

FILED
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
OAKLAND

2014 JAN 30 AM 10:02 I

AGENDA REPORT

TO: DEANNA J SANTANA
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

FROM: Bradley Johnson
Assistant to the City
Administrator

SUBJECT: Budget Advisory Committee Report

DATE: January 21, 2014

City Administrator
Approval

Deanna Santana

Date

1/21/14

COUNCIL DISTRICT: City-Wide

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and accept this informational report from the City's Budget Advisory Committee evaluating the FY2013-15 Budget process and noting topics the Budget Advisory Committee plans to analyze in 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Budget Advisory Committee recommends that the City undertake the following actions to improve future budget processes

- 1 Release the adopted budget and all associated documents in open-data format in a publicly accessible location
- 2 Create a standard budget-proposal template to enable apples-to-apples comparison of budget proposals
- 3 Provide a centralized budget webpage
- 4 Conduct public engagement year-round
- 5 Launch a public budget-literacy campaign
- 6 Add additional methods of engagement
- 7 Agree on revenue projections by a set deadline
- 8 Does not change the financial policies that underlie the budget process during the process
- 9 Consider ways to separate union negotiations from the budget process
- 10 Connect spending to clear priorities and shift the budget design to focus on programs

The Budget Advisory Committee finds that the FY2013-15 budget process was better or the same as prior processes, and that the City rates "fair" regarding the informational quality of the proposed budget, attention to engaging the public, and the level of transparency and open dialogue in all public meetings dedicated to the budget

Item _____
Finance & Management Committee
February 11, 2014

OUTCOME

Staff requests that the Finance and Management Committee receive and accept this informational report. The acceptance of this report does not create any policy or compel any action.

BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

On May 21, 2013, the Oakland City Council passed A Resolution Establishing the City of Oakland's Budget Process Transparency and Public Participation Policy (Resolution), which requires the Oakland Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) to submit an annual budget process evaluation to the Finance and Management Committee. The purpose of the evaluation is to rate the budget process on transparency, engagement, and clarity.

ANALYSIS

Please see the accompanying report for the Budget Advisory Committee's full analysis.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

The Budget Advisory Committee conducted a non-scientific public survey as a component of their assessment of the FY 2013-15 budget process.

COORDINATION

This report was prepared by citizen members of the Budget Advisory Committee in coordination with staff in the City Administrator's Office.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

There are no costs or fiscal impacts associated with the acceptance of this report.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

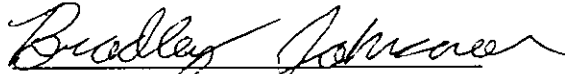
Economic No direct economic opportunities have been identified.

Environmental No direct environmental opportunities have been identified.

Social Equity No direct social equity opportunities have been identified.

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

Respectfully submitted,



BRADLEY JOHNSON
Assistant to the City Administrator,
City Administrator's Office

Attachments:

A: Annual Budget Process Evaluation Report



Annual Budget Process Evaluation

For the FY 2013-15 Policy Budget passed on June 27, 2013

January, 2014

On May 21, 2013, the Oakland City Council passed A Resolution Establishing the City of Oakland's Budget Process Transparency and Public Participation Policy (Resolution), which requires the Oakland Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) to submit an annual budget process evaluation to the Finance and Management Committee. The purpose of the evaluation is to rate the budget process on transparency, engagement, and clarity.

This evaluation includes the Committee's ratings and a summary of ratings from an online community survey that the Committee conducted. Information about the survey methodology is included in Appendix A. Specific comments and suggestions in each category are included in Appendices B - F.

BAC Top Ten Recommendations for Next Budget Cycle

The following recommendations were approved by consensus by the Committee. Over the next eight months, the BAC will submit four follow up reports to the Finance and Management Committee on recommendations 1 and 2, 4 through 6, 9, and 10. The BAC will submit a fifth report that tracks the progress of the provisions in the Budget Process Resolution.

Most Necessary and Immediate

- 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).
- 3 Provide a centralized budget webpage:** Currently, it is difficult for the public to find all of the various budget documents that are released throughout the process. There should be a centralized webpage with links to all documents listed in chronological order.

