



Public Service Impacts from Budget Cuts

May 29, 2009

The current recession has been underway for some time. Organizations, businesses and individuals have all felt the impact of rising unemployment, housing crisis, restricted credit markets and a host of other factors. San Rafael has not been immune from this economic meltdown. Our City Council and staff have spent numerous hours examining service levels and taking appropriate steps to keep our budget in balance. Results of our efforts and strategies to address the City's budget were captured in the Recession Action and Economic Vitality Plans adopted in March 2009.

Over this past year, the City of San Rafael took many actions to reduce costs and increase revenues to address a General Fund deficit in excess of \$3 million. Approximately 76% of General Fund expenditures are related to the cost of hiring employees, who deliver the many services expected and enjoyed by our community. Given the size of our budget deficit projections and an expected slow economic recovery, reducing the workforce has become essential to balance the City's budget.

Including upcoming actions proposed for City Council approval on June 1, 2009, a total of 29 staff positions will have been eliminated over the past year, through vacancies, retirements, outsourcing or layoffs. With a remaining employee base of 416 positions, these staffing reductions are designed to minimize any adverse impacts on public safety. No departments have been totally eliminated or closed. Essential safety services, provided by emergency responders in our Police and Fire Departments, will remain in place to handle the multitude of calls for assistance and problem solving. There will, however, be a noticeable change in San Rafael's traditionally high level of public service.

The budget cuts result in the following service reductions:

13 DAYS OF FACILITY CLOSURES. City facilities will be closed for 13 days to implement a furlough. Effective July 2009 - June 2010, facility closures are planned for the 2nd Monday of each month, plus December 28, 2009. Police, Fire, Childcare and Parking Services will remain in operation on these days. Examples of services not available on furlough days include:

- Planning
- Building and Fire Plans & Inspection
- Business License
- Code Enforcement
- Streets Maintenance
- Parks Maintenance
- Engineering
- Economic Development
- Finance, Legal, Human Resources, and all other administrative functions

FALKIRK CULTURAL CENTER CLOSED FOR EXHIBITS AND PUBLIC EVENTS. Art shows, public events and holiday celebrations at Falkirk Cultural Center will be eliminated. There will be reduced public access to the mansion's grounds and galleries. Falkirk will still be available for private rentals for weddings and other events.

DECREASED STREET REPAIRS. Routine preventative and response based street maintenance services, such as painting red curbs, crack sealing and filling potholes, will occur less frequently. Priority will be given to the most critical needs in order to maintain high safety standards for pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles.

LESS WEED AND DEBRIS REMOVAL. Parks crews will maintain our parks and median landscape areas less frequently. This will mean weeds will be visible longer than we currently allow, and debris will not be removed as quickly.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL PROGRAM MINIMIZED. The City will no longer remove graffiti on private property. There will be a slower response to graffiti removal on public property as there will no longer be a dedicated staff person for graffiti removal.

LIBRARY SERVICES REDUCED. Library patrons will experience longer lines when checking out library books or waiting for reference service. Also, the Library will purchase fewer new library books, magazine subscriptions, and databases. This will mean that:

- Book purchases will be limited to high-demand items – budget reduction is \$40,000.
- Reference book purchases will be curtailed by about 60 volumes per year.
- We will eliminate up to 60 magazine subscriptions.
- Premium databases including Reference USA (business information) and Global Road Warrior (travel and country information) will be discontinued.

DELAYS IN PERMITS. We will have less engineering and planning staff which will slow down permit approvals including the following:

- For all new commercial and residential developments, staff will require an additional five working days, above the existing ten days, to review and submit Public Works conditions before the application can go to the Planning Commission.
- For all work within the public right-of-way by utility companies or private property owners (such as driveway approaches, sidewalks, drainage, walls and fences), Public Works will require an additional three working days, above the present three days, to process the applications and issue an encroachment permit.
- Fewer Planning staff will be available for public assistance at the counter.
- The turnaround time to review and issue building permits may be extended due to loss of staffing in divisions or departments which support these functions, such as Planning, Public Works and Fire Prevention.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE PROGRAM REDUCTION. The City's household hazardous waste program, located at the Marin Resource Recovery Center, will have reduce operating hours (closing at 3 pm instead of 5 pm) and will no longer be open on Saturdays for resident drop off of waste products.

OPEN SPACE FIRE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES REDUCED. Our Open Space fire prevention vegetation management program will be reduced from clearing 100 acres to 25 acres per year.

FEWER CODE COMPLIANCE INSPECTIONS EACH YEAR. With fewer building and code enforcement staff we will experience the following:

- There will be a slower response or an inability to respond to Code Enforcement complaints about non-safety related issues such as illegal signs and banners, fences, trash or debris pickup and overgrown vegetation.
- Code Enforcement will complete fewer health and safety code compliance inspections each year in apartments, as enforcement positions have been reduced.
- Staffing reductions necessitate completing fewer commercial fire compliance inspections each year, as enforcement positions have been reduced.

PRIORITIZED POLICE SERVICES. With the loss of Police staff, the following will take place:

- Reduced traffic enforcement throughout the city limits. Motor officers will be reassigned to fill slots in the basic service beats on an as needed basis.
- The loss of officer positions for one year will not allow 'cover cars' or staffing above the six beat areas (minimum shift) to be regularly assigned. Because of this decline in officers, the community should expect slower response time to all calls for service.
- There will be slower response times to incidents involving the mentally ill. To maintain basics beat services, a reassignment of one mental health officer must be made back to operations.
- Given all of the types of responses experienced each day, lower priority will be given to non-injury, non-DUI accidents.
- All non-violent crime reports without a known suspect will only be accepted through the department's internet crime reporting program or on a front counter report form.
- Officers will no longer respond to or document any private property non- injury accident. Citizen's can file a report on a front office accident counter report form.
- Due to limited staffing there will be a delayed response to school related incidents, as we have only one dedicated officer currently working full time in the middle and high schools.

The City Council will hold a meeting on June 1, 2009 at 8 pm to discuss the budget. A detailed staff report is available at www.cityofsanrafael.org/Government/City_Clerk. Call 485-3072 or 485-3064 for information regarding the upcoming meeting.