

Matthias, Isaac L

From: jclausius@charter.net
Sent: Monday, March 4, 2024 4:39 PM
To: All Alders
Subject: City \$27M Deficit

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Dear City Council Members,

My Alder Sabrina Madison, reached out to me for my thoughts on dealing with the \$27M budget deficit facing our city. She hoped that as a former alder I would share my ideas for your discussion at the March 5th council meeting.

Numerous media articles or pieces have been warning of the city "structural deficit" for quite some time now. Proposed attempts to close the \$27M gap by spending cuts and raising city fees and hotel/vehicle taxes are unrealistic and unsustainable.

A property tax referendum is the most workable solution at this time. If successful it would buy time for city officials to work with state officials to increase the shared revenue formula. At the same time granting our city ability to implement a sales tax (such as Milwaukee) could be explored.

Financial referendums are a hard sell and city government must share full transparency with voters to be successful. Believe me, budget discussions during my city council tenure were no picnic then and nothing has changed! Please contact me if anyone has any questions.

Good luck tomorrow evening,

Joe Clausius
18 Clarendon Court
Madison, WI 53704

Matthias, Isaac L

From: Joanna Frasch <jefra1313@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 4, 2024 1:48 PM
To: Madison, Sabrina
Cc: All Alders
Subject: 2025 City Budget

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Dear Alder Madison,

I'm writing as your constituent to ask you to please raise my taxes. As a citizen of Madison, I'm well aware of the \$27 million dollar budget shortfall the city is facing, and I urge you to support a referendum which would allow the city to increase the tax levy and cover the shortfall without cutting services to the city. I understand and am grateful for the city's ability to have covered the deficits in the past with pandemic aid, and I would personally rather have a slight increase in taxes in order to maintain this level than face the consequences of deep cuts to programs and services.

I'm also writing as a union member to urge you to support a referendum in order to avoid layoffs of city employees. I am concerned for my union siblings that deep cuts could result in them losing their jobs with the city they passionately and faithfully serve. I believe that in the long run deep cuts to city programs and services while displacing a number of city employees would eventually create larger issues and further strain on the budget.

It's my understanding that this predicament we're facing is due, at least in part, to perpetually stagnant shared revenue funds from the state. Hopes were raised for a short time with the legislature enacting 2023 Wisconsin Act 12 (Shared Revenue, Personal Property Tax Elimination, and Milwaukee Sales Tax Authority) only to learn it didn't deliver funds as hoped. This Act also brought a new restriction on municipalities with populations greater than 20,000 creating budgets; it abolishes the ability to make cuts to police and fire/EMS services. To be clear, I do not believe that if Madison could cut \$27 million from these departments they should, or that it would solve the problem. It is, however, an overreach of the state legislature to restrict cities' (only of a certain size) spending and limit their autonomy to make their own budget decisions.

In the city of Madison's case, if there was no referendum, it would mean a funding cut of 15% to all other divisions except police, fire, and EMS in order to cover the budget shortfall. It seems odd to me the state would favor one group of services over another in this Act, when shared revenue funds are usually unrestricted. It is basically telling municipalities to favor police and emergency services over programs and services designed to decrease their need, whether the communities agree to this or not. I believe this is a direct violation of Wisconsin's constitution, [Article 11](#) which states: "Cities and villages organized pursuant to state law may determine their local affairs and government, subject only to this constitution and to such enactments of the legislature of statewide concern as with uniformity shall affect every city or every village. The method of such determination shall be prescribed by the legislature." I urge you in your position on the city council to demand the City of Madison challenge this Act, as by only restricting cities over a certain population threshold, it is clearly not uniform.

Please support a referendum which would close the budget gap, maintain programs and services, and save city jobs. Please also, for the long run, refer the matter of Act 12 for legal action by the city attorney.

Sincerely,

Joanna Frasch
Constituent and proud member of AFSCME
3348 Ambassador Dr. #3
Madison, WI 53718
715.321.0569

Sent from my iPad

From: [Letesha Nelson](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Goodman concerns regarding budget
Date: Monday, March 4, 2024 7:05:20 PM
Attachments: [GCC Letter for City Council - March 4 2024.pdf](#)

Some people who received this message don't often get email from lnelson@goodmancenter.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello City Council, I wanted to share some thoughts with you regarding the upcoming City budget decisions you have to make and that will affect us as a community. Please see the attached letter that explains an important community perspective.

I look forward to keeping in touch and learning more about the next steps in the coming months.

Thanks in advance for your time and consideration.

