

FY 2024 Budget Survey and Process Review

Agenda

- Intro
- Brief review of staff survey results
- Review of Board of Commissioners survey results
- Common themes/ideas
- Minor (process) changes that staff can implement
- Substantive (policy) changes that need BOC action

Introduction

- Upon adoption of annual operating budget, surveys are sent to both BOC members and staff (department directors, departmental budget managers) to collect feedback on processes and formulate needed changes (if any)
 - Multiple new board members this year and more feedback provided in the survey, staff felt it was important to discuss the overall budget process and any potential changes with the Board of Commissioners
- Staff noted some common themes and some minor adjustments as well as some requested changes that were more substantive and we would like Board guidance before implementing
- Only discussing feedback received from survey
 - In order to not omit any feedback received elsewhere (ex: in person at a work session or via email), this presentation focuses only on feedback submitted through the survey
- Also sent a survey to staff (department directors and their assigned budget staff) – this survey is more technical to ensure that we are assisting departments with the technical aspects of budget preparation
 - DOES include questions about departmental budget meetings and follow-up after the presentation of the Manager's Recommended Budget

Staff Survey

- Generally positive feedback overall
- Positive feedback about:
 - Budget kickoff sessions – thorough information presented
 - Budget labs (one-on-one help sessions)
 - Departmental budget meetings
- Area for improvement:
 - Munis (Financial software) manual – reorganize to better match workflow of budget process, be even more thorough (make no assumptions of understanding by any staff)

Budget Calendar

- Multiple Commissioners felt current calendar was adequate
- Direct communication with independent entities/elected officials (ex: Sheriff, Board of Elections)
- Adjustment of CIP timeline, specifically during election years when new members may come onto the Board
- Commissioners to be sent all department requests (currently budgeted and expansion items) and individual commissioner expansion requests
- Commissioners to be asked to prioritize all expansion requests
- Opportunity (early in the year) to revisit budget priorities in the event of significant changes in circumstances

Retreat (General)

- Was the information provided at the retreat and one-on-one sessions helpful to you?
 - 4 “Yes” responses, 1 did not respond
- Closer integration and tracking between strategic plan and annual plan.
 - Desire to make funding decisions based on what brings specific outcomes toward Plan Chatham in that fiscal year.
- Commissioners to be sent/informed of all requests made by each dept/commissioner/manager
- Commissioners asked to prioritize expansion items and asked explicitly if there are items they wish to be added
- Recognition of difficulty for new Board members to fully engage so early in their term
- Recognition of value of expert voices (ex: financial consultants) and receiving information in advance

Retreat (Heads Up)

- Does "Heads Up" presentation help you to understand department input?
 - 4 "Yes" responses, 1 "No" response
- Tracking/mapping spreadsheets like were used in recommended budget discussions for expansion request items
- Each department to have a metric to compare their past/current performance as a tool to prioritize expansion items, identify low performance areas, and set goals and expectations
- Hearing the "why" may help Board to understand a request better

Recommended Budget Document

- Does the Recommended Budget document provide you with the information you need?
 - 4 “Yes” responses, 1 “No” response
- Encourage staff to integrate/map numbers (as they’re being developed and finalized) with strategic plan and annual plan
- See property tax raised per region (zip code, BOC districts, precincts, others?) and “missed” property tax per region (due to programs that keep property tax payment lower than full assessed value)
- Dollar bill graphic reflecting allocation of funds done on a regional level (zip code, BOC districts, precincts, others?)
- More detailed break downs (specifically transfers in and out), more on the basics

Recommended CIP

- Does the Recommended CIP document provide you with the information you need?
 - 5 “Yes” responses
- Desire for changes around timing of process

Other Improvements

- Chatham County Schools budget request/follow-up discussion
- Budget/CIP Work Session(s) Agenda creation
- Historical budget information (ex: percentage breakdowns of expenditures by category over time)
- Budget similarities/differences with counties of comparable size? How do we compare to neighboring counties in various statistical areas (examples: population, county income)

Common Themes/Ideas

- Additional information throughout budget process
 - In advance, when available and possible
- New/Additional data viewpoints – additional data and/or enhanced level of detail
- Better/stronger linkages between funding decisions and stated goals/priorities of the Board
- Similarly, stronger focus on performance data (where applicable and available)

Minor Changes

- Change of CIP timeline – no impact in FY2025 Operating Budget or FY2025-2031 CIP, potential impact for FY2026
 - Need Board guidance sometime during the next fiscal year and Board would ultimately vote on change when approving FY2026 budget
- Opportunity to revisit budget priorities mid-year – Board has broad authority on budget adjustments during the year
 - Regularly scheduled quarterly budget updates provide pre-built opportunities to discuss County's budget position and could include time to revisit budget priorities (if circumstances allow)

Minor Changes continued...

- Enhance use of data mapping/integration between funding decisions/strategic plan – can work to implement beginning with FY2025 budget process
 - Will likely be a multi-year process to get fully integrated throughout organization
- Additional supplemental data – we can provide additional supplemental data throughout the budget process
 - Budget document is likely not the best place for this supplemental data, but we can provide to BOC and make available to the public in a separate link/attachment

Substantive Policy Changes

- Direct communication with independent entities – need Board guidance on moving forward with this request as it would be a change to how we have historically done business and prepared the Manager’s Recommended Budget
 - Staff can dedicate time at annual retreat for initial conversation and budget work session(s) for discussion on recommended budget
- Creation of Budget/CIP Work Session Agendas (including Budget retreat) – historically, staff have been responsible for creating these agendas, need guidance on if the Board would like to move away from this method
 - Board has often instructed staff (in advance) to prepare specific topics for discussion/review at the retreat

Substantive Policy Changes continued...

- Commissioners sent all department requests (currently budgeted and expansion) – Commissioners receive high level overview (in budget document) of total requested amounts for both continuation and expansion budget requests (as well as Manager's Recommended funding for each)
 - If desired by the Board, staff can provide line-item detail of all requested/recommended budget amounts for entire organization as well as supplemental materials.
 - Line-item report is approximately 300 pages
 - Supplemental materials for each expansion request are (on average 5-10 pages)
 - Supplemental materials for continuation requests (ex: updated quotes on recurring contracts) average 10-20 pages per department
- Individual Commissioner expansion requests – historically, individual commissioners have not submitted expansion requests during the budget process
 - Any directive (request) from the Board to the Manager (or staff) should come from a majority of the Board

Substantive Policy Changes continued...

- Commissioner prioritization of expansion requests – in previous years, individual commissioners have not been involved in prioritization of expansion requests in advance of the Manager submitting the Recommended Budget to the Board
 - A majority of the Board may ultimately decide to fund, or not fund, any request that has been submitted
 - Additionally, a majority of the Board may include funding for a program/position/initiative that was not requested in the Manager's Recommended Budget

Questions/Discussion
