City Passes Balanced Budget Adapts to Historical Elimination of Redevelopment

These have been incredibly tough times for families, businesses, and cities throughout the state and nation. Very few have escaped the negative impact of the “Great Recession,” and the City of Santa Fe Springs has certainly been no exception. Adding to our challenge was the State’s ill-fated decision to eliminate redevelopment.

Most, if not all cities, have struggled to balance budgets during the downturn in the economy. Many cities have had to cut budgets further due to the loss of the Redevelopment Agencies. As difficult and seemingly drastic as the budget modifications the City made were, in order to meet these challenges (budget cuts, changes to City services, employee layoffs and revisions to employee compensation and benefits), Santa Fe Springs has emerged through this crisis in far better shape than most cities.

Unlike some California cities (San Bernardino, Mammoth Lakes, Stockton) who have gone bankrupt, and the scores of other cities who are on the verge of doing so, the City of Santa Fe Springs did what it needed to do to adjust to its new fiscal outlook and acted responsibly to make prudent, yet difficult, budget-related decisions that have not only resulted in a balanced budget, but have reduced the City’s structural deficit and strengthened its reserves. All this puts the City in a far better financial position than it has been in years.

How Did We Do It?

In the wake of the State’s decision to eliminate redevelopment, the City embraced the following message: Clearly, the City of Santa Fe Springs can no longer do business as usual. We are not to successfully transform ourselves from a small City with a large redevelopment agency (formerly the 20th largest in the State), to just a small City with no redevelopment agency, we will need to do more than make superficial cuts. We will need to nudge City government for greater efficiency and a more streamlined organization to maintain as many services as possible and the jobs that support these services.

With the adoption of the balanced FY 2011-2012 budget, City officials can now say that the organization has transitioned and been retooled to provide a more efficient and streamlined provision of services. Making this transition would not be possible without the commitment and collaboration of the community—large and the City’s employee groups. At a special meeting on July 3rd, the City Council approved labor agreements with the City’s three employee groups that enact significantly greater contributions to retirement and medical benefit costs, the savings of which to the City will equal over $2 million in this fiscal year, and will increase in value the following year. Greater savings will be achieved in subsequent years, as new hires will be subject to new benefit packages that contain reduced retirement formulas and even greater employee benefit contributions.

The net impact of the elimination of redevelopment on the City’s budget was $13.4 million. The significant reductions in labor costs were just a part of a multi-layered plan that attempted to spread the redevelopment-related budget cuts across the organization, so as to minimize the impact on any one stakeholder group. Some of the budget modifications, such as the reduced City staffing levels (due to layoffs), are more noticeably felt, while others, such as more changes to programs, events, and services, are less so. Nonetheless, every part of the organization has been affected by the massive budget shortfall created by the elimination of redevelopment and the requisite budget modifications. In making these difficult decisions, the City did so with the vision of creating stability for the organization and thus the community, so that it could remain fiscally strong and move forward to continue to be the City of Santa Fe Springs that we all know. Suffice to say, the City has done what it needed to do to adjust to its new circumstances, so as to be able to once again live within its means.

As you will see, the City is a much leaner organization than the Santa Fe Springs of yesteryear (even last year). Although the new Santa Fe Springs is a smaller organization, the City is still very much rooted in the past, with the same spirit and dedication that has been the hallmark of this community for over 50 years. We are no longer the 20th largest Redevelopment Agency in the State, and we will no longer benefit from the revenue that redevelopment brought to our community, and now that redevelopment is gone, we must contend with the fact that we are now just a small sized City of 17,000 residents, but that does not mean that we are “just another City.” The State may have taken our dollars, but they cannot touch our most precious asset, which is the commitment and involvement of our residents, businesses, and employees. Redevelopment or no redevelopment, Santa Fe Springs is, and will always be, a great place to live, work, and play.
City Council Update

City Council meetings are held at 6 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursdays of every month at City Hall. For details, call the City Clerk’s office at 868-0901, Ext. 7314. For new Council meeting minutes and archives of past minutes, visit www.santafesprings.org.