Recommended Mid-Term

4. **Conduct public engagement year-round:** We recommend that the City expand in its use of town halls and other forums to engage the public so that it is a year-round process where citizen input is gathered throughout to have a more participatory budget. We especially encourage citizen input be gathered before the Mayor and staff begin to draft the budget so that data collected from the community informs and shapes the budget's trajectory. A year-round commitment would entail shifting the manner in which the City conducts its town halls so that they are conducive to gathering community input rather than just merely distributing information. Year-round engagement would enable the City to build long-term relationships with the diverse constituencies that make up Oakland. We recognize that such a commitment would take several years to achieve and encourage the City to devote more resources to planning and implementing a robust and effective public engagement process.
5. **Launch a public budget-literacy campaign:** The BAC recognizes that Oakland residents vary considerably in their understanding of local governance and budgeting, which impacts their level of civic participation. To ensure that the public engagement process the City undergoes is inclusive and equitable, we believe that education campaigns that increase budget literacy are absolutely essential.
6. **Add additional methods of engagement:** While this budget process had more town halls than previously, they were the only method the City used to engage the public. We recommend the City collect community input through a variety of means, including but not limited to online surveys, paper and/or mailer surveys, focus groups, polling and drop-in hours. We also encourage the City to conduct town halls in more locations, at differing hours, and in multiple languages.
7. **Agree as a Council on revenue projections by a set deadline:** This annual budget process was characterized with several disputes over the amount of revenue projected for the City's coffers. These disputes added to the confusion for the public due to multiple revenue projections. In addition, there was little data provided to the public as to how these projections were obtained. To avoid this in the future, the BAC recommends that the City Council follow the revenue forecast guidelines explained in the Resolution and set a date in mid-May to agree as a Council on a projection.
8. **Do not change the financial policies that underlie the budget process during the process:** It is confusing and compromises transparency when the Council changes policies that set boundaries for the budget process during the process, such as the reserve policy. The BAC recommends keeping existing policies in place once the process has begun.
9. **Consider ways to separate union negotiations from the budget process:** During this past budget cycle, contract negotiations with unions compounded the complexity of the budget process. The BAC fully supports the contract negotiation process and we think it is best if this process is separate from the budget process so that neither disrupts the other in its completion. Separating the processes would allow the City to better anticipate its obligations and plan accordingly.

Recommended Long-Term

10. **Connect all spending to a clear set of priorities and shift the budget design to focus on programs:** In its current format, the budget is difficult for a non-expert to follow. On a day-to-day level, citizens interact with specific government programs, rather than departments or funds. The BAC feels it would be very beneficial if the City moved to a program based budget that was tied to clearly stated spending priorities. In particular, the BAC recommends that Council consider the Priority-Based Budgeting model.

Score Cards

Overall Score Card		Much Better	Better	Same	Worse	Much Worse
Overall, how would you compare this year's budget's process and design to prior years?	BAC		X*	X*		
	Community Survey	14%	34%	31%	11%	9%

The resolution specifically asks the BAC to evaluate the City on the three areas listed below

Score Card – Specified Evaluation Criteria		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
The informational quality of the Proposed Budget	BAC			X	
	Community Survey	8%	23%	51%	18%
The City Administration's and City Council's attention to engaging the public and its impacts on the budget process and product	BAC				X
	Community Survey	3%	18%	51%	28%
The level of transparency and open dialogue in all public meetings dedicated to the budget	BAC				X
	Community Survey	5%	13%	54%	28%

*The BAC is giving this year's budget process a score of better in some areas and same in other areas. BAC members want to commend staff for the quality and amount of information released throughout the process. Community members already acquainted with the Oakland budget found this information useful and appreciated the effort as the first steps to a better budget process. In addition, BAC members want to commend Council for adopting the Budget Process Transparency and Public Participation Policy.

However, BAC members feel that parts of the budget process continue to lack transparency and present a major barrier to participation for the majority of community members. In particular, it continues to be difficult to track changes in the budget from year-to-year, to compare competing Council budget proposals, and to understand the real impact of the budget on City programs.

