

AGENDA REPORT

TO: FRED BLACKWELL
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

FROM: Sarah Schlenk
Interim Budget Director

SUBJECT: Implementation of BAC 2014
Recommendations #1 & #2

DATE: March 17, 2014

City Administrator
Approval

Date

3/20/14

COUNCIL DISTRICT: City-Wide

RECOMMENDATION

Receive a report with possible action for the implementation of the Budget Advisory Committee's 2014 Recommendations to the Finance Committee, including: 1) Publishing all budget documents in an open-data format in a publicly accessible location; and 2) Creating a standard Budget-Proposal Template to enable side-by-side comparisons of different budget proposals.

OUTCOME

This report articulates actions that the Administration will undertake as part of the Budget Process that address the first and second Budget Advisory Committee's 2014 Recommendations: 1) that the data underlying the biennial Adopted Policy Budget or the Mid-Cycle Amended Policy Budget will be posted to the City's Open Data portal, no later than December 31st of the year of Adoption or at the Publication of the Printed Budget Book, whichever is sooner; 2) that the data underlying the biennial Mayor's Proposed Policy Budget will be posted to the City's Open Data portal, no later than May 1st of the year in which it is proposed; and 3) that the City Administrator's Office will continue working with the Budget Advisory Committee to create a standard Budget-Proposal Template that enables apples-to-apples comparisons of the budget proposals submitted by the Councilmembers, and suggest any changes to the budget process timeframe or resources needed to implement the standard Budget-Proposal Template.

BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

On May 21, 2013 the City Council adopted Resolution No. 84385 C.M.S., which established the City of Oakland's Budget Process Transparency and Public Participation Policy. Item 11 of that Resolution requests that the Budget Advisory Committee "BAC" submit an informational report to the Finance and Management Committee that analyzes opportunities for improving the budget process in future years.

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The BAC submitted a report in compliance with the policy; in it the BAC proposed ten recommendations for approval of the Budget Process. At the February 11, 2013 Finance and Management Committee meeting and at the February 18, 2013 City Council meeting, the Council expressed interest in implementing the first and second recommendations of the BAC. Those recommendations were:

- 1. Release the adopted budget and all associated documents in open-data format in a publicly accessible location:** The BAC recommends that the Finance and Management Committee create an ad-hoc taskforce to work with staff to ensure that all budget documents are posted to Oakland's open-data portal (data.oaklandnet.com) as spreadsheets (CSV), making it searchable and downloadable. The city's website, www.oaklandnet.com, does not currently allow spreadsheets, making it unsuitable to host accessible budget data. When a budget-related document is released, such as the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), the related data should also be released in this format.
- 2. Create a standard budget-proposal template to enable apples-to-apples comparison of budget proposals:** The BAC recommends that a standard format for budget proposals is created and adopted before the next budget cycle. When the Mayor's budget is released, it should also be summarized and released in this standard format. Council Members' proposed amendments should be released using the template and clearly delineate how the proposal impacts total expenditures and how it is different from the Mayor's budget. The standard template should exist in open-data format (spreadsheet) in a publicly accessible location (City of Oakland's open-data portal, data.oaklandnet.com).

ANALYSIS

BAC Recommendation 1:

Staff agrees with the recommendation of the BAC regarding the release of raw data concerning the City's budget and finances. Staff has determined that the most appropriate current location to house such data is the City's Socrata Open Data Portal, available at <https://data.oaklandnet.com/>.

Staff has posted the data underlying the FY 2013-15 Adopted Policy Budget. Staff will continue working with the BAC to identify other key tables that can be posted to the open data portal. Staff is also working to determine the proper formats, and timeline for posting the audited data underlying the FY 2012-13 actual revenues and expenditures.

Posting the aforementioned data sets to the open data portal should not require additional staffing resources. However, if the volume of informal questions and public information requests substantially increases due to the publication of this data, additional staffing may be required in the City Administrator's Budget Unit, and/or the Controller's Budget & Operations Unit.

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Additionally, better public access to this data could be facilitated if the City were to enhance & upgrade the format, design, and functionality of its website. This would ideally be combined with creating a central budget and financial information webpage per the BAC recommendation #3. Staff is assessing the feasibility upgrading the City's website for these purposes as a component of a larger effort to improve public access through the website.

BAC Recommendation 2:

Staff is working with the BAC to develop a plan to implement recommendation #2. In consulting with the BAC on possible template formats several issues arose. Staff has worked with the BAC to further refine the character of the recommendation for a standard template. The key goals for a template are:

1. The template should allow apples-to-apples comparisons of proposed Council amendments to one another and to the Mayor's budget, while providing detail of each proposal. This would be accomplished by publishing a workbook (a series of Excel spreadsheets) of Council proposals in which the itemized amendment of the Mayor's budget are listed for each proposal as a separate worksheet, and a summary sheet by fund and department compares the funding and staffing of each of the proposals.
2. This workbook should be available to the public no later than 48 hours prior to the Council meeting when it is to be considered. Ideally it would be published within 72 hours as a component of the Supplemental Agenda Packet. The sheets in the workbook would be posted to the open data portal and if available to a revamped budget page on the City website.
3. The Council proposal worksheets should contain numbers that have been validated by a third party. Staff suggests that the Controller's Bureau of Finance serve in this role. The Controller's Bureau is currently responsible for most expenditure costing and routine budgetary operations.

The implementation of a template that meets these key goals will likely require changes to the current budget process timelines noted in the Budget Process Transparency and Public Participation Policy Resolution No. 84385 C.M.S. The implementation of this template may also require additional staff, and equipment in the Controller's Bureau due to the need to rapidly provide additional information during a period of time with a pre-existing heavy workload.

Additionally, the BAC recommends that prior to adoption of any standard template format that BAC members work with individual Council Offices to explain the format, do a "test run" using the template, and solicit input & feedback so that all members are comfortable with the template design. Staff anticipates finalizing a template by the end of the summer 2014, and performing the testing with Council staff during the fall 2014, prior to the beginning of the next two-year budget process.

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PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

Staff has directly engaged the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) and its membership in developing proposals for the implementation of the BAC recommendation.

COORDINATION

This report was developed in coordination with the Controllers Bureau within the Finance Department.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct fiscal impacts associated with the acceptance of this report. However, if as a result of planned administrative actions, the volume of informal questions and public information requests substantially increases due to the publication of budgetary data, additional staffing may be required in the City Administrator's Budget Unit, and/or Controller's Bureau Budget & Operations Unit to provide timely responses to questions.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

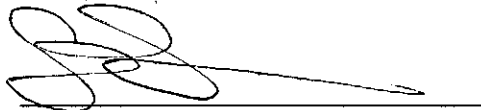
Economic: None.

Environmental: None.

Social Equity: None.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Bradley Johnson, Assistant to the City Administrator, at (510) 238-6119.

Respectfully submitted,



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City Administrator's Office

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