



The Oakland Observer [@Oak\\_Observer](#)

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Reporting from the Council's first budgeting session. CMs Brown, Ramachandran, Unger and Wang will introduce budget amendments, legislation waiving certain restrictions on agenda. Houston is using zoom from out of state. Here's more on all that [oakland-observer.ghost.io/budget-focus-c...](#)

There's 38 speakers, that's a lot for 9am special meeting on a Wednesday

Brown who co-chaired the Budget team says its focus is: "funding essential services, prioritizing a safe, clean and economically thriving Oakland"

Ramachandran criticizing the coliseum sale. The budget passed prevented the cutting of OFD during summer months.

Regardless of Ramachandran's claims, the budget amendments are based on several assumptions, including using funds from assumed litigations, assumed hiring savings, assumed contract that hasn't passed yet, and a billboard contract not yet passed at council

Ramachandran on "right sizing" academies. "the city of Oakland has never been able to implement six academies in one biennial cycle...it's not just throwing money at a problem...we want to up our academy process"

Ramachandran noting poor academy production...despite claiming this is realistic, Ramachandran's claims that academies can be increased to 42 belie several efforts just like this that didn't do it.

On self-insurance liability fund "we put in much more money than we need to in this fund...the amount that we need is a very small percentage"

"we are deleting some vacant managerial positions"

The budget amendments reverse the last brown out. Two were in original Jenkins' budget, one was reopened due to correcting funding mistakes, this is the last.

Ramachandran says that filling civilian roles currently filled by sworn officers will get police

on street, most of them are in the IAD.

The Brown/Ramachandran budget also adds an OPD grant writer, special ops for human trafficking, and civilian safety ambassadors

It has to be noted, even with the academy deletion, OPD's budget rose by about 60 mm from what it was budgeted in the last biennial.

Plans for increasing illegal dumping solutions. Ramachandran claims that anti-dumping cams aren't good enough, nearly a million to improve them. Adding environmental enforcement officers



**FUNDING ILLEGAL DUMPING SOLUTIONS**

**TECHNOLOGY**

- Adds \$850,000 for technology such as cameras and drones
- Adds \$150,000 for review of camera footage and data collection

**ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

- Adds 2 EEOs plus training expenses such as HazMat certification

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

- Adds \$500,000 to train Oaklanders for careers in beautification

**OAKTOWN PROUD CAMPAIGN**

- New education initiatives to help prevention

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A lot of this funding is coming from non GPF sources and are part of existing plans

Kind of just a money giveaway for small businesses, a politically smart idea given the current environment

# FUNDING ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

## **SUPPORTING BUSINESSES**

- Adds \$3 million for Business Incentives Program
- Adds \$1 million to create Economic Opportunity Zones

## **PERMITTING**

- Adds back 1 Special Events Permit Coordinator

Brown has taken over presentation. As I wrote in the overview in OO, some of these changes are direct responses to director complaints on the dais during the budget study session

# FUNDING EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT

## **PERMITTING**

- Adds \$3 million for IT to improve Accela systems

## **AUDITOR'S OFFICE**

- Increases staffing and O&M to complete mandated audits

## **ETHICS COMMISSION**

- Funds Limited Public Financing and Enforcement Unit

## **NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**

- Funds NEST coordinator program



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\$3 MM to reverse any proposed layoffs.

# FUNDING RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

## LAYOFFS

- Allocates funding to reverse all proposed layoffs

## RESERVES FOR FEDERAL VOLATILITY

- Allocates \$2 million in reserves in the case of State or Federal grant cuts
- Allocates \$900K in reserves for cuts to homelessness programs

This will be at least the fourth iteration this reporter has seen of efforts to increase recruitment. I am not sure there is a thing the OPD hasn't tried without lasting success.

