

One of my favorite things to do is to watch the leaves fall from my poplar trees. The leaves cascade down like yellow snowflakes. Another one of my favorite cold-weather things to do is puzzles. It's probably why I actually enjoy the budget process. The budget is just a puzzle that eventually has to fit together. My husband likes puzzles, too, but we approach it quite differently. He likes to do the borders first, and I like to look at the individual elements of the picture and put them together first. I enjoyed watching how these individual elements come together and meet up with the other ones in the puzzle, and then eventually attach to the border.

The City's budget process is not a lot different. The City is the border, and all the individual departments are the elements. In this budget puzzle, the finance department is that unseen element that ties it all together. Everything has to be within scale or it won't come together. If too much focus is put on one element, with blinders on as to how it fits into the bigger picture, that's when we have real problems.

All the taxes you pay, whether it be property tax or sales tax, all go into one puzzle. You may or may not know that "junior taxing districts" are single-focused by nature, and they sometimes cause problems when they don't fit into the bigger picture.

What is a "junior taxing district"? There are many – the library, the fire department, the Flood Control district, and many, many more – all have their part in the puzzle. Junior taxing districts chip away at the big picture as a whole and limit what the city is able to collect from your property taxes, even though we are a senior taxing district. There are other organizations that are bidding for your tax revenue, also, such as South Sound 911 and Pierce Transit, which are funded from sales taxes. This year, the City will receive \$300,000 LESS in property taxes, even though property values are up. It's a big math problem that I won't try to explain in detail, but basically, there's just too much coming out of one source, and unfortunately, you are that source.

Let's apply some of that same thinking to what's going on in our own City. If all the focus is on the police department (which is about 60% of our General Fund), and there is no money left for parks or streets, then what? If all the focus is on just parks, what's left for streets? Well, you get the picture. But even more so, if all the focus is on one piece of the City's overall picture – whether it be the 911 Memorial, or the renaming of the lower ball field, or soccer, or even the dog park that we've never managed to get – you can see that things can become out of balance and will not fit together well.

Here are a few trivia questions for you – How many police officers does it take to have two officers on per shift 24/7? How many officers do you need to patrol every street of the city? Do you know how many miles of streets Public Works employees have to maintain? Or how many potholes they fill every year? How many parks do we have, and how many man-hours does it take to mow them? How many dogs do we have in Milton, and how many of them have dog licenses? These, and so many more, are pieces of the puzzle that I and Council will try to put together.

My budget will come out in November, and my part of the puzzle will be over for a while. At that point, I will hand it over to Council, and it will be their puzzle for a while. By the end of December, an official budget will be adopted by Council, and they will hand that budget back to

me to implement. That's government in balance. Oh, and did I mention Public Hearings? That's your part of the puzzle.

2017 Budget Public Hearings

All meetings begin at 7 pm.

Milton City Council Chambers

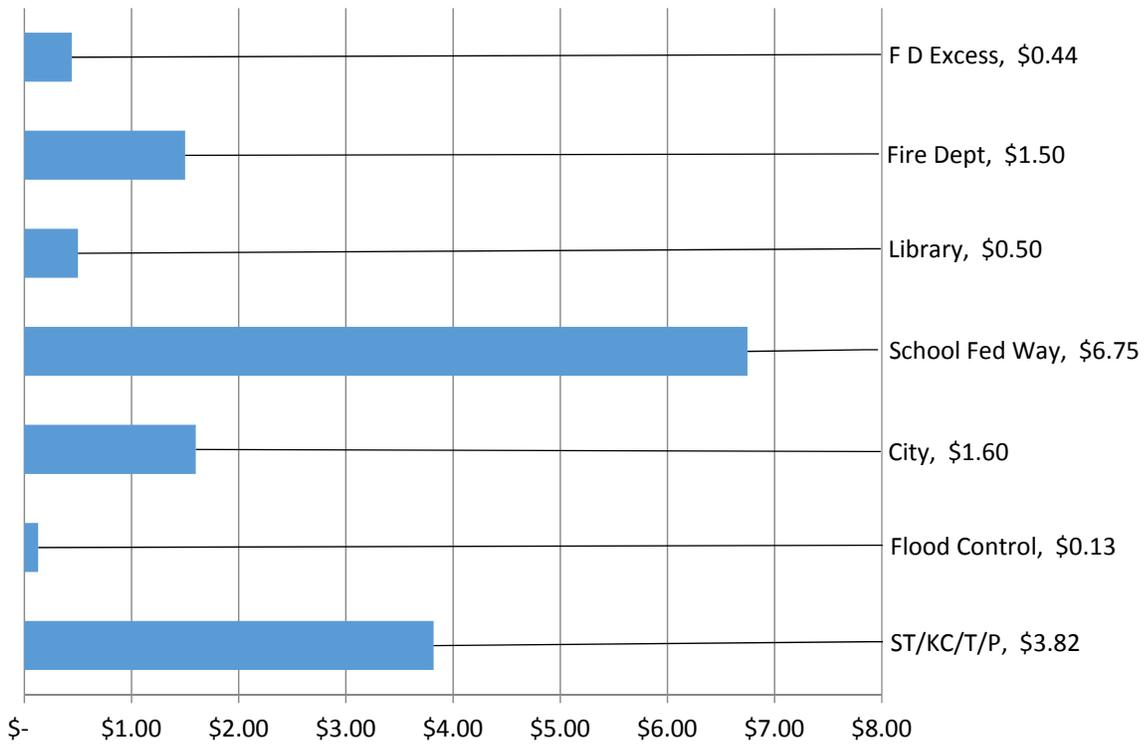
1000 Laurel Street

Mon, 11/7	Revenue Sources
Mon, 11/21	Preliminary Budget
Mon, 12/5	Final Budget

You may or may not know that all of my budgets have been balanced, or “revenue neutral”. This year will be no different – it will be balanced, as well.

So, as the leaves turn color and fall as they've done for many years before and many years to come, we will go through the same budget process year after year.

King County Property Tax Split



Pierce County Property Tax Split

