one department so far has lowered their overall budget but instead has looked at the possibility of adding even more staff or increasing salaries, I just think "you don't get it". Our budget is not sustainable - ^{cutting} fix it, by lowering the costs. Citizens, if you ask them, have suggestions that include the curtailing of services. We are willing to step up are you? ^{For instance} \$60 million for capital improvements over six years with fees/rates being a primary source for funding is unacceptable!

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