

HAMPTON VA

NEWS RELEASE

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Budget input Q&A

From March 6, 2017, operating budget forum, Bethel High School

Q: What are you doing to keep the younger generation here, to homestead, and to have jobs? I'm retired from the military, and it's hard to get a job here.

A: In terms of jobs, we are doing two things: Bringing more employers here, and making sure our young people are prepared for careers.

We're also helping to link up the workforce with the employers. We know we have businesses with job openings that they can't fill. And we hear from young people that they can't find jobs. We need to link people to the jobs that we do have.

In the development world, my economic development team and the council are always focused on bringing jobs here, especially high-wage jobs. We have a workforce development center that does retraining for people - maybe they have been laid off or need a new skill set. Also, there are jobs for teenagers, including the service sector. We need jobs at all levels for different needs.

We also want to show employers – and potential employers who can locate here – that we have a ready workforce of people who are trained.

On the education front, our high schools are being transformed using a design called a career academy. Here in Bethel, for example, we have the health sciences; Hampton has aerospace and information technology; Kecoughtan has architecture and arts; Phoebus has information design and engineering. For example, students at Kecoughtan are using AutoCAD software and getting certified, which can lead to a job.

Next year, we are starting a wall-to-wall academy program. All 9th graders will be in a career academy. Each school will have a STEM-based program, applied arts, technology, etc. The City of Hampton is participating in the public safety academy – for students who want to become police, military, judge or lawyer. These students will be working with our police department or EMS staff. And it's not just the special classes; their core classes will also be through a lens of the academy. These students might read "To Kill a Mockingbird" or "The Firm" rather than, say, the "The Scarlet Letter," in English. Because they relate to the student's passion, the books have increased relevance and the student cares more.

The career academies are picked based on jobs in the area, as well as growing industries and places where baby boomers are retiring, creating demand.

We know some students will go away – to college or to work in another city. We want them to be able to come back. What people are thinking about when they are locating is: "Can I earn a good wage and can I raise my children in an environment that I care about?"

If you are former military, we can try to link you with an employer. Or you can go to the Workforce Development Center on retraining a new skill set. Or visit the Virginia Employment Commission.

Q: Have you ever thought about going to solar or wind power for the city?

A: We do have a practice that all new buildings are at least silver LEED certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.) We aspire to be gold or platinum, but we can't always afford it. We have looked at solar. I can't say when we will incorporate it, but I know that it is getting more cost-effective. If it can be as cheap as a traditional roof, we will do it – and when we look at cost we look at energy usage over time as well.

Q: I feel that for people to Choose Hampton, we need to safeguard our natural resources -- our waterways, our parks -- those things that make living here so special.

A: A lot of what we do to open our waterways is in the recreation arena, and we talked about that at the earlier capital budget meeting. We share your passion for our waterways and other natural environments. Council has been committed to activating our waterways. It's been a goal of ours to try to get more boat rental opportunities, and you are going to see some exciting things in terms of that in the near future. We had several questions about upgrading some of our parks in the capital budget polling. You can take that online at: <http://www.hampton.gov/survey> beginning March 7.

Q: With your presentation on the billing of residents for ambulance rides, is there any data on the fact of how our revenue relates to other localities. Do we see more transports because we don't bill, compared to other cities that bill?

A: That is also why we are researching an annual cap or a subscription service. What is the right balance, so that people don't fail to call for help when they really need it? We will do some additional research and try to get that information.

The tension here is if we lose that revenue from insurance policies, how do we make it up?

From Feb. 27 capital projects forum, Hampton High School

Q: When you talk about a new facility for the 911 operators (moving them off the 9th floor of City Hall to a building rated for a Category 3 hurricane), how many people is that?

A: At any one time, there is a minimum of 10-12 people. But total, it's a lot of employees because they fill shifts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Also, in emergency conditions, we bring in extra people because the call volume goes up. The cost also includes some upgraded systems that we plan to put in place when the move happens. We are timing the relocation to be in sync with the upgraded systems so we don't have to do it twice; we can just put the upgrades in the new facility and then move.

Q: You are planning to have the building rated for a Category 3. Why not rate the building for a Category 5 hurricane?

A: It's actually much more expensive. We weighed the extra expense versus the likelihood of the event. Right now, with our geography, we have a lot of protection from the coastline to the south. Storms generally weaken before they get to us.

Q: You also mention moving the Public Works buildings because of flooding. Does that mean there isn't another use for that land on Armistead Avenue?

