

City Council budget goals

Employee compensation and managed savings

- City of Asheville Staff has worked to manage departmental budgets conservatively during the financial downturn. With slow but steady improvement in revenues, this conservatism has created adequate savings in the 2013-2014 budget to fund the increase in employee compensation proposed for fiscal year 2014-2015. Staff has been tasked with continuing this careful budget management in order to fund adjustments to compensation identified as part of the planned compensation study upon its completion. Asheville will continue to pursue rightsizing and reengineering of service delivery to make the most cost effective use of the limited resources available. The FY 2014-15 proposed budget for personnel costs includes funding for a 3% across the board compensation pool for employees, as well as a compensation study to be performed by an outside consultant.

Police Strategic Plan

- The Asheville Police Department has developed a strategic plan to improve service delivery, employee retention and resolve structural issues within the department. The 2014-2015 budget includes APD in its plan for a compensation study. The City's aging police fleet and lack of a take-home vehicle program for its patrol officers is an issue that will be addressed through the CIP program; patrol vehicles will be replaced on a five-year asset life schedule and the take-home program will be implemented over the first five years of the replacement schedule.

Asheville Redefines Transit

- Asheville Redefines Transit (ART) still faces considerable financial pressure. Revenues do not cover expenditures, nor do they seem likely to do so. Return on investment for a transit system is weighted more toward the environmental and social aspects of the triple bottom line; the transit system provides access to jobs and helps to limit the number of vehicles on the road. ART riders have asked for a redesign of Route C to better enable people to use ART to reach shopping destinations in south Asheville. Sunday service for better job access has also been an ongoing request from the ridership. The 2014-2015 operating budget addresses both of these issues with the requested redesign of Route C and the addition of limited Sunday service. These changes will be implemented in January, 2015, and partially grant funded, minimizing their budget impact for the fiscal year.

Graffiti Initiative

- In April 2014, City Council approved a new graffiti ordinance that included a 90 day concentrated initiative to aggressively remove graffiti from property. During the 90 day graffiti removal initiative, which will run from July 1, 2014 to September 30, 2014, property owners will receive significant assistance from the City when removing graffiti. As outlined during the April meeting, property owners will be required to sign a waiver and agree to pay 10% of the cost of removal. The City will pay up to \$500 per building per incident. \$300,000 has been included in the FY 2014-15 general fund budget to fund the City's potential costs for this 90 day graffiti removal initiative. The FY 2014-15 proposed budget also includes funding for administrative costs associated with this program. The money for this 90 day initiative is coming from the City's general fund fund balance.