



FY 2011-2012
Budget Proposal
—
Public Hearing
Comments

The following document contains citizen comments and questions received during the June 7, 2011 Public Hearing regarding the FY 2011-2012 proposed annual budget. These comments have been paraphrased as closely as possible. Questions of a rhetorical nature have been treated as a comment rather than a question seeking an explanation regarding specific items contained in the proposed budget.

To view the complete FY 2011-2012 Budget Proposal, please visit:

http://www.cityofowasso.com/budget_1112/index.html.

Hard copies of the budget may be viewed at City Hall or at the Owasso Public Library. Please contact the Office of the City Manager at 918.376.1502 with any questions regarding the budget or this document.

SPEAKER 1

There are a lot of people in our community who can't afford the increase in the fee and can barely pay for their living expenses now. Just recently, the City increased the water cut-off fee from \$25.00 to \$100.00* to get it reinstated. Are we doing the basic services of government, or are we doing more than is necessary?

Government won't shrink its self; you need to listen to the people and lower taxes.

Government shouldn't pay for sports when people are hurting. Government should not provide the frills, just the basic necessary services. There is no official opinion on record at the Attorney General's office regarding Advalorem taxes

**Staff Note: In the event that a resident's water service is disconnected due to non-payment, the City assesses a charge of \$25 in the form of a default payment fee. In 2010, the OPWA Trustees approved the establishment of an additional \$50 fee to be applied to accounts where a meter is required to be locked or pulled as a result of non-payment on a utility account; for a total of \$75.00. The \$50 fee will be split and applied as a \$25 refundable deposit towards the customer account and a \$25 non-refundable fee to cover the associated costs incurred as a result of dispatching a Public Works employee to lock or pull the meter.*

SPEAKER 2

We complain about taxes but recovering from the affects of crime will cost much more than \$12 per year.

SPEAKER 3

We moved to Owasso in 1998 to raise our kids, we were impressed by the town then and continue to be impressed. I am involved in youth sports and the city is very supportive of our efforts. You don't see that in many cities and towns that we travel to.

No one likes higher fees and taxes, but it is important to invest in your community.

SPEAKER 4

I personally don't want to pay for anything; the city needs to manage their money better.

QUESTION: If the police needs more money, why don't you just raise their quota for ticket writing or raise the cost of the tickets? (ANSWER: There is no Police Department policy, nor has there been, that directs Officers to write a minimum or maximum number of tickets per day, week, month, or year. The goal of the Police Department is to enforce the law equitably, not to generate revenues.)

I worked for the City of Bixby and believe me, I know about city's wasting money. You need to figure out another way to fund activities.

SPEAKER 5

I am not a big fan of handouts or government waste, but the \$1 fee increase is not that. I want Owasso to be a safe place for me and my family. Regardless of your profession, you need to proper equipment to do a better job. When you say fees and taxes, it strikes fear into people. I work with Senior Citizens and their health and safety are at risk if public safety fails.

SPEAKER 6

I am in favor of the \$1 fee. Kids and families will be affected if there is a decrease in public safety; I want to know that the officer responding will have the best equipment and training not just to protect my family but to protect himself. No one likes spending more money, but \$1 per month can be cut from anyone's budget.

We spend endless dollars on our military for equipment and training, your local law enforcement are the soldiers in our town and deserve the capital needed to do their jobs.

SPEAKER 7

I have lived here 30 years and owned a business in Owasso for 4 years; we love Owasso and consider it the safest town in Oklahoma.

My business was a victim of a robbery and even though the police department couldn't afford it, they set up a sting operation to catch the criminal.

I looked at my utility bill before tonight's meeting and trash pickup for \$13.00 per month is very important to my family and so is \$6.00 per month for an ambulance. \$1.00 per month is important to citizen safety.

SPEAKER 8

Owasso resident and reserve officer, I volunteer time to give back to community. I can account that the police cars are old and run down. \$1.00 per month is not too much to ask for increased public safety.

SPEAKER 9

I have lived in Owasso for 56 years. \$8.00 per year is not a lot but everything has gone up – food, utilities, gas, and it has got to stop. How do you expect people to live when they don't have a job? What about the unemployed? What happens when their unemployment runs out? More people than ever are using the local food pantries, if you are hungry how are you going to pay the \$8.00?