A: There are many reasons to move the facility. Frankly, the Bright's Creek and Public Works properties look a bit blighted because of their age and industrial usage. You can see that area from the interstate, as a view of our city. We would like to clean up the area and relocate the public works facility to another site we own in Hampton. A full redevelopment of the current public works site can be done in a way that mitigates flooding on the property and brings additional private

development downtown. Coupled with the rest of the Bright's Creek area, freeing up this property would provide a cohesive area for development from the interstate to downtown, and begin to tie downtown to the Coliseum Central area.

Q: I was kind of surprised that the sports tourism facility didn't rank out higher. It's really the only new building that will bring in new people, whereas the others are mostly redevelopment. This weekend, my family was eating out after church and Moe's was absolutely packed from a volleyball tournament at Boo Williams. It brings in so many people from other areas, and they bring parents, who all go out to eat and spend money. This is the one that would bring in money -- directly and indirectly -- to the city, whereas the others have a lot of time down the road before they make a difference.

A: People have different feelings about it. All of those factors are things the Council will look at when they make a final decision. It's not everybody's top priority, and some people in the community have not been in favor of it. Full disclosure: I'm the city manager and I am also a parent of a swimmer, and I know that people spend a lot of money on their children's sports and events. That is part of the thought process. We have seen how well basketball and volleyball have done here, and we wanted another facility to add to our Sports Tourism.

From Feb. 21 general forum, Kecoughtan High School

Q: This is a very interesting presentation about the budget process. Will it be available somewhere?

A: It is posted online, though the document doesn't have all the comments from the live presentation. The direct link is: <http://hampton.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15124>. All of the information from the various input sessions will be collected and posted at <http://hampton.gov/ivalue>, which you can also get to from <http://hampton.gov/budget>.

Q: Explain the retail-time crime center.

A: This is a new center we are adding to help the police by providing additional eyes in real time. We have a variety of types of cameras already on public streets, such as the VDOT traffic information systems. We can tap into those feeds to see what is going on. For example, if there is a crime, we usually dispatch officers to the scene. However, if we can see where the suspect's vehicle is headed using these cameras, we can send an officer out to where the suspect is headed, rather than where he came from.

All of our cameras are located in public spaces. We are not intending to violate anyone's privacy. We just want to tie together what we already have and use it more effectively.

Q: Is tourism a consideration for helping to increase revenues?

A: That is a part of our strategy. Tourists spend more money than they use in city services while they visit. As a city, we are working to increase that by improving the quality of our hotels, boosting youth sports tourism and promoting/supporting our attractions. Youth sports has been shown to be more recession-proof than some other kinds of tourism, because parents will make other sacrifices for their children.

Q: Virginia was one of the states that added an online sales tax. How does it work now?

A: If the retailer has an operation in the state of Virginia, there is tax money that comes back. For example, if you order from Amazon or someplace with a physical presence in Virginia, the tax money comes back to the state. The state is charged with distributing the local share back to the

locality. The portion of the sales tax for schools is distributed based on a state formula and the portion distributed to the City is based on the 1% paid by our residents. If the retailer doesn't have a location in the state, such as Zappo's, there is no tax collected or coming back to the state. A change in that process would have to be made on the federal level.

Q: Is there a federal infusion of dollars to help the city with costs, especially with the schools?

A: The federal government doesn't send much money to Hampton. We get some community development block grant money, and schools get some for impact aid (to offset property tax revenues for students who live on federal bases) and special education. There's not a lot of discretionary money at all.

Q: Could the federal government be encouraged to put more money here, especially to help veterans and retirees, and the impact of property tax lost from the state amendment to help disabled veterans?

A: We are trying to get additional facilities here. We put in a bid for a state retirement home for veterans. That's really more to help our veterans than for the economy, since it wouldn't be taxable property. We are also trying to get more federal spending here, for example, NASA Langley, Langley Air Force Base and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, have room to grow and are centrally located. We also support additional funding for the Fort Monroe National Monument. When there is another round of BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure), we believe that Langley is poised to grow and absorb more operations.

We have sought more money for education, especially in special education. The federal government pays very little of the costs of the rules and regulations they imposed.

Basically, though, the federal government is running at a deficit each year. They are looking to cut, not add, expenses. That doesn't mean we give up; we continue to work with the people who represent us in Washington.

Q: Is there an impact on Hampton from the change in federal immigration policy?

A: The immigration policy changes at the federal level should not have a direct impact on Hampton. In the past, there has been an impact on the regional jail that Hampton participates in with other localities in the region because they would house inmates from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency.

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