The City has its own set of guiding principles for the budget, which the BAC was also asked to evaluate

Score Card - Guiding Principles for the Budget		Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dis-satisfied	Very Dis-satisfied
Inclusive Design Public participation is an early and integral part of issue and opportunity identification, concept development, design, and implementation of city policies, programs, and projects	BAC				X	
	Community Survey	3%	18%	23%	36%	21%
Authentic Intent The City pursues public participation in order to shape their budget	BAC				X	
	Community Survey	3%	26%	18%	23%	31%
Transparency Public participation processes are open, honest, and understandable	BAC				X	
	Community Survey	3%	21%	23%	28%	26%
Inclusiveness and Equity Historically excluded individuals and groups are included authentically in processes, activities, and decision and policymaking Impacts, including costs and benefits, are identified and distributed fairly	BAC				X	
	Community Survey	3%	16%	34%	24%	24%
Informed Participation Members of the public receive and/or have access to the information they need, and with enough lead time, to participate effectively	BAC					X
	Community Survey	5%	8%	26%	26%	34%
Accessible Participation Public participation processes are broadly accessible in terms of location, time, and language, and support the engagement of community members with disabilities	BAC				X	
	Community Survey	8%	16%	29%	29%	18%
Appropriate Process The public participation process uses one or more engagement formats that are responsive to community needs and encourage full, authentic, effective and equitable participation	BAC				X	
	Community Survey	5%	14%	35%	30%	16%
Use of Information Local officials communicate decisions back to process participants and the broader public, with a description of how the public input was considered and used	BAC					X
	Community Survey	5%	8%	23%	41%	23%
Building Relationships and Community Capacity Public participation processes invest in and develop long-term, collaborative working relationships and learning opportunities with community partners and stakeholders	BAC				X	
	Community Survey	3%	13%	26%	31%	28%
Evaluation Sponsors and participants evaluate each public participation process with the collected feedback and learning shared broadly and applied to future public participation efforts	BAC				X	
	Community Survey	3%	8%	34%	29%	26%

APPENDIX A Survey Methodology

In addition to submitting feedback from the Budget Advisory Committee members, the BAC is committed to collecting and providing feedback from community stakeholders. To compile stakeholder data for this evaluation, the BAC created an online survey. The survey was distributed through listservs, individual emails, and social media.

There were 39 respondents in total. The survey asked respondents if they were affiliated with any groups. That data is listed in the table below.

Answer Choices	Percent Responses	Number Responses
Small Business Owner	15%	6
Nonprofit	18%	7
HeadStart	0%	0
Neighborhood Association	23%	9
Local 21	3%	1
Local 1021	0%	0
Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)	21%	8
Police and Fire	0%	0
Citizen	77%	30
Recipient Organization of City Grant	0%	0

The BAC recognizes that the survey was not representative of the Oakland population and that the sample size was small. This was expected due to time constraints and because this is the first year that the BAC was asked to submit this report. Goals for the stakeholder survey in future years include:

- Maximize publicity of the survey by partnering with community organizations, neighborhood groups, and student groups
- Start working on partnerships now so community groups are aware of the BAC and the annual evaluation
- Cooperate with City Council members to advertise the survey
- Increase the length of the submission period to allow community members more time to respond
- Ensure that the BAC sends representatives to all town hall meetings and other budget outreach efforts
- Ask respondents to rate City Administration separately from City Council
- Clarify and simplify the survey language

APPENDIX B

Comments about the statement:

We have been asked to evaluate the City on the 3 areas listed below. Please rate the City based on your experience of the budget process this year.

- **The informational quality of the Proposed Budget**
- **The City Administration's and City Council's attention to engaging the public and its impacts on the budget process and product**
- **The level of transparency and open dialogue in all public meetings dedicated to the budget**

The District 7 Town Hall meeting on the budget left only 5 minutes for Q and A, so there were many people who **didn't** get their questions answered, including me. I also think that budget materials **need** to be presented in a **more** accessible way. You shouldn't **need** training in reading financial statements to be able to make sense of the documents. And it seems very arbitrary the order in which people are called up to speak. Why do loud groups of union members get to go first? It should **be** in the **order** in which people submitted their comment cards.

Maybe unfair to judge because I didn't attend all meetings, but I had the feeling the real **direction** determining issues had already been decided. All else was just language. I will have to pay much more attention, much earlier on in the process.

Most Oaklanders don't have the time to attend City budget meetings and those who do are paid advocates, generally against the police. Transparency is good but you can't just do whatever people say at a random public meeting.

"Dialogue" not possible in large public meetings, format of meetings allows side-by-side monologues by various interests (not sure dialogue is a fair goal for existing forums, requires new forums). Mayor's proposed **budget** gets "good" rating for transparency, council proposals get "poor" (hence overall "fair" rating). Council proposals not accessible to public (hard to find PDFs, not digital), informed discussion is very limited even for city officials, let alone the general public.

