

City Council approves budget with 13.7 average pay increase for firefighters

TUESDAY, JUNE 15

\$44.8 million budget includes no tax increases, strong revenue growth



At their meeting on Monday night, Spartanburg City Council approved 5-2 a first reading of the upcoming fiscal year budget. The \$44.8 million budget includes no tax or fee increases and revenue growth is expected to be strong, with property tax revenue growing six percent and City Hospitality Tax revenue expected to bounce back to above pre-pandemic levels.

Included in the budget is \$430,000 allocated for increases in pay for City firefighters, an average raise of 13.7 percent or \$5,400 per firefighter. However, that sum was lower than the \$628,000 initially requested by Chief Marion Blackwell, and several speakers during the budget's public hearing voiced their support for fully funding the Chief's request. Council members Ruth Littlejohn and Erica Brown voted against the budget, both citing their desire to see firefighter pay increased further.

Beyond providing pay increases, the budget also moves firefighters to a step pay plan. According to City Manager Chris Story, this ensures appropriate salary progression throughout a firefighter's career and prevents the salary stagnation that has impacted the City's ability to retain experienced firefighters. In all, the City budget includes around \$7 million budgeted for the fire department.

In a memo to Council, Story added that the upcoming budget is indicative of a community making steady progress despite the impacts of the pandemic and cited continuing economic development progress that has showed no signs of slowing in our community. Council will take up a second reading of the budget at their next meeting on June 28.