



Thoughts . . . Election 2013 and the Budget

My location and view of City Hall will give me a front row seat for the upcoming 2013 city budget discussions. The election changed the City Commission makeup by two faces, but did it really make any difference?

The 2011 election was billed as a game changer. John Matta, Wynn Butler, Rich Jankovich and incumbent Commissioner Loren Pepperd were billed as leaning to the conservative right. Sure, on a 3-2 vote a couple of ordinances were changed and mass transit was not funded. But the 3-2 votes clearly put Rich Jankovich on the left side of the ledger (and demonstrated that what is said during a campaign is not always translated into action). So after the first few months the folks thought three conservatives remained in the commission chairs.

The goal for budget year 2012 and 2013 was to do something about the out of control spending and the skyrocketing city debt. What was the result? In 2011 the mil levy was 41.917 and the City Debt was 225 million. Two years later the mil levy is 43.439 and the city debt is 270 million. A conservative commission was never elected. The 2013 budget increases and continued higher city debt were the product of a 3-2 vote, Jim Sherow, Rich Jankovich and Loren Pepperd.

The 2013 Commission will continue to vote just like the 2011 Commission. A couple of the newly elected Commissioners billed themselves as fiscal conservatives. I would not hold my breath on how they will vote when it comes to spending your tax dollars. We will see many 3-2 votes, with a resultant increase in taxes to fund library expansion, mass transit, airport terminal expansion, social services and city run day care; for starters. The recently passed ½ cent sales tax provided an opportunity to at least drive down the debt a million dollars a year. That tax will more than likely be a justification for more bonds. The city has a 326 million dollar debt limit. The newly elected commission will easily be able to achieve that milestone, because for them, a manageable debt is defined as anything under the credit card limit.



The voter turnout was 20.03% for the county. Only 1 in 5 folks took the time to vote. It only took 2700 to 3000 votes to win, but 34,597 people were registered. The vote count was - McCulloh 3,024 votes; Reddi 2,783; Jankovich 2,701; Nuss 2,324; Strawn 2,182; Ball 2,130 and Hogan 719. Congratulations to the winners and a further well done to the voters that supported their candidates, you may have gotten what you desired – but only time will tell. As for the spectator's in this affair I think you may have gotten what you deserve.

Mr. K