

Woodbury City Update

November/December 2006 • Volume 8, No. 10

Public hearing on 2007 city budget scheduled Nov. 29

Most of Woodbury's residential property owners can expect a slight increase in their city taxes next year – mainly as a result of the open space referendum approved by voters in November 2005. That's the bottom line coming out of the proposed 2007 city budget,

which will be reviewed at a public hearing on Wednesday, Nov. 29, at 7:30 p.m.

"Though voters approved a \$9 million bond issue last fall, the city did not issue the debt until 2006," said City Administrator Clint Gridley. "As a result, 2007 is the first year that the referendum will impact property taxes."

According to Finance Director Tim Johnson, city taxes on a single-family home valued at \$288,500 – the average value for taxes payable in 2006 – will go up approximately \$33 next year. The open space referendum accounts for \$29 of the increase; without the referendum, the tax hike would be just \$4.

Total city taxes on the average value home will rise from \$863 in 2006 to an estimated \$896 for 2007, a 3.8 percent increase. The calculations assume that the home experiences a 5.4 percent increase in market value.

"The proposed 2007 total tax levy is \$23.8 million, an increase of \$2.3 million over the current levy," Gridley said. "Of that total, \$1.92 million is attributable to programs or activities involving prior citizen or City Council

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2007 city budget highlights

The theme for the city's 2007 proposed budget is "Taking Care of Business." In choosing this theme, City Administrator Clint Gridley explained that the city is not proposing significant new or special programs for 2007, but rather it is seeking to fulfill a number of new initiatives begun over the last two to three years and retain the city's firm fiscal foundation.

This theme also reflects a renewed focus on bringing business to Woodbury through the recent strategic planning exercises of the Economic Development Commission and the Economic Development Authority, and the comprehensive plan update for commercial and industrial zoned areas.

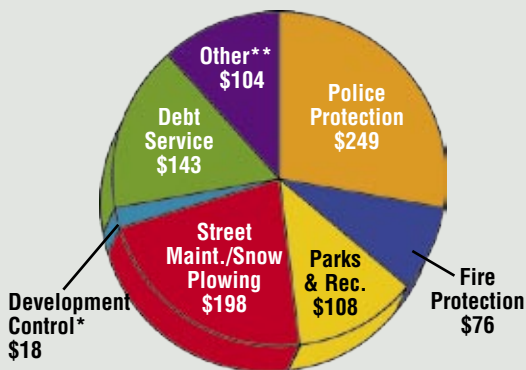
"This also illustrates the excellent year we have experienced for business development in Woodbury, which will add approximately 650,000 square feet of office and commercial space," Gridley noted.

The General Fund budget, which is the city's primary operating fund, is proposed to be \$23.76 million for 2007, an increase of 8.9 percent above the current year. The larger sources of expenditure increases include: wages and benefits adjustments for staff positions; insurance premium increases; state-mandated increases to the city's portion of employee pension contributions; costs

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Where do your taxes go?

Average total city tax = \$896



Figures represent the projected annual cost for a home with a taxable market value of \$288,500 for 2006 (assumes a 5.4 percent increase in value for taxes payable in 2007).

*Development control includes planning, economic development, building inspections, engineering.

**Other includes administration, recycling, elections, building maintenance, finance, information technology, assessing, etc.

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Council Perspective by Mayor Bill Hargis

Cheryl Hurst, Mike Madigan deserve our thanks

In December, Cheryl Hurst and Mike Madigan are concluding their service on the Woodbury City Council. In January, two new Council members will be sworn into office. As this transition occurs, it seems appropriate to thank the outgoing Council members for their dedication and hard work on behalf of the city.

Leaving the Council

Neither Cheryl nor Mike sought re-election. For Cheryl, the decision to leave the Council was motivated by her desire to finish course work toward a bachelor's degree in English from UW-River Falls.



Cheryl Hurst

In her 12 years on the City Council, Cheryl applied her passion for aesthetics to many issues. She was a catalyst for helping establish the city's architectural standards and was primarily responsible for the recent

improvements made to the median along Valley Creek Road between Radio Drive and I-494.

Cheryl always had her finger on the pulse of the community. Her outstanding people skills made her very approachable for residents wishing to share concerns, and she was a great help in articulating residents' positions on issues. But her interactions with the public extended far beyond eligible voters. She also voluntarily gave presentations about local government services to more than 1,000 local elementary school students over the last decade.

Cheryl recognized the challenge in fostering a small-town, community feel in a growing city and became a strong proponent of constructing Central Park as a community gathering place. As the Council liaison to the Fire/Emergency Medical Services Staffing Task Force, she worked hard to implement changes to improve response times to fires and other hazardous events in Woodbury.

We are also grateful for the eight years that Mike Madigan devoted to the City Council. Mike was elected in 1998 and was re-elected to a second term in 2002. He gained his

first experience with city government on the Planning Commission, serving as chairperson in 1998. He decided not to run for re-election because of his increasing responsibilities at work. Mike started his own law practice, Madigan, Dahl & Harlan, three years ago.

