



CITY OF CLEARWATER

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CITY MANAGER

To: Mayor and City Council Members

From: Jon P. Jennings, City Manager

At the special budget meeting held on August 4, 2022, it was requested by Council to identify cost savings measures in the proposed fiscal year 2022/23 operating budget that would equate to a 25% roll back of the city's millage rate. The proposed rate for the upcoming year is 5.9550 mills, the same rate as levied in the current year. The full roll back rate is 5.3264 mills. To accomplish a 25% roll back, the proposed millage rate would need to be reduced by 0.1572 mills, which would reduce ad valorem revenues by \$2,288,740.

Staff has compiled a list of cuts that would be necessary to accomplish this task. Although savings are being identified, I would not recommend that council make any of these cuts. The proposed budget was created with a focus on making the necessary investments to ensure a vibrant future for the City of Clearwater. This budget begins the process of bridging the gap for departments that require additional staff to provide our residents with the levels of service they expect while ensuring the proper accountability measures are maintained for accuracy and dependability. In addition, with the approval of the Imagine Clearwater project, it was always anticipated that additional staff would be required to program and maintain the park area. While some service levels were increased, this was done in response to residents and/or neighborhoods who consistently requested the ability to access enhanced public services. These short-term savings would have a relatively small impact on taxpayers (\$15 annually for every \$100,000 of taxable value) at a time when these funds will provide for necessary investments in our community impacting both residents and employees.

- Economic Development & Housing (\$96,700) – eliminate the new FTE, Sr. Real Estate Coordinator. This position was added to enhance the expertise in the coordination of all the City's property transactions to include interaction with other agencies as necessary. Elimination leaves the current void in processing transactions which results in burdening other departments with tasks, inability to complete processes timely, and inability to provide oversight of property management.
- Fire Department (\$52,820) – eliminate the new FTE, Payroll Technician. This position was added to ensure resiliency in the complex payroll process for the fire department – a mission critical task. Elimination of this position puts the City and department at risk with inadequate "bench strength" to back up administrative staff.

- Human Resources (\$102,110) – eliminate the new FTE, HR Manager. This position was added to create a centralized training program that will provide organization-wide learning, employee development programs, a supervisor certification program and leadership development classes. This program is essential to the development of existing staff at a time when personnel shortages are at a nationwide high – investing in current employees is critical to providing a healthy workforce. Our HR-to-employee ratio is lower than the average of our comparators with 0.9 HR employees for every 100 FTEs. The elimination of this position will continue to highlight the lack of appropriate HR staff impacting our ability to meet objectives and continue to provide quality service.
- Information Technology (\$40,000) – eliminate the new FTE, Network Analyst. This position was added to better support computer and network users Citywide as we increase both the number of personnel and systems/technologies used in daily operations. These recently added functional solutions have increased demands for support due to increased infrastructure deployment. Not adding this position decreases the support needed for these specialized solutions which require increased training. This will slow response times impacting a large number of users, expand the impact of downtime periods and increase inefficiencies.
- Library (\$281,360) – eliminate additional hours added (1.5 FTEs) for North Greenwood Branch (NGW) and eliminate an additional 2.5 FTEs ultimately impacting existing library hours. The additional hours at NGW were added in response to community requests for the library to open Saturdays and increase morning access, as well as staff's desire to better serve the surrounding neighborhood by making hours more equitable to other branches. Additional FTE eliminations would result in fewer programs offered to the community and the inability to adequately staff all branches at current levels at a time when residents are consistently requesting additional hours.
- Office of Innovation (\$138,480) – eliminate two new FTEs, Neighborhood Coordinators. These positions were added to enhance the connection between city staff and members of the community. Not adding these positions would leave a team of only 2 people to support the community engagement plans developed for all of Clearwater's neighborhoods.
- Parks and Recreation (\$706,270) – eliminate the new FTEs for the Custodial Team, eliminate the new FTEs for Downtown Core Programming, other service/FTE reductions ultimately impacting recreation center hours and programs.
 - The Custodial Team of 4 FTEs was added to reopen 6 closed restrooms in neighborhood parks and to provide a better level of service for existing sites maintained by outside contract. These closed park restrooms are a consistent complaint from families who frequent their neighborhood parks. These would remain closed and existing restrooms at larger parks would remain contracted, which is a lower level of service to the community.
 - The Downtown Core Programming Team of 4.5 FTEs was added to provide recreation programming at Imagine Clearwater Park, Station Square Park, Festival Plaza, and Crest Lake Park. This staff would be responsible for creating daily programming such as special events, outdoor classes (yoga, fitness, health, dog training, fishing etc.), and youth

