

Budget Survey FY17-18

Budget Workshop #1



Expectations

- Q1: Top 3-5 Expectations for the 2017-18 Fiscal Year
 - **W3:** Continue on the same path as the last few years. Pave streets, pay down debt, keep from raising taxes.
 - **W5:**a) Maintain conservative fiscal management, eg. meet budgets, not increase in debt or tax rate, pay off debt
 - b) Maintain a safe environment (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Municipal Court)
 - c) Ensure friendly business environment/economic development to support businesses and increase sales tax base.
 - d) Continue to improve and maintain the city infrastructure
 - i) Roads, water, waste water treatment, gas system and airport
 - ii) Establish and implement a plan to understand the state of the sewer system
 - e) Ensure we provide competitive wages for city employees

Expectations (2)

- **W2:** a. Explore other venues that encourage bilingual members of our community to express their views, concerns, and needs on municipal issues.
- b. Ensure fair dispersal of budget funding for supporting requests from all Alpine citizens
- c. Budget and funding should reflect the needs of the whole community.
- d. Continue to look for ambulance options
- e. Continue work on improving the City streets

Expectations (3)

- **W4:** A. Pave more streets throughout the City of Alpine and make sure that the paving process is done properly.
- B. Maintaining proper safety code for our drinking water and that our sewer plant is up to code with TCEQ regulations.
- C. Kokernot, Baines, Medina and Centennial Park are being updated, but we also need to include Pueblo Nuevo Park & City Pool. The amount budgeted and grants that Friends of the Park distribute should also be distributed to all parks equally including Pueblo Nuevo and the City Pool. Doing this also attracts tourist to our town and keeps them here longer. An example is Fort Stockton, TX Splash Pad & City of Pecos, TX splash pad.
- D. The money that is being distributed to the events and organizations needs to be completely re-evaluated. (Viva Big Bend, Cinco de Mayo, Fourth of July, Fiesta Del Barrio, Tourism Center, Library, Sunshine House, etc....). Many people from the community are upset that Viva Big Bend has not had more Tejano groups to accommodate the Hispanics in the community.
- E. All city employees including city manager, city secretary and city assistant need to be on a Salary Structure for example:
 - Level 1, 2 and 3 receive a 5% raise, Level 4 skip a raise, Level 5 receive a 5% raise, Level 6 skip a raise, Level 7 receive a raise, Level 8 & 9 skip a raise and Level 10 receive a 5% raise and stop at this level. Then create an incentive (bonus for all the years of work starting at 3 year \$500, 4 years=550, 5 years=1000
 - 6 years=1500, 7 years 2000, stop at that amount so any years after that you continue to receive the same amount.

Fire Department

- Q2: We currently fund just under \$80K annually for the support of the Alpine Volunteer Fire Department. Councilor Fitzgerald has been working as the City Liaison with the County to formulate a more robust Interlocal agreement between the two entities. If the agreement with the County changed or the costs increased, how would you like to see this area funded?
 - **W3**: Hopefully we won't fund higher amount.

Fire Department (2)

- **W5:** Consider use of increased funds from the increased values in city property
- **W2:** a. How are the 80K for support of the Alpine Volunteer Fire Department being spent (i.e., equipment, maintenance, training, uniforms, etc.)?
- b. Who reviews and approves the Fire Department line items and/or requests for funding.
- c. Who is accountable for the spending of Fire Department funding?
- d. Are Fire Department volunteers complying with Federal/State/Municipal requirements and guidelines regarding a well-organized and well-trained Volunteer Fire Department?
- e. I would like to see more cooperation from the Fire Department to send documentation of what is in place and if we are compliant with all local, state rules and regulations to operate.
- **W4:** The City Council and Mayor need to meet with the Brewster County Commissioners and with the County Judge quarterly to discuss the Fire Department.

Paving

- Q3: We continue to look at ways annually to increase our spending on Paving. Council has been successful in the past two budgets at allocating more dollars towards these endeavors. What are your thoughts on budget allocations for paving moving forward?
 - **W3:** The more we can put into paving, the better.
 - **W5:** When the city established a long term plan to repair and rejuvenate the 1050 blocks of city roads/streets, there were two key parts of the strategy. First was to increase the level of funding, which is now about 10% of the city budget. Second was to put a plan in place that results in rebuilding roads about every 28 years, and seal coal every road every 7 years. Leave the budget at 2016/17 levels. Continue on the plan.

Paving (2)

- **W2:** Budget allocations for paving is important. But I question how the decisions are reached regarding which streets in Alpine are to be paved. It appears that the more affluent neighborhoods in Alpine have well paved streets while the less prosperous neighborhoods are ignored. Why? I want to allocate budget accordingly and within reason to see improvements within our city. Our streets need a lot of work.
- **W4:** I have heard from many people not only in my ward but throughout the community that this must be a priority so we need to make this happen. I also know two people who have worked for the TX DOT and have expressed their concerns to me regarding the paving of our streets by city employees. That the way the city employees are paving the streets is not the proper way. Do we hire someone who has knowledge and experience because in the long run the city is wasting money? The city needs to apply for grant money to make this happen. If we need to transfer monies from another department then let's look carefully so that those departments still have enough in their budget for what they are needing.