I only know about the results of the Budget. It was terribly wrong to cut 80 cops 4 years ago--wrong priority. I blame council, especially Quan and Brunner and Dellums.

While I'm on many City mail and email lists, I haven't received any budget info - I have to go and look for it. It should be sent, or a link sent, to all known email addresses.

Could have been better at letting public know when CMs proposed alternative budget scenarios. For example, naming the CM proposals. Supplemental document #1 isn't transparent. No one wants to read a 'supplement' and probably won't open it unless they are eager. This is probably not an intentional thing, but staff can use some training on online reading behaviors.

I appreciate the **budget** process starting several months before passage of the budget. This was a challenge during several years during the Dellums administration.

The budget is city centric. It should be organized and presented in way that addresses the issues that matter most to people. For example, police services and public works have a role in public safety. If the budget were presented in a manner that mattered to people, then the related pieces of public works and police services would be presented **as one**.

Some members of the city council appeared more interested in engaging than others. The city admin **didn't** appear to care at all. Her presentations, as well as Quan's, were incomprehensible. It would be much easier to believe the process was transparent if the agenda and reports were labeled **online** and easy to find.

The city continues to post raw numbers in tabular formats. These figures are great for works, but for **people** looking to evaluate what our goals are and how they are being realized through a **budget**, the process is **befuddling**. It would also be nice to get a sense of what other cities are paying/investing for similar services.

At next round of townhall meetings about budget, would be great to have important budget info presented in a format that's easier to read from the seats, for non-accountants. A lot of tiny spreadsheets were displayed last time. Also, at the "townhalls," city officials actually used most of the time to talk to the audience -- 15 minutes or less remained for questions from the audience.

The most open, transparent, honest discussion of the budget that I can recall in the last decades. Straight, accurate information was provided without obfuscation.

I know little about the budget and rarely if ever see the budget process.

Wish you could have the city council meetings be less focused on venting and more on clear arguments. Democracy does not prevail when we go by who is the loudest.

While the city is making a greater show of being transparent, it really seems to be mostly a dog and pony show. The public is the stakeholder with the least input.

As I will mention below, the informational quality of the Proposed Budget and the City's attention to engaging the public were far better than in previous budget cycles. However, the confluence of the collective bargaining process and the budget cycle meant that the public dialogue was largely dominated by the city's unions, while the City Council's failure to fairly regulate the public comment process at its meetings had the effect of excluding most voices and intimidating most Oaklanders from participating in the process.

The level of detail in the budget is highly uneven. Kids First¹ is listed as a one-line expense, with no details at all on how it is spent, while Public Works goes on for many pages on details of how & why it is spent.

As someone with a moderate interest and involvement in city government I find the budget process entirely obscure.

The budget document is very opaque. The dialogue was adversely affected by the SEIU attempt to take over too much of the public forum. This crowds out ordinary folks. The last minute dueling amendments left many people shut out.

The budget is very opaque and the public dialogue did not happen. I think in many cases the SEIU shouting caused many Council members to zone out.

APPENDIX C

Comments about the statement:

The City has its own set of guiding principles for the budget, which we have also been asked to evaluate their performance this year. In the series of questions to follow, please rate how satisfied you are with the City's performance for each principle. Each principle will be listed with a brief definition.

- **Inclusive Design** Public participation is an early and integral part of issue and opportunity identification, concept development, design, and implementation of city policies, programs, and projects.
- **Authentic Intent:** The City pursues public participation in order to shape their budget.
- **Transparency** Public participation processes are open, honest, and understandable

Financials need to be made easier for the general public to understand (use simpler language)

Not sure how issues that percolate up from the departments are digested Not sure how revenue generating proposals are evaluated Not sold on the transparency thing See #1, above

Again, public participation is not necessarily reflective of the desires of the majority of the public

See previous comment

The city admin detailed and number heavy power point presentations weren't understandable to some audiences Part of transparency is making public presentations accessible to everyone However points for at least making the effort)