# POLICY DIRECTIVES

## PUBLIC SAFETY


- Increase number of filled OPD civilian positions to free up sworn officers for patrol
- Enhance recruitment for police academies
- Coordinate with county and other partners to combat human trafficking
- Ramp up transition of Internal Affairs investigations to the Community Police Review Agency (CPRA)

Jenkins budget left transition of IAD to CPRA in the dark, with the assumption it would never happen. With CPRA's current budget, it's not possible. In the know folks say the budgeting to CPRA has to come first to catch the process as it transitions. It would take 16 add'l staff

The City's third party budget consultant, Ben Rosenfeld, now presenting on "road map to fiscal health" of clashing metaphors

## OAKLAND'S FISCAL ROADMAP

- Contain pension and long-term liabilities
- Reach voter-mandated requirements
- Develop long-term capital and fleet plans
- Update the City's fiscal policies
- Improve revenue collections



More from Rosenfeld...assume he'll go into these flat statements

## OAKLAND'S FISCAL ROADMAP

- Focus economic development efforts
- Plan for federal and state reductions
- Update the City's fiscal policies
- Prioritize city service inventory
- Link finances to performance

Rosenfeld says this document will come back later this month, with clear deliverables and timelines

Assumes an additional tax proposal for \$40 MM...different than assumption on Coliseum,

it's ongoing revenue, opposed to a one time bandaid. Proposal is not assumed until the second year of the two year budget...there's time to implement contingency plans.

Rosenfeld said that the parcel tax would be before voters in June 2026, which still gives time in the mid-cycle for contingency. But to be honest, that doesn't make much sense at first glance. Seems pretty much like the coliseum sale dynamic

CAO veteran Deborah Edgerly, hired as a consultant last year, said that this is the best budget process she's seen.

Unger now: "I've been calling this the nobody's happy budget, and I think that that is really emblematic of the fact that what we tried to do with this budget was really focused on the core essentials."

Unger: "what is the function of a city, what is a city for...we need to do fewer things, and do them very well.. public safety, safe streets, blight, infrastructure and economic development"

Unger says that OFD is the first line of medical care...when we close firehouses, we lose valuable lifeline for the most vulnerable people in society.

Unger praising ceasefire "when we allow it to work, it reduces homicides"

Unger: "that's the appropriate place to be, doing somewhat less, but doing the less things,correctly...important to understand this is the beginning, not end" Unger says noting structural deficit is not solved

Wang now: "this is not a budget we did with a surplus...we have an unprecedented situation...we had very many late night decisions, debates..."

Wang: "and I remember is, for my colleagues, when we were designing this budget, we were thinking, we've got to make sure that we think about East Oakland. We got to think about the flats. We've got to think about the council members that are not represented in this room."

Wang: "we need to ensure that we have enough police officers. And to do this in a fiscally responsible way" Wang says that that they need to go to social work schools to recruit 🙄🙄

No one has addressed the reality, that even the OPD admits, fewer people who are qualified to be police want to be police [and with the current visuals that could get worse, not better]

Council President Jenkins, "we want to fund everything, but we do not have enough money to do..."

Jenkins to HR Dept: "we have scheduled one analyst position to be cut while we are recruiting..."

Mary Howe, Director of Human Resources: "we are actually slated to lose five positions: one manager, one senior, one tech and one principal analyst...that will be a big hit to the team" re recruitment

Jenkins moved right along. Now asking about bus shelters.

OakDOT 's Director: "we presently have about 100 shelters and the city of Oakland, that they range from poor to very poor, some are still serviceable, but if, if we had our way we would replace every single one of them.

Rowan says that each shelter runs 60 to 80k, we want to get new ones out there to test their durability. So this appears to be a pilot project, more than really addressing directly

Rowan says that no one has the money to replace all the shelters and maintain them. He says the key is to get out of the "maintenance business"

Unger asks CAO on bond sales.

CAO Johnson says it will move forward...before end of calendar year.

