

Orange remains without a budget

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With a little more than three months left until the end of the 2010 fiscal year, the city still does not have a final budget in place. That point was driven home last week during the City Council meeting by a former councilman, who reminded the current members about the schedule.

William Lewis, who represented the city's South Ward for 16 years, told council members that since the city does not have a working budget in place, city personnel could be spending more money than the city has without anyone knowing until it was too late.

"I there a budget? If not, you guys had better start getting on somebody because your deadline is June 30," said Lewis.

The current fiscal year ends on June 30. After that date, administration of Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. is to prepare a 2011 fiscal-year budget for submission to the council.

In the absence of a final approved budget, the city has been using temporary appropriations to pay its bills. The problem with that method, Lewis and others said, is that it defeats the purpose for having a budget.

"I am very, very disappointed this budget did not come before the council in March," said City Council Vice President Elroy Corbitt. "I believe it was supposed to be on the March 16 agenda, but it wasn't there. The proposed tax increase it contains is 4.3 percent, but that is not satisfactory to me. I'm not satisfied that's the best we can do."