Airport

- Q4: We do have an upcoming project on taxiway and apron enhancement. We are needing to put approximately \$225+K more in reserve to provide for our off-set. We do believe this is the year to budget the equity transfer from our Gas fund to accomplish this task. Please offer up any thoughts, concerns and/or suggestions.
 - **W3**: If we can afford it, let's do it.

Airport (2)

- **W5:** Make the transfer in the 2016/17 fiscal year if possible.
- Relative to natural gas cost and the gas fund, consider releasing and RFP focused on the competitive market now that the new gas pipeline is in place.
- **W2:** It is important to keep and maintain our airport. I want to see the equity transfer accomplish this task. The airport is very important being that our hospital utilizes it for all air transport for our patients to get to a higher level of care. We also have UPS utilize it to bring in and out packages.
- **W4:** The city needs to consider grant money and if the city needs to match any money from the gas fund we need to make sure that the gas fund isn't going to be drained of funds.

Parks

- Q5: We currently have multiple parks across the City and have enjoyed a nice uptick in the Adopt-a-Spot program. Maintenance intervals continue to be something we consider with our current staff size. We also have had to take action this year of increasing our Lifeguard pay in order to attract employees. What goals do you have for the City Parks? If those goals entail additional spending, what levels are your comfortable supporting?
 - **W3:** We have too many parks, for a town this size. Do not need more staff for maintenance.

Parks (2)

- **W5:** The City Council needs to first agree on the top 5-6 parks that the city will focus resources on and use adopt a spot to allow resident volunteers to maintain the others. In the event there are no adopt a spot volunteers, then put in place a plan to get them off the city assets. My priorities for the city to maintain are Kokernot, the city pool, Centennial, Medina, and Baines.
- I would keep funding at the same level

Parks (3)

- **W2:** City parks are important in every community. They are special spaces where individuals and families can visit to have an enjoyable recreational or cultural experience in a safe, secure, and natural environment. In my opinion, Alpine parks need improvements. Medina park, for example, has no electrical outlets for holding night time special family/cultural events; it has no bathroom or toilet facilities; it is not even properly identified on the Alpine city map. Interesting enough, Medina Park, although small, is visited daily by family and young people. There is a need to upgrade Medina Park with services equal or compatible with other parks in our city. I would like to see more at Medina Park, having picnic tables already there and being used for a lot of picnics and birthday parties. The annual Fiesta Del Barrio festivities happen down the street. Would like to see electricity poles put in place.
- I think the Adopt-a-Spot program has worked well and encourage citizens to continue to adopt a park. Goals for the City Park is for our community to continue to adopt a park and for our young teenagers to volunteer and play a bigger part in our parks.
- **W4:** We need more employees for the parks department as well as other departments and the employees need more hours.

Ad Valorem Tax

- Q6: Please feel free to voice any comments on Tax rate, property valuations, etc.
 - **W3**: We can leave the tax rate alone. The appraisal district takes care of our income increase. We can blame them.
 - **W5**: Maintain the current rate
 - **W2**: As for Tax rate, property valuations, we may consider to evaluate where we are on this and see what other options are available if we need to leave as it is now or make changes. We need to see what is best for our city.
 - **W4**: I don't think we need any changes here we are doing just fine keep it the same.

HealthCare

- Q7: The City converted to TML's partially self-funded health care program for our employee benefits this past year. The new program has been employee friendly and easier to administrate for our Finance organization. Do you have any thoughts/concerns with this topic?
 - **W3**: Think that was a good move. Congrats.

Healthcare (2)

- **W5:** In my view, healthcare insurance is an important benefit and I see three key elements of any effective plan: 1) Cost effective and competitive in the marketplace, 2) Easy interface for the employees, including selecting the doctors they want and getting the care that they need, 3) The plan provides a mechanism that helps ensure the balance between the city and employees.
- All three seem to be met, and thus no other additional thoughts and no concerns.
- **W2:** Our employees are important asset to our city and need to be taken care of. Glad to see that we have converted to a better healthcare program.
- **W4:** No concerns here I'm the one that came up with this idea and if it's working great then leave it alone.

5-Year Capital Plan

- Q8: Department Heads will be updating their lists as part of the budget process. If you need a copy of last year's 5-year plan, please let Megan or myself know. Please provide any thoughts or comments on Capital spending related to both physical and infrastructure related assets.
 - **W3**: Would like a copy. Think what you are doing is just fine.
 - **W5**: Reviewed the FY 2016/17 plan. Would be nice to have a rundown on what was implemented in the plan during the current FY prior to looking at the new plan so that we have context for reviewing the go forward plan.

