

Council Ready For Budget Vote

Few Adjustments Made in Painless Review Process

By Steve Caraway

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SPRINGDALE — The 2010 Springdale budget will go to the City Council for approval two weeks early.

The council finance committee, meeting Monday, wrapped up its review by sending the budget to the next council meeting with a recommendation for approval. The Springdale council traditionally votes on the budget at its first meeting in December. The recommendation calls for a budget vote on November 24 instead of the original schedule of Dec. 8.

The three budget hearings were relatively painless, said Alderman Bobby Stout, committee chairman. More financial details helped the process move faster, said Alderman Mike Overton.

"All the additional details about our financial status help to raise my comfort level," Overton said. "We know we have the money for any emergency."

The committee reviewed the administration budget and discussed the balances in the general fund and the capital improvement fund. The general fund, as of Oct. 31, has a balance of \$4.6 million, according to an administration balance sheet handed out at the meeting.

The balance of capital improvement program fund totaled \$19 million as of Oct. 31, stated the document. Both totals included money restricted for specific items or committed to projects, Wyman Morgan, city director of administration and financial services.

The council committee made minor adjustments to the budget suggested by Mayor Doug Sprouse. In two earlier budget work sessions, the council added a caretaker position for the animal shelter, reduced a listed open position in the building department and adjusted the source for the pay for one position in the parks department. The city received an update in its workman's compensation cost, creating a drop of \$80,460, said Morgan.

The changes lowered the projected general fund expenses of the city by \$67,840. The proposed 2010 budget estimates income and expenses of about \$27.3 million.

"Just because it's in the budget, there is no need to spend money if you don't have to," said Alderman Rick Evans.

Perry Webb, president of the Springdale Chamber of Commerce, and Blake Hanby, chairman of its board of directors, reviewed the practices of the organization at the meeting.

The city pays the chamber \$100,00 per year for economic development.

The chamber will segregate the city funds from its other funds, Webb said, using invoices to make payments from the city funds.

"There will be a firewall between the public and private funds," Webb said. "We're attempting to protect the integrity of our organization and volunteers."

The Arkansas Freedom of Information Act has been used to target the chamber volunteers, Webb said. Stopping the co-mingling of funds would end that possibility, Webb said.