SPEAKER 10

I am in favor of the proposed budget. When you look at what is being spent and why you can see. I want to make sure the Police Department has the proper tools and that we are prepared for what comes our way. But, short term solutions are a slippery slope for long term problems. Our government can't nickel and dime our community without reevaluating in a couple of years. We need to protect the financial liberty of our residents and when sales tax goes up we must cut fees and taxes.

SPEAKER 10 (CONT.D)

I have heard that the OEDA is recommending not to fund fireworks from the Hotel Tax. QUESTION: Is that correct? (ANSWER: Yes.) This (funding fireworks) sounds like a silly thing, but when you think about all of the things Owasso provides for us, like a golf course and fireworks, and consider that we are in an economic crises, we have to cut somewhere. When you cut things like these, we lose our quality of life and economical development edge that draws people here.

SPEAKER 11

The golf course is needed – you can't attract new development and people without these types of things. The city has done more with less and I think part of the solution is the strong neighborhood program that was voted on by the people. It is our responsibility as a citizen to seek out and assist others by building strong neighborhoods. I challenge all residents to get actively involved in the program and see what you can do to help.

SPEAKER 12

I am a business owner and as such it is important to maintain Owasso as a safe town. I am in favor of the budget and think you should consider it.

SPEAKER 13

I am in favor of the budget as proposed. The \$1.00 fee is not just adding money to a bill, it is freeing up money to keep other departments in the city going. We need to pressure our legislature to find new ways to fund government.

Cities are in trouble nationwide and are competing with each other, jobs are moving and people are leaving to find the land of opportunity. It comes down to cities providing a quality of life. Police, Fire, schools, retail, and good city government draw people.

I saw an e-mail circulated about speaking against adding city employees. Owasso has grown 50% in the last ten years; we need additional employees to meet the needs of a growing community.

Look at the tax collections, Owasso has gone from \$500,000 per month to averaging over \$1million per month; look at the home values, they are holding and some growing. We need to fund those things that increase the quality of living for everyone. Owasso is seeing a \$150 million per year leakage in sales tax from the 74055 area code. The way to bring money back to the community is to support investment in the community. We must maintain what we started years ago.

SPEAKER 14

A member of the police department and responsible for fleet management. The police department policy for vehicle replacement is to replace vehicle after 100,000 miles or 7 years of use. We currently have 21 of 49 vehicles that are outside of this. We have the need; please find a way to fund it.

SPEAKER 15

No one is saying cut public safety, but look at the budget and see what you can cut that is not essential. What can we live without?

SPEAKER 16

Resident since 1971 and proud of our small town. I am in favor of the \$1.00 fee but there has to be somewhere else to cut from. Surely we can find something in the budget to cut. It is important to remember where we are and how we got here.

SPEAKER 17

People give and that is the community we live in. Quality of life is why we live here. I am in favor of the budget as a whole and happy that our government is focusing on the quality of life. We need to give the men and women the tools they need to do the best job possible. Don't restrict funding based on the needs of a few, but find ways to help those few. We can't pick the budget apart for select groups; it must benefit the whole community.

SPEAKER 18

City employee for 30 years. It is difficult to sometimes see from the outside, but employees are spending your money wisely. The community enjoys the current quality of life because the employees are invested. Most employees are also citizens of Owasso and will be paying the fees and taxes too. In order to maintain a quality living, cities have to have funding. Cities are what they are because of citizen investment.

SPEAKER 19

Are you using funds wisely? I know of an incident where a child was locked in a car and we sent three police cars, one fire truck, a sheriff deputy, and an ambulance. We don't need that many.

SPEAKER 20

I am in favor the \$1.00 fee and appreciate the police and fire; but social security hasn't seen a raise in three years and the priority should be to cut other parts of the budget.

SPEAKER 21

I own a business in Owasso and understand that you won't make everyone happy. To see the Fire Department giving up some of its funds to the Police department says a lot about our employees. Mr. Ray recommends a budget that he thinks best fits our community and where we want to go. He has a vision for the next 10-20 years and an increase in taxes to see what we want for our community may be needed. It may take a dollar or two and I hate taxes too, I agree that our Federal and even State government is too big, but those are different entities than our local government.