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KANSAS CITY  
MISSOURI

## Office of the Mayor

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DATE: February 11, 2010  
TO: City Councilmembers  
FROM: Mayor Mark Funkhouser   
SUBJECT: Comments on Proposed FY 2010-11 Budget

This is the third budget I've worked on as Mayor. This is the third time this City Council is having to make do with significantly less revenue, yet our expenses continue to rise. This is the third time we are having to think through the implications of the situation on Kansas City families.

Some families I know very well. They belong to the city employees I've worked with for 20 years who are again being asked to deal with a wage freeze, and who are again being asked to do more with less resources. These families matter to me.

The other families I think of are the families I represent as Mayor, the families I am trying hard to put first as I carry out the duties of Mayor. These families matter enormously to me as well. And they must be highly considered as we deal with the most pressing challenge facing our city – building our population.

Population growth is the key to generating the revenue that is needed to provide quality services for our residents – namely public safety and basic services. And population growth will bring more businesses to our city, bringing with them jobs and neighborhood vitality. In essence, Kansas City will prosper once again.

This is why it is imperative that I address the three reasons people leave Kansas City or choose not to move here: fear of crime, dissatisfaction with basic services, and schools.

To do so, I have been a strong advocate of full funding for our police department.

To do so, I started a program called A City That Works, in order to target small amounts of money that have the ability to highly impact basic services. This program focuses attention on the five areas that are most important to our residents and have the greatest potential for improvement in citizen satisfaction levels.

And to do so, I am now turning my attention to the third area - our schools - through my Schools First initiative.

Fortunately, the new Acting City Manager, Troy Schulte, and I both believe in government reform. And we are both fiscal conservatives. I have studied the Acting City Manager's Submitted Budget, and I am pleased. I believe it is one of the most complete, most fiscally responsible and most transparent budgets I've seen in the twenty years that I've been a public servant for Kansas City. It directly addresses our structural imbalances. This is a budget I believe we can be proud of.

Last year I asked the City Manager and City Council to focus on what matters most to Kansas City's families. I believe the Acting City Manager has done that to a large extent in this year's budget. Services that matter most to Kansas City families are being kept whole as much as possible. This budget protects police funding, and it protects the neighborhood-level basic services our residents so clearly value.

As this Council now takes up the challenge of refining and adopting this document, I have full confidence in my Finance and Audit Committee Chairperson, Deb Hermann, to guide the process forward, including holding public budget hearings for residents, holding City Council hearings with each department, and managing the budget through the City Council process.

We as a Council have begun to turn the financial ship of our city government around for the better. Budget reform and discipline were needed to get us through this difficult economic period. The budget submitted to me includes such reforms and discipline. This budget also positions Kansas City well. As the economy recovers and we begin to see revenue growth, we will be able to once again build a city we are proud to live in.

While I agree with the vast majority of the budget submitted to me there are a few changes I would like to recommend. These changes affect about one percent of the overall budget, but they direct more money to the services that our residents say they want the most. Many of them come from discussions at A City That Works meetings. They are all ideas that, for a small amount of expenditure, can have a big impact on our residents.

**Enhance the City's Effort to Communicate with the Public**

On most citizen satisfaction surveys, our residents feel that their government does not do a good job of communicating with them. I propose extra money to address this need.

**Improve Street Maintenance**

In every citizen satisfaction survey street maintenance is the highest citizen priority. I propose funding for an expedited response team to address residents' complaints to the 311 Action Center on street maintenance. The funding will be used to quickly fill potholes, seal cracks and address other road concerns.

### **Expand the Automated Trash Collection System**

First implemented in the Green Impact Zone as a pilot project, the fully automated trash collection cart effectively reduced the illegal dumping in that area by one third and significantly improved the Litter Index of the Green Impact Zone Area. In the new fiscal year, I propose to expand this program further into the central city, where trash, illegal dumping and code violations are most concentrated.

### **Improve Code Enforcement Efficiency**

I propose extra funding for the Neighborhood and Community Service Department to equip their 50 code enforcement officers with mobile computers. This will significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's code enforcement effort.

### **Reduce the Call Wait Time and the Call Abandonment Rate of the 311 Action Center**

As more and more citizens use the 311 Action Center to request city services or information, the outdated equipment and the limited staff of the 311 Action Center often lead to a long wait time and a high abandonment rate. I propose funding for the 311 Action Center to obtain a recording system, which will significantly reduce the call waiting time and abandoned rate of our 311 Action Center.

### **Support the Aim4Peace Program**

Over the years, Aim4Peace has been sporadically funded through various city funds, and supported by outside funding from grants. Last year we made the tough choice to cut them from the general fund budget, knowing they had grant funding to sustain themselves for one year. It is time to add them back to our general fund and keep them whole. According to the founder of Ceasefire, Dr. Gary Slutkin, Aim4Peace is one of the best such programs in the United States. Aim4Peace will help us directly address our homicide rate.

### **Fund Civil Legal Services**

As Kansas City families struggle to meet these challenging economic times, the work of legal aid is as important as it has ever been. This funding goes primarily to civil legal services, which saves the city hundreds of thousand dollars a year by greatly reducing blight throughout our city.

### **Fund Paint Program**

This program supplies free paint and supplies to income eligible Kansas City homeowners. It is a popular program, which has an immediate impact on neighborhoods. The program serves an average of 175 homes each year, many of them owned by our elderly residents.

### **Fund Community Center Positions**

Last year I fought for, and was successful in obtaining, funding for our community centers. The centers are anchors for thousands of people in our city, from young to

old. This year, we need to maintain funding for four positions to keep those centers open their normal hours.

### **Eliminate Direct City Funding for Stadiums**

Kansas City needs to concentrate on what matters most to our residents. Between May 2007 and this year Kansas City was forced to lay off 200 employees and eliminate 650 vacant positions. We have been forced to cut our basic services. We have no choice but to now eliminate what is a non-contractual agreement to directly fund the Truman Sports Complex stadiums. We have already discussed with Jackson County officials the need for a long-term solution for stadium funding that does not rely on the City's general fund. We need to work together to find that solution now. Kansas City's general fund is not the place to find that money in these tough economic times.

At the recent Governors Summit, sponsored by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, one point was made absolutely clear. As Kansas City goes, so goes the region. And for Kansas City to thrive, we need to provide the basic services our residents deserve and expect. As cities around us struggle with their budgets, and lay off employees, it reminds me that it is all that much more important that Kansas City be a good steward of our taxpayer's money.

The budget process now passes to the City Council. Our strategic planning sessions have shown me how unified we are on the things that matter most. I believe that spirit will continue as we work together to finalize a budget that addresses the priorities we set at our strategic planning session last fall. I believe that the recommendations I have made honor our shared priorities, especially in regard to the vitality of our neighborhoods.. I believe the budget as a whole already addresses some of our revenue strategy goals.

I look forward to attending the public budget hearings, to hearing more from our city departments, to meeting with my fellow council members, and to ultimately adopting a budget that has as its highest priority the goal of placing Kansas City families first.