Houston says he's concerned about the homeless prevention pilot "that's not necessary...because we have things coming down pipeline...that money should be moved to illegal dumping enforcement...prosecuting. That 1 MM should go to illegal dumping enforcement"

The waiver item is being read in, because it has to be passed concurrently as budget amendments are dependent on them.

Johnson explaining the item. You can read about it here: [oakland-observer.ghost.io/budget focus-c...](https://oakland-observer.ghost.io/budget-focus-c...)

This item is needed for the entire budget as it was presented by Jenkins, not just the amendments.

HCD Director Weinstein addresses Houston's comments about homeless prevention pilot: "the focus is on preventing homelessness before people are homeless...to reduce unsheltered homelessness by 50%, we need to be investing 20-25 MM....but cheapest way is to invest in prevention"

Weinstein: "For every person that is coming from the street into housing, 3 are falling into homelessness. So this is an issue. We cannot build our way out of homelessness. We really need to stop it before it starts."

Weinstein: "Homeless Prevention pilot was designed w/penn and Stanford to look at how we can invest our money in people that are most at risk of becoming homeless, and making sure that it's evidence based, and that we are looking at people, really, at the very end of that cliff"

"target black men between 25 & 64 that were either previously homeless or coming out of incarceration and are most at risk of becoming homeless...pilot was evaluated again by Penn/Stanford...84% of program participants say if it was not for it, they would have become homeless."

Houston seemed to not have heard anything she said and said 1 MM would do nothing to prevent homelessness. Weinstein responded that 125 families were kept out of homelessness

CMs keep asking Weinstein, who is tasked with housing and homeless, to comment on illegal dumping and she's like, not my thing.

Houston just noted he's been in a restaurant all this time.

HCD noting that its about 8k per renter, compared to the City's investment of about 100K per new construction unit of housing [of about 800k to 1 MM]

Here's the study, first document in the list [oakland.legistar.com/LegislationDet...](https://oakland.legistar.com/LegislationDet...)

Fife thanks Weinstein: "It's been debated ad nauseam in this community economic development department, and you've advocated with data from some of the most prestigious Ivy League institutions on why this is so critical to helping stem homelessness in the city of Oakland"

Fife nails it: " I feel like we're having the same conversation. So what I would urge my colleagues to do is read the info reports the data reports, watch the CED meetings so that we can move on to discussing some of the other critical issues around homelessness"

Fife: "I'm finding myself holding back saying what I believe needs to be said in this process so we can have collegiality & move the city forward. I see a lot of hypocrisy, as compared to the last budget cycles, I'm not going to go there because I don't think that is productive"

Pretty clearly referring to cutting an academy, which was a focus of media-instigated controversy in previous iterations

Fife also zeroed in on the cultural affairs manager deletion, which she said is important to bring business to Oakland, and to prevent gentrification

Fife also asked the difference between entertainment and economic zones. Brown says that the nomenclature has been hard to nail. Fife says that the term "opportunity" should be removed because of federal connotations

EWD Director on cultural affairs mgr: "[cultural affairs manager] delivers legally mandated & budgeted work. So position, oversees public art program in place by ordinance, oversees Cultural Affairs Commission, w/out position, we aren't able to deliver on legally mandated work

EWD Director also says its currently done by an ELD, who its assumed would be let go.

Just objectively, Gallo's comments aren't productive. He's going through the idea that Oakland needs more cops, in the midst of reports that say its not physically possible.

Gallo suggested that the police did not intervene in last night's looting after political event because of how it would look.

Gallo still pretending that he is not a council member.

There's been some back and forth about County Measure W, that's 600 MM for homelessness.

