



City of Glenarden

FY 2019 Budget Issues

Local governments are seeing rising expectations of the budget from their constituents. Whether local economies cycle up or down, experts are urging municipalities, such as Glenarden, to utilize resources available to them and budget for the future.

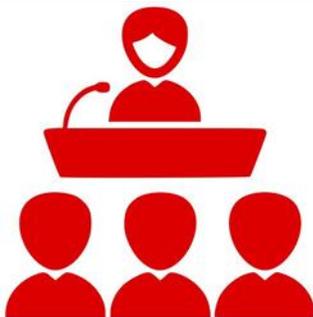
As Mayor, my challenge to the Council and City Administrators is to stop making balancing of the budget the only priority. Instead, make sure that the decisions our government makes financially are going to continue to help us be sustainable and progressive as a City for many years to come.

The following are 10 of the biggest challenges that we, the Council and the Administration, have failed to address in the budgeting process for Fiscal Year 2019.



Limited Resources

Resources will always be limited. Ideas will be unlimited. We have to figure out as a community what are our priorities and then get creative about applying our limited resources to accomplishing those priorities. The City Legislators and Administration historically has not included the residents in the budgeting process effort before establishing the budget. More public engagement can assist in setting those priorities.



Communication

Our biggest challenge is communication, not only among public officials but internally with the administration and staff. Communication is the key to success, and we will not be successful if some divisions don't know what the other divisions or departments are doing, or understand the intent of their actions. Better communication rules over everything. For instance, the communications between the Executive Office of the Mayor and the staff and management has been cloaked by Legislative oversight.

Change of Culture



As Mayor, at the beginning of my administration in 2017, I thought I would implement better financial management policies based on my philosophy of what good management was about. However, I found out that I did not do a good job of educating the staff on my vision and getting their participation in the management plan. When it was time for implementing all of these changes there was push-back from the staff. My recourse was to start over with communicating – explaining why this new approach would benefit everyone. The idea was that these new ideologies and methodologies will benefit the staff and city in long-run as the City grows and as revenue streams change. We'll be ready to face anything, whether it be an increase in revenue or another recession. However, the majority of the Legislators did not want change in appointments, financial management and revitalization of community services departments and therefore rendering the new ideas and vision impossible to activate.

Infrastructure



One of our biggest problems is dealing with infrastructure and finding the way to maintain and invest in new modern structures with revenues that aren't growing at the same rate as costs. The challenge is to reprioritize programs and make sure investment occurs in high value projects. Unfortunately, we are not engaging in this practice as an administration. The decisions are being made and performed by the Legislators only.

Vision



Local governments must first establish a vision as to where they want the community to go. Make sure that the program structure supports that vision and then make sure that the budgetary structure supports the program structure, which supports the vision. There has got to be some thought behind it along with input from residents. Since the Legislators dominated the vision efforts which are normally the responsibility of the Mayor and the Cabinet, the visions created by the Mayor was not included in the 2018 budgetary programs supported by the legislators



Citizen Expectations

Another challenge is the increasing citizen demands and expectations with stagnant or decreasing revenues. The problem is compounded by a dedicated staff that doesn't want to tell the public that there aren't enough resources to meet those expectations. Local government can address this through the tools of transparency, good communication, honesty, and presenting the information in a way that is easily understood. The residents are then invited to participate in forums where they can get their questions answered. This is an important way for trust to develop.



Balance

For a long time, Glenarden City Councils and Administrations have felt that the finance numbers should drive the discussion, rather than the priority areas or strategic directions. While the available resources cannot be ignored, there are tools such as Priority Based Budgeting that could help us find a balance between the numbers and the strategic directions. It can help us put those dollars into the parts of the community where they are going to have the most impact. The budgeting process guided by this Council does not put the community first, monies are being spent without a strategic direction.



Relatable Discourse

This is the ability to tell a story and connect with stakeholders, whether they be the community, council or our internal administration. I think this tool allows everyone to use the same language. People can resonate with a story, but the stories are falling on deaf ears as self-centered power and Authoritarianism drives unconstitutional accountability. As the Council regime overreaches their legislative obligations to the residents and runs the administration as well.



Sustainability

In many local governments, we talk about fiscal sustainability, but we don't practice it very much. We need to make sure everybody sees not only today, but what the future looks like and how things might change so that we can respond to it now. It's better to respond to something when you have time to fix it, rather than waiting until the brick wall hits. And that is the case with the current and past City Councils blind acknowledgement that the City needs to prepare for receiving the responsibility of managing the public utilities and right-of-ways of the Woodmore Towne Centre. The 800-pound Gorilla the room. This is a municipal undertaking that I have talked myself blue in the face with the Council only to be publicly discredited by the Council Vice President as if I did not have the knowledge or background to know the facts. A huge mistake, leaving the Council Vice President begging the County Agencies to take back Woodmore Towne Centre from our responsibility and inclusion in the City of Glenarden.



Citizen Perception

Survey data can help the budgeting process, allowing Glenarden to understand what our residents not only want out of our budget, but also the way they are currently perceiving our budget. As a baseline, this data helps The Council and Administration to understand what our citizens' priorities are and that serves the bottom line of a City budget. However, the Administration and City Council has failed to engage in data collecting and reaching out to our citizens



regarding our budgeting process, needless to say, the citizens priorities. Being a new resident of Glenarden and also new to municipal government, as a "part-time" Mayor, I assumed my City Administration, which was run by Managers not appointed by the Mayor, knew what they were doing from the previous administration. As Mayor, I was prohibited from appointing qualified professionals and could not obtain the approval to appoint them by the City Council.

The challenge to address citizens perception has never been a key factor or concern in our budgeting efforts, hence leaving the citizens wants and needs out of the budgeting process.
