



Budget surveys set to begin

By the Lincoln Journal Star

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Mayor Chris Beutler on Monday encouraged those selected for a phone survey on the city budget to take the time to participate.

A scientific phone survey of 600 randomly selected residents will begin this week. The survey is part of an effort to solicit public opinion on how the city should spend tax dollars.

“We are taking a different look at the budget process and finding out what citizens want is a crucial step,” Beutler said. “If those originally chosen through the random selection process respond, it increases the validity of the survey and decreases the amount of time it takes to complete the calls.”

Those with caller ID will see a University of Nebraska number on the display. The city is working with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Bureau of Sociological Research.

Alan Tomkins, director of the Public Policy Center, said the survey will take about 15 to 20 minutes.

Beutler said the project is a necessary first step toward implementing outcome-based budgeting, which ties programs to the goals residents want local government to accomplish.

Those not included in the phone survey will be able to provide input in writing, online and at public meetings. The process for gathering those comments will be announced soon, city officials said Monday.

Beutler is to make his decisions on the 2008-2009 budget in May. The budget is to be released to the public in June. The City Council is expected to vote on tentative changes to the mayor’s budget in July.

The public hearing is scheduled for Aug. 11, and the council is scheduled to adopt the budget Aug. 25.