



For Immediate Release

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STATEMENT FROM THE JACKSON CITY COUNCIL ON ITS PROPOSED BUDGET PLAN

Jackson City Council presents comprehensive budget plan to prevent Mayor's proposed tax hike

(Jackson, Miss.) -- Over the past several days, the Jackson City Council has heard presentations from representatives from each of the city's departments. At the onset of this process, we have made it clear that we would look at every option to put the city on sound financial ground. After review of the Mayor's proposal for an 8% tax increase and hearing directly from department heads, we believe there are savings opportunities that will allow the city to avoid Mayor Yarber's proposed tax increase and minimize, although not eliminate, the need for proposed furloughs.

The Council has gone through the budget line by line has presented to the Mayor and to the Citizens of Jackson a budget plan that is financially prudent and yet protects a quality of life the citizens of Jackson can be proud of. The budget plan we are proposing will require cuts beyond what the Mayor has already offered, and will leave no choice but to let go of some valued city employees. However, this plan does not lower the number of police officers or fire fighters who presently serve. In addition to not compromising on public safety, the Council believes that a handful of staff reductions here at city hall can help lessen the blow to our employees out in the streets who provide the most important work to citizens.

Key Cuts Include:

- **\$1,200,000 Cut to unessential technology and equipment purchases.**
- **\$1,018,197.96 Cut to vacant positions in various departments.**
- **\$494,250 Cuts in City Hall**
- **\$115,000 Cut to outside consultants in Planning Department**

"We have been told by the Mayor that, if we do not raise the tax rate by 8%, we will need to find \$5,851,290 of additional savings elsewhere in the budget" explained Council President Melvin Priester. "We have also been told by the Mayor that cutting people's salaries by a furlough will net approximately 3 million dollars in savings in our budget" noted Council Vice-President Tyrone Hendrix. **By cutting the budget in the manner proposed by Council, the City will save approximately \$7,640,858.96.** "That's enough not to raise takes and lessen the need for a furlough, particularly among city workers who are most vulnerable," says Councilman De'Keither Stamps. **FULL PLAN ATTACHED BELOW.**

**JACKSON CITY COUCIL'S COMPREHENSIVE BUDGET PLAN TO
PREVENT PROPOSED TAX INCREASE**

The City Council proposes making the following cuts to the budget:

1. Reduce the City's allocation to the zoo from 1.2 million dollars per year to \$600,000 for right now. We love the zoo and recognize its importance to the city. But if we raise taxes, there won't be a city left to support the zoo. We believe, after looking at the budget that if the mayor follows the revenue and budgetary suggestions of the council over the next few months, there will be enough revenue before the end of the fiscal year to give the zoo a second payment of \$600,000.

Savings from Cut to Zoo = \$600,000

2. We should reduce the amount of money we are holding in reserve from the general fund for unlikely financial contingencies. Right now, we are proposing to budget 4,310,000 in reserve on a matter with the JRA where JRA is likely to refinance the matter itself and not need any of that money. Rather than keep that full amount in reserve, the council proposes reducing that reserve by 2.8 million (to \$1,510,000).

Cut to JRA commitment = \$2,800,000

3. Freeze an additional \$1,000,000 in unfilled positions in the police department. This fiscal year, there are approximately 80 budgeted, but unfilled positions in the police department. The mayor has proposed freezing 50 of those positions. If we froze the remaining 30 that would save \$1,239,000. The Council proposes meeting in the middle and freezing 1,000,000 million of the remaining thirty positions. The police department already plans not to hold a recruiting class this year. These positions have been unfilled for several years. Most importantly, through the leadership of Chief Vance, we have seen a decrease in crime this year with the present size of our force. While we always wish we had more officers, these financial times require us to have a budget that is the size of the force we have rather than the force we wish we had.

We similarly propose freezing additional vacant and unfilled positions in the fire department and public works department. With regards to Fire, we asked the chief if freezing these positions would impact the City's Fire rating and he said no. Therefore although we again would like to increase our number of firemen, we must budget for the force we have in these times.

Based on the presentation by the public works director, the City has an additional \$600,000 of unfilled, currently vacant position. We propose freezing those positions. Significantly, the Public Works department will still have \$120,000 of room to fill some positions. More importantly, if the public works department functions in the manner we believe it can under the leadership of Director Powell, the city will be in a better position later in the year and may be able to revise the department's budget.

Savings from freezing additional positions in Fire, JPD, and Public Works:

Public Works	\$600,000.00
JPD	\$1,000,000.00
Fire	\$418,197.96

Total = \$1,018,197.96.

4. We must cut costs in City Hall. After hearing the department heads make their presentations and reviewing the staffing levels, we must unfortunately accept that we are top heavy in the City. Therefore, the Council proposes reducing the budget for the Office of Constituent Services, the Clerk's Office, and the Chief Administrative Officer by 486,000. More specifically, the Council proposes reducing the Clerk's Office salary line by \$200,000 from its 2015 budget, the Office of Constituent Services should be reduced by \$200,000 from its proposed budget of \$469,742, and the Chief Administrative Office should reduce its budget by \$86,000. The Council has decided that it will reach this cut through a combination of freezing positions and terminations, this is not something we enjoy but a few cuts at the top of the organization chart are what we need to save the people who really keep Jackson working. Likewise, if the mayor is willing to cut his salary 5%, the Council is willing to pitch in too, thus saving \$8,250.

Savings from additional cuts to Clerk's Office, Constituent Services, and Chief Administrative office: \$200,000 + \$200,000 + 86,000 +8,250 = \$494,250

5. We must cut costs associated with municipal court. Right now, there are \$120,000 worth of budgeted, but unfilled positions at the municipal court. We propose freezing those positions.

Freeze Vacancies at Municipal Court = \$120,000

6. In these tight financial times, we have to cut the costs we spend on outside consultants and studies. During the budget hearings, the Department of Planning requested 175,000 to hire outside consultants to do two studies. A comprehensive plan for \$150,000 and an operations study for \$25,000. We can't afford either right now. Therefore the Council proposes cutting \$115,000 in other professional services from the Planning Department's Budget.

Cut Other Professional Services from Planning Department = \$115,000

7. In addition to cutting back on outside consultants, we have to cut back on other expenses such as computer software and equipment. The office of information technology has requested \$2,460,203 for computer software, other professional services, and data processing equipment. The council has identified several projects that are not essential in these difficult times and so we propose cutting this amount \$1,200,000.

Cut to computer software, other professional services, and data processing equipment = \$1,200,000.

8. The City must cut what it spends on travel. The Council proposes several cuts to travel, dues, and memberships and dues, etc., for itself, the administration, and the clerk's office totaling \$37,434. We also propose an additional \$58,000 cut in travel from all other departments in the City.

Elected Official and Staff Travel Cuts = \$37,434 +\$58,000 = \$95,434

9. In recent weeks, the Council has approved a number of contracts on an expedited basis because we knew that they would result in cuts to our budget. One of those contracts is for a company called medical analysis to do our drug testing for free. The second contract was for a company to take over senior transit for us. During budget hearing we asked whether the contracts had been properly accounted for yet and we were told that they were not reflected yet despite being certain savings. If the value of these contracts is recognized we can cut \$87,000 from our budget for drug testing and \$100,000 for senior transit.

Cut from Contract Savings = \$187,000

In total, this proposal cuts **\$7,640,858.96** from the proposed budget without sacrificing our commitment to public safety, without mass layoffs, and without hurting our ability to do the city's work. The Council believes in addition to this amount there may be room for additional cuts of up to 100,000 in the area of parks and recreation.

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