

## City Council gives final approval to fiscal year 2021-2022 budget

TUESDAY, JUNE 29

### Approved budget includes 13.7 percent average pay increase for City firefighters



At their meeting on Monday, Spartanburg City Council approved 4-3 the final 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. Mayor Junie White joined Council members Ruth Littlejohn and Erica Brown, who voted against the budget's first reading, in voting against final approval of the budget, citing their support for funding Chief Blackwell's full request.

Beyond providing pay increases, the budget also moves firefighters to a step pay plan. In his presentation to City Council during the budget's first reading, City Manager Chris Story said that the move 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 and also includes a 3 percent cost-of-living increase for all City employees.

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.