



**Friends of Carefree**, this edition of the Newsletter contains information from two town meetings held during the week, a Budget Workshop on March 24<sup>th</sup> and the "Village Center" Community Open House on March 26<sup>th</sup>. [As requested, the print size for the Newsletter has been enlarged to accommodate all readers.]

### **Budget Workshop**

The first workshop of this budget season was very well guided by Town Administrator, Gary Neiss. It was especially important this year since two new council members were just appointed to council last week, and had never been through this particular process before.

The session was intended as a very high level overview. It focused on town services, expenses, and revenue as well as the relationship between those elements.

Core Services are grouped into categories, such as Community Development (staff of 4), Public Works (staff of 4), Municipal Court (staff of 3), Admin/Resource management (staff of 5), and Public Safety (Fire & Police are contracted out).

In Carefree, the Revenue stream flows from essentially two sources, State Shared Revenue and Local Sources (Sales Tax & Fees); Carefree does not have a 'local' property tax [thankfully, which is why many residents chose Carefree for retirement]. In the coming Fiscal Year (7/1/15 - 6/30/16) projected revenue is \$5.2 million. The breakdown is: \$2.8 million from Local Sales Tax, \$1.4 million - Local Fees, and \$1.0 million - State Shared Revenue.

A 5-year average shows that about 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of our local sales tax is generated by Retail, Construction, and Utilities. The last 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of revenue is from Accommodations, Restaurants/Bars, and Commercial Leasing. [The Super Bowl helped boost leasing by about \$50K in February.]

On the expense side all figures are approximate until the Final budget is adopted in June. Fire Protection (Rural Metro, \$1.4M) and Police (MCSO, \$400K) account for \$1.8M or 34% of total expenses. Town Staff accounts for \$1.3M, or 25% of total expenses, and \$2.1M (41%) is allocated for town assets & operations.

Budget details (line item entries) which highlight that last 41% of expense will be made available in the weeks ahead. The top 3 contributors in this category are Public Works @ \$670K, Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) Loans @ \$245K, and Marketing @ \$200K.

*Carefree, what life should be!*

Town Financial Reserves are in good shape. As of 2/1/15 the total reserve sits at \$5.2M, with \$2.5M of that held as a 'rainy day fund' to help cover town expenses in the event of unforeseen events. The remainder is potentially available for Capital Improvement projects. In the past Capital projects funded the fire station, purchase of town hall and open space land, and street maintenance.

Ongoing council discussion will focus on various Economic Development efforts, and plans for the Council Chambers (continue leasing or finance new facilities). [In fairness, these topics have generated substantial debate, both on the council and throughout the community.]

We won't go into any more detail right now because the complete workshop presentation is available on the town website, or you may view it from our Archives page: [www.CarefreesFutureMatters.com/archives.html](http://www.CarefreesFutureMatters.com/archives.html)

### Village Center Community Open House

The Open House (3/26) was well done. A nice showing of residents and merchants were in attendance to hear, see, and comment on some of the preliminary ideas. **The meeting opened with a presentation of the preliminary recommendations for the village center master plan.** Following the presentation attendees were able to review poster board displays depicting key recommendations, ask questions, and provide feedback to the Baker Group.

Worthy of note is the fact that many of the preliminary recommendations did not appear to require expensive construction projects, but rather focused on visual and pedestrian amenities which, on the surface, appeared to be relatively modest in cost. The need for a cultural draw, or other attraction, to bring people to the 'Village center' was mentioned but no specific recommendation was emphasized. The Baker group will email a copy of their formal presentation within a few days, at which time it will be available on our Archives page, [www.CarefreesFutureMatters.com/archives.html](http://www.CarefreesFutureMatters.com/archives.html)

The Baker group will prepare their final recommendations for a Village Master Plan to the Council in the weeks ahead. Stay tuned for upcoming Newsletters in which we will report on relevant meetings and decisions regarding Carefree's future.

**Don't forget to visit [CarefreesFutureMatters.com](http://CarefreesFutureMatters.com)**

Respectfully submitted by Jim Van Allen and John Traynor

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