

Budget shortage forces Eugene to cut services

Existing programs will face \$775,000 in cuts, though city councilors aren't sure where the reductions will come from

By Marty Toohy
Oregon Daily Emerald

The city of Eugene will have to trim at least \$775,000 worth of existing services from next year's budget, and possibly as much as \$1.3 million, but city budget committee members aren't sure yet where reductions will come.

The city has to cut \$375,000 from its general fund due to a budget shortage. In addition, \$400,000 will be re-allocated to increase the city's Permit and Information Center budget. The center provides zoning information and issues building permits, and currently receives most of its funding from fees for the building permits.

The center currently doesn't receive money from the city's general fund.

City Councilor David Kelly said the increase to the Permit and Information Center will be included in next year's budget "with much dismay by the city council," because, with the cur-

rent economic conditions decreasing permit purchases, the added revenue wouldn't make enough of a difference.

The city manager's office, which is required to present options for each year's budget to the city's budget committee, has also proposed increasing funding to four other programs, which could bring cuts to existing programs to \$1.3 million.

Kelly and budget committee member Craig Wanichek said it's too early to predict what city programs could have budget cuts. Kelly, however, said he's totally opposed to a suggested 10 percent reduction in the Metro and Community Planning Department.

"They plan out the future of the city," Kelly said. "We have less planners now than we did in 1990, when we were a smaller community, and I know how overburdened they are."

The city manager's office offered reduction options for all 39 departments receiving money from the city's general fund.

Several factors resulted in the city's need to trim \$375,000 from its general fund.

First, Qwest Communications has refused to pay franchise fees to many Oregon cities this year, including \$1.5 million owed to Eugene. Their refusal to pay comes after a Washington state court ruled last year that the company did not have to pay franchise fees to the city of Renton, Wash.

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An Oregon state court recently ruled in favor of several Oregon cities, including Eugene, suing Qwest for refusing to pay the franchise fees. Qwest still might appeal, however, and for caution's sake, the city is creating its budget as if Qwest will not have to pay.

Also, state Measure 50, which

passed in 1997 and rolled back property tax rates, has resulted in less property tax revenue and caused long-term budget shortfalls in cities across the state.

Finally, nationwide economic conditions have resulted in lower overall property values, which in turn resulted in less state revenue from property taxes. The amount of taxes that property owners pay on their property is based on its assessed value.

Next year will be the first time in several years that Eugene's operating costs will increase faster than revenues, city budget manager Kitty Murdoch said.

The city budget committee will hear a tentative budget proposal April 15, and that proposal will be available to the public. The budget committee will hold meetings every Monday from April 15 to May 6 at 5:30 p.m. in the city council chambers, and will listen to up to half an hour of public comment at its meetings.

The city council must approve a final city budget by July 1.

This year's general fund is \$113.4 million, and the total city budget is \$326.2 million. Oregon law requires that all of its local

City budget shortfall

The city of Eugene will have to cut \$375,000 from existing programs in next year's budget, and is considering moving funds from existing programs into the following new ones:

\$400,000 for the Permit Information Center

\$250,000 to cover an expected Emergency Medical Services Fund shortfall

\$200,000 for drug treatment programs

\$100,000 for a city emergency planner, who would ensure money from the city's emergency fund is used wisely

\$30,000 of increased funding to the Eugene Springfield Metropolitan Partnership, which recruits businesses to the area

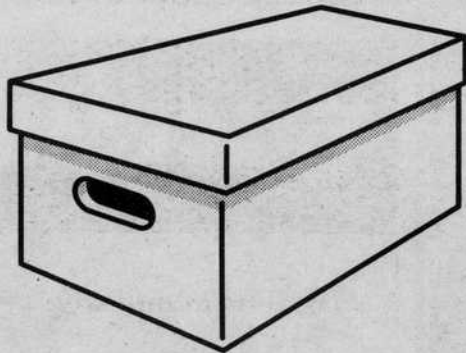
Source: City Budget Committee

governments operate with balanced yearly budgets.

E-mail reporter Marty Toohy at martytoohy@dailyemerald.com.

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Andrea Yates convicted of murdering children

By Terri Langford
The Dallas Morning News

HOUSTON (KRT) — Andrea Yates, the suburban mother who methodically drowned her five children last summer, and whose attorneys said she was insane when she did it, was convicted of capital murder Tuesday.

The jury took three hours and 40 minutes to decide that she was guilty of two counts of capital murder for the June 20 drownings of Noah, 7, John, 5, and Mary, 6 months.

The killings of her other two children, Paul, 3, and Luke, 2, figured prominently in the case.

Yates, 37, stared straight ahead as she stood between her two lawyers for the reading of the verdict by state District Judge Belinda Hill. Afterward, she glanced at her two brothers, Brian and Andrew Kennedy, and her mother, Jutta Karin Kennedy, who were seated together on one side of the courtroom.

On Thursday, the same jurors — eight women and four men — will begin considering Yates' punishment. Defense attorneys will call witnesses who will try to convince jurors that Yates should receive life in prison instead of the death penalty.

"I obviously don't agree with the verdict, but it's my job as a lawyer to accept it," said Wendell Odom, one of Yates' attorneys. "You catch your breath and start all over."

The verdict stunned husband Russell "Rusty" Yates and his family. They held hands as the judge read the jury's finding of guilty. Russell Yates cried softly "Oh, God," and put his head in his hands. He kept his head there, apparently cry-

ing but saying nothing as his wife was lead from the courtroom.

Yates said little to her attorneys as they met with her after the verdict.

"She thanked me," defense attorney George Parnham said.

Said Odom: "She's doing all right. She's prepared for this; she's doing all right."

Cyndie Aquilina, a jury consultant who assisted Yates' defense team in selecting jurors, said she was shocked at the verdict.

"I don't know how they got there," Aquilina said. "She was clearly insane."

In their closing arguments, prosecutors argued that Yates' lifelong drive for perfection — not her mental illness — forced her to drown her five children as a way out of her overwhelming home life.

"Andrea Yates wanted to be the perfect mother. Just like you heard that she wanted to be the perfect daughter," prosecutor Joe Owmbly said, summing up his capital murder case against the registered nurse. "And she was driven by this throughout her life."

But defense attorneys argued that Yates was a loving but mentally ill mother whose psychosis was so severe that she drowned her children because she believed they were threatened by Satan. They said Yates was insane at the time of the drownings and should be acquitted.

In Texas, a person can be found not guilty by reason of insanity if a mental illness impairs a defendant's ability to tell right from wrong.

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