

From: Todd Weaver <TWeaver@cityofwinterpark.org>
Date: July 31, 2020 at 5:18:18 PM EDT
To: George Albu <gealbu2@gmail.com>
Subject: RE: [External] Raising Taxes??

Hi Mr. Albu,

Thank you for your email.

The former commissioner who made these statements has an unfortunate habit of spreading misleading and/or false information, and his recent remarks regarding "the Commission voted for a property tax increase" qualify as both. That is also true of the false and misleading recent email from the Demetree real estate group saying the same.

The City Commission rules are such that we must approve or disapprove the yearly budget. Although Mayor Leary described the preliminary budget as "balanced", it simply cannot be balanced when City staff has only estimated revenues as one side of the balance sheet. It is no surprise that sales tax revenue to the City will be severely diminished due to the Covid crisis as well as other revenue sources. Local property taxes are but one source of revenue, and the only one the City has any control over. Those revenue figures won't be available until September, so the Commission took the responsible step of raising the cap on the millage rate; we did not vote to set a higher millage rate. This was done just in case the staff projections were wildly off the actual. The determination of millage rate won't be made until September.

- Our City's revenues from sales taxes and commercial licenses and permitting are down. Although the residential property values have remained strong and have increased by about 3%, commercial businesses have suffered. The City expects lower commercial property tax revenue and lower sales tax revenue.
- Due to Covid-19, the City has approximately \$3 million less year-to-date revenue than expected. To compensate, the City is tightening its belt:
- 15 open positions are frozen, 5 of which are police officers. The police force will be down 9 officers by year-end.
- Key departments will be short-staffed. If the pandemic is prolonged, this can impact the health and cleanliness of our lakes, sidewalks, and cyber security.
- The City has provided thousands of dollars of aid via utility bill assistance and "Feed the Need" to our Winter Park residents who are negatively impacted by Covid-19.

The City is forecasting a loss of approximately \$1.4 million of revenue next year. We are looking for other sources of revenue to offset the losses. The City is waiting to learn about a new Federal Cares Act.

The Commission is anxiously awaiting the actual revenue figures, because we are tax payers too. The services provided by the City are really the only reason to have a City Government and staff. Cutting services is not a good solution either, as citizens expect a certain level of service.

Best regards,

Todd