

BUDGET MESSAGE
FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022
CITY OF STAFFORD
By Mayor Cecil Willis
18 AUGUST 2021

Many changes have occurred in Stafford and the world since Mayor Scarcella issued his last message in August 2019. However, the long-storied journey of Stafford continues. We continue to strive in many areas to blaze new trails and enhance and improve our current positions. Today marks the 241st day of a new Administration. This Administration is grounded in continuing the strong, sound, proven fiscal policies that have been in place for decades. There is an old saying that “the proof is in the pudding”.

This budget was predicated on four (4) sound principles:

- *Balanced Budget**
- *No diminished services**
- *Enhanced and streamlined operations**
- *Rebuilt fund balance**

These principles have been achieved with the budget I am presenting.

These principles are a major component of the foundation building blocks, if you will, that have served Stafford quite well. A great deal of the credit goes to those that preceded us and put in motion the appropriate elements needed for a strong sound fiscal foundation.

The results of this budget, to no surprise to the majority, achieves these principles. However, to the dismay of a small group, it dispels their predictions. These nay sayers were ready to say, I told you so, we will have to do a city property tax and/or lay off personnel among other things. The main problem, in my opinion, is they do not fully understand Stafford, its citizens, and its business community. Unfortunately, they are putting their personal agenda ahead of the City's welfare. The fiscal foundation of Stafford is strong and continues to grow stronger. Since I took office, Stafford has ranked between #64 and #69 in sales tax receipts in the entire State of Texas for cities. This alone speaks volumes about what a seven (7) square mile area and its people can achieve. There are many new and exciting developments under construction or in the planning stage of

construction that will continue to strengthen and build on our foundation.

I am pleased to state for the 27th consecutive year, this budget is based on A ZERO CITY PROPERTY TAX. This budget result would not have been possible without the tremendous support of our exceptional CITY STAFF. The head of each and every department clearly accepted the opportunity with which they were tasked. Everyone is now clearer and has a better understanding of the many opportunities that presently exist and lay ahead. The starting point was to budget what we needed to run our daily operations at the current level. We then added a few wants to enhance the operations.

I must single out Ms. Alka Shah, our new finance director, and thank her for her professionalism, patience, leadership and understanding during this process. Her over 26 years of experience in government finance was put to use and tested. She was charged with making sure that commonly accepted and approved best practices of accounting were adhered to. She and the staff referred to my outlines and requests in formulating their budget and not only met my request but exceeded those requests.

When I assumed this position, I had in my mind that I was chasing \$6,000,000 plus to balance this budget. This budget reflects the success, and also allows us to expand slightly. This budget affords us the opportunity to add four (4) police officers, two (2) telecommunication officers, an additional Humane officer in the codes department and an administrative clerk position in the Fire Department. In the Fire Marshal's office, we proposed streamlining the plan review process by outsourcing. This will allow the staff more time to do their fire safety inspections, arson investigation and other life and property services.

We will continue to monitor and evaluate any and every opportunity we have to supplement the staff we currently have or improve on the operations. The total budgeted for the General Fund is \$24,235,975.00 with a total personnel cost of \$16,531,360.00, which is 68.21% of the budget. There are currently 159 full time positions proposed in this budget, along with 43 regular part-time. Like almost all businesses after personnel cost, there are limited opportunities of available funds. We must be very vigilant when it comes to additional personnel.

Two other notable occurrences in this budget were the refinancing of SEDC bonds for a total savings of \$935,278.00

over the life of the bonds. Along with this the City was able to issue a Certificate of Obligation totaling \$6,339,669.10 which relieved funds from the General Fund. The City, after receiving a favorable A+ rating from Standard and Poor's, received a most favorable interest rate of 2.405904%. \$2,406,820.66 will go to pay for fire equipment, \$3,932,848.44 will fund street and drainage issues along with facility repairs and other infrastructure items.

Another significant component of this budget is a two percent (2%) salary increase for full time employees. I am extremely pleased that the numbers allowed us to propose this with the adoption of this budget. All of the City staff is deserving of this increase.

"We must be ever vigilant regarding the fund balance. The fund balance is our rainy-day fund. Hopefully, we all now realize the importance and significance of this fund balance". If a pandemic and a freeze did not get everyone's attention, I am not sure what will. Going forward this year, we will also be initiating and tweaking a number of procedures to further reinforce and clarify the best practices when it comes to finances. A few examples are a fund balance policy, purchasing policy and a tweaked purchase order policy. These three (3) items alone will greatly enhance our

opportunities to improve our fund balances and properly oversee our financial operations.

CONCLUSION

Having had gone through the many unanticipated events this past 18 months, everyone should be cognitive that fiscal prudence is necessary. Most individuals and companies know this to be a fact. Sometime in government, as I have observed, they may from time to time get carried away in doing what is a worthwhile endeavor without thinking about “what if the funds are no longer available going forward”.

So now, I submit this my first budget for Council’s consideration. It has achieved the majority of the things we know to be important to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our Stafford citizens. Along with that, we are helping Stafford to continue to grow and move forward with innovative ideas and concepts.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:



CECIL WILLIS

MAYOR, CITY OF STAFFORD, TX

**Submitted by the Mayor of the City of Stafford on August 18,
2021 at 2:35pAM/PM**

Nicola Browe, City Secretary

By: Richard Worthington on behalf
of Nicola Browe