

Clearlake's \$12.5 million budget subject of Thursday hearing

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson
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CLEARLAKE – The Clearlake City Council has crafted a \$12.5 million budget for the 2008-09 fiscal year, and they'll hold a public hearing for the community to give comment on the proposed document at this week's council meeting.

The council will meet this Thursday, Oct. 23, at Clearlake City Hall, 14050 Olympic Drive. Members will hold a special closed session beginning at 5:45 p.m. for a negotiation relating to a property at 12150 San Joaquin Ave. The public meeting will begin at 6 p.m.

The city's budget process was held up by that of the state, which this year was late by a historic margin. City Administrator Dale Neiman had reported to the council in August that Clearlake would have problems if it had accepted a budget before the state did, including potential funding losses, as Lake County News has reported.

Once the state budget was accepted in late September, the City Council started the work of creating this year's budget for both the city and Clearlake Redevelopment Agency, holding two workshops earlier this month.

The city's \$12.5 million budget includes a little over \$5 million for redevelopment and about \$7.4 million for the city, said Neiman. It also includes \$422,000 in the general fund.

Neiman has been in the process of moving the city's budget to a cash balance system, which he said is a better way to manage funds.

"We're headed in the right direction," he said.

The only problem that the city had in its budget process relates to deficits in some city funds, such as the Measure P fund, which gathers money from a half-cent sales tax to support the Clearlake Police Department. Neiman said that fund has a \$154,912 deficit.

If that deficit isn't resolved by next year, the plan is to loan money from another fund to catch up Measure P, said Neiman. The airport project, which the city is negotiating to have developed, could be done by that time, he added.

That's better than the alternative, said Neiman. "We didn't want to lay off any more officers," he said, adding that last year the city cut four officer positions from Clearlake Police to make their budget numbers.

The good news is that the general fund has a surplus, said Neiman.

Overall, this year's budget is better than last year, Neiman said.

One reason it's better is that the city "dodged a bullet" and didn't end up losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost revenue and takeaways to the state that Neiman had feared might happen.

"In my view the state didn't fix their structural deficit problem and it's going to be worse next year," said Neiman.

Other items on the Thursday agenda include the following:

– The council will continue a discussion on establishing an advisory committee for the redevelopment agency. At the last meeting, the council gave Neiman direction to return with more options and information.

– Presentation of a proclamation for Red Ribbon Week to Harriet Rogers, safe schools coordinator for Konocti Unified School District.

– Consideration of changing the designated animal hearing officer from the City Council to the city administrator or his/her designee.

– Confirming assessment(s) for administrative penalties for failure to abate public nuisances(s) in accordance with Clearlake Municipal Code Sections 1-9.9 c, “Payment and Collection of Penalties”; Resolution No. 2008-59.

– Consideration abatement for public nuisance(s) in accordance with Clearlake Municipal Code Sections 1-8.17, “Nuisance Abatement” and “Special Assessments”; Resolution No. 2008-60.

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