



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Raul Peralez

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: March 15, 2022

Approved by:

Date: 3/14/2022

SUBJECT: Approval of the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Mayor's March Budget Message

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the Mayor's March Budget Message along with the memo from Councilmembers Arenas, Esparza and Carrasco and direct the City Manager to include the following:

1. Provide an MBA on the items listed in my March 4th Transportation & Environment Committee (T&E) memo regarding the Vision Zero Status Report¹
2. Include an updated cost estimate for a City Sanctioned Encampment
3. Prepare an MBA regarding a strategy for our public safety employees and first responders to access mental health resources.
4. Identify funding to restore the San Jose Fire over-time budget of \$660,000 to allow all fire stations to be fully staffed during declared "state of emergency" and fire season.

BACKGROUND

Thank you to the Mayor and my colleagues for looking at the budget process to tackle some of the most pressing issues within our city. As our city looks to emerge out of the pandemic we need to continue to look for ways to solve some of our most critical issues.

Vision Zero

I appreciate the Mayor's message addressing pedestrian and traffic safety. As Chair of the Vision Zero Task Force, I am too familiar with the names of traffic victims that are read off when convening our task force meetings. Last year was one of the deadliest years in San Jose's history of traffic fatalities and 2022 is trending at an even higher rate.

¹ <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=10577139&GUID=A42B6B86-70CB-420D-9CBA-1F1338EB1AE7>

Therefore, at the most recent T&E Committee on March 7, my office issued a memo with recommendations to explore in this budget cycle (see footnote 1). The memo contemplates budgetary recommendations related to increased resources to evaluate and deploy safety enhancements, especially in our priority safety corridors (PSCs). The recommendations have already been accepted by my colleagues at committee and considering the urgency of this issue, it would make sense to include them as part of our budget process as intended.

Sanctioned Encampment

During the pandemic we saw our unhoused community continually encamp in our public parks and spaces, most notably, in our Guadalupe River Conservancy. While the Mayor addresses housing alternatives in the March budget message, many solutions will still take a considerable amount of time, while our neighborhoods are urging for more immediate solutions. Over the years, I have asked our city to implement a sanctioned encampment pilot, and I continue to ask my colleagues to take this into consideration again.

With a significant shortage of shelter beds and over 5,000 San José residents continually seeking refuge in public spaces, sanctioned encampments can provide basic living conditions that will also allow access to better case management. Additionally, as we begin to clear the encampments under the flight path as directed by Federal Aviation Authority (FAA), a sanctioned encampment would help alleviate the strain of pop up encampments in nearby residential neighborhoods, as we are currently seeing those who have already been moving from the Guadalupe River Park area to other nearby parks, such as St. James, Watson and Roosevelt Park.

Using lessons and observations learned from both the major encampments at the Jungle in 2014 and recently near Columbus Park, we learned that while there were many negative impacts on having an encampment of such size, one unintended but key benefit is the centralization of our unhoused population allows for more efficient deployment of human services. A more controlled sanctioned encampment can provide a similar opportunity that would allow for our agencies to provide services, case management and hopefully housing placement in a more appropriate and centralized location.

Public Safety

It is no secret that this pandemic has taken its toll on us all. Our first responders have had to face the pandemic, all while battling perennial wildfires, maintaining public safety during social unrest, and responding to COVID emergency calls. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, statistics show that “when compared to non-essential workers, essential workers are likely to report symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder (42% vs 30%), starting or increasing substance use (25% vs. 11%), and suicidal (22% vs. 8%) thoughts during the pandemic.”² In 2019, our Council prioritized mental health even

² <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>

further by adopting my proposed suicide prevention policy. My office further doubled down when proposing our Community Violence Prevention Initiative that called for improved wellness programs for our employees, and currently being implemented through the Powered by People enterprise priority that is partnering with the [National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#). And as we begin to shift to a COVID-19 endemic, it is important that we do not forget the mental health of our public safety employees and first responders, serving in one of the most thinly staffed city halls of a major American city. Our communities depend on them for critical life saving services. Therefore, it is imperative we continue to prioritize strategies to bolster their wellness in body, mind and spirit, so we can call upon them to do their best when serving our community.

As we look to provide a safety net for our community, we know that California is subject to beautiful weather. However, a change of weather can also turn its course into tragedy. We recently experienced this with a major wildfire that impeded on our East Hills and reached across neighboring cities, such as Milpitas and Fremont. Our San José Fire Department should be able to adjust their personnel resources as needed. Therefore, I ask that we include restoring the San José Fire Department's overtime budget, in order to be utilized in the wildfire season and during any declared "State of Emergency" that will require a shift in personnel.