The city needs to engage the citizens both online and offline and ask about trade-offs The current process with 6 or 7 town hall meetings ensures that you get people who are ardent supporters of the elected but not people with a brain

the process seemed to be a joke, honestly the budget was changed at the very last minute- the proposals were passed around at the city council meeting so that people who were watching at home or had been participating couldn't even see them the changes were made only days before (3 if i remember)- so much for participation! then the union discussions were resolved after the budget was decided and, although it's great that this was worked out, the agreed-upon money was way more than what was budgeted for what was public participation for if it wasn't for agreeing on a budget that would be stuck to? it's impossible to find the current budget online, with line items

same comments the budget always begins at a reductionist view of give something to get something I would like it to start with our communities goals and an assessment of how much these items would cost for full implementation the budget then would not only reflect our values but also show us where there are funding gaps

too many words, simplify this b s

The first sentence of your question makes no sense

liked the town hall meetings in the districts and the explanation of the budget although the graphics were a waste of time

The public is a diffuse group with competing interests It can not balance unions, politicians, business interests which are much more unified

I saw no evidence of public participation before the issuance of the proposed policy budget And the alternatives proposed by groups of city council members did not seem to arise out of public or inclusive processes

It seems that the mayor & city administrator have a budget in mind, and feel their job is to sell the public on that budget. The public presentation I saw could not have been less understandable: unreadable slides, jargon,

I am generally unaware of the process by which citizens can have any input to, review of, or access to the city process that develops the budget or monitors the expenditures of public funds. As a member of a city advisory commission which oversees significant expenditures, the result of getting financial information from the city is obfuscation and denial.

APPENDIX D

Comments about the statement

Please rate how satisfied you are with the City's performance for each principle. Each principle will be listed with a brief definition.

- **Inclusiveness and Equity:** Historically excluded individuals and groups are included authentically in processes, activities, and decision and policymaking Impacts, including costs and benefits, are identified and distributed fairly
- **Informed Participation** Members of the public receive and/or have access to the information they need, and with enough lead time, to participate effectively.
- **Accessible Participation:** Public participation processes are broadly accessible in terms of location, time, and language, and support the engagement of community members with disabilities.
- **Appropriate Process:** The public participation process uses one or more engagement formats that are responsive to community needs and encourage full, authentic, effective and equitable participation

I don't feel satisfied but I have to accept a lot of the blame there Need more info on the front end of issues, not just the Council's presentation of the results

In general, the City seems to listen to the loudest comments, not the most relevant

I feel the city made what they consider a reasonable effort There were TownHalls and multiple opportunities for comment extended - either by the city council (asking for emails, letters, calls) or by allowing public comment at city council meetings I am not sure how accessible the process was to those with disabilities however there was council meeting where a deaf person came to speak and they brought in an interpreter don't know if it was city supplied or not Not sure if website is available in other languages or in Braille but I do know meetings are closed captioned

I was grateful we could provide input via email, website, and in person

As noted above, one town hall per district is insufficient Furthermore, residents rarely receive full documents more than 48 hours before a meeting The city can not expect its residents to drop work commitments, children, and life at a moments notice because the city released abides document

see above desley brooks apposed to the budget transparency ordinance on principle, because she felt it didn't reach all of the constituents while I disagree that the ordinance was bad, I agree that it didn't reach everyone and that "accessibility" wasn't broadly conceived

The bargaining process for city employees must be finished BEFORE the budget documents are finally approved Since 80% of city spending is employee compensation, not knowing the city employee compensation levels makes it impossible to have an accurate idea of projected spending

We are not the worst city nor the best

I don't feel I know enough about the city's processes to have an opinion on most of these However, one long-standing frustration I have with the city is that townhalls and other events meant for interaction between elected officials and residents often are not announced until 72 hours in advance I am signed up on the mayor's newsletter, city administrator's list, attend our local NCPC, and I still don't get notifications far enough to keep my schedule clear for meetings I really want to attend Would be great if the city had a Townhall Listserve or something! Something obvious and simple so meetings can be announced as far in advance as possible

As with most public policy processes, the city can offer the opportunity to participate, but only a few will take that opportunity to engage in the process Nevertheless, many who don't will still complain loudly about the budget after the fact

too much blah blah, re write this survey

Most of the public events were hijacked by the participants in the city's labor dispute. In this context, non-city employees, non-insiders and those who don't do business with the city (e.g., non-profits) are "historically excluded individuals and groups," and had little involvement in the process.

I suspect that various city staff feel that they are satisfying all of these high-falutin' goals, but I doubt that very many citizens agree that they are being met. I certainly do not.