5-Year Capital Plan (2)

- **W2:** Would like to see updates from department heads (response came before distribution of updated plan). We need to set our 5-year capital plan within reason and financially reasonable for both physical and infrastructure related to our city. Overall our capital plan has worked thus far.
- **W4:** A. Airport-I thought we had a grant for this to help us with the Apron and Taxiway?
- B. Public Works, Code Enforcement, Animal Control & Utilities Dept.- the equipment that needs to be purchased or refurbished we need to make sure this is gets done.
- C. City Admin. -Security Camera's I thought we were getting a grant for this?
- D. Police-After look to see what grants will pay then the city needs to come up with the rest of the money to purchase what they need. On the Patrol Vehicles, I'm wondering what kind a is best suited for the police SUV or Truck?
- E. Gas-If we are going to transfer funds we must make sure that they have what they need first before we transfer any funds.

HOT Fund

- Q9: Do you have any thoughts on driving spend out of this fund further towards advertising versus specific event offset spending as we've done in the past? We have also absorbed the oversight and operation of the Visitor Center this fiscal year. What other goals would you like to see achieved from this fund?
 - **W3**: We give too much money to events. They should evolve into self sufficiency.

HOT Fund (2)

- **W5:** It would be very helpful for the Council to have a discussion during the first budget workshop about an integrated plan for HOT, economic development, the visitor center and how the airport fits in. The director of the business center could provide the glue that brings all four elements into alignment. Thus finding the right visitor center director is important.
- Relative to driving \$ toward advertising or specific events, my view is advertising and outreach has a higher priority over specific events. As we've seen with Viva Big Bend, and other events, there needs to be a leader who sees value in the event itself.
- **W2:** I would be interested in learning more about the overall operation plan (i.e., Purpose, staffing, exhibits, strategic focus, etc.) of the newly established City Visitor Center.
- All other funds to be used evenly across the board for anything that will help our city and better our community.
- **W4:** There are other ways of not spending so much money on advertising. We do need to advertise we just need to find other sources that are less expensive.

Economic Development

- Q10: What roles do you feel that the elected officials and community groups can take to further develop more economic stimulus in the community/region? What types of business/industry need to be attracted to help grow our Ad Valorum and Sales Tax Revenues?
 - **W3:** Greater selection of eating places. Jobs to keep Sul Ross graduates here.
 - **W5:** The City and Council need to maintain the momentum associated with the Vision Plan activities and I believe it should be on the Council discussion list every month including an update of the 6 areas of recommendation. The discussion could also include input from the SBDC and potentially the Chamber, if the Chamber has a focus on economic development. When appropriate, the Council should discuss how best to attract businesses. Opportunities exist in many market segments.

Economic Development (2)

- **W2:** Elected officials and community groups should take a leadership role in the development or encouragement of renewable energy source businesses for our community (i.e. solar. Wind generators, compressed natural gas products, etc.). Other brainstorming sessions would also be helpful to generate and develop additional business ventures.
- Alpine as a Tourism destination is a viable economic development alternative. More tourism development and facilities are needed in our area.
- **W4:** We need to have town hall meetings regarding one subject that the community feels they need to discuss for and us come up with options. This is very needed instead of cutting our community short on their questions. This should be done once a month. We do need more business or franchises and let's ask the community which ones we should attract to Alpine. We need town hall meetings I agree with this 100% so that we can all work together and the citizens can be more involved in their community. Send a survey with the gas bill and put one on the newspaper regarding what franchises our community wants.

Non-Department Subsidies

- Q11: We currently fund the library \$40K annually, Family Crisis Center \$8K and Children's Advocacy Center \$5K. Do you want to continue at those levels? Are there other entities you feel the City should consider? We budgeted \$10K for the Council's discretion throughout the year. Would you support continuing that initiative?
 - **W3:** However, the library should get a little more. Lots of citizens use it. Not everyone looks for college level books.
 - **W5:** I support funding the current areas, however, believe Council should have a discussion with Library prior to funding. There are five libraries in Alpine (3 within AISD, 1 SRSU, Alpine library). They seem to operate independently. Prior to funding the Alpine Library, Council needs to understand what and how the Alpine Library is working to help ensure top quality library services in Alpine that includes engagement and interaction with the other libraries.

