

Reston Heights Neighborhood Association Alder Report

February 17, 2024

2025 Budget

Information and discussions with the Council about the City's Operating Budget have commenced. This is due to projections that the City's 2025 structural (operating) deficit will be approximately \$27 million.

In response, the City's Finance Department has been sharing information about the budget conditions and providing some explanations for how we arrived here, and what limits we have to present and approve a balanced budget.

One of the most apparent issues is the fact that property taxes, local charges, and revenue from state aid to the City has grown slower than the cost of providing City services over the last few years. Access to COVID-19 related assistance funds provided the City with much needed relief but unfortunately, that money was temporary and is mostly depleted/won't be accessible past 2024.

Understanding the budget, its complexities and connections to staff and residents has been one of the steepest learning curves I've experienced during my time in office. Therefore, I'm pretty thrilled the City's Finance Director and staff has been actively engaging the Council and informing the public about the anticipated budget challenges ahead. I look forward to sharing information with the District about my personal budget priorities, those that come from discussions amongst the Council, as well as opportunities to share your input on budget priorities and strategies for approving a balanced budget.

Review the 4-Part Budget Info Series:

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/finance/budget/2025-budget/2025-budget-outlook>

Email Finance Department with follow up questions:

citybudget@cityofmadison.com

Email Alder Currie with input/feedback: district16@cityofmadison.com

Meadowlands Apartments Update

I continue to participate in a weekly meeting with the Office of the City Attorney, Madison Police Department, KCG and Public Health Madison Dane County due to the apartment community currently being under a Chronic Nuisance Abatement order. While the abatement order has not been lifted, we've continued to see significant declines in both calls for service and calls that result in an enforcement action (ie: arrest or citation). In fact, during this week's meeting, MPD shared there had been zero (0) calls for service 7 days and counting! The MAC Center, which serves as the community's

on-site supportive services hub, offers recurring programming and connections to resources for Meadowlands Apartment residents. Due to a collaborative approach of surveying residents and receiving feedback from multiple involved entities, the MAC Center is focused on providing programming and services within six (6) priority and critical need categories of:

- **Youth Engagement**
 - Student-aged children and young persons under the age of 24 require engaging activities and structured programs to focus their attention and foster personal development
- **Safety and Violence Prevention**
 - Residents need access to safety training and violence prevention/intervention resources to ensure a secure living environment and to improve conflict-management skills for youth and adults
- **Community/Social Cohesion**
 - Residents need opportunities for building healthy connections and finding common interests to enhance community cohesion
- **Supportive Assistance**
 - Residents require accessible resources for 24/7 assistance, including support for intra and interpersonal development
- **Childcare/Parental Support**
 - Families need assistance in finding structured childcare services to meet their needs
- **Education/Employment/Career Advancement**
 - Residents require access to information about stable, legal employment opportunities and career advancement resources to encourage professional growth and empower residents with positive choices. Residents would benefit from educational workshops and opportunities to enhance financial literacy and self-sufficiency

Winter Storm Report

Recently, staff in Streets and Emergency Operations divisions, MPD, MFD, Traffic Engineering, Engineering, Parks, Community Development Division, and Human Resources worked collaboratively to produce an after action report regarding the City's response to the winter storm events of January 8-20, compiled by city staff. During the week of January 8th, the Madison area received 15-24 inches of snow in three (3) separate rounds.

Snowstorm response, by the numbers is as follows:

- Streets Division's total cumulative hours spent on snow related duties, from first deployment on January 11 to final deployment on January 23: 10,082

- Total approximate tons of sand spread: 3,665
- Total approximate tons of salt spread: 1,952
- Total cumulative hours worked by heavy equipment contractors during general plow on January 13: 628
- Total cost for snowstorm response of January 12-13 alone: \$435,626.16

Summary of findings and recommendations:

- Emergency routes were clear throughout the storm and there were no reported impacts to the ability to deliver ambulance, police, or fire service.
- The sustained cold temperatures meant the City was unable to clear streets down to bare pavement, which made conditions slippery at times and consequently impacted commutes. Prioritizing clearing streets delayed clearing some sidewalks and bike paths. The only ways to avoid such impacts in the future would be to significantly increase the City's capacity to salt the roads by buying new equipment, cross-training and reallocating staff from other Departments to assist in plowing or exploring the use of different chemical agents besides rock salt.
- During the response, issues with providing warming centers when overnight (homeless) shelters are closed, was identified. Plans must be created to improve resiliency and continuity of operation of these functions as well as alternate plans for any emergencies that prevent these locations from opening.
- Traffic Engineering was able to effectively adjust traffic signal timing citywide to improve traffic safety and flow during the snow events, but was at capacity during the January 10 cleanup, which caused delays in clearing traffic lights. Other agencies, including the City of Madison, also need to get approval from the State to assist them with maintenance of traffic lights on their right-of-way on Hwy 51. Pre-treatment of traffic lights should be considered in future snowstorms with similar conditions and standing MOUs should be considered with Dane County Highways and WisDOT to allow mutual aid in addressing safety concerns.
- In future events with a predicted magnitude similar to that of January 12 (and the impacts of the following week), increased forewarning to the community is vital. While we had adequate internal communication and some external communication, there was an identified deficiency in coordination of public information and dissemination strategies. There are ongoing efforts to solidify a Joint Information Center plan – a partial activation in a similar storm would be warranted. Similarly, there are efforts to improve coordination with community partners who may be able to help amplify our message and ensure it's reaching at least the 3 most spoken non-English Languages (currently Spanish, Hmong, and Mandarin. Coordinated messaging would also help to emphasize the key messages and to set community expectations appropriately, hopefully lessening public frustration as the storm and cleanup went on.

Personally, I received a lot of complaints about particular areas of the District. I know everyone's experience will vary and despite all the work spent trying to get communications out about road conditions and expectations, some will still not be satisfied with the answers and responses provided during the storm, and afterward. I feel like I did learn new information as is typical when operating within large systems. For instance, a resident in the Elvehjem neighborhood contacted me about sidewalk terraces that were damaged during plowing efforts and were identified as needing to be rebuilt and/or replanted. The resident was concerned that the cost to rebuild/replant would fall on property owners. However, I received the following information from City staff: **"Damage like that is pretty typical when we have to plow when the ground isn't frozen. Assuming that stretch of sidewalk is plowed by the City, all a resident needs to do is fill out a [Report a Problem](#) for sod damage and Streets batches those up and sends out staff in the spring to make repairs and seed. If it's from plowing the road, it's the same process."**