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Sent: 4/19/2017 10:39:44 AM
To: <AshevilleNCCouncil@ashevillenc.gov>
Cc:
Subject: For consideration regarding the budget process for 2017-2018

Mayor Manheimer and City Council Members,

At the city council meeting on Tuesday, April 11th, **three issues stood out to me most.**

1) Asheville City Council nodded to move forward with the 2017-2018 consolidated budget, which includes the 1-million dollar, annual budget expansion for the Asheville Police Department as requested by Chief Hooper.

2) Several non-profit representatives made comments in response to the consent agenda expressing frustration in the amount and process of the recent disbursement of our city's Strategic Partnership Funds, which are locally paid for out of the City's general fund for projects that support Asheville City Council goals through the city's Community Development Department for programs that address housing, transit, food security, and more. Over 400k in requests were made, with 200k budgeted for distribution.

*After speaking with representatives of the non-profit community that were in the room, it is clear that perceived tone from Council, response to increased outreach, and lack of clear communication regarding process lead to additional frustration and heated conversation.

3) In public comment, Rev. Amy Cantrell of BeLoved House highlighted the petition titled "A Million Dollars for The People," citing figures from governing.com which would show Asheville as having higher officer-per-capita policing than the national average for a city our size, as well as one of the highest rates for cities in the state of North Carolina.

*In my opinion, this data is the strongest part of the petition. National concern around over-policing is heard in our community, especially but not limited to conversations in groups like Black Lives Matter, the 100 Days Coalition, and the Sanctuary Cities movements.

I see these three issues as connected.

One of the named reasons for the yearly budget expansion for the APD is a need for 24-hr. policing in Downtown Asheville, which has recently seen a 1% increase in crime and has the highest crime rate of the city. According to community leaders and business owners in Downtown Asheville that I've spoken to, our bustling sidewalks are currently perceived as generally safe, while parking issues take higher precedent in surveys. ([ACT: Feb. 9, 2017](#)) This is a complex, deeply-rooted, systemic issue ranging from wages & retention of city employees to increased population due to our tourism industry and daytime workforce to management & training.

*From my experience, I have seen 3-5 cars race into a situation on Haywood Road when only the smallest concern was raised. Several times, I have asked officers if everything was okay, and the general statement was that they were "bored" and wanted to see what was happening. Also, I have attended two of the Coffee With a Cop events, and had excellent conversations with officers who live in the county due to the high cost of living in town. One expressed difficulty getting work in his field, so he went to work for the APD and comes in from the county to "take care of the hippies and the tourists."

I urge each of you to consider the state and national statistics when justifying more officers in our police force - especially when not all the available positions in the APD are currently filled, which leads to increased overtime. The main issue here is how our city is going to prioritize funding requests. If there is an extra million in tax dollars to allocate in this year's budget, we should consider the example recently set by Buncombe County when they voted to fund community initiatives instead of a new jail.

There are so many things we can do to make Asheville safer and more secure for all. Can you imagine the long-term impact Asheville would see if the city doubled the

Strategic Partnership Fund by \$200k and invested the rest into free-fare transit for our bus system? Increased transparency, diversification of public communications, and calculated use of our volunteer boards & commissions are all ways to address trust between city governance, city staff, and the people of Asheville.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service!

Kim

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Kim Roney - Piano Teacher