camps. Eliminating this new team would be a disservice to the major capital investment made in the construction of Imagine Clearwater/Coachman Park and the goal to activate the park, downtown and Crest Lake Park.

- Existing service level cuts would also be required at our recreation facilities; this includes the elimination of approximately 3.5 FTEs. Recreation Center pool operating hours would be reduced to just summer swimming only (10-11 weeks) vs. the current practice of opening one month prior and one month after the summer season. This will significantly impact the number of swim lessons that can be provided through our school aged learn-to-swim programs as well as the availability of our pools to be utilized by the public, thus degrading our service levels. Additional reductions could require a decrease in operational hours at various Recreation Centers by one hour a day. These reductions would have a negative impact on our users (particularly those who work) and would likely realize decreased membership levels and revenue due to customers utilizing other alternatives.
- Planning and Development (\$55,000) – eliminate an existing FTE, Development Review Technician. This position serves as the first point of contact with the department and is responsible for all aspects of customer service related to the intake of paper and electronic permits. Eliminating this position would reduce the department’s capacity to provide timely customer service impacting both in-person and phone assistance for applicants routing of plans for building review, and calculating fees and processing payments. It would also hinder efforts related to the maintenance and retention of permitting records.
- Police Department (\$586,220) – eliminate Traffic Unit Officers (2 FTEs), Community Liaison Officers (2 FTEs), and the funding for the Mental Health Co-Responder agreement with Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office (PCSO). The additional Officer positions added in fiscal year 2022/23 to support the beach was a critical public safety need. As such, approval to hire was requested in February and staffing has been assigned to address the need during the peak spring break and summer season. The following cuts to existing operations (programs/FTEs) would be required in the Police Department:
 - The Traffic Unit would be reduced by 2 officers, resulting in a reduction in traffic enforcement and limiting the ability to respond to community complaints of traffic issues. Many traffic enforcement responsibilities would need to be absorbed by patrol officers, which would only be able to handle complaints as time permits. Recent data has shown an increase in traffic crashes and traffic crash related fatalities. Any reduction in enforcement would reduce the ability to address traffic safety issues and trends.
 - The Community Liaison Team would be reduced by 2 officers, resulting in community outreach becoming the responsibility of patrol zone officers, as time permits. A relationship with the community is vital to the success of any police department. Reducing these positions will decrease the ability of the department to identify and respond to community issues, gain cooperation in criminal investigations, and decrease the legitimacy and public trust.
 - We would eliminate our Mental Health Co-Responder agreement with PCSO. This program provides for a staffing partnership with PCSO with our funds providing for two

Crisis Response Specialist which work with CPD officers to handle calls for service involving people with mental or behavioral health issues to include follow-up care and long-term case management. This program, which has been in place since 2021, has proven to be a valuable resource for CPD in our response to approximately 1,400 calls for service annually which involve issues related to mental illness.

- Public Works (\$200,000) – reduce capital funding transferred to the streets and sidewalk maintenance project by \$200,000 annually. This funding was budgeted to provide adequate resources needed for street and sidewalk maintenance and improvement city-wide. While a recent focus has been on the back log of repairs, consistent future investment is needed to establish proactive planning for continuous improvements that will provide residents and visitors safe access to streets and sidewalks within the City.

In closing, I strongly urge you to approve the proposed budget as submitted. This budget represents an opportunity for great change in our community; emphasizing programs which result in stronger connections between the city and our residents, neighborhoods, and employees.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon P. Jennings". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jon P. Jennings
City Manager