Mike brought his exceptional mediation, communication and analytical skills to many issues on the Council. He was instrumental in helping create and implement a residential growth management policy that is working very effectively.



MIKE MADIGAN

Mike also weighed the environmental impacts of each decision made by the Council, using a practical approach to reach the desired outcome. He helped pass a tree ordinance that creates incentives for retaining and planting trees in the city. In addition, he was a key player behind making improvements to the city's storm water system. The improvements, which are currently under way, affect both water quality and quantity.

Long-term vision

Together, Cheryl and Mike were guided by the long-term interests of our great city and did not make decisions to fulfill a personal agenda.

During their time on the City Council, voters approved two open space referendums to protect natural resources. Approximately 312 acres were acquired with the 1998 referendum money and the city has identified an additional 24 priority open space sites for funds approved from the 2005 referendum.

The city also completed several major capital improvement projects during Cheryl's and Mike's tenure including: Central Park, the Tamarack Road interchange, and expansion of our Public Safety facilities.

We will miss the many special qualities that both Cheryl and Mike brought to the City Council during their years of service. I hope community members will join me in expressing our thanks and best wishes to both of them.

2007 city budget highlights... from page 1

associated with contracting city elections to Washington County; and new positions for 2007.

The proposed budget contains the following staff additions to keep up with the growth of the city:

- Four police officers
- Two firefighter/emergency medical technicians
- One public service worker in the Streets Division
- A part-time program management specialist for environmental initiatives
- A recreation specialist to staff "healthy aging" programs
- A part-time secretary in the Building Inspections Division

Seasonal jobs in a few areas, such as parks maintenance and Carver Lake beach, also will be increased. In addition, three staff positions are proposed to be upgraded.

Utility rates

For 2007, water rates are proposed to increase by 3.4 percent, and sewer rates by 3 percent. The increases are due to the continuing need to create a financing source for the depreciation of water and sanitary sewer lines in Woodbury. The storm water utility rates for 2007 were still being discussed as the City Update went to print.

EDA levy

For the past few years, the Woodbury Economic Development Authority has levied funds to support affordable housing programs in the city. To lessen the impact of the open space referendum on property taxes, the City Council has decided to suspend the EDA levy for 2007. In the interim, a new housing action plan is being developed.

The result of this decision, which will save taxpayers a few dollars on their total tax bill, may not be readily apparent to property owners. That's because the EDA levy is included under "special taxing districts" on your tax notice. In 2006, the levy's impact was about \$14 for the average value home.



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review and action. Some examples are: planned increases in expenditures on street reconstruction and maintenance; public safety staff additions recommended by the Fire/EMS Task Force to improve service levels; and fully funding the capital equipment replacement program.”

Though the levy is increasing, the city's tax rate is actually declining by 3.2 percent, said Johnson, because the tax base grew faster than the tax levy. If a property had no increase in value, city taxes on it would be decreasing.

General Fund budget

For 2007, the General Fund budget, which is the city's main operating fund, is recommended to be \$23,760,170. This compares to \$21,817,022 for 2006.

Property taxes at \$16.1 million account for 68 percent of the General Fund revenues. Other sources of revenue include permit fees from new home and business construction, charges for various services, miscellaneous revenues, and transfers from other funds.

Combining the property tax funding of the General Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and Debt Service Fund, the proposed 2007 total property tax levy is \$23.8 million – 10.7 percent higher than the 2006 levy of \$21.5 million.

Major components of the levy increase include: increased street major maintenance expenditures as recommended by the citizens

How does the cost of city services stack up?

Product/service	Annual price/ tax per household*	COMPARE TO:	Annual cost
Police protection	\$249	Cable TV (Digital Service)	\$628
Fire protection	\$76	Cell phone (most popular national plan)	\$810
Snow plowing/street repair & maintenance	\$198	Trash collection (65 gal.).....	\$227
Parks & recreation	\$108	Dinner for two “out” once per month	\$420
City water	\$104	Large Caribou coffee twice a week.....	\$194
Sanitary sewer services	\$198	Daily newspaper subscription	\$208
Street lights	\$24	Broadband Internet service.....	\$695

On average, a Woodbury homeowner would spend roughly the same amount for cable TV service as the combined cost of police and fire protection, street maintenance/snow plowing, and parks and recreation services.

*Annual price is the 2007 projected cost for a home with a taxable market value of \$288,500 in 2006, and which experiences a 5.4 percent increase in value for taxes payable in 2007.

task force, funding the city's equipment replacement program, debt service on the bonds issued following the open space referendum, and additional public safety staff.

Total city expenditures for 2007 are estimated at \$56.3 million. This includes the General Fund and all other city funds, such as the storm water utility, emergency medical services, Eagle Valley Golf Course, Bielenberg Sports Center, and others.

Providing a good value

“With property owners experiencing the impact of the open space referendum in 2007, the City Council worked hard to limit the tax increase due to operations,” said Mayor Bill Hargis.

“The Council carefully scrutinizes the budget

each year, with a goal of giving our taxpayers good value for the property tax dollars they pay.