July thru August, 2012

• The City Council reached agreements with the City’s three employee labor groups for two-year MOUs that include pension reforms to help balance the City budget.
• The City Council authorized the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company to proceed with all railroad work needed to support the Valley View Avenue Grade Separation Project.
• The City Council directed staff to reduce City Council pay to the level prior to January 2012.
• Joseph Serrano, Sr. resigned from the City Council. The City Council elected to appoint Laurie Rios to serve the remainder of former Councilmember Serrano’s term, which ends November, 2015.
• The City Council reached agreements with the City’s three employee labor groups for two-year MOUs that include pension reforms to help balance the City budget.

Interstate 5 South Corridor Undergoing Improvements

The Golden State Freeway (I-5) is a key transportation route and one of the state’s most heavily-used corridors. To ease traffic congestion, the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will improve the I-5 South Corridor, which consists of six separate projects. The I-5/Carmenita Road Interchange Project is the first of six projects that will be completed with the goal of easing traffic congestion and improving traffic flow along the I-5 corridor between the Orange County line and the I-605. Completion of this project will significantly improve access to the I-5 Freeway and circulation in this area. Work continues on this segment as several utilities are relocating their facilities to the new frontage road areas.

The I-5/Alondra Boulevard segment is the second project to start construction. This project will widen the I-5 Freeway to add one additional lane in each direction and realign and upgrade adjacent frontage roads. In addition, the project involves the reconstruction of a new overpass where Alondra Boulevard crosses the I-5 Freeway. The reconstruction of the bridge will cause the bridge to be removed and the road will be closed to through traffic as a result.

Caltrans recently opened bids for two separate segments I-5/Rosecrans Avenue and I-5/Imperial Highway. Caltrans is in the process of selecting a contractor and issuing an award of contract for both of these segments. Construction is scheduled to start on these segments in the Spring of 2013. In 2013, all six projects, totaling close to $1.6 billion will be under construction and are expected to be complete in 2016.

Caltrans and the City of Santa Fe Springs are working cooperatively to make sure the public, affected businesses, and residents, are kept informed about the progress of the project. More information is available by visiting the project website at http://www.i-5info.com. The website is a valuable source of information and provides the opportunity to register to receive alerts about construction. Residents and businesses may also visit the Advocacy Office at Norwalk City Hall, located at 12700 Norwalk Boulevard (inside the City of Norwalk Information Office).

Seismic Study Conducted by Local Energy Company

BreitBurn Energy and project manager company, LA Seismic, have been working on a Heritage Seismic Imaging Project this past month. LA Seismic is in the process of creating a sub-surface map of the greater Santa Fe Springs area. The Heritage Seismic Imaging Project is conducted on all major roads of the City. The study will continue for about 3 weeks on all major roads. To find out more about the equipment used to conduct the surveys, how it works, and potential impacts, visit www.heritageseismicimaging.com. More information is available by calling 562-883-9010.

Tutor Training Workshop is October 9, 11, 16, & 18 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. (registration required)
Utility Assistance Programs

The City of Santa Fe Springs provides several programs to provide utility payment assistance to members of the community meeting income guidelines. The programs are administered through the Family and Human Services Division, which partners with the local United Way for two of the programs to assist families in need during times of financial hardship.

Edison Assistance Fund (EAF)

Funding is provided by the United Way as available, typically beginning in June and ending when funds are depleted. In order to qualify you must meet the household income guidelines indicated below. In order to apply you must be the person whose name is on the utility bill, bring your California driver's license or identification, your original most current Edison bill, and your proof of income for all household members who receive any income. There are no residency requirements for this program.

Gas Assistance Fund (GAF)

Funding is provided by the United Way as available, typically beginning in February and ending when funds are depleted. In order to qualify you must meet the household income guidelines indicated below. In order to apply, you must be the person whose name is on the utility bill, bring your California driver's license or identification, your original most current Gas bill, and your proof of income for all household members who receive any income. There are no residency requirements for this program.