Ramachandran noting the following:

*\*\*the biennial budget is a road map for two years of expenditures, but the Council and Mayor/CAO have the power to alter the budget through agendaized vote at any time throughout the year. The Mayor/CAO are allowed to overspend the OPD and OFD's budget without seeking additional authority to do so.*

*Additionally, there is a regular process after the first budgeted year to revisit assumptions about spending and revenues in the "mid-cycle" budget adjustment. The mid-cycle adjustment can become a new budget in itself that can deviate from the original in ways small and large. Thus, in a very real way, the biennial is mostly only a concrete budget for the first year of the biennial— and even that can change. With all this being said, OO's intentions with reporting about the biennial is to represent what CMs and Mayor/CAO are claiming they will budget in the two year biennial, over both years.*

Council members can propose their own amendments going forward. That's usually the way it works, but there's a lot of new CMs here who don't appear to know that.

Ramachandran says that a lot of leadership positions are cut out, and defends cutting the cultural affairs manager: "we do not need a position that costs the city 300k/year" when there are already 4 staff members.

Ramachandran: "we want to prioritize funding staff that provide direct services, not those that make over 250 a year for positions that are hard to defend"

Ramachandran basically saying the Cultural Affairs Manager is "difficult to defend". I think she will hear a lot of support for that position at this meeting.

Public comment begins:

I'm covering remotely, the council chambers appear to be filled

Gail Wallace of League of Women Voters praises funding of limited public financing program, and says they hope that it will lead to fully funding Democracy Dollars.

Noel Gallo's exact words on last night's policing: "Police didn't show up because it was not going to be the right thing to do, considering that debate we're having throughout the country, right?"

BACS rep: "If we're comparing human beings to street on the street versus debris, I trust the city council's discernment to put human lives first. I've been involved with homelessness prevention for the last four years in the human impact of this program has been invaluable"

IAFF President notes that previous budget, which has largely been criticized kept fire stations open: "previous budget team from the previous budget cycle made some hard choices that supported OFD and open firefighters by keeping as many firehouses possible."

IAFF President Olyer thanked Fife, the only person who is still in office from the previous budget team

Linda Carter, East Oakland Senior Center. "East Oakland Senior Center has over 1000 members, and currently we have only one senior coordinator and four part time custodians. We need more people working to sustain the amount of people that we service at the East Oakland Center."

Carter: "Could you please find funding to keep our center open? Our hours now are from 9 to 1, and we need it from at least 9 to 3, and we we have only 4 days. We need that Friday back. Please find funding for our seniors."

Coalition for Police Accountability rep: "cuts to OIG undermine this to get out of federal oversight, we have to show the judge that we can oversee ourselves. IG is intended to take over the work of monitor. budget does not include any auditors to do this work"

Another senior center advocate: "we beseech you, to return that 5 days a week, 9am to 1 is not working for seniors....We have, we have been asking and pleading that we get those

hours back as three is enough. We need a director, we need clerk we need administrative staff"

So far many comments about senior centers cuts that currently exist in the budget, open half day, four days a week, with almost no staff. The cuts are severe, made to nominally keep the centers open.

Oakland Symphony Director: Oakland understands power of arts and culture...this is not just felt by those who live here. Every guest artist who comes and starts into the Paramount Theater leaves speaking about the audience they met in Oakland", urges funding of cultural affairs

