

CITY BUDGETS TO BE RELEASED IN MAY, JUST BEFORE ELECTION

In fiscal year 2013 (which began July 1, 2012), the city of Eugene's budget was a whopping 408 pages — without its glossary and definition of acronyms. Citizens and advocacy groups who want to comb through the proposed fiscal year 2014 budget prior to voting on the proposed city service fee will have to consume the budget, decipher it and get their messages out in three weeks or less, and that's to converse with voters who might remain undecided until the last minute.

This year the city manager's office plans to release two budgets in early May, one with the city service fee and one without. Ballots will be mailed May 3, and the election is May 21. Unofficial ballot return data from the Nov. 6, 2012, election indicates that 23,060 Lane County ballots were returned by Oct. 24.

"The timing gives them enough time to use it to advocate for their fee campaign, but not enough time for citizens to analyze it," says Bonny Bettman McCornack, co-director of

anti-fee PAC Citizens for Truth, Justice and the American Way. Bettman McCornack says that the budgets out in May won't have the audited numbers she would trust to make a decision. "The budgets are proposed budgets

based on assumptions, and the city manager controls the assumptions used to project the numbers," she says. "There are stated variables composing the methodology used by the manager, but he gets to weight those variables."

The audited numbers for general fund revenue will be forecasted in the Comprehensive Annual Fiscal Report (CAFR), which the city releases at the end each fiscal year in June.

Chris Wig, campaign manager for pro-fee group Eugene Cares, says he doesn't think the May release of the budgets is too short a time frame for voters. "I don't think that that is necessarily the most relevant detail as to the city fee itself," he says. Instead, he says he's focusing on the potential for losing important services and the creation of an exemption process for low-income people.

Mayor Kitty Piercy, who is in favor of the fee, says that the city budget is transparent, but due to dedicated or constrained funds, some money can't lawfully be moved from account to account. "We think the public has and will continue to have very transparent information regarding the city budget, and each of us as budget committee members, staff or electeds are always ready to answer questions," she says. "I don't think that a critique of the city's budget process or of the workings of the budget committee is relevant, necessarily," Wig says. "There is a budget shortfall. That's a fact."

Bettman McCornack disagrees, saying "As far as I can tell, since Ruiz gets to pick the numbers he uses, give or take several million here and there, for both revenue and expenditure projections, releasing the budget can be a powerful political tool for the city. Especially in the absence of the audited numbers in the CAFR." — Shannon Finnell

'The city manager controls the assumptions used to project the numbers'

- BONNY BETTMAN MCCORNACK

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CONSTRUCTION STARTS AS EARLY AS APRIL 1ST

OR 58 Salt Creek Tunnel and Half Viaduct Project, Milepost 56 Spring to mid-October 2013

Project Location



OR 58 Suggested Alternate Routes



Nighttime highway closures

Monday — Thursday from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Open to a single lane of travel weekdays

Monday — Thursday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Open to a single lane day and night on weekends

Friday at 6 a.m. until Monday at 8 p.m.

Other travel impacts:

- Pilot cars will escort motorists
- Expect 20 minute delays
- Oakridge will always be open from the west
- Crescent Lake and Willamette Pass will always be open for business from the east

Know Before You Go

To learn more about the construction project and schedule, visit the project website at www.58tunnel.com.

For the latest road conditions, visit www.TripCheck.com or call 511.

