



City of Orange Township

29 North Day Street
Orange, New Jersey 07050

News Release

For Release: Immediate

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**Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. to hold Public Forum on Budget
Wednesday, December 10th 6:30-8:30pm. Council Chamber, City Hall. 29 North Day Street**

Statement by Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr.

On Wednesday, December 10th, Together with the directors of city departments, I will be holding the first in a series of monthly public forums. Because this forum comes in the midst of our work to prevent an 18% property tax increase, we will focus on the budget. However, we will answer questions about any issue affecting our city.

I invite all citizens and taxpayers to attend and participate. I invite you to hear my ideas on the budget and ways to cut spending and add revenues. You will be able to ask questions, receive answers, and express your opinions. If you are unable to attend, I invite you to watch the forum on Channel 35.

I want to emphasize that the large tax increase in the introduced budget reflects the condition of Orange that my administration inherited. I fully realize that an increase that large would seriously harm taxpayers.

Before we had finished our work of finding cuts and understanding their implications, we were forced to introduce the budget to satisfy a legal requirement needed to apply for State Emergency Aid. If we receive the aid, it will help us to lessen the tax increase.

My administration is looking at measures to repair our city's finances including a hiring freeze, eliminating and consolidating positions, restructuring debt, and lowering operating costs. I have asked each department head to examine ways to reduce current spending by 10 to 15 percent or more. We must look at downsizing municipal employment over a period of time just as other governments and businesses have been doing across America.

I will work diligently with the Council, the Citizens Budget Advisory Committee and others to minimize the tax increase.

