

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Councillor Jennifer O'Connell is bringing the community with her to the 2009 budget meetings.

In March of this year Councillor O'Connell sent out a Budget Survey asking residents to let her know what their priorities were for the 2009 budget and hundreds of Ward 1 residents responded. Questions on the survey ranged from "what are the priorities the City should focus on?" to "is the City doing enough to increase jobs in the community?"

Councillor O'Connell was very pleased with the response from residents, "I was happy that people took the time to let me know how they were feeling about the budget. It was very disheartening however to hear so many painful stories of people struggling during this economic downturn."

Some of the overwhelming results were; **60%** of respondents felt this year's priority should be to lower taxes. **43.48%** of respondents felt the City was not doing enough to increase jobs/businesses to the community. And **46.96%** felt that the budget process is not transparent enough.

Many residents commented on the fact that the Mayor and Council should freeze wages and reduce expenses. As a result Councillor O'Connell moved that the Mayor and Council freeze their 3% salary increases during these tough economic times. "The salary increases do not add up to a lot of money, however it is more about leading by example and showing our community that we are sympathetic and understand that many people are suffering and we will not continue business as usual knowing this." O'Connell did not receive enough support from Council to do so, however she said she will still freeze her salary.

Councillor O'Connell also reduced her overall budget by nearly 10%.

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