Non-Department Subsidies (2)

- **W2:** All of these subsidies are important. I would like to see the library get increased to \$45K, Family Crisis \$5K and Children's Advocacy Center \$8K.
- Other questions to ask are: These subsidies are OK but how are the funds being used (i.e. salaries, equipment, maintenance, etc.)? Are these funds used to comply with goals/objectives that serve the Alpine community and children? Can other groups apply for non-department subsidy funding? What are the requirements? Who can other groups contact for applications?
- **W4:** I think we need to change the amounts that we distribute to the Library, Family Crisis Center and Children's Advocacy Center and include the Sunshine House, and the West Texas Food Bank to this list.
- As for the \$10k allocated to the City Council & Mayor that needs to stay and we need to update the salary of the City Council & Mayor. City Elected Officials work hard and it is a fulltime job. There are many cities who pay their elected officials a good salary this is something that most needs to be addressed.

Police

- Q12: We receive feedback at the City regarding the volume of officers we have on patrol – both in the streets and in the downtown area. Would you support increasing the budget for additional officers? If this required reducing spending in other departments, which one(s) would you propose?
 - **W3**: Can't have too much law enforcement. The safe streets and city is a blessing. If money is needed, reduce parks expenses.
 - **W5**: Having a solid Police department AND an effective court system is key to ensuring compliance to laws and ordinances. The third leg of the stool is individual responsibility by the residents or visitors. The court system is effectively working, with one exception, the ability to compel those who have violated the law to come to court. As such, the only change that I recommend is moving to a court of record.

Police (2)

- **W2:** The police play a necessary role in our community. We need well trained and physically fit law enforcement officers who can respond to law enforcement situations when needed. A sound budget for proper training in community relations, de-escalation techniques, physical fitness, and proper use of fire arms should be considered. We are lucky that we have not reached the level of racial violence and tension found in other major cities. We should try and keep it that way via an effective community sensitive police force. I am in favor of increasing budget for additional officers to patrol our streets. I mean PATROL, not to increase officers and see them not working. Safety for our community is important to me. I encourage the community to get involved in helping our police dept. As for reducing other departments that would be something that I can't suggest until I have some dialogue with our finance dept and look at numbers.
- **W4:** We need more officers and we need to give them plenty of hours. I would have to say that the administration department would be the one to be reduced.

Other Considerations

- Q13: Please use this space to identify additional thoughts/concerns/suggestions not identified previously.
 - **W3:** Keep Erik Zimmer!!
 - **W5:** The City of Alpine can and my view should, play a key leadership role in the following key strategic areas that affect the city relative to meeting the needs of the residents as having Alpine desirable place for residents and businesses:
 - 1. Improved Downtown Environment
 - 2. Strong connection between Murphy Street Area and Downtown
 - 3. Affordable Housing
 - 4. More integrate Healthcare
 - 5. Skilled Nursing Care
 - 6. Stronger connection between businesses, community and education
 - My view is that City Council should include on it's agenda on a quarterly basis, a discussion about one of the key topics above, and in preparation for that discussion, one of the council members should draft some key points and information.

Other Considerations (2)

- **W2:** I would recommend educational workshops, conferences, symposia for Alpine residences about how our city government “who is who” in city government and how city government functions.
- Another consideration is the loss of our city manager. He inherited a HUGE mess that had been in place and overlooked for many years. He is doing a tremendous job bringing this city to where it is now financially. NO one knows the endless hours and/or work he puts in taking him away from his own family. We as citizens have drove him away. I suggest that we look closely at our options for a replacement, I do not want to see all this hard work he has put in for someone to come in and not give us the 120% we have now and fall back to the same position we were before. We must keep moving forward.

Other Considerations (3)

- **W4:** A. We need to add two more City Council meetings because it seems to me that we end up with too many agenda items, or the agenda items end up being put off for another day or a workshop which is basically the same thing as a City Council meeting. We also need to fix the City Council Agenda to add Citizens Comments after every item. We must remember who Elected us to Office, so if the public wants to express their opinions they should have that right.
- B. Update City Charter Ordinances, update Grievance committee, update City Council Salary and Mayors and update by adding an HR Department.
- C. Have all city departments' heads report to city council monthly or quarterly as well as organizations that the city helps with monies.
- D. The City Finance Director and City Assistant need to be at every meeting and to make a report as to what is going on or if the Council & Mayor have questions they are available to answer any questions.
- E. We need to look at having an HR director with an HR assistant. It's not appropriate for the Finance Director to be the HR Director & Assistant City Manager. Having too many job titles causes too many conflicts and lack of being able to perform one job title to its full potential.
- F. The bank statements need to be included on the city web site there is no reason to not include them and if there is it doesn't matter because it's public record. Our community is asking for this so why not put them on the website. The Mayor needs to be part of the check signing as it was done in the past he is the head of the City.
- G. Our local businesses need proper training on hospitality when greeting people.
- H. The City Council and Mayor need to meet quarterly with the County Commissioners, So, we can all get what questions we have out in the open and discuss them and come up with solutions. We need structure and organization and not have unanswered questions. Situations of who said what and what happened or who is liable for paying what need to be addressed in these meetings. We need to come up with some dates and see what dates they have available and agree to meet.