

Birmingham City Commission Minutes
Public Hearing on the 2024-2025 Recommended Budget
April 27, 2024
8:30 a.m.
Municipal Building, 151 Martin
Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/939720407>

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Katie Schafer, Mayor Pro Tem, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ROLL CALL

Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk, called the roll.

Present: MPT Schafer
Commissioner Baller
Commissioner Haig
Commissioner Host
Commissioner Long

Absent: Commissioner Longe
Mayor McLain

Staff: City Manager Ecker; City Clerk Bingham, Assistant City Manager Clemence, City Engineer Coatta, Planning Director Dupuis, Assistant City Manager Fairbairn, Ice Arena and Facilities Superintendent Folk, Parking Systems Manager Ford, Building Maintenance Superintendent Galik, Finance Director Gerber, Police Chief Grewe, Museum Director Pielack, Fire Chief Wells, Human Resources Manager Woods, Department of Public Services Director Zielinski

III. PUBLIC HEARING – 2024-2025 RECOMMENDED BUDGET

In the absence of the Mayor, the Commission motioned for Commissioner Baller to serve as temporary Mayor Pro Tem for the duration of the meeting. MPT Schafer served as the temporary Mayor for the duration of the meeting.

The Mayor opened the public hearing at 8:34 a.m. Acting Mayor Schafer and CM Ecker provided introductory comments. FD Gerber presented the budget overview and staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

There was no public comment regarding the introductory comments or the budget overview.

Commissioners' comments were as follows:

- The City should undertake a broad and sustained effort to inform the public about the OpenGov software.
- It might be appropriate to raise the water and sewer rates more quickly so that infrastructure projects are funded less via the General Fund. If this approach is adopted, it would be important to communicate the reasons for the decision to residents.
- Raising the millage rate would not result in a substantial increase for the average resident. Offering user-friendly infographics, such as a picture of a dollar bill broken down to indicate where taxes go, would likely help residents better understand the City's budget. A Headlee override will most likely be required in the future.
- A decrease in the millage rate would still result in increased revenue generation because of increased property values.
- Birmingham only receives about a third of a resident's property taxes. It is more fiscally responsible to conduct regular preventative maintenance than it is to delay preventative maintenance in order to artificially and temporarily reduce costs. When preventative maintenance is neglected, future repairs tend to be much more financially burdensome.

There was Commission consensus to:

- Decrease the millage rate to 10.7224 in order to maintain the same .3 mill gap the City has maintained for a number of years.
- Conduct a phased increase of the water and sewer rates over the next two years in order to more fully fund the City's water and sewer infrastructure improvements.

- Have staff offer information to help residents understand that infrastructure improvements would be funded by the rate increases.

For the General Fund, ACM Fairbairn presented the Commission and the Manager's Office budgets, BMS Galik presented the City Hall & Grounds and the Property Maintenance-Library budgets, HRM Woods presented the Human Resources budget, CC Bingham presented the Clerk's Office budget, and FD Gerber presented the Finance Department, the Legal, and the General Administration budgets.

There was no public comment regarding the General Fund. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners' comments were as follows:

- Efforts should be undertaken to increase the number of residents using the Engage Birmingham platform.
- The proposed technological improvements will be valuable. The City should continue its efforts to integrate useful technologies.
- The City should find ways to increase its agility and responsiveness to residents' concerns. Responding quickly and directly to misinformation on social media would be of particular benefit.
- More communication of the City's successes would also be beneficial.
- Relative to the average published in the March 2024 Bureau of Labor Standards report for municipal employees, the City's fringe benefit to salary ratio was higher. Making publicity videos more accessible on the City's website would be valuable.
- This budget requests funding for some physical improvements to City Hall. As much as possible, the City should ensure that those improvements align with any future plans for further improvements.

FD Gerber presented the Judicial budget.

There was no public comment regarding the Judicial budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

For Public Safety, PC Grewe presented the Police and Dispatch budgets, FC Wells presented the Fire and Emergency Management budgets, and BO Johnson presented the Building budget.

There was no public comment regarding the Public Safety budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners' comments were as follows:

- The Mental Health Co-Responder Program is a valuable program. Birmingham should aim to continue its leadership in regards to this program. It would likely also be valuable to approve funding increases for the program should staff deem it necessary.
- There is a notable demand for the Police-supported Mental Health Co-Responder Program.
- The Birmingham Fire Department was commended for having the quickest emergency average response time in Michigan, and one of the best average response times in the United States.

