

Oroville Council OKs preliminary budget and final budget workshops

Workshops for final budget set

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OROVILLE >> At a short meeting Tuesday night, the Oroville City Council accepted a preliminary budget, set a schedule to review and revise the document, and supported a ballot measure increase for Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District.

The mosquito issue was the first item of business discussed after approval of the consent calendar.

City Administrator Randy Murphy explained the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District has a ballot measure to increase assessments for the agency, which is a special benefit district.

The city has 62 parcels within the district's jurisdiction, at a yearly cost of about \$726.34. Murphy said the city attorney advised him the city may be exempt.

Mosquito District Manager Matt Ball addressed the council to explain why an increase is needed. The district covers 1,700 square miles, including Hamilton City.

He voiced concern that the Asian tiger mosquito has made its way to Southern California and could end up in Butte County.

"It could only be a matter of time that two new species come to Butte County... that carry yellow fever and Dengue fever," Ball said.

He also noted there have been 128 cases of West Nile virus in Butte County since 2004, with some Oroville patients in that number.

Some councilors voiced support, but others didn't.

Indicating support, Councilor Gordon Andoe mentioned that the district also had to recently buy an airplane engine, and will go out to spray if people request it a day before an event, such as a

barbecue.

But after finding out property owners would pay the increased rates, Councilor Cheri Bunker said she would vote no.

Mayor Linda Dahlmeier noted a relative of her daughter's was bitten by a mosquito three years ago and got West Nile virus.

"It's very serious," she said. "Mosquitoes don't care if it's your pond or your neighbor's pond."

Andoe moved to support the measure. The Council voted 3-2 in support, with Bunker and Jack Berry voting no.

The preliminary budget for the 2014-15 fiscal year was introduced by Murphy, who explained that a city charter requires the council to adopt a preliminary document by June 1. Staff started out with last year's budget, but hasn't "vetted" all the information yet, he said.

"It appears we're in good shape, but the reserves have gone down significantly," he said.

Interim Finance Director Glenn Lazof explained that he used the second year of a two-year budget prepared last year for preparing the preliminary document.

The preliminary budget projects revenue for the next fiscal year at just over \$12.1 million and expenses just over \$11.8 million. Cuts made last year are also reflected in the preliminary document and the 2015-16 budget.

Lazof also outlined a proposed schedule for a public hearing June 3, workshops June 24 and July 17, and a special meeting Aug. 12 to approve revisions and approve the final budget.

"We want to go forward in 2014-15 with a solid budget," he said.

Lazof also pointed out that revenue is slightly down and that his projections are "conservative."

Vice-mayor Thil Wilcox said she appreciated Lazof's being conservative, but also pointed out the council has to be responsible in its decisions.

"I don't want a picture out there that we're doing rosy..." she said.

Councilor J.R. Simpson had questions about \$800,000 in the reserves fund. He said his understanding was that \$800,000 had been used when the city bought the Oroville Inn.

Lazof indicated he would have to check on that further.

Murphy added that staff is presenting information as they find it and increasing transparency in the process.

"The public has expressed concerns...We're trying to be as transparent as possible," he said.

The councilors unanimously approved a motion to accept the preliminary budget and adopt the proposed schedule for putting together the final budget.

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