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October 5, 2016

City of Renton Contacts:

[Jan Hawn](#), Finance Administrator, 425-430-xxxx

[Preeti Shridhar](#), Deputy Public Affairs Administrator, 425-430-6569

Mayor Law presents balanced 2017-2018 budget to City Council

Budget asks for more staff in public safety and economic development

"We currently have over \$2.2 billion dollars of private investment being made in Renton."

Renton, WA –Mayor Denis Law presented a balanced city budget for 2017 and 2018 to the Renton City Council at the Council Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, October 3, 2016.

"The financial health of our city remains strong," said Mayor Denis Law. "We continue to improve the level of service we're providing to our residents and business community, and we are experiencing significant investment in our city as the region continues to rebound from the great recession."

The budget for 2017 and 2018 has expenditures of \$476 million, with \$196 million of the amount coming from the General Government fund earmarked for police, parks, street repair, and other city services. He also stated that this was a decrease of 5.3% in overall revenue and a 2.0% decrease in expenditures compared with the 2015-16 adopted budget, due to the formation of the Renton Fire Authority, which voters approved in April.

Law acknowledged the work and contribution of the Community Budget Advisory Group, a group of local residents, business owners and community leaders who met over several weeks to provide valuable input and helped shape the city's budget.

Mayor Law reaffirmed his key priority areas of focus established to address the goals and objectives of the Council's Business Plan, and stated that the 2017-18 budget continues to provide resources for each of these areas:

- Economic Development
- Inclusion/Diversity Initiative
- Police Effectiveness/Community Relations
- Workforce Culture, Competence, Customer Service
- Quality of Life Initiative

The budget does not contain cuts to any citywide programs and includes the largest increase in public safety.

“The focus of the proposed budget is to stabilize and maintain core services at a level that is expected by our residents and businesses, and will position Renton for the future,” said the Mayor.

Highlights of the Mayor’s proposal include the following:

- Increased staffing in the police department by seven positions; funding for increased costs related to Valley Communications and SCORE; application for a COPS grant from the Department of Justice, which would offset the cost of the five commissioned positions.
- Addition of a part-time position for Emergency Management; grant funds will be used to partially pay for the position.
- In the Community and Economic Department, addition of an administrative secretary, a plan reviewer and a construction inspector to address the significant growth in development projects.
- Funding for the dedicated services of an expert consultant for Renton’s highly successful Inclusion program.
- Assistance for struggling families by adding \$24,000 per year to the funding requests from the Human Services Advisory Committee; the money will fund several proven programs that the Committee was unable to include because of the budget constraint.
- Addition of \$254,000 per year to cover the actual costs from bank fees and merchant services from city customers using bank cards to pay for city fees and services; costs will be recouped through minor fee adjustments.
- Contingency plans to cover some critical maintenance and capital projects.
- Implementation of a new recreation class registration management system, as the current system will be discontinued after next year.
- \$50,000 in 2017 for the arts, as well as a commitment for using money from city-capital improvement projects to fund art projects.
- Increased staffing and resources for maintenance and improvement for several parks and facilities.

Law also highlighted some of the city’s accomplishments and upcoming investments.

“We have experienced a lot of success in our economic development efforts,” said Law. “We currently have over \$2.2 billion of private investment being made in Renton. This includes three new hotels, several office complexes, downtown development and major expansions such as IKEA and Valley Medical Center.”

He also mentioned the following accomplishments:

Economic Development

- Hundreds of new jobs in Renton
- Significant growth in healthcare sector with new Group Health campus, Providence Health Systems and expansion of Valley Medical Center

- New investments in downtown Renton
- Development and growth in Sunset Improvement Area

Public Works

- Conversion of 18,000 water meters to advanced metering system with leak detection
- Completion of several transportation projects including Logan Avenue North, Duvall Avenue Overlay, SW 27th Street and Strander Boulevard Extension
- Several projects at the airport
- Cedar River Dredging and removal of 120,000 cubic yards of gravel and sediments

Inclusion

- Accomplishments of the Mayors Inclusion Task Force
- Ongoing training for all city staff on racism and implicit bias
- Community Police programs in partnership with the Renton African American Pastors
- Highly successful first Renton Multicultural Festival

Customer Service

- High levels of innovation and customer service in every city department

“Like every large city, we have plenty of challenges before us but we also have great opportunities,” said Law. “I’m pleased to report that our city remains financially healthy .We turned 115 years old this past July, and the city has never been better than it is today.”

The Mayor’s budget speech and presentation can be found at rentonwa.gov.

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