

2021-2022 BUDGET MESSAGE, MAYOR JW FOSTER

Dear Friends,

As we work to adopt another forward-looking budget to guide our work for the next two years, I want to extend my sincere appreciation for the support I have received from the community, the Council, and our City Staff. One of the most important responsibilities I have as Mayor is to develop and propose a budget for the City Council to review and approve, which then becomes the official budget for our City. Working together, I feel we have put forth a good road map to our future.



This proposed budget also adheres to our financial policies which require us to live within our means by making sure revenues support our proposed expenditures. We have made monumental improvements to the way we budget; creating a long-term revenue forecast to proactively balance revenue and expenditures on a 5-year horizon, establishing sound financial policies and dedicated reserve accounts for rainy days, and refinancing debt to achieve substantial savings. As a result, these actions have earned the City of Yelm two consecutive Distinguished Budget Awards in recognition of our adherence to national financial management standards.

We are fortunate to present a budget that does not reflect the significant service and staffing reductions happening in many other neighboring cities. We are also fortunate to have a balanced budget proposal that maintains the services our residents and businesses depend on. This budget honors our current union agreements, without a reduction in work force. It also maintains the competitive wage structure, significant health care and other benefits we provide to recruit, hire and retain our exceptional workforce.

Responsible budgeting has enabled us to add seven positions over the last few years, including three additional police officers and other essential staff to improve service delivery. We now have the right people in place to ensure the City of Yelm continues to operate in a sustainable, productive, and economical manner for years to come.

In addition to maintaining current staffing levels, this budget proposes to hire an additional Police Officer to maintain service levels in anticipation of an upcoming retirement. It also continues to support the social and mental health services our Police Officers currently utilize to assist those who need it most. This is a growing need in every community and as resources become available, we are committed to exploring opportunities to enhance our existing partnerships with regional partners who provide those services in concert with our field officers.

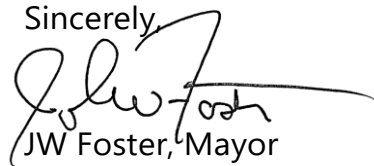
This budget also invests one-time resources in our ongoing efforts to secure and manage water rights, which will remove the biggest roadblock to future residential and businesses development. It also invests in the creation of a Habitat Conservation Plan, mandated by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, to mitigate impacts from commercial development on ecologically sensitive land within the city limits. This coordinated approach will allow private landholders to more quickly and responsibly develop their properties in order to bring more services to Yelm. My budget also proposes to invest capital funding in critical infrastructure improvements, as well as the creation of an off-leash dog park and other community priorities identified in the Capital Improvement Plan and Downtown Business Development Plan.

This budget reflects a significant reduction in water utility charges. Our Public Works Director and billing team were able to demonstrate how rates could be adjusted without negative effect on the fund balance, providing some relief to our water customers.

This proposed budget sets the stage for a sustainable, thriving economy in the future. By living within our means and investing in the highest priorities, we will successfully navigate the challenges of 2020 and continue advancing our vision to keep Yelm a safe, healthy, happy home for all.

Read on to see how all our team members bring this budget to life!

Sincerely,


JW Foster, Mayor