“For about \$75 per month, the average homeowner receives police and fire protection, snow plowing and street maintenance, park development and maintenance, recreational programs and facilities, and many other services. I believe this compares well to what we as consumers pay monthly for cell phone services or Broadband Internet, or for entertainment such as a concert, sporting event, or theater performance.”

City taxes constitute about 28 percent of the total property tax bill for Woodbury homeowners residing in School District 833 and the South Washington Watershed District (amounts will vary somewhat for other school and watershed districts). Property owners should review their truth-in-taxation notice, which Washington County was expecting to mail by mid-November. It will show the projected tax impact of the proposed city, county, school district, watershed and other levies.

More information about the proposed 2007 city budget is available on the Woodbury Web site at www.ci.woodbury.mn.us. The full budget document also can be reviewed at the Finance Department (now located at the Public Safety Building, 2100 Radio Drive) or at the R.H. Stafford Library, 8595 Central Park Place.

The City Council will accept public comments on the city budget at the hearing in the City Hall Council Chambers on Nov. 29. For more information, contact the Woodbury Finance Department, (651) 714-3502.

Hargis re-elected, Stephens and Ohs gain Council seats

Woodbury voters re-elected Bill Hargis as mayor, and selected Mary Giuliani Stephens and Julie Ohs to fill two open positions on the Woodbury City Council on Nov. 7. All three will begin four-year terms in January.

Hargis was seeking his fourth full term as mayor. He was appointed as Woodbury's mayor in 1993, elected to his first full term in 1994, and re-elected in 1998 and 2002. Prior to becoming mayor, Hargis served on the City Council and the Woodbury Economic Development Board.

Stephens and Ohs emerged as winners from a field of five candidates seeking Council positions. Stephens, a self-employed attorney, arbitrator and mediator, garnered 10,256 votes to lead the field among the Council candidates. She has resided in Woodbury for 21 years with her husband Greg; the couple has two adult children.

Ohs, a self-employed consultant who has served on the city's Economic Development Commission, received 7,753 votes, narrowly defeating Peter Rekow (7,604 votes) to win the second Council seat. Ohs and her husband Michael have lived in Woodbury for 13 years. They have two college-age daughters.

Residents now can request city services online

Have you ever noticed a damaged stop sign in your neighborhood while driving home from work? If you called Public Works or City Hall after hours to report it, you probably got an answering machine. Now, if you have Internet access, you can notify the city about a broken street sign and make several other requests for city services online at any time of day from your home or work.

"The city is adding this new system to make it as convenient as possible for residents to request service from the city," said Clint Gridley, city administrator. "It will also allow city staff to better track the number and type of requests we receive, and help us identify and address areas for improvement."

How to make a request

The Citizen Service Request System can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week

from the city's Web site located at www.ci.woodbury.mn.us. From the home page, select "Online Services" in the navigation bar. Then click on "Request Service."

If you don't have Internet access or if you prefer to call to request service, city staff can log your request into the system on your behalf. This allows staff to track the request and be certain it is completed.

Making an online request is easy! From the Citizen Service Request System main page, click on "Make a Request." Then, make your selection from the main list of categories. The request form for a damaged sign could be found under "Streets & Traffic Control," for example. From the next menu of items, you would select "Street Signs." Then, simply complete the form to provide information about your request.

Some parts of the form are marked with an asterisk, and these are required for your request to be submitted. If you wish to receive a response from city staff regarding your request, please remember to select a "preferred method of response" on the form. When you have completed the form, don't forget to select the "Continue" button at the bottom of the page to submit your request into the system.

Set up a personal account

When you use this service, your request will be forwarded immediately to the appropriate employee for follow-up. You also will have the opportunity to create a personal account, which will allow you to track the progress of your request. Immediately after your request has been fulfilled, the city will send a survey via e-mail or U.S. mail to solicit your feedback regarding how well your request was handled.

The request system will be monitored by staff during regular business hours. For most departments and divisions, regular business hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, Public Works is open from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Users are encouraged to view the frequently-asked-questions section prior to submitting a request. Who knows, you may learn something that you always wanted to know! While you are viewing the Online Services section, check out the other services the city is offering online.

For more information about the Citizen Service Request System, call the Administration Department at (651) 714-3523.



Winter parking regulations

Woodbury's winter parking restrictions are now in effect. City ordinance prohibits on-street parking:

- Between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. from November 1 through April 1
- Any time two or more inches of snow have accumulated until after the street has been completely plowed

The ordinance applies only to public streets, not to private roadways. Questions about winter parking regulations should be directed to the Public Works Department, (651) 714-3720.

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Mayor: William Hargis. Council Members: Cheryl Hurst, Michael Madigan, Paul Rebolz, Amy Scoggins. City Administrator: Clinton Gridley. Communications Coordinator: Julie Lehr.

The City of Woodbury is subject to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In accordance with the act, the Woodbury newsletter is available in other formats. Call Julie Lehr, 714-3500; TDD: 714-3568.

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