Letesha

Letesha Nelson (she/her/hers)
CEO/Executive Director
GOODMAN COMMUNITY CENTER
214 Waubesa St., Madison, WI 53704
Office 608.204.8025 // Main 608.241.1574 // goodmancenter.org

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March 4, 2024

Common Council
City of Madison
City County Building
210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Room 417
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of Goodman Community Center's board and staff, I'm writing to share our concern about the City of Madison's anticipated \$27M budget shortfall in FY25. We understand you must consider all available options as you make the difficult but necessary decisions to address such a large financial gap. However, any cuts to the City's annual funding for Goodman Community Center and other neighborhood centers will be especially challenging due to the record-high demand and need we're all experiencing in all of our programs.

Goodman Community is Dane County's largest community center, serving over 40,000 people annually ages 3-103. Our annual expense budget is \$8.3M and we have over 100 employees. People from all walks of life and all ages come here for programs and services that make their lives – and our community – stronger. GCC is committed to creating and maintaining a community that respects and values diverse life experiences. We currently house a preschool, 4-year-old kindergarten, after-school programs for all ages (including countywide Girls Inc.), an older adult program, food pantry, fitness center, and a gym. We also rent our spaces to individuals, private corporations and community groups.

The City's annual support of Goodman Community Center makes a profound impact on our youth and their families and the overall financial health of the center. Goodman receives approximately \$450,000 from the City through a competitive Community Development Grant that we work to apply for annually and dutifully report on. This grant award funds several of our core programs, including:

- Preschool Childcare
- Elementary Youth Programming
- Middle School Youth Programming
- High School Youth Programming
- TEEN works
- Senior Services
- Case Management



Goodman
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We strengthen lives
and secure futures

} *with our community*

As Madison continues to grow exponentially, so do the needs of our community. Now, is not the time to divest City resources as it will only cost our community even more in the long-term. However, if cuts are inevitable, I encourage you to proactively communicate with Goodman and our fellow service agencies, so we can best manage our limited resources to weather this challenge as safely as possible.

We provide critical services for our community, as do many of our fellow agencies, and it will be terribly difficult to do more with less but, as always, we will do our best.

Please contact me with any questions. Regardless of the difficult road ahead, our community is stronger if we collaborate and work together to make the best, community-informed decisions.

Thank you for your consideration and your partnership.

In community,

Letesha Nelson
CEO/Executive Director



From: [Bruce Hansen](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Balancing the budget.
Date: Monday, March 4, 2024 12:56:36 PM

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Dear Madison Alders,

In order to partly balance Madison's budget, I propose two revenue increases (1. and 4.), and two spending cuts (2. and 3.), and a change of policy (5.).

- 1.) Increase property tax revenue to an amount 2% higher than the national inflation rate. I support this higher than inflation rate increase because we, as Madison voters, have voted in representatives who spend with abandon. We consequently should pay higher taxes. However, these taxes will hurt seniors and others on fixed incomes and will be passed on to all renters too. Increasing taxes will not just hurt the rich so increased taxation is not a total answer.
- 2.) End all DEI programs and spending. Transfer DEI employee to other non-DEI Madison City employment jobs.
- 3.) End all affordable housing programs and projects that are not too far along to stop. There is no way to provide affordable housing for everyone who wants to move to Madison.
- 4.) Sell existing affordable housing units to private interests to reduce Madison's structural debt with some strings attached to prevent the ruin of those already made dependent on subsidies. Madison is not required to provide and maintain a supply of cheap labor for its businesses. Businesses should pay more if they need to attract workers.
- 5.) Cease and desist Madison's frenetic pro-growth policy. It enriches developers but runs up taxes and causes undesirable zoning changes.

Thank you.

Bruce Hansen

Matthias, Isaac L

From: Nicholas Pjevach <nick.pjevach@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 4, 2024 8:16 AM
To: All Alders
Cc: Mayor
Subject: Need for theory behind budget

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Dear alders,

As you prepare for the committee of the whole tomorrow evening to discuss the 2025 budget outlook and addressing the structural deficit, I want to turn your attention to a moment from the January 23 Common Council meeting. During discussion of Legistar File [#81016](#), Mayor Rhodes Conway answered Alder Bennett with the following statement at 2:38:45 (<https://media.cityofmadison.com/mediasite/Showcase/madison-city-channel/Presentation/f76d56ed58764af7bddeca3050b308701d/Channel/d29c91089bda40e7bb0fba20311ff0755f>) regarding any additional briefing on the budget that alders were not yet aware of (mind you this was before the presentation from Finance, [#81870](#)):

