



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Ash Kalra

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT

DATE: October 6, 2014

Approved

Ash Kalra

Date

10/6/14

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Appropriation Ordinance and Funding Sources Resolution amendments in various operating and capital funds to implement the 2013-2014 Annual Report recommendations, including appropriate technical adjustments, as detailed in Section IV (Recommended Budget Adjustments and Clean-Up Actions) as recommended by the City Manager with the following exception:

Of the \$3.8 million in savings from unfilled positions in Police Department, allocate:

- 1) \$800,000 for a rebudget to address Police overtime needs.
- 2) \$1,000,000 to the Library budget in order to address staffing needs to ultimately increase library hours to 6 days a week.
- 3) \$2,000,000 to a Neighborhood Safety Grant Program to be over seen by United Neighborhoods of Santa Clara County for use by recognized neighborhood groups in the city of San Jose.

BACKGROUND

As is the case essentially every year, this year the City of San Jose has a large excess fund balance due to conservative budget projections and a growing economy. This year, the excess fund balance exceeds \$17,000,000. In the City Manager's Annual Report, all of the money is accounted for through recommended rebudgets, rebalancing actions and specific appropriations that have been developed prior to any presentation to, or feedback from, the City Council or community. Therefore, any suggestion of a different use cannot avoid being contrasted with the existing prepared recommendation. It is in that environment that I make the above recommendations.

At this time, the City Council has created a fund to address our severely understaffed Police Department called the Police Department Staffing Reserve Fund. The idea behind this fund is to put some money aside to help us staff up the department back to a level of at least 1,250 officers. The amount of excess funds the city has available - based upon savings from unfilled positions - is \$3.8 million. I agree with having \$800,000 going immediately to Police overtime as it is certainly needed in light of our drastically inadequate staffing level. There is currently \$10,000,000 in the Police Department Reserve Fund and, with the budget office's excess budget fund recommendations, the amount would grow to \$13,000,000. Currently, our department hovers around 900 officers. Adding \$3,000,000 to a fund that has the goal of growing the department by over 300 officers while we are still struggling to play catch up with department departures will not benefit neighborhoods while ignoring other uses for the money that can go to immediate needs. Once we truly have a plan in place that begins to stem the tide of departures and

grow the department, then it would make sense to augment the fund beyond the existing \$10 million. In the meantime, our neighborhoods need help today.

Library Hours

Libraries are not only great places for learning and community gathering, they also create a safe space for families in neighborhoods throughout our city. Recently, within walking distance of Edenvale Branch Library, there have been two homicides. Yet, this is one of the libraries that is not even open on Saturdays. Since we know it may be some time before we can fully staff our police department, a smart and cost-effective way to use resources to enhance community public safety and increase access to an amenity that is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of families a year would be to rapidly accelerate our ability to open every library 6 days a week.

Therefore, I am suggesting \$1,000,000 be immediately allocated to our Library department. With that money, the Library management can begin to staff up towards a 6 day a week schedule for all branch libraries. Given the cost-savings from implementing many of the recent audit recommendations, \$1 million can go a long way in preparing the library to go to a 6 day a week schedule by the 2015-2016 fiscal year, saving the millions of dollars in the Library Parcel Tax Reserve to ensure the increased staffing is sustainable in the years to come.

Neighborhood Safety

In recent years, it has been refreshing to see increased neighborhood activism in the light of disturbing crime rates in our community. Our police officers work very hard, however, we know that given the limited staffing, they cannot respond to many theft related incidents as quickly as they may have in the past when we had a more fully staffed department. Thankfully, we have engaged and innovative residents that, realizing the need for our police officers to prioritize crimes that are of a more urgent nature, have begun to work together to root out the burglars and thieves that, at times, scour our neighborhoods looking for easy targets. This increased activism has led to recent successes in neighbors working with our Police Department to nab burglary rings. However, we know we are still losing this battle against thieves far more often than we would like to admit.

A recent report indicated that in 2013 there were roughly 27,000 property crimes in San Jose totaling over \$76,000,000 reported stolen from victims. Sadly, many more property crimes go unreported and, with the ever increasing number of property crimes in San José, residents are subject to rising costs of home a vehicle insurance rates. While we work on strategies to increase staffing in our Police Department, we should immediately act to give tools to neighborhoods to provide them with a fighting chance against crimes in their community.

Therefore, I suggest allocating \$2,000,000 to create a Neighborhood Safety Grant program. Funds would be allocated through the United Neighborhoods of Santa Clara County to specifically benefit San Jose neighborhoods. Similarly to how neighborhoods currently apply for CAP Grants for beautification and neighborhood improvement projects, this Neighborhood Safety Grant program can be used to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods as it applies to public safety. For example, a neighborhood may apply in order to offset the cost for residents to install burglar alarms, safety sensor lights, and even offset the costs of private security patrols. Or, provide partial grants to offset the costs of repairing doors and windows at homes that have been burglarized.

The depth and quality of the recommended uses can be vetted by UNSCC and the City Crime Prevention Unit in order to ensure the funds are allocated to the best, most cost-effective uses. I believe that would be a much better way to immediately address neighborhood safety than warehousing millions of more dollars in a reserve fund that is unlikely to be significantly employed for the remainder of this fiscal year or even the next.