



TO: Budget Committee

CC: City Department Directors

FROM: Robert Strobe, City/District Manager/Budget Officer

DATE: May 4, 2023

RE: Budget Questions and Answers

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Thank you to the members of the Budget Committee who provided questions thus far. This allows the Staff to provide a more comprehensive response. Below are the questions submitted with our answers. It is our practice to provide all questions and answers to the full Committee. Additional questions will be answered and forwarded as they are received. Note that some of the questions may have been edited, if I have missed any important elements of your inquiry resulting in an incomplete answer, please let me know and we will gather additional information.

1. **QUESTION Urban Renewal Agency (URA):** How will the new “Traded Sector/Business Park Call for Projects Business Attraction Incentive Program” be the same or different than the two previous programs that existed? Why are we moving to this merged structure?
  - a. **Answer:** This incentive is available for qualifying projects anywhere within the Urban Renewal District including the La Grande Business Park. The previous Traded Sector program was primarily targeted towards new construction at the La Grande Business and Technology Park and had a 1/3 URA to 2/3 private investment requirement that also had higher minimum project cost than the CFP, required job creation, and had to be a traded sector use. The Business Park CFP was the same program as the rest of the District, just with dedicated funding for projects at the Park. The new combined Business Park /Traded Sector incentive accomplishes several things. The new program allows us to provide a larger incentive for traded sector projects with a combination of higher capital investment and job creation to help La Grande remain competitive with other communities throughout the region. The new format also removes the annual funding cycle that was in place for Business Park CFP projects, allowing us greater flexibility to respond to development opportunities throughout the year. Non-traded sector projects at the Business Park would still be considered using the same parameters as the CFP program.
2. **QUESTION Urban Renewal Agency (URA):** Are there any measurable outcome goals that the URA staff are striving to achieve? E.g., # of new businesses attracted, # of new jobs created, dollars of new tax revenue created, etc.?

- a. **Answer:** The goals we are trying to achieve as those contained in the Urban Renewal Plan, but we don't have specific objectives/goals such as number of jobs created or new businesses in the District. The URA programs, most notably CFP and the new Trade Sector/CFP program both contain preference points which reflect the goals and objectives of the URA Plan. We conduct an annual report that can be found on the City's website documenting URA activities including projects funded. Both CFP and the Façade Grant programs require a minimum 50% matching investment of private dollars, higher for Traded Sector.
3. **QUESTION Fire/EMS:** I fully support adding capacity to this department and know the medical call load has increased greatly without a commensurate increase in staffing; that said, I see we are paying for the three new firefighters with URA money. Since that is a one-time rather than a recurring revenue source, will we be able to pay for these three new FTEs in future years out of other revenues? Will these positions be sustainable for us?
- a. **Answer:** The additional General Fund dollars resulting from the under levy are helping to offset the added costs as opposed to transferring them to Public Works for streets as was done in the current year. You are correct that given the under levy is an annual decision, we cannot count on the funds for future budgets. We are optimistic that we will be able to sustain the positions but cannot guarantee that is the case. Should things change, such as opting not to continue to under levy each year, the City will have to adjust spending based on the priorities of the City Council at that time.
4. **QUESTION Police:** How many miles / years is a police vehicle in the fleet before it is retired on average?
- a. **Answer:** Our marked patrol vehicles typically (on average) reach the end of their service life after 5-years and/or 100,000 miles.
5. **QUESTION Parks / Recreation / Aquatics:** Could you please provide more information on:
- **What will be added to the Riverside Greenway Trail Loop as part of the extension project?**
    - **Answer:** About 1600 feet of asphalt trail will be extended in a loop formation. This will enable a future trail extension and resolve the "dead end" that exists now. The damaged section at the East end of the existing trail will also be replaced.
  - **The status of the work / planning to replace the playground at Riverside Park?**
    - **Answer:** Staff has assembled a committee of community volunteers to plan, design, fundraise, and implement the Riverside Park playground replacement. Currently, they have directed staff to solicit preliminary designs based on their theme, "The Magic Forest." After they choose a final design, they will launch a fundraising campaign with hopes of raising more than 40% of the project cost so staff can obtain grant funding for the remaining 60%.
  - **Plans for adult recreational leagues –what was added this year and what, if anything, will be added in the coming year?**

- **Answer:** Adult Co-Ed Soccer was added this spring with over 50 players and demand for more that missed the registration deadline. The other interest from our outreach for next year is Cornhole! That's right, a cornhole league could be coming soon.
- **I know upon reopening from COVID, there was a major shortage of lifeguards. Has this shortage abated? Are we able to staff most of the hours we want to with lifeguards?**
  - **Answer:** Nationwide, pools are experiencing a shortage of certified lifeguards due to the 2-year gap in the ability to certify/recertify guards during COVID. In our facility, things are looking up, but we are still missing the core age group of 18-25-year-old guards, making it difficult to staff our midday shifts. We are getting close to fully staffed again.
- **Does the department have any plans for classes or processes to get young people in La Grande to train for this work?**
  - **Answer:** This spring, we have offered 3 weekend lifeguard classes and a lifeguard class through EOU for college credit. We plan to continue to hold one guard class per month, potentially taking a break for summer and starting back up in the fall. We have also implemented several internal policies removing as many of the barriers to certification/work scheduling as possible.