"The sort of factual way to answer the question is what is represented in the fiscal note, right? Depending on which version you are looking at, there is a sort of total dollar impact or the percent of the entire budget impact, both of those are available to you for all the relevant numbers. I think though you are asking sort of a more philosophical question which I'm not really sure is mine to answer, but nonetheless, I think the short version is any additional expense to this city increases the gap between what's available to us in revenue and our cost to continue. So, you can look at that as any additional expense makes the problem worse or you can look at that in the bigger picture this is a relevant small increase compared to, for example, the well-deserved wage increase that city staff are getting this year or whatever we find out in terms of increases of our health insurance rates or fuel prices. All of those are likely to be much larger total price tags than this item. **At the end of the day, historically when we bring the budget to the floor, you and your colleagues are "making decisions"— to use polite language— over items that are \$5,000.00, which is a very small portion of the total cost of what you are talking about right now. So it's all relative, alder.** I don't think there is a way to encapsulize what the impact on the budget would be other than literally looking at the numbers. **Beyond that it is more of a philosophical approach you want to take to the budget.**"

I would like to compliment Alder Bennett for her subsequent [blog post from last week](#) which thoughtfully explained the difficult situation we find ourselves in as well as insight into her priorities going into tomorrow's meeting. As you all navigate this tough conversation over the coming months (I do not envy you at all, but am here to be supportive in whatever ways I can be), I would encourage you to articulate your priorities to your colleagues, constituents, but most importantly, yourselves. This is not to justify your future votes, but rather have clearly stated guiding principles to ground your decision making.

May tomorrow's discussion be a fruitful one which helps everyone understand how our community will tackle this crisis together through your collective leadership.

Best wishes,
-Nick

Nick Pjevach
he/anything respectful
nick.pjevach@gmail.com

262-853-7094

Address for next couple weeks:

2417 E Mifflin St #1
Madison, WI 53704

Future address:

2513 E Mifflin St
Madison, WI 53704

From: [Christine Powell](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Testimonial from a City Streets Staff person regarding a potential referendum
Date: Monday, March 4, 2024 8:52:58 PM

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Dear Alders,

I am writing to you as a City Employee, and AFSCME 6000 member, who is asking for the Alders to strongly consider a reoccurring referendum to help the City meet its fiscal needs, as the State has prevented the city from raising the property tax to match with the growing costs in a more typical manner.

I joined the City staff in the fall of 2019, first as an Information Clerk in the Streets Division, and now as the Operations Clerk. I'm the person who gets the calls from residents who need help with Streets services, who are not happy with their services, who ARE happy with their services, or are just moving in and need to know how Streets Services work. I help elderly people navigate the city's services without internet access, and also jump in and help with other projects as needed, like the roll out of the new large items garbage collection system. I tell elderly people their brush schedules, I explain what goes into what cart, and why. I listen to a lot of frustrated people, because that's the nature of customer service (happy people don't call as much!) - and try to make sure that the residents feel they are well serviced by their tax dollars.

I can only speak to what I've seen – but that has been a steady increase in new homes – averaging 160 serviced homes a year just on the West side, with the eastside is roughly the same. We have garbage and recycling routes that have new blocks added into our far west area every month, as large developments complete homes on new streets. Collection routes are getting longer, without added staff positions. So also are areas we need to manage snow, collect brush and yardwaste on. That number does NOT count unserviced homes such as larger apartment buildings with 8+ units. We're up to about 1,800 lane miles that need to get plowed every snow storm for a City General Plow event. A rough estimate from our GIS staffer has over 800 cul-de-sac or dead end streets that need special handling for storms, and are trickier for garbage and brush collection. Talking with my superintendent, Charlie Romines – he put it well – we've squeezed as many efficiencies as we can at this point out of the system. We added wing plows (they do two lanes at once), automated trucks (far faster and less staff needed than 2 person rear loader trucks), we've moved large items to schedules (not driving every street 24 times a year hoping to find garbage items), we've added a night shift in the winter to even out the 24 hour nature of the work without dipping those staff into Overtime. We've also had open managerial positions for salary savings over these last years too.

If we must cut services to match a budget without referendum, we'll have less optional services, that will drive the costs to individually be paid by residents, as they have to haul their own brush, large items to the landfill, or move to paid extra collections like local cities such as Middleton have. We'll have slower responses to snow events, as the nature of Streets staffing is cyclical – the summertime brush and yardwaste staff, the drop off attendants become plow and sander trucks in the winter. They clear crosswalks, bike paths, and city

responsible sidewalks. Garbage is year round, but 'seasonal duty' people are where we gain the flex to handle Wisconsin winters. Those staff who haul resident material won't be there for winter plowing rotation, where we have people rotating overtime – less staff means more long shifts for remaining workers, and that has an impact on people's lives.

