



Hemet-San Jacinto

San Jacinto council to review \$59.6 million spending plan



[POD ▶ Download story podcast](#)

10:00 PM PDT on Wednesday, May 2, 2007

By **STEVE FETBRANDT**
The Press-Enterprise

SAN JACINTO - A proposed spending package of \$59.6 million will be unveiled before the City Council at tonight's meeting--one that calls for more police officers and the addition of paramedics at both fire stations.

"The proposed budget addresses the needs of a growing city," City Manager Barry McClellan said in his written budget report. "These include growth in service, maintaining cost-effective service levels and building the city's infrastructure to support growth."

In addition to general expenses, the budget includes \$36.4 million for new and ongoing capital improvements -- mostly for road upgrades -- but not of all that is likely to be used in the fiscal year, said Finance Director Bernie Simon. The city budgeted \$26 million for that purpose this year but actually spent \$8 million.

McClellan said there will be a host of continuing capital improvements in the coming year, including rehabilitation of the Ramona Expressway from Sanderson Avenue to the western city limits, plus general street resurfacing and rehabilitation. Money also will be set aside to widen Sanderson from Esplanade Avenue to the Ramona Expressway, and widen Esplanade from State Street to Sanderson.

Future street projects include downtown pavement rehabilitation, widening of Washington Avenue and Hewitt Street, traffic signals at Hewitt and Commonwealth Avenue, and sidewalk infill work.

McClellan said the city's financial position remains solid even though developer fees are down. The city has enough reserves to meet expenses in the new fiscal year, which starts July 1.

Property taxes continue to rise because of new-home construction, and sales-tax revenue should increase sizably in fiscal year 2007-08 because of the opening of several new businesses, including the Wal-Mart Supercenter on San Jacinto Avenue and the Stater Bros. Market at State Street and the Ramona Expressway.

McClellan said sales-tax revenue could jump by as much as \$550,000 in the coming year.

More Police, Paramedics

"Because of this, the City Council is able to direct significant resources to the highest priority of local government--public safety," McClellan said. "Just last year, the city added a new fire station and 3.5 full-time sworn police officers. This year, it is proposed to add four more sworn police officers and to upgrade six firefighter/engineer positions to paramedics in order to provide faster advance life support to those in need of medical aid."

Development processing fees overall are expected to drop by about one-third to one-half in the new year, McClellan said.

"The overall health of the general fund will allow the (City) Council to make decisions to increase service levels in public safety and in non-general-fund operating budgets, such as public works and special districts," he said.

The new budget, which is expected to be approved by the City Council in early June, calls for \$495,000 in additional spending to add four sworn police officers and one non-sworn community services officer. San Jacinto Police Chief Kevin Vest has recommended adding a school resource officer at San Jacinto High School, one full-time deputy to handle registration and monitoring of convicted sex offenders, and two extra Problem Oriented Policing officers.

The next largest expenditure would be \$200,000 on a city paramedic program. The funding would pay for one paramedic per shift at both of the city's fire stations. Hospital transport service would continue to be provided by the American Medical Response ambulance company.

Full-Time City Engineer

The proposed budget calls for hiring a full-time city engineer to serve the growing population, which is now at 35,000. The alternative, McClellan said, would be to expand the existing contract with the city's consulting engineer to provide a full-time, dedicated deputy city engineer.

"It is anticipated that the position would pay in the range of \$100,000 to \$120,000 per year plus benefits," he said.

San Jacinto also needs to beef up its public-works staff by four positions at a cost of \$60,000, McClellan said, and add a senior accountant at a cost of \$95,000 to manage the books for the city's special districts, such as lighting and landscaping.

As for reserves, McClellan said the projected year-end fund balance as of June 30 is \$6,857,450.

"I recommend that \$4 million be transferred to the contingency reserve and \$2,857,450 to the capital-projects reserve," he said. "I am also recommending that we transfer \$600,000 from the \$4 million development ... reserve to the general-fund operating fund to balance that portion of the budget."

Contingency reserves were down from \$3 million to \$1.37 million during the current year, McClellan said. Transferring the \$4 million from the 2006-07 fund balance would bring the contingency reserve to \$5.37 million next year.

Reach Steve Fetbrandt at 951-763-3473 or sfetbrandt@PE.com
