



**Legislative Department
Seattle City Council
Memorandum**

Date: April 26, 2016

To: City Councilmembers

Copy: Council Central Staff
Legislative Assistants
Ben Noble, Director, City Budget Office

From: Councilmember Tim Burgess
Chair, Budget Committee

Subject: **Fall Budget Review Process for the 2017-18 Biennial Budget**

The Council's budget planning for the 2017-18 biennium is underway. This will be the first budget season for a majority of Councilmembers and the first in our new hybrid district system.

To assist you through the Council's fall budget review process, please carefully examine this memorandum along with the attached *Calendar*. Central Staff will provide an overview of this process at the May 2, 2016 Budget Committee meeting. The Council will also receive an updated revenue forecast for the City at this meeting.

Please note that there are a couple of significant changes to how we review and adopt the budget this year, primarily to give Councilmembers more time to review balancing options and to provide more transparency for Councilmembers and the public.

1. BUDGET PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

Each of you is a member of the Budget Committee. All members should plan to be available on all of the dates indicated on the *Calendar*, although, as typically happens, some meeting dates may be cancelled depending on our progress and workload demand. Please notify Paddy Wigren as soon as possible if you plan to be out of town during any part of the budget process (i.e., September 26 - November 23).

Descriptions of each of the major phases in the budget process follow.

A. Mayor Transmits Proposed Budget (September 26) & CBO Overview (September 29)

The Mayor's proposed 2017-18 budget will be presented to Council on Monday, September 26. The Mayor will address Council that afternoon to outline the case for his proposal. CBO Director Ben Noble will provide department budget detail later that same week.

B. Departmental Budget Discussions (October 6, 7, 10)

The Budget Committee will meet with the leadership of certain departments at the committee table in Council Chambers to discuss key elements of the Mayor's proposed budget. The structure of these presentations will revolve around our standing committee structure. Councilmembers who sit on the standing committee(s) that oversees the presenting department will be expected to attend the discussions related to that department. In line with our regular practice, any other Councilmember may also attend these presentations as their schedule allows.

Central Staff will coordinate and lead these discussions. Department directors will be asked to provide summary information highlighting key changes to the base budget, and they will also be available to answer questions. This discussion format is a change from recent practice of department directors making overview presentations, as those have generally been duplicative of CBO's budget overview presentation.

C. Public Hearings (October 5 and 18, 5:30 PM)

Consistent with past practice, the Council will hold two evening public hearings.

D. Budget Committee Deliberations (October 17, 18, 19, 24)

This series of Budget Committee meetings will focus on Central Staff presentations highlighting potential budget issues as well as other Councilmember-driven requests. Councilmembers wishing to have any identified issues included in the Central Staff memos that will guide the first three days of presentations must submit a request to the Central Staff budget lead by 5:00 PM on Tuesday, October 11. Committee members will have opportunities both to explore issues and to debate the merits of possible changes to the Mayor's proposed budget.

The meeting on October 24 will be reserved primarily for follow-up discussion of questions raised during Budget Committee Deliberations on October 17, 18 and 19.

E. Budget Chair's Initial Balancing Package (November 2)

As Budget Chair, I will meet with individual Councilmembers following Budget Committee Deliberations and then will present on November 2 an initial balancing package of amendments to the Mayor's proposed budget to the Committee. My proposal will attempt to reflect priorities discussed in earlier Budget Committee meetings. By releasing the Chair's

balancing proposal in advance of the first Committee votes, I will be able to publicly share my initial balancing package substantially earlier (approximately two and a half weeks prior to the final Committee votes on the budget) than has been the practice in recent years. This will increase the transparency of our budget process and will provide all Councilmembers with more time to carefully review the balancing package before voting.

Additionally, because I will be developing an initial balancing package with an emphasis on priorities identified in earlier Budget Committee discussions, this will reduce the need to debate budget actions that are widely supported. Instead, the Committee will be able to focus its efforts on resolving the most complicated issues.

F. Budget Committee Discussion of Chair's Initial Balancing Package (November 9-10)

Two Budget Committee meetings are scheduled for the discussion of any further changes to the Chair's initial balancing package that Councilmembers may wish to propose. Any proposal will require sponsorship from at least three Councilmembers to be discussed by the Committee. These proposals will be discussed but not voted on. They may address any budget issues regardless of whether or not they were discussed during the Committee's earlier deliberations (see D. above). Please note: Councilmembers' proposals and the names of at least three co-sponsors for budget revisions must be submitted to the Central Staff no later than 5:00 PM on Friday, November 4.

G. Budget Committee Discussion and Vote on Chair's Revised Balancing Package (November 15-16)

As Budget Chair, I will again meet with Councilmembers individually and then present a revised Chair's balancing package in response to the latest round of Committee discussions. My revised balancing package will be subject to a vote in Committee on November 15 and/or 16.

Councilmembers may tee up consideration of additional budget actions modifying the revised Chair's balancing package. An affirmative vote of the majority of the Committee members present is required to amend the Committee agenda in order to consider any proposal which is not already listed on the agenda. Any proposal that increases appropriations in one area must be self-balancing at this phase, either through a reduction in appropriations in another area or by new or increased revenues. Please note that if proposed revenue increases require legislation, that legislation will need to have been introduced and referred to Budget Committee by Monday, November 14.

H. Final Budget Committee Votes and Full Council Adoption of Budget (November 21)

After Central Staff completes another round of review to catch technical errors, the Budget Committee will meet the morning of November 21 to take final votes on budget-related legislation. The Full Council will meet that afternoon to vote on the final budget package.

2. STANDING COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND USE OF CENTRAL STAFF RESOURCES

In order to preserve Central Staff resources for budget matters, Council's Standing Committee meetings will be suspended from September 26 - November 23 except to review required legislative actions such as a quasi-judicial rezone.

If your committee needs to meet during the suspension time period for any other reason, you will need to seek pre-approval from Council President Harrell and myself. If approved, you will need to coordinate with Paddy Wigren to minimize conflicts.

3. INFORMATION REQUESTS

Central Staff and the CBO have developed a protocol in an attempt to provide complete and timely responses to questions from Councilmembers. Please channel all questions and information requests through the designated Central Staff budget lead (see attached). The lead analyst will transmit your question(s) to CBO staff, as well as track and coordinate the distribution of responses.

4. PUBLIC ACCESS TO COUNCIL BRIEFING MATERIALS

The Council's Budget webpage will provide links to budget materials including: department presentations, issue identification papers, and budget actions developed by Central Staff and discussed at Budget Committee meetings. These documents will be posted in a timely manner. Materials will also be made available in hard copy in the Budget Review Notebook that is available to the public and the press in council chambers daily.

Please let Kirstan Arestad, Erik Sund or me know if you have any questions about anything in this memorandum. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Attachment: Council's Fall Budget Review Process for 2017-18