



## NEWS RELEASE

### **Mike Browning**

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Twitter: @cityofmborotn

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/cityofmurfreesborotn](http://www.facebook.com/cityofmurfreesborotn)

PHONE: 615-848-3245/642-3230 mobile

EMAIL: [mbrowning@murfreesborotn.gov](mailto:mbrowning@murfreesborotn.gov)

Website: [www.murfreesborotn.gov](http://www.murfreesborotn.gov)

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## **City releases proposed FY 2018 Budget for Council Review**

*Budget proposes 24 new positions; 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive year without property tax hike*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 17, 2017

**MURFREESBORO, Tenn.** – City Manager Rob Lyons, in accordance with the City Charter, has submitted the City’s Proposed \$157.2 million Fiscal Year 2017-18 (FY 18) Budget for review by the City Council. The proposed General Fund expenditures increase 3.75 percent while revenues increase nearly 5 percent from FY 2016-17 budgeted amounts.

“The City of Murfreesboro is still enjoying a period of residential and businesses investment, and rapid growth to maintain a healthy and vibrant financial community,” said City Manager Rob Lyons. “Our biggest challenge is to manage growth and change throughout the City and its government, so that infrastructure and public service amenities operate effectively and efficiently for all citizens.”

The FY18 proposed budget is the 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive year without a property tax increase.

The budget proposes advances in public safety, economic development, public service and citizen engagement. The proposed FY18 budget adds twenty-four employees and recommends a 3 percent across-the-board increase for full-time employees. For the average employee earning \$48,000, a 3 percent raise translates to approximately \$1,440 annually or \$120 per month. Currently, the City is conducting a total compensation study of pay and benefits spearheaded by Gallagher Benefit Services. The market update will be finalized with the budget.

The proposed budget prioritizes spending on four primary goals established by City Council: 1) Safe and Livable Neighborhoods, 2) Strong and Sustainable Financial and Economic Health, 3) Excellent Services with a Focus on Customer Service and 4) Engaging Our Community.

The Safe and Livable Neighborhood category projects call for four (4) new police officers and four (4) Fire and Rescue personnel. In FY 16-17, fifteen (15) new fire personnel were added with the opening of Fire Station #10. Other **Priority 1** projects include:

- Open the new Police Headquarters on Highland Ave.
- Begin development of the west-side park on the former McDonald Property.
- Launch Advanced Life Support (ALS) within the Fire and Rescue Department.
- Construction of relocated Fire Station Four and the Doug Young Public Safety Training Facility Progress toward full implementation of a 700 MHz two-way radio system for public safety.
- City-wide design guidelines.

The proposed Police Department budget moves employees from a 37.5-hour workweek to a 40-hour workweek, effectively adding the equivalent of 13 officers. Combined with adding 4 new police officers, the added resources to the Police Department maintains a top priority focus on safe and livable neighborhoods.

The Proposed Budget also provides for the continued expansion of the Fire and Rescue Department's Basic Life Support (BLS) to include medication administration and procedures by October. A target date of July 1, 2017 has been identified to move to Advanced Life Support (ALS).

Livable communities not only provide for public safety, but accessible recreational opportunities. Land acquisition for a new park on property known as the McDonald Farm in western Murfreesboro was finalized with the purchase of land. In May 2017, Parks and Recreation celebrated the grand opening of the new Miracle Field at McKnight Park. Plans include opening a new soccer facility at the Jordan Farm and begin construction of the 2-mile extension of the Greenway system from Highway 99 to Barfield Crescent.

Another recreational amenity, Adams Tennis Complex which opened in July 2015, operated with 84 percent of its expenses from revenue generated during the first nine months of operation in FY 17.

The City's financial health continues to be a hallmark. Moody's upgraded the City to Aa1 in 2016, the second highest rating possible on an 18-step range. Moody's cited the City's growing tax base, its well-managed financial position and ample reserves supported by strong budgetary controls as factors in their decision to upgrade the City's bond rating.

The City's revenues exceeded budgeted revenues by \$2.3 million as reported in the FY16 Audit. In the past ten years, the City budgeted annually from \$1.5 million to \$4.8 million from fund balance to balance the General Fund's annual operating budget. The proposed FY18 budget recommends utilizing \$3.75 million.