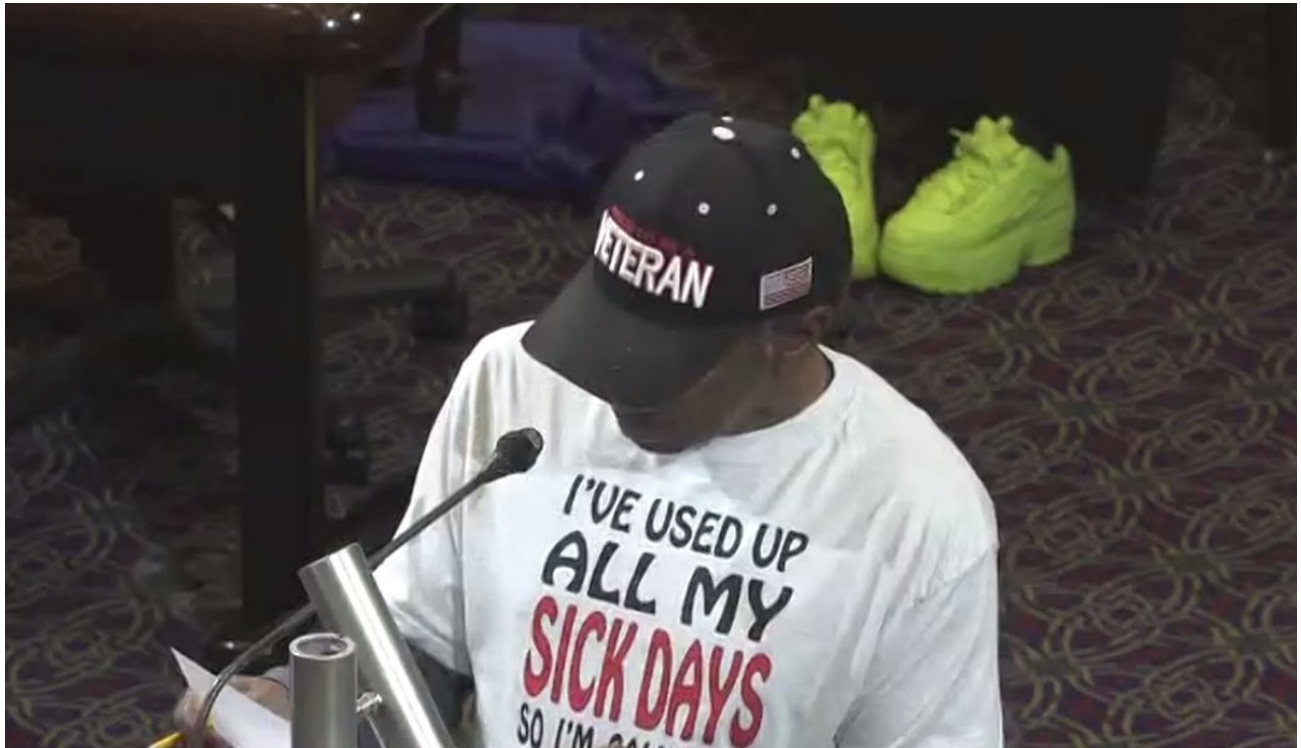


Graham Lustig, of Oakland ballet: "We provide services to community, Oakland ballet provides 8k local students with free dance ed every year...it's scandalous that arts are not featured in any way in this budget"

Funding for the partially open, and to the bone staffed senior centers has been the majority of the comments, second arts, in terms of unfunded programs

Speaker: " if you have a pulse, you have the ability to be a senior. I don't care if you

consider yourself a cougar or a silver fox, you can be a senior, we include everybody."



Roberto Bedoya, former Cultural Affairs Manager asks Council to fund the role

Lance Wilson, APTP speaks out on [civilianizing IAD: " an important step in reducing financial strain on our city, transparency, accountability"

Several speakers are praising things that are actually in the budget, so I'm reporting those to a less degree. Of those, PEC ex director, and a commissioner have thanked for budgeted items

SEIU evidence tech, says she's happy to see that city council is looking towards civilizing roles



Worth noting, there's been not one public comment complaint about cutting an OPD academy.

Several speakers complaining about the relaxation of maintenance of effort for parcel taxes supporting library that pays for 70% of library budget measures.

Speaker: "measures legally require minimum contributions from general fund for tax collection. Only in event of a severe & unanticipated financial event can this general fund amount be reduced. According to city's own reports, in 2021 22, 23 this financial event is unanticipated"

Immediately after public comment, Ramachandran moved the maintenance of effort legislation, which passed with unanimous votes of present

It would be surprising, but it appears the council is on the verge of passing the budget and amendments today.

Ramachandran moved the item, Unger seconded, after Brown said she was seeking a way to restore the cultural affairs manager position. The budget just passed with 6 ayes, Fife excused, Gallo no.

In Open Forum, there's 25 speakers

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