

**Mayor's column for
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Well, it's budget time again! Seems like it always is! Staff has put together their department budgets, and now my budget review team, including two councilmembers, is reviewing it. Each year two different councilmembers chosen by the council president assist the team as we go through the review process. This year Council President Deanna Dawson and Councilmember Ron Wambolt are on the team.

I'll give my budget address to the Council on October 17. This year, for the first time, we'll put together a two-year budget. This will save us time, as the budget process is time consuming for staff, and also give the Council more financial information to work with as they go about their business.

After the passage of voter-approved initiatives six years ago, we made serious budget cuts at the City. With the expected reduction of revenues and the accompanying budget cuts, we have managed to limp along financially. We also have been the beneficiary of a good economy and a brisk new construction period.

As with most city budgets, public safety costs continue to rise and become a larger and larger part of the budget. Ten years ago, police, fire and the municipal court costs made up 51 percent of our budget. This year that number will be almost 60 percent. The total costs will be near \$17 million. As a comparison, our total property tax revenue brings in \$12 million.

Once delivered to the Council for their consideration, the budget will be the subject of Council scrutiny and public hearings. That will be your opportunity to let us know what you think. Watch for the public hearings in October and November.