

## Budget

Budget time is here again! Tomorrow, October 16, I will present a proposed 2014 budget to City Council during our committee meeting. As a refresher, our budget preparation cycle begins in August with all the Department Directors working on preparing their budget needs for the next year. In September, I begin a series of 23 meetings with all the Directors to sift through the requests and decide the level of budget needed to fulfill our mission as a City. In October, our Finance Director Alicia Huschka and I work diligently to bring the projected revenues and projected expenses into balance. It is a Washington State law that municipalities will adopt a balanced budget each year.

Our City budget is approximately \$47 million and is comprised of three major components: government operations of \$22.5 million, city utilities of \$15.1 million, and capital project funds of \$6.0 million.

One of the major goals of this year's budget preparation is to bring our City workforce off of furlough. During the recession, our staff has been working a reduced work schedule of 38.5 hours per week, with a matching reduced wage. As the economy has recovered, the City was able to bring Departments such as Streets off of furlough. In 2013, the Departments under furlough included City Attorney, Information Services, Human Resources, Finance, Community and Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Public Works administration, Police administration, and Fire administration. The impact to our budget to remove the furlough is \$200,000.

A second goal was to increase services in Departments where demand has increased. For instance, our Police Department has cut back on special duty traffic officers in recent years. The proposed 2014 budget reinstates full funding to our Police Department and attempts to add a police officer to the full time equivalent (FTE) count.

Labor represents 75% of our operating costs. The City of Mount Vernon employs 192 full time employees who provide services to 32,000 residents and thousands of guests each day.

### Budget facts:

- Information Services Department oversees our fiber optic infrastructure, which produced \$74,600 in revenue to the City in 2013.
- The City budget includes \$239,000 to Skagit 911 for dispatching services
- Street lights cost the City \$350,000 per year to operate
- The City budgets \$240,500 to provide public defense services to those charged with misdemeanor crimes by the Mount Vernon Police Department

Budget meetings are open to the public! Consider joining us on Wednesday evenings, beginning at 6pm for the City Council committee meeting, followed by City Council at 7pm at 1805 Continental Place (Police/Court campus).

## Roadwork

Thank you all for your patience during the recent road work at the railroad crossings. Burlington Northern Railroad is working aggressively to improve rail crossings in our region.

### Mayor Jill Boudreau

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Repairs at Kincaid Street Railroad Crossing

## Mayor's Coffee Hours

**Saturday, October 26**  
10:00—11:00 a.m.  
Ristretto Coffee Lounge  
416 S. 1st Street

**Friday, November 1**  
11:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.  
Xtra Special Cakes  
919 W. Division

**Friday November 8**  
10:00—11:00 a.m.  
Bargains Galore  
224 Chenowith Street

## Winter Driving - Reminder

Our Street Department is constantly monitoring the weather conditions, and responding as promptly as possible to icy roadways. Take time to check wipers on your vehicle, tire tread, and heating system.

Drivers need to be prepared to help us keep the traffic flowing!

- Reduce your speed and increase your following distance.
- Use caution on bridges, overpasses, ramps, curves, and hills that tend to get icy first.
- Stay informed about weather and road conditions to help make good decisions.
- Plan ahead and allowing extra time to reach destinations.
- TALK WITH YOUR TEENAGE DRIVERS – and discuss safe winter driving habits.
- Prepare and carry an emergency car kit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WINTER DRIVING – See the Washington State Department of Transportation website at [www.wsdot.wa.gov](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov)



## IPZ Update

We did it! The City of Mount Vernon and partners were successful in the Innovative Partnership Zone (IPZ) designation through the Washington State Department of Commerce! The Skagit County IPZ application partners include: the City of Mount Vernon, Port of Skagit, Economic Development Association of Skagit County, Northwest Agriculture Business Center, Washington State University, Skagit Valley College, Skagit County, Sakuma Farms, Knutsen Farms, and Skagit Valley Malting. Our first meeting is October 16, to begin working together to bring economic growth to Skagit County in the area of innovative agriculture! A big part of the direct benefit to the City is tourism, linking agriculture to a 'farm to table' dining experience. I had the pleasure of attending a special dinner for travel writers from British Columbia, Seattle, and Portland last month. The writers confirmed that one of the most desirable tourism experiences includes farm fresh dining experiences!

## LEAN Training

In September and October, the City of Mount Vernon arranged for the State Auditor's Office, Local Government Performance Center to come to Mount Vernon to deliver training in process improvement. All City Department Directors and Managers attended to



learn about improvement methodologies proved to work in the private sector. Whatever the name – Lean, Six Sigma, Kaizen – the key tenants of any process improvement technique are to reduce variation, remove waste, and manage constraints of any process. The successful end result is quick action that improves services and reduces cost.

For example, most Lean projects begin with mapping out a process on a board, and identifying where the process gets "stuck" causing delay, re-work, or problems. Then teams work through ways to increase capacity and quality by removing the barriers to the process, and standardizing work.

My expectation for our employees is that we embrace process that provides the most efficient services to our residents. Just because we have done things the same way for 20 years, doesn't mean it is the most effective. The challenge is to embrace the idea of 'constant improvement' knowing we can always to better!

In addition to an introduction to Lean Management, the attendees learned about performance measures and the vital importance to using measures well. We must be accountable to our public, and be able to show data illustrating our good work.

Employees from Skagit County and Sedro-Woolley joined us in the classes. The Lean training was provided at NO COST to Mount Vernon!