

City Corners

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Bellevue Begins Budget Process, Encourages Public Input

by Jennifer Robertson



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The year 2014 is off to a fast start and the City Council is busy as ever working to ensure that Bellevue continues to deliver great services to our residents. Every two years the City Council creates a biennial operating budget and a seven-year capital budget. The City's combined budget is in the neighborhood of \$1.3 billion. It is the Council's largest policy document and sets the standards for how we provide city services and what projects are funded. The budgeting process takes the full year and there are many opportunities for you to share your priorities with the Council. This article will provide an overview of the process and where to look for additional information.

Many of residents may not know that the current budget document is on the City's website at www.belleluewa.gov/budgets.htm. The City is currently in the process of updating all of the website information for the 2015-2016 Budget and the 2015-2021 CIP development process. To keep up to date with what is happening on the budget, residents can click on "Receive notification when this page is updated" and then they will know when we have updated the information.

The City uses a "Priorities of government" process known as budget One. The Budget One process identifies the community's broad Outcomes (results that matter most to the community), prioritizes services to achieve those Outcomes, and funds services within available revenue. The Council has approved the seven Outcomes that will frame the budget process:

- **Safe Community** - focusing on maintaining a safe place to live, work and play.
- **Improved Mobility** - focusing on existing and future infrastructure, traffic flow, built environment and travel options.
- **Healthy and Sustainable Environment** - focusing on preserving natural open spaces and providing a healthy environment, which supports healthy living for current and future generations. Innovative, Vibrant, and Caring Community - promoting community engagement and fostering diversity and creativity in City-provided services.
- **Quality Neighborhoods** - creating a "sense of community" by maintaining neighborhoods that support families and providing convenient access to day-to-day activities.
- **Economic Growth and Competitiveness** - focused on planning for growth that will add value to the quality of the City and create a competitive business environment that supports entrepreneurs and creates jobs.
- **Responsive Government** - fostering stewardship of financial and property interests, reflecting sound business practices, and ensuring deployment of programs that are necessary to deliver the highest priority services.
- **Opportunities for citizen engagement.**

The City Council want to hear from our residents and businesses on the budget. There are several tools for providing this input and I encourage each of you to share your views with the Council (including the importance of the Newport Way sidewalk project!):

- **Budget Survey** - this is a random, statistically valid, survey; some may have already been contacted; results should be available soon.
- **Performance Survey** (annual).
- **Public hearings** held by the City Council (tentatively scheduled for May 19, July 24, and November 19).
- **Oral communications** at Council meetings on non-public hearing nights.
- **Written stakeholder communications** to Council (council@bellevuewa.gov)
- **Boards & Commissions** provide input and recommendations to the Council on the budget and there are opportunities for input to these bodies:
 - *Transportation Commission* makes funding recommendation for roads, bike lane, transit and sidewalk projects;
 - *Environmental Services Commission* makes recommendations on utilities project funding and rates;
 - *Human Services Commission* makes recommendations on grant funding for human services needs
 - *Art Commission* makes recommendations on funding for the arts; and
 - *Parks Board* makes recommendations on funding for park projects.
- **Presentations** to neighborhood groups, business associations, and others upon request.
- **Information** provided to individuals upon request.

The budget process only happens once every two years, so please make sure your input is heard. As always, if you wish to discuss any city issues, please feel free to contact me at j.robertson@bellevuewa.gov or 425-516-5877.

Jennifer is a municipal attorney and a member of the Bellevue City Council. She lives with her husband and three children in Somerset. She is active in the public schools, serves as a Girl Scout Leader and enjoys spending her summers at the Somerset Rec Club cheering for the Somerset Stingrays swim team.