

June 17, 2009
CITY RESPONSE

Responses to questions/suggestions submitted March 30, 2009 (Public Budget Workshop) and shortly thereafter.

1. Anonymous: Last year the police department requested a 30% increase based on the belief that the City had 24 million dollars in assets. The Council agreed to the increase without thinking twice about it. Was there ever a study conducted to justify the increase, or did the Council act blindly? *The increases for the Police Department were approved by City Council on or about 4/18/07 in anticipation of the commercial centers coming in the community. The recession has delayed their progress. A report *by the previous City Manager indicated a need for an increase based on the following chronology:*

On February 21, 2007, the City Council directed Staff to report on the current staffing levels of the Soledad Police Department and to recommend a strategy to address recruitment and retention concerns.

On April 4, 2007, the City Council received a report from Staff outlining the difficulties that the Soledad Police Department has had filling seven vacancies, with the anticipation of additional vacancies becoming open in the near future. When interviewed, police officers from a cross-section of positions advised that it was compensation offered by municipalities that was of primary concern when deciding which organization to apply for and for those officers deciding where to pursue careers.

On April 18, 2007, the City Council received a report from Staff comparing the benefits offered police officers of surrounding agencies to compensation offered to Soledad police officers. The report made comparisons of compensation items as retirement, medical insurance, and salaries. The data collected revealed that the compensation offered police officers in Soledad was significantly inferior to the compensation offered at other police agencies in Monterey County.

2. Anonymous: How is it possible that you have the Chief of Police in the Assistant City Manager position without being bias? Do you really think he is not going to favor his other department? I'm sure he won't be suggesting any cut backs in the Police Department. *There is no evidence to support that the Chief has a conflict. The Police Chief/ACM is leading the City's negotiating team and meeting with all represented employee groups on matters involving salary and benefit reductions.*
3. Guadalupe Rodriguez: A mi familia le gustaria un parque Vosti mas seguro, con mas juegos para los ninos, lugar con sombra para sentarse, lugar para corer con cemento y pues in fin un parque digno de Soledad, Ca. (This resident is requesting a safer, more family friendly Vosti Park). *Funds for this purpose are not easily available. The City has applied for grants to be used for Vosti Park improvements. It is unlikely the City will receive funding due to State budget challenges.*

4. Lorena Albarran: Mi familia necesita seguridad en el parque y necesita conponer banos, pasto y poner mas juegos para los ninos y que quiten a todos los senores que estan jugando en el parque porque quiero salir con mi familiar y hay mucha inseguridad. *(This resident is requesting a safer, more family friendly Vosti Park).* **Funds for this purpose are not easily available. The City has applied for grants to be used for Vosti Park improvements. It is unlikely the City will receive funding due to the State budget challenges.**
5. Carla Stewart: I understand City Hall no longer stays open after 5 to serve the residents of our bedroom community. Have the hours at the Police Department counter also been reduced? If so, is there a need for four secretaries? There is a need for both City Hall and the Police Department to be open until 5:30 or 6 in order to provide services to residents of our City who commute. **The Police Department counter is open Sunday through Wednesday for 22 hours, from (7 am to 5 am; On Thursday, Friday and Saturdays, the counter is open 7 am to 6 pm). One of the clerical positions was eliminated from the budget at mid year.**
6. Carla Stewart: Re: Creekbridge/WalMart Dev. Will they be contributing to our community, for example, a base ball park, basketball courts, etc.? **These items will be negotiated with the developer.**
7. Carla Stewart: What is the economic development department doing during these times to attract business, find new sources of revenue (i.e. rental of City property)? **The Economic Development Department is applying for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funds to be used for economic development projects. The Public Works Department is applying for Federal Stimulus Funds as well as other potential grant funding for Economic Development projects.**
8. Carla Stewart: Will the Council be participating in the League of California Cities Annual Conference? Has the Council limited their travel and conference attendance? **Council travel budget has been reduced 50% in the FY 09-10 budget.**
9. Carla Stewart: Has there been any consideration re health benefits of certain employees' dependents and the cost to the City? **This will be the subject of bargaining with employee groups and with unrepresented employees.**
10. Gama Romero: The City charges \$6 per house. Can that money be used to fund City needs? **The \$6 per house fee is used for graffiti removal and street sweeping services. It is already used for city services.**