The dialogue was adversely affected by the SEIU attempt to take over too much of the public forum. This crowds out ordinary folks. The last minute dueling amendments left many people shut out.

APPENDIX E

Comments about the statement

Please rate how satisfied you are with the City's performance for each principle. Each principle will be listed with a brief definition.

- **Use of Information** Local officials communicate decisions back to process participants and the broader public, with a description of how the public input was considered and used.
- **Building Relationships and Community Capacity:** Public participation processes invest in and develop long-term, collaborative working relationships and learning opportunities with community partners and stakeholders.
- **Evaluation:** Sponsors and participants evaluate each public participation process with the collected feedback and learning shared broadly and applied to future public participation efforts.

I do not believe the city makes any efforts to bring regular people into the budgeting process. I didn't see any low-income people participating in budget hearings, and I attended about six of them.

The whole thrust of part #1 is the problem "Local officials communicate decisions back to process participants and the broader public", The question is how are these decisions arrived at, not the reporting back mechanism.

Our elected representatives are the ones accountable, not people who come to a random meeting.

If this happens, it isn't visible to the general public, nor does City effectively communicate to the general public how it does these things, which itself (communication) needs to be improved.

I know my council person seeks info from community but I don't know how the input is weighted in her decisions. I'm also unaware how other councilmembers interact with their own residents. I didn't quite understand the last principle so I'm neutral.

Ideally, when staffing in budget office and city administrator's office increase, it would be wonderful for them to visit each neighborhood group or the board for each group to encourage group as well as individual letters of budget proposals.

This really should be ongoing.

What long term relationships? who's working on this now? this is the first followup I've heard.

I am dissatisfied with the future intent of each budget cycle. I believe that every process should also incorporate some element of capacity building for not only the community but for the city as well.

Too much blah blah, re write this survey.

The administration did a great job of documenting ongoing responses to Council and city information. However, the city did little to build relationships with those in the city who have historically played little part in the process, and I saw no evidence of "sponsors and participants" evaluating each public participation process.

The aspirational goals stated above sound nice, but other than spending an enormous amount of time and effort trying to dig into the budget process, there is no way for the average taxpayer to become informed. Goals such as these are achieved by specific actions which I don't think the city really intends to take.

This feed forward and lessons learned principle set was not very evident in this year's process. Though the Budget Office did turn around documentation requests in a very timely fashion.

APPENDIX F

Comments about the statement:

What suggestions do you have for the City to improve their budget process? Especially when it comes to public participation?

I haven't seen anything about the budget Better outreach thru NCPC It doesn't matter if you are doing a bunch of new things if I have to be in the know to find that out Outreach and info I can read rather than meetings are important

Allow adequate time for questions and answers Don't privilege the largest and noisiest groups of people Call for comments in the order in which people requested time to speak Hold more budget hearings so that people don't have to wait until 10 or 11 pm to speak

Can't compare this year to prior years with confidence It all depends on how participative you want the public to be and who the public is The heart of a budget is in the details Maybe ask for small public working groups to self assign themselves to and focus on the detail of budget items Maybe ask the groups to redefine the objective and transparency Maybe involve the groups in really looking at both sides of the equation (revenues vs costs) Maybe you are doing all of this already and I am just unaware of it all

Don't fetishize public participation Nonprofit employees and union members are not the general public, but they are the ones who attend most of the meetings

Spend more time listening to what the community wants instead of defending what has been proposed

Host town halls in the neighborhoods, publish budget information in newspapers and other widely read publications, include budget updates in mayoral and councilmember speeches and heavily publicize the Council meeting where public participation will take place

Expand Budget Process Transparency Ordinance to - Require that mayor's and council's budget proposals be submitted using one common template/form that is digital (spreadsheet not PDF) and made publicly accessible (data oaklandnet com) at specific deadlines during the budget process - Require that the common template/form show clearly how budget proposals impact the city's Five-Year Forecast, and effectively communicates impact on other "hot button" issues (to be decided by a public forum) - Require that the budget office publish the adopted budget in a consistent, digital, publicly accessible format by a certain deadline

each council member send email updates to voters

Collate all the email addresses that all city departments have for residents and use that collated list to sent budget information throughout the entire process I've never received anything about the budget but I do receive emails from council members, elected officials, the police department, etc The City has my email address in many places, why not use it for the budget process Perhaps there is an online process for commenting on the budget but I've never seen it

