

Council members address chickens, budget issues

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Salem city council members on Monday approved a budget that increases money for law enforcement and dedicates about \$111,000 to an after school program that officials previously said would be cut.

The total approximately \$437.3 million budget was first examined and modified by the city council after being handed up by the Budget Committee on June 8.

The 2009-2010 fiscal plan includes about \$437.3 million in revenue and about \$399 million in expenditures. Councilors expect an approximately \$38.4 million ending fund balance to carry over for the next year.

The city's general fund, which pays for many basic services such as police and fire, is about \$99 million in expenditures, Budget Officer Debra Neville said. The budget includes an ending balance of \$5.5 million for the general fund.

Expenditures in the current fiscal year 2008-09 were budgeted at \$481 million, Neville said. The approximately \$81 million decrease in expenditures comes from cuts in staffers throughout the city, reorganization efforts and the elimination and consolidation of some departments.

The new budget gives an additional \$11,360 to the POWER Program, an after-school program hosted at all middle schools in the Salem-Keizer School District.

Officials previously said city funding of the program would be cut and looked to the school district and nonprofits to takeover fiscal responsibility.

Councilors first amended the proposed budget on June 8 to reinstate funding the program.

The adopted plan includes an additional \$864,860 to the Salem Police Department, giving it the authority to spend assistance grants from the federal government once received.

It also rebudgeted outstanding purchase orders not fulfilled as of June

Chickens

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Councilors passed a motion to begin a process of amending city code to allow residents to keep chickens on their property if they follow certain restrictions, which include:

not keeping roosters

keeping no more than three hens

at least 20 feet from a property line

minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet

Barbara Palermo, of the pro-chicken group Chickens in the Yard, expressed concern about limitations of the above restrictions, specifically the large lot size.

"That would disqualify 80 percent of us," she said.

The issue was first brought to the council in February by supporters hoping to house hens in their backyards. amending the city code would equate chickens to pets within city limits, removing them from the definition of livestock.

Monday's discussion in council chambers was fueled by a desire to get the issue taken care of in as timely a matter as possible, while considering any nuisance chickens kept as pets might create. Councilors planned to address noise and nuisance issues in the future.

"I'm concerned that we are sending the message that chickens are our number one priority," said Councilor Dan Clem who represents Ward 8.

The resolution was passed to the Planning Commission, which will return a recommendation to the council for approval.

30 that are part of the 2008-09 fiscal year. The council's actions also reappropriated funds allocated for projects that had not been completed during the current budget year.