



City of Lincoln
Mayor's Office

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MAYOR SAYS CITY TO DO MORE WITH LESS

Job cuts could total 105 over two years

Mayor Chris Beutler today announced his initial proposal for the 2008-2009 City budget will include at least 45 fewer City employees. The cuts were one of the efficiencies the Mayor outlined today in the first of a series of announcements on his budget proposals. Last year, the Mayor's budget included about 70 job cuts, which means the Mayor has offered the Council a reduction of more than 115 jobs over the two budget years.

Beutler continues to work on his proposed budget, which he will present to the City Council Monday July 7. He said his budget will be consistent with the feedback received in the PRIORITY LINCOLN process to get public input on budget priorities to make government more efficient.

"One result that was clear was that people appreciate City services, and not just the ones they use," the Mayor said. "But that does not mean they are willing to blindly endorse how City government provides those services. They want accountability, efficiency and value. They want us to do everything possible to make City Hall smaller and smarter. In short, Lincoln citizens want more bang for the buck. And that is where we start."

About 2,000 people participated in PRIORITY LINCOLN this spring through a scientific phone survey, a follow up discussion, a non-random survey and a series of town hall meetings.

Other efficiencies cited by the Mayor:

- Restructuring efforts in Public Works and Utilities and other City departments.
- A savings of nearly \$1 million in health insurance due to the City's 2006 switch to a self-administered health insurance fund.
- Changes in the City employee retirement program. The Mayor said he is working with the Personnel Department and City unions on a way to reduce the City's two-for-one match.
- A \$589,000 service cut to StarTran along with smaller buses and more price incentives to encourage ridership during a time of record gas prices.

Mayor Beutler said he and the City Council will face many tough budget decisions. "The unfortunate fact is that past City government decisions to put off the tough choices on the budget has dug our fiscal hole very deep," he said. "If the City Council decides that this budget must be balanced without any revenue increases, the cuts will be deep and in some cases very severe."

Beutler said even public safety may not be immune from cuts. "At this point in the budget process, reductions in the number of police officers and firefighters cannot be excluded from the discussion," he said. More than 50 percent of City tax dollars go to fund public safety services. When you consider that fact in light of the budget deficit we face, it's nearly impossible to leave police and fire off the table."

Beutler said his goal is to find the "right balance" in his proposed budget. "Lincoln residents told us they want a smaller and smarter City government, but not at the expense of the qualities that make Lincoln a great place to call home," he said.