While the Proposed Budget does include potential land sale revenue from the First United Methodist/Franklin Synergy property, it does not include estimated revenue from sale of Gateway property. In today's growing economy, a likely Gateway land sale would reflect favorably on the fund balance.

**Priority 2, Strong and Sustainable Financial and Economic Health**, highlights some of the following initiatives:

- Implement Murfreesboro 2035, Historic Bottoms and North Highland Avenue studies and design guidelines to attract and retain jobs.

- Study and analyze options for disposal of solid waste due to the expected closure of Middle Point Landfill.
- Finalize the Major Thoroughfare Plan.
- Redevelopment of the former First Methodist Church/Franklin Synergy site.
- Construction on improvements to Lytle Street, Jones Boulevard, St. Clair Street, Middle Tennessee Boulevard, Kingdom Drive Bridge, Greenway Phase IV and the Perlino Drive Bridge.

The budget proposes the addition of a Principal Planner in the Planning Department to keep long range plans such as Murfreesboro 2035, the Historic Bottoms and North Highland Avenue projects moving and up to date.

The City has won sixth consecutive Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and will seek the seventh with this budget. This is a companion to the award the City has earned for 18 years for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) also known as the annual audit.

**Priority 3**, Excellent Services with a focus on customer assistance, includes the following:

- Redesign the City's website for a more attractive and easy to use interface.
- Partner with Motlow Community College to train Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) in-house.
- Utilize the Unmanned Aircraft System during weather emergencies, emergency response and public safety events.
- Complete the energy efficient program to reduce the City's energy costs.
- Move to a 40-hour work schedule and 7-day tour of duty in the Police Department.
- Fully implement holiday signal timing plan for Medical Center, Old Fort and Mall Circle Drive.

The City communicates and engages with citizens in many ways. City TV, the City's website, news releases, Parks and Recreation user surveys, neighborhood open houses, public hearings, presentations to civic groups, and Citizen Police and Fire academies.

In 2016, CityTV converted to High Definition (HD) through a grant from Comcast and the Legal Department published the City Code on-line to give customers real-time access to the City's code and requirements.

**Priority 4**, Engaging Our Community, includes the following:

- Continue holding City Council neighborhood meetings throughout the City.
- Continue holding neighborhood meetings on planning issues, including annexations, rezoning and planned development.
- Use the new City website to better integrate social media.
- Use social media and other measures to solicit citizen input on landfill disposal and other current issues.

- Connect with our residents and customers of Parks and Recreation to develop a master plan
- Using social media, technology and neighborhood meetings to educate and continue development of the comprehensive plan

In 2016, CityTV earned a Second-Place national award from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) for best “Use of Social Media.”

### **New Positions**

The proposed FY17-18 budget recommends a total of twenty-four (24) new positions, bringing the total number of City employees to 890. In addition to 9 public safety personnel in Police and Fire, new positions in the proposed budget also calls for an Economic Development Director in Administration, Project Engineer for the Engineering Department, Heavy Equipment Mechanic in Fleet Services, Network Administration and Administrative Support Specialist I in Information Technology, Irrigation Technician, Groundskeeper-Soccer Facility and Assistant Program Coordinator for Pool in Parks & Recreation, Principal Planner in the Planning Department, Laborer and Equipment Operator in Street Division, Full-Time Custodian in Building Maintenance, Traffic Engineer in Transportation and a Driver in Rover.

The proposed budget does not recommend a property tax increase and recommends adoption of \$1.2066 as the tax rate. Property tax revenues are projected to be \$40.5 million in FY18, an increase of 7.6 percent due to new construction and growth.

As required by the Charter, City Council received a copy of the proposed budget May 15. Budget Review Sessions on the FY18 budget are scheduled for May 25, June 1, June 6 and June 8. The Public Hearing and First Reading of the budget ordinance is scheduled for June 8. Second reading will be considered on June 15.

For City News online, visit [www.Murfreesborotn.gov](http://www.Murfreesborotn.gov).

### **Photos attached caption:**

1. *FY 2017-18 City Budget Cover.jpg.*