

Subject: Where Our Money Goes & Supe Info
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Last night the public got its only opportunity so far to have a say in the budget for the next year, after all the decisions and priorities had already been put in print.

The Mayor bluntly stated that she thought the Library didn't serve that many people and cost too much; Crull wanted to charge fees for each activity; Sculatti wanted the Library to allow commercial events after hours and force it to hold fundraisers and all the Council members subjected Jennifer Baker to a humiliating 1/2 hour of grilling, wondering why she can't create the #2 library in the State and not have to pay for it? Jennifer Baker (one of the few remaining dept. heads) was incredible, countering that the City had not bought the Library a pencil in 12 years, or a book, and doesn't even pay for the lights. The Library Foundation pays for those things and is one of the few donor groups that pays for basic functions as opposed to extra programs. There was no mention by the Council of how well the Library serves those on low incomes who use the computers and find help, nor how the Library serves as a community center (MIA here) for all of us -- they had to be reminded. Ms. Baker can name her price anywhere else and probably will.

For contrast, note that the Police Dept. uses 33% of the General Fund budget (the Library uses less than 10%). The Chief got a 20% raise this year -- plus plans for a new police dept and everything they were doing seemed just fine with only minor questions about a few programs -- Sculatti even suggested that they should get more perks like therapy to combat stress like they do in New York City, clearly an environment directly comparable to St. Helena. In defense, the Mayor alluded to some stressful crimes here that we don't know about, like . . .?

Other interesting things in the budget: For the part-time temp job of Council Member, each pulls in \$30,204.80 per year (salary and health benefits for their families). The City Attorney cost over a half a million and next year the costs of litigation go up 250%, mostly due to being sued for lack of low-cost housing (the Calderon case). The City Manager's true cost and the Planning Dept.'s true costs were disguised (that is, not identified), by assigning 25% of the City Manager's pay to the Planning Dept., the only department where that is done, admitted Mr. Broad. And, as the Council was cutting staff, removing caps on restaurants and hotel rooms, trying to annex Meadwood, selling City Hall and passing the winery ordinance, all with the message to us that St. Helena was in a bad financial crisis, it turns out for the past 4 years revenues have exceeded expenses and the panic was about building an even larger reserve. Building the reserve was never

mentioned at the time. However, according to testimony last night, we now have 3-4 million or more, 2-3 million to be used at the Council's discretion. But that is not the key problem. The problem is the reserve seems not to be identified or accounted for in any of the City's budget documents. News of it was solely verbal so we don't really know the real number. See the online [budget metrics in fun charts](#). Maybe you can find it -- click through the options on the left & scroll down to see the spreadsheet.

Find time to attend the budget hearing, it continues at the next Council meeting. We have an educated, professionally oriented population who seem committed for the long term here yet few show up to protect that commitment.

And lastly, [here is a short analysis](#) of the Chamber Questionnaire completed by Dillon and Chilton. Click on the little comment bubbles to see the notes.

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