Ending my email here with some numbers from my West side Streets office – to get an idea what we are doing with current budget amounts.

During Student Move in 2023 (7/31/23 -9/15/23) – we collected **1,863 tons** of large items and 'extra' garbage (that's whole city, not just West side). I averaged the amount in excess of the normal Thursday collections, as 'Thursday-land' is much of our student focused housing – and added that to the volumes of Student Move specific garbage collected to get that number.

From 2020, 2021, and 2022 – a total of 2,658 garbage or recycling cart swaps (want a small cart, have a large, have large, want a small) were done. This is an example of a service that is 'extra charged' by private services. Pelliteri charges \$45 a swap cart swap. \$119,610 – that would cost residents. Many of these are simply families moving into homes that previously had smaller households, or people recycling more cardboard and needing a larger cart. It makes sense to do it – so we do, without charging. We want people to be able to efficiently be able to dispose of things properly.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'll be in the audience gallery Tuesday night watching the presentations and discussions and reporting back to the AFSCME membership how things look after the meeting.

--

In Solidarity,

Christine Powell

AFSCME 6000 At Large Board member

Christine.J.Powell@gmail.com

From: [Sarah Russell](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Agenda Item 82316
Date: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 3:15:32 PM

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Hello,

I am both a City of Madison resident and employee. I have some ideas that I would like to share for tonight's meeting.

All permanent employees that do not live within the City of Madison should have a pay reduction of some sort (1%-2%). There used to be a 1% longevity reduction for CG18 only who lived outside of Madison which went away because it wasn't fair to just that comp group. I think it should be for any and all permanent employees (not hourly), regardless of comp group. This would be an incentive for people to want to live within the city.

If I have to pay another wheel tax, or more property tax for working and living in the city, those who don't live here should also have to take a similar hit.

Are there properties that city owns that could be sold?

Increase the cost of parking tickets.

Streets Dept. could charge a small fee to pick up large item refuse, which is now free.

Install red light cameras to be able to issue more tickets.

Are there more services that the city could offer for a fee? (tree trimming?)

Having electric fleet vehicles available for the public to rent.

Are there building inspection/permit fees, can these be increased?

Ambulance could charge for non-transport.

Are there business license fees?

Offer PPP's (Public Private Partnership) to jointly create and run revenue-generating operations (tourism, real estate).

Tax incentives for new businesses to come to the area.

Create tourism draws, that will bring people to the city.

Thank you.
Sarah Russell

From: [Shelley Van Proosdy](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: City of Madison 2025 Budget
Date: Saturday, March 2, 2024 11:41:46 AM

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I would like to voice my opposition to the proposed November referendum to raise property taxes in an effort to close the \$27 million structural deficit in the 2025 budget. How much more do you think fixed income property owners can bear in property tax?

In addition, this would only be a temporary fix. Please consider the alternatives of reducing expenditures in order to close the gap. We need a big picture solution not bandaid fixes.

Shelley Van Proosdy

From: [Joseph Keyes](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Madison Budget Deficit
Date: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 4:11:49 PM

Some people who received this message don't often get email from jkeyes1a1@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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To All Alders:

The City of Madison is in a terrible budget deficit position through its own making and lack of fiscal stewardship. It was brought on by incurring new, ongoing costs when money was not available and by misapplying funds like one time ARPA funds to recurring expenses. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds will soon be gone but the ongoing expenses remain.

I am a retired Certified Public Accountant and Certified Management Accountant who is well aware of budget preparation. To properly get the budget back in balance the following steps must be taken:

- 1) Stop any and all new spending until the budget is in balance without the use of budgetary gimmicks.
- 2) Identify all ongoing costs currently being paid for by one-time funds like the ARPA funds or by debt. Those costs need to be the focus of immediate cuts.
- 3) Prioritize all city services. Those at the lower end of the priority scale will need to have the most budget cuts.
- 4) If there is a reluctance to prioritize services for expense cuts, then there will need to be an across-the-board percentage cut to all services. Cuts will be painful, but they are needed.
- 5) Identify some services that can be separately billed to the public. This will bring some but, most likely, not a material amount of revenue.
- 6) As a last step, raise property taxes or ask the public to raise the property taxes through referendum. However, this should only be done after each of steps 1 through 5 have been completed and have made a material impact on the deficit. A referendum is only a short-term fix. Points 1 through 5 will need to be repeated until a balanced budget can be reached.

Again, this deficit evolved through lack of fiscal stewardship. The Mayor and the City

Council need to treat this budget like their own personal household budget where they would not spend what they currently do not have.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Keyes

District 11