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# Mayor says budget has no tax increase

*Grants, union concessions credited with maintaining staffing levels in six-month plan*

By John Zucal  
Managing Editor

City administration officials said the budget they presented to the City Council is the first in more than 10 years without a municipal-tax increase.

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. presented a \$27.5 million budget for the transitional period to the council during its Sept. 20 meeting. It is slightly more than one-half of the \$53.1 million final budget for the 2011 fiscal year.

The city will operate under a six-month budget, through the end of the year, as it moves to a calendar-year budget cycle. As it will receive state aid for the

transition period and calendar year concurrently, administration officials were required to provide a budget projection to the state Local Finance Board before it granted approval in May. The projection then was \$26 million.

In his statement accompanying the proposed budget, Hawkins said no layoffs of city employees are expected. He stated 11 members of the city's municipal workers' union were returned from layoffs through \$600,000 in concessions during negotiations.

Hawkins also noted the concessions of the police and fire unions allowed for the restoration of the 12 firefighter positions which had been eliminated early this

year. Most of the laid-off personnel were rehired.

In addition, said Hawkins, the city will hire an additional 12 firefighters through a federal grant it received this year. A re-working of a police grant allowed for the return of five laid-off police officers.

"We looked for new ways to cut costs and for grant programs that would help relieve the burden on local taxpayers," Hawkins said in his statement. "With these savings, we expect to be able to hold taxes stable beyond the period of this six-month budget."

Officials said some aid would be deferred to 2013 to boost revenues in that budget.

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