

City of Taunton Office of the Mayor

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Mayor Submits 2021 City Budget

Maintaining Quality Service and Protecting Taxpayers Top Priorities

Dependency on Stabilization Funds Cut to Protect City's Fiscal Future

Taunton, MA ...Today Mayor Shaunna O'Connell submitted her first City Budget to the Taunton City Council.

"Since being elected to office, I have been working around the clock to improve service while finding savings for taxpayers. Less than 60 days into office, we were hit with COVID-19. Our priorities shifted to public health safety and economic concerns. I am pleased that there is light at the end of this tunnel, but we are now facing new challenges at City Hall. My focus for this budget is to maintain quality service while avoiding overburdening taxpayers who have been struggling due to the shutdown," said O'Connell.

Some of the factors effecting the FY2021 budget include:

- During the Corona virus, Taunton has been hit with over 900 cases and 40 tragic deaths.
- Increased costs to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Unemployment in the city is now over 21% percent.
- State revenue is down \$1.9 billion and there have been no indications from the State House if local aid will be held harmless.
- Operating expenses have increased due to the new City Hall and trash disposal costs

Preparing for the worst case scenario, O'Connell reduced budget requests by \$5.1 million and has reduced the annual budget by \$3.1 million and the use of stabilization funds by \$4.7 million. The budget doesn't require new

taxes and it also doesn't layoff any city workers. It is also significantly reduces the city's dependency on stabilization funds, which puts the city on a much better fiscal path for the future.

"Due to the pandemic, we need to count every penny and use our resources wisely. This budget is both fiscally sound and preserves services. Furthermore, we have cut the city's dependency on stabilization funds," said O'Connell. "Wanting to be a good steward for Taunton's future, I am pleased that we have reduced the dependency. This will significantly help our fiscal future."

Some of O'Connell's savings include:

- Project contracts
- Revising hydrant flushing schedule
- Improving department work process to avoid backfilling positions
- Restructuring law department

The city budget last year was \$241,971,767.37. This year it will be \$238,840,351.81. "I know that family budgets are tight right now. That's why we have put in the long hours to tighten our belts at City Hall," said O'Connell.

Items that are being funded:

- New police cruisers
- Repairs for the Hopewell Poll
- Liberty & Union Park renovation
- Taunton Alternative High School renovations
- Paving, sidewalks, and infrastructure improvements on Bay and County Streets
- Reconfiguration of Middleborough Ave. intersection to a four-way stop

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