

April 15, 2009

## Lemoore City Council

After hearing of all of the suggestions last night, I feel there are many cost-saving measures that the City can implement without eliminating full-time personnel.

The following are some options I feel Council/City Manager should consider:

1. Maintain the hiring freeze - Departments are able to get by at this time with the level of staffing present; if work loads increase, this option can be reevaluated.
2. Provide retirement incentives for those who qualify – they are usually higher paid than a new hire would be.
3. Furloughs of one day per month – I would much rather take one (or possibly two) furlough day per month than eliminate the medical stipend for those that do not take healthcare coverage. Furloughs would affect all employees evenly. Eliminating the medical stipend would only affect those employees who do not take health coverage. These employees are already receiving less in benefits than their fellow employee who has health coverage for more members of their family. Another option would be to limit City paid health coverage to 100% for the employee only and have employees bear the extra cost for additional family members. This way all employees, whether accepting health insurance or not, would receive the same benefit amount. Employee's who receive the stipend are able to pay for medical expenses not covered by insurance, pay for supplemental insurance from AFLAC, pay for child care and invest in their retirement. This is a great benefit. In addition, it is a tax free benefit. Furloughs of one day would help save money for the City, but would not really effect the employee's take home pay significantly because it reduces taxable income and thus taxes, so in most cases the net difference is not noticeable. I would have often preferred to take time off without pay rather than use vacation/sick leave and thus save the City money and my time; however, this practice has been discouraged by management in the past. As long as there is adequate staff/workload coverage, this practice should be encouraged during these tough economic times. This also helps staff save time for more unexpected or catastrophic type losses. Finally, if furloughs are truly going to be effective, City services must completely shut down on furlough days. This will further save money through management and operational costs.
4. Any reductions in staffing should be in line with the reduction of services needed, such as those that were mentioned, the decline in building inspections and planning and development applications. If there are less people needed to perform the current level of work, then staff may need to be reduced in these areas. When these areas pick up again, staff can be rehired.

5. I am definitely an outsider looking in when it comes to Fleet Maintenance, but it seems like these services may be better performed by a local area business. They may be able to perform the services for less and perform them more routinely. This will further help to stimulate the local economy.
6. Consolidation to CMC – I think this is a no brainer. Operations and public service would be much better served if the Planning Department was located at CMC. It makes no sense for customers with development applications to go back and forth between the Planning and Building Departments. I don't think the current set-up is common in any other cities in our area. In addition, if the Teen Center and many of the Recreation Programs are being run at CMC, it makes sense for the Recreation Department to be there too. I don't see a real benefit to them being located at the Civic Center other than our use of their color copier and scanner. If this will save operation costs, do it. One other thought is if the Planning Department moves to CMC, perhaps the Utility/Finance staff could move to the Planning Department Building. This would provide easier accessibility to the public with the elimination of stair climbing. In addition, it should provide more room for staff. There are three offices in the back of the building where the Finance Director and Accountants can be and there are three offices in front where Accounts Payable, Water Accounts and Business Licensing can be. In addition, there is a large common reception area where the Account Clerks can be located. This would eliminate the expansion and related costs planned for the Utility Billing Office. In addition, once the Finance and Utility Departments move across the street, the Redevelopment and City Manager Departments could move downstairs. This would allow greater accessibility to the public than our current second floor location. I would assume that the City Hall building is the least energy efficient of them all, so the less we use it the better. As opposed to closing the current Planning Department location, if all second floor offices were downstairs, the second floor of City Hall could be closed off and only used for file storage. The kitchen appliances could be unplugged and the Civic Centers could be used since they are always on anyways. The air conditioners and heaters would not have to be run upstairs either.
7. Finally, the topic of Part-time Employees came up in several different ways – I believe any unwarranted part-time positions should be eliminated. In addition, a key reason to have part-time employees is to save money on benefits, etc. However, we have part-time employees that practically work full-time, which results in the City having to contribute to PERS for these employees. That pretty much defeats the purpose. Don't work any part-time employees past the number of hours that would require PERS contributions. If more time is needed, hire two part-time employees for one position, rather than hiring one part-time and working them full-time (unless, of course, the costs of worker's comp., etc, would outweigh the costs of the PERS contribution).

I think these suggestions along with others provided by employees last night could save the City significant funds while maintaining current full-time staff levels and morale.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brooke Austin', written in a cursive style.

Brooke Austin  
Housing Specialist