The Commission recessed briefly, and returned from recess.

For Public Works, CE Coatta presented the Engineering budget and DPSD Zielinski presented the Public Services budget. DPSD Zielinski noted a correction to the budget, explaining that the Uniform Allowance would actually increase to \$17,000. FD Gerber noted the corrected Uniform Allowance would be integrated into the finalized budget.

There was no public comment regarding the Public Works budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners' comments were as follows:

- DPS was commended for its investments in staff. Investments in City staff promote increased recruitment, retention, and skill-building. The value of investing in staff should be publicized, and investments in staff should continue to be funded.
- The Engineering Department was commended for its efficiency.

FD Gerber presented the Health and Welfare budget.

There was no public comment regarding the Health and Welfare budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

PD Dupuis presented the Community and Economic Development budget.

There was no public comment regarding the Community and Economic Development budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

For Recreation and Culture, DPSD Zielinski presented the Parks & Recreation, Ice Arena, and Community Activities budgets. MD Pielack presented the Birmingham Historical Museum budget.

There was no public comment regarding the Recreation and Culture budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

FD Gerber presented the Transfers Out budget.

There was no public or Commission comment regarding the Transfers Out budget.

FD Gerber introduced the Special Revenue Funds budget. CE Coatta presented the Major and Local Streets budgets, DPSD Zielinski presented the Solid Waste Disposal budget, CM Ecker presented the Senior Services Fund budget, and FD Gerber presented the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission, the Law & Drug Enforcement Fund, the Opioid Settlement Fund, and the Community Development Block Grant budgets.

There was no public comment regarding the Special Revenue Funds budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners' comments were as follows:

- City staff does an excellent job in general and the City must do a better job of informing the public about the City's successes. Many factors go into evaluating streets for repair. There have been two water main issues on Arlington and Shirley just in the time since the Commission began discussing improvement of those streets.
- The collaboration between City departments is very beneficial.
- Hearing that the City is improving its operations is valuable. It may be worth exploring the finances of enabling the City to conduct its own road improvements. A campaign to increase recycling in the City and to inform residents that recycling generates revenue for the City would be worthwhile.
- The City has spent a fair amount of money on visible improvements historically. There needs to be more funds raised and spent on improving unseen infrastructure. There also needs to be more public education regarding the necessity of those improvements.

For Enterprise Funds, PSM Ford presented the Automobile Parking System budget, FD Gerber presented the Water Supply System and the Sewage Disposal budgets, and DPSD Zielinski presented both of the Golf Course budgets.

There was no public comment regarding the Enterprise Funds budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners' comments were as follows:

- Residents should know that even though their payments with ParkMobile are not reflected on the meters, parking enforcement staff are able to see that those spaces have been paid for. It would likely be more beneficial to publicize that information than it would to spend money installing modems so the payment is also reflected on the meters.
- It might be worth running a promotion to increase the number of regular users of ParkMobile.
- Alternatively, instead of incentivization, meters could be shut off in an area of town and signs could direct parkers to use ParkMobile as a pilot program for determining whether that would increase adoption.
- A License Plate Recognition Parking System combined with removing the meters might be worth further exploration in the near-term.

ITM Brunk presented the Information Technology budget.

There was no public comment regarding the Information Technology budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

For Component Units, ACM Clemence presented the Principal Shopping District budget, LD Craft presented the Baldwin Public Library budget, and FD Gerber presented the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and the Triangle District Corridor Improvement Authority (TDCIA) budgets.

There was no public comment regarding the Component Units budget. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

Commissioners' comments were as follows:

- The Library would benefit from further advertising regarding its lesser-known services.
- Addresses in City presentations should be listed along with the building or business currently at that location for easier reference.

FD Gerber presented the Debt Service Fund and the Greenwood Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund budgets.

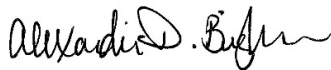
There was no public comment regarding the Debt Service Fund or the Greenwood Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund budgets. Staff answered informational questions from the Commission.

The Mayor commended all staff for their work on the budget. She noted that the Commission emphasized the importance of increased communication a number of times. She also noted the benefits of increased collaboration among City staff.

The Mayor closed the public hearing at 1:41 p.m.

IV. ADJOURN

Mayor Schafer adjourned the meeting at 1:41 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist