

Behind The City Scene

There is an adult variation of kid's hide and seek. It is the government budget process. Of course I am dealing with a local government budget, but it exists at both the State and Federal levels. Those budget documents no doubt run into the thousands of pages as opposed to Aurora's which I estimate at about 350 pages. It is not what I would call light reading and it is in a typeset that challenges even my bifocals.



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Government budgets at all levels share a common trait. They are hyper technical with columns and columns of numbers and commentary. There is every type of "Funds" ala Contingency, Reserve, Revenue, Proprietary, etc. So far I have not found one denominated "Slush" because I think that has a bad reputation so I have to look at all the others to see if they are slushy. I think the City Finance employees would be marked down on their evaluations if they ever denominated a Fund as "Slush". Oh well.

At the end of the notebook are 150 Acronyms to close out the budget document with an exciting conclusion. To give a feel for the exciting nature of the document Appendix 3 is entitled "Schedule of Annual Operating Transfers". Now I better be careful not to read that before I go to bed! The document was supposed to be available online on the City's website starting September 1 but I have not wanted to try to check on that because I don't want to crash my 5-year-old IPAD.

The City Manager's staff prepares the budget. I have known seven City Managers over the years and none of them have or are going to ever say, "Oh Crud, the City budget is a total mess!" Instead you see statements like, "The City faces formidable challenges due to...." Nevertheless the budget is very important in shaping the City's future in terms of more of this or less of that. On September 30 the City Council met to try to amend the City Manager's proposed budget as it does every year. Of course it takes six votes to amend anything whether it is an add or subtract a line item.

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2017 Ward IV Town Meetings — held on the third Thursday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at EcoTech Institute, 1400 S. Abilene St., unless otherwise noted.