

Mayor's Lincoln Budget Proposal Calls for Cuts

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Thursday, Mayor Chris Beutler announced his first steps to create a smaller and smarter city hall. Since he entered office last May, he's made several changes with many of them greatly affecting the city. Now he's planning on making even more cuts and changes to get the city's \$6 million deficit back to the balancing point.

"Lincoln citizens simply want more bang for their buck, and that is where we start," Beutler said.

Beutler said his proposed 2008-2009 budget will do exactly that by cutting the city's \$6 million deficit down to about \$1.5 million.

"Lincoln residents told us they want a smaller and smarter city government, but not at the expense of the qualities that call Lincoln a great place to call home," Beutler said.

Beutler said he based a majority of his budget decisions on this year's priority Lincoln phone and computer surveys as well as town hall meetings.

"Priority Lincoln told us that this community places a high value on safety and security. Unlike past years, these crucial services will not be immune from cuts," he said.

But it's still not clear whether or not Lincoln's police or fire departments will receive cuts, and if so what those cuts would be. These are a few cuts Beutler has included in his budget. The first includes at least 45 city job cuts -- at least half of them for early retirement.

Beutler also plans to restructure several city departments as well as make a \$589,000 cut to StarTran, along with smaller buses and more price incentives to encourage ridership during a time of record gas prices.

Beutler said everything outlined in his plan will help leave Lincoln taxpayers with more money in their pockets.

"Our initial costs will help save the taxpayers over \$3 million, and contribute to a smaller, smarter city hall," he said.

Lincoln City Councilwoman Robin Eschilman said she appreciates the fact Beutler is listening to the citizens, and trying to provide them with the cuts and changes that will benefit them most.

Beutler will present his proposed budget to Eschilman and other members of the council on July 7.