See above comments

Establish budget reading groups at libraries to encourage reading of the lengthy budget in portions along with discussion

Focus on public safety Engage the public early and often And stop subsidizing stuff that should not be subsidized This is not a budget process, but the net is fewer dollars for stuff that benefits the greater city

be honest if you're doing it, do it if not, just go back to the old way

- Businesses are completely excluded from the budget process, except for one Chamber of Commerce rep. Since a substantial amount of tax revenue is from Oakland businesses they should be part of the budget process throughout the cycle. Individual taxpayers are substantially excluded from the budget process - there is little feedback into the tax ramifications of budget decisions so the taxpayers can react to spending proposals. In summary the process is completely biased to satisfying employee unions and the various non profits that spend the city money, without essentially no input from the business and individual taxpayers that provide the money.

Like the comments before I think that the budget should start with a set of value principles determined by our community. Next, we should "best" assess how much these things would cost in order to reach full implementation. We then would begin the budgeting process of shifting money around and looking at revenue. This process would be transparent and would include examples from other cities. Finally, we would create a document that reflects not only what money we are investing into services, but also include the funding gaps in these areas in order to reach our stated value. So VALUE. We value public safety DREAM. We believe that more enforcement is necessary and to properly enforce a city like ours would require x officers. COST. The full cost of implementation would be \$x dollars. ANALYSIS. What are we proposing to spend and how does this compare to other cities. REPORTING. We allocated \$x dollars for police staffing. This leaves us \$x dollars short of our goal.

At next round of townhall meetings about budget, would be great to have important budget info presented in a format that's easier to read from the seats, for non-accountants. A lot of tiny spreadsheets were displayed last time. Also, at the "townhalls," city officials actually used most of the time to talk to the audience -- 15 minutes or less remained for questions from the audience.

Earlier public involvement before the administration's proposed budget is released in order to learn the public's will BEFORE beginning the process of crafting the budget proposal. For instance, if public safety is the overwhelming concern of most citizens, the budget should be BUILT AROUND addressing that concern instead of simply including it in the mix. The focus of the budget should be determined by listening to the citizenry and then crafting a budget that addresses their concerns as its central emphasis.

direct vote by all property tax payers only, and special votes for special funding. If the county/state/feds provide funding, then they get votes as well.

new mayor

It makes little sense to plan a budget while at the same time negotiating contracts with city unions. These processes ought to be separated in time.

Give the public more information early on and let them understand the difficulty of putting together a budget on limited resources. This would enable more informed and better choices. For example, provide a survey on what cuts would you (John Q Public) make if you only have so much money.

Council and Mayor's staff levels need to be shrunk and this will never happen with the current budget process. Elected's staff levels should be removed from this budget process and given to the citizen lead Budget Advisory Committee.

There needs to be a much better job of getting input from a broad spectrum of the community. It was clear that a high priority for the majority of council in this budget process was increases, however slight, for the city's employees. Would this have been a high priority for a broad spectrum of the community if asked? Perhaps yes, perhaps no, but there is no way of telling. In addition, we need to adjust the cycles so that the budget process and MOUs aren't being negotiated at the same time.

Honestly want feedback, rather than trying to sell us on what they have already decided. Make really understandable budget presentations (so-called "narrative budgets" are good for this). Have more time for questions, and answer the questions honestly.

Try more public access methods like using the public libraries and having selected drop in sites where general information about the budget, budget principles, and citizen input can be made easier to gather. Use technology at public meetings to engage input from those who do not want to publically address their questions and concerns. Use a citizen, stakeholder survey process to begin the budgeting activity to gather wider input on community based priorities.

Intent does not appear to be the same as the principles above. The process was not clearly communicated to residents and the engagement was better but still poor.

The town halls in each district do not seem like effective means to educate, engage, and hear from a diversity of citizens. Instead, a broader range of forums -- with preparation, skillful facilitation, and follow-through with participants -- needs to be planned and convened, to truly solicit thoughtful community input. Another need is for more information to be available and usable on-line -- meaning easy to understand and navigate, accurate and up-to-date, linked to more back-up detail, and comparable with other proposals (over time and same time).

have public hearing in which there is actual back and forth between citizens and the Council. Maybe use committees to do that or in some cases create smaller discussion groups. For instance the Public Safety Committee could be used to conduct public discussions on that portion of the budget.