



NEWS RELEASE

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City Councilors Approve Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Budget at Thursday's Meeting

The City Council approved the City of Tulsa budget with added amendments reflecting citizens' priorities of increasing and enhancing public safety, public transportation and beautification.

The majority of the Council's \$3.4 million amendment to the City's \$711 million total budget provides funding to boost public safety. Councilors allocated \$1.9 million to add 61 police officers to Tulsa's streets.

"The end result this year is a big step toward improving public safety at a time when Tulsans too often don't feel safe," Councilor G.T. Bynum, who chaired the Council's Budget Committee, said.

The added officers will come from two police academies, one in October and one in April, and from hiring 16 civilians to replace officers in desk work positions, freeing up the officers to return to the field.

Councilor Karen Gilbert worked with Councilor Bynum on the proposal to increase officers.

"Our police department is extremely understaffed and has been for several years. With low staffing levels, you're not just putting the public in danger, but you're also putting police officers in danger," Gilbert said.

The budget amendment also provides \$155,000 in funding for the Family Safety Center, which offers assistance and support for victims of domestic violence, and \$50,000 for a Crime Stoppers tip line contract.

Public transportation gets a boost with \$200,000 in funding to support the Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority's initiative to reduce headways and increase bus routes.

Beautification was also a high priority. The Council restored right of way mowing to nine cycles, up from eight cycles, at a cost of \$90,000. And \$160,000 was approved for city cleanup crews.

The Council also provided funding to rehabilitate two community centers, Franklin Park and Springdale Park, at \$124,000 each.

A one-percent pay increase for non-sworn City employees was also approved.

The Council's amendment scoured the total budget for cost-saving measures to provide enough funding for these priorities. Some of the cost reductions include: saving \$525,000 by postponing hiring for some vacant positions, \$271,000 in deferred computer replacements and utilizing \$200,000 of the operating reserve.

"In a difficult budget year with plenty of external distractions, the City Council stayed focused on our most important responsibility: the best use of taxpayer dollars within the City budget," Bynum said.

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