HEAP Income Guidelines 2012

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Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

HEAP is a federally funded program that provides financial assistance to supplement a household's annual energy cost. The Gus Velasco Neighborhood Center has partnered with the Long Beach Community Action Partnership to provide outreach for their HEAP Program. This program is available year round, or as funds become available. In order to qualify, you must meet the income guidelines indicated below. To apply to HEAP you are required to submit the following documents: original current electric bill, original current gas bill, (both electric & gas bills must be provided), copies of all household income (for the past 30 days), for all adults 18 years or older, a valid California driver's license or a valid California picture I.D., and the applicant's Social Security number. There are no residency requirements for this program.

Additional Utility Assistance for Santa Fe Springs Only

Family and Human Services Fund (FHSF)

Family and Human Services funds are available only to low income Santa Fe Springs residents, (on a one time basis only) to assist them during times of true financial hardship. These funds may be utilized to prevent shut off of critical utilities such as water, gas, or electricity, as well as for other basic needs. These funds are available through donations from residents, businesses, and organizations in the community. To apply you must bring in your current bank statements and proof of income for all adults in the household, as well as documentation of all bills and expenses within the household. A thorough financial assessment will be completed and eligibility is determined on a case by case basis.

If you would like to donate to the Family and Human Services Fund, or would like any additional information on any of the programs mentioned above, call the Gus Velasco Neighborhood Center at 692-0261.

Annual Pow Wow at Heritage Park

Heritage Park will once again be the site for the annual Pow Wow. The event will be held November 3rd & 4th at 10 a.m. and will celebrate Native American life through dancing, singing, drumming, and food. Exhibitors will be on hand to offer Native American-made products such as jewelry, clothing, blankets, and pottery. This event is free and plenty of parking will be available. Call Heritage Park at 946-6476 for more information.

This event is hosted but not funded by the City of Santa Fe Springs.
SFS Chamber News

47th Annual Citizenship Awards Reception
Thursday, November 15
Celebrating 47 Years of Volunteerism!

The City of Santa Fe Springs and the Chamber of Commerce are pleased to honor the 2012 Citizens of the Year for their extraordinary contributions to this community, at an afternoon reception, Thursday, November 15th. The reception will be held from 2 - 3:30 p.m. at Town Center Hall.

The Citizenship Awards Committee, made up of several members of the Santa Fe Springs residential and business communities will select this year’s recipients.

Reservations will be available to residential and business citizens of Santa Fe Springs beginning November 1st. Please call the Chamber of Commerce at 944-1616 to reserve your seat or e-mail Lindsay@sfschamber.com.

Join the Santa Fe Springs Chamber/League Youth Enrichment Fund Mentoring Team

The Santa Fe Springs Chamber/League Youth Enrichment Fund is looking for adults in the community who have a desire to provide young students with support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement, and constructive examples. By becoming a mentor, you will have the opportunity to be a role model and encourage a student to be successful by providing them guidance in helping them plan for his/her future. Through activities such as Job Shadow Day, College Visits, and Business Breakfasts, students get “hands on” exposure to reliable role models in a professional environment while developing interpersonal skills and learning about life and business. The Mentor Program is a nine month structured program which runs in partnership with Santa Fe High School’s Business Academy. All activities take place from October, 2012 through June, 2013. The only qualifications are a friendly attitude and a desire to positively influence the life of a young person. If you are interested in participating in the Mentor Program, call the Chamber office at 944-1616.

Donate your Car, Truck, RV or Boat to the Santa Fe Springs Chamber/League Youth Enrichment Fund

You can donate your car, running or not, to Cars4Causes. Tell them you want the proceeds to go to The Santa Fe Springs Chamber/League Youth Enrichment Fund. We benefit from the donation and you get a tax deduction.

1-800-766-CARE (1-800-2273)
www.cars4causes.net