

Citizen's Advisory Group

Municipal Cost Structure Committee

7-21-08 Update

The committee has begun its work with the premise and conviction that the city staff has been continuously and diligently engaged over a number of years in the search for cost efficiencies. The current and projected gap between projected resources and the anticipated cost of maintaining existing levels of staffing and public services requires, however, that all past efforts be reviewed, re-examined and renewed, and that ideas which may have been set aside in any earlier examination be studied and considered anew.

The committee seeks first to establish an inventory of possible paths to cost efficiencies. Accordingly, we have commenced a series of interviews of key officials of the City – to include the Executive Office, the Board of Aldermen, and the principal city departments.

Interviews have been conducted with the City Comptroller, the leadership of the City's Public Works Department, and the Information Technology Department. Additionally, the subcommittee will be reaching out over the next two months to the following:

Executive Office of the Mayor

City departments: Police and Fire Chiefs
Human Resources Director
Public Buildings Commissioner
City Librarian
Parks and Recreation Commissioner

City official committees, including the Energy Conservation

City employees: key Union leadership
All employees through an e-mail response form

Former elected officials

Interested private citizens and community organizations

The committee has scheduled the evening of Wednesday, July 23rd, from 6:30 P.M., to be available to any and all individuals and groups seeking to convey and discuss pertinent ideas regarding the management of municipal costs.

This information and idea-gathering phase will be pursued to seek answers to the following questions:

1. What opportunities exist to reduce short and long-term General Fund municipal costs without reductions in service? Can intended and unintended consequences and both short and long-term effects be associated with particular cost management proposals?
2. What municipal costs should be supported by user fees rather than by the general taxpayer? (This examination will be carried out in conjunction with the Revenue Structure Committee).
3. What opportunities exist to promote greater utilization of technology in the delivery of services? At what additional initial cost and payback period?

4. What management or organizational structure changes might enhance cost reduction and efficiency? In what areas would centralization be more effective? In what areas would decentralization be more effective? (This examination will be carried out in conjunction with the Decision and Control Structure Committee).
5. What are the barriers to cost reduction within the municipal cost structure (internal, state, federal) and how might they be lowered or eliminated?
6. How can the connection between municipal service levels and spending levels be clarified and made more readily understandable? If service level reductions are necessary to meet projected available revenues, what recommendations can be offered as to how service level cutback decisions are prioritized?