



STATE OF THE CITY

Mayor Roy D. Buol Winter 2019

Each year since 2007, it has been my privilege as mayor to deliver an annual State of the City Address to update you, the residents and stakeholders of our city, on the state of our community. These public presentations were also broadcast on television and streamed and archived online. Much has been achieved and much has changed since that tradition began. Among those changes is the dramatic increase in the ways we have to receive information on topics important to us. As a result, I have chosen to modify the State of the City format to connect with more people and provide more frequent updates on community projects, initiatives, and issues.

Beginning with this issue, a State of the City column will appear in the City News newsletter four times per year and that information will also be converted into a video that will air on CityChannel Dubuque (on Mediacom channels 8 and 117.2 and online at www.cityofdubuque.org/media) and will be shared on the City of Dubuque's Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn channels.

For this inaugural column, I want to focus on a timely topic: the process to develop the City's annual operating and capital improvement program budgets. The City's budget preparation and administration begins and ends with the City Council and we take our responsibilities as stewards of public funds very seriously. In fact, Dubuque currently has the second lowest property tax rate of the 11 cities in Iowa with populations over 50,000. Dubuque's rate is 72 percent lower than the highest rate (Council Bluffs) and 45 percent lower than the average of those 11 cities.

The City's budget cycle is 12-months long and the City's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Public input is encouraged throughout the budget cycle to ensure that the budget is citizen-based. The process begins with the City soliciting input in the middle of the previous year. City department managers then get together for two days in June to develop information for the City Council. However, the development of the budget is driven by the goals and priorities developed by my City Council colleagues and me during three facilitated, public sessions held annually in early August. We review the City's vision and mission statements, identify five-year goals, and establish a prioritized policy agenda for the upcoming fiscal year as well as a prioritized management agenda. City staff use this information in the following months to provide

information to the city manager as the city manager creates a recommended budget for the following fiscal year that will support those goals and priorities.

Every November, the city manager holds a budget public input meeting to gather suggestions and ideas from residents and stakeholders for the next year's budget. Public input is also solicited at additional meetings with neighborhood groups and other organizations. Input can also be submitted online at www.cityofdubuque.org/budget where residents can also access a new budget simulation tool and budget documents from past years.

The City Council reviews and approves budget policy guidelines in December to assist the city manager in finalizing the recommended budget before it is presented to City Council, typically at the first City Council meeting in February. The recommended operating budget and five-year capital improvement program includes recommended property tax rates, rates and fees for city services and utilities, and other major budget considerations. The recommended budget and all related documents are public information and are posted to the City's budget webpage the day after they are presented to City Council and remain available for review.

Next, a series of six public meetings (see full schedule at www.cityofdubuque.org/FY2020budget) are held to review individual department/division budget details. These are televised public meetings held in the City Council Chambers where department managers make presentations and residents and stakeholders are encouraged to attend and provide input. Following this series of meetings, City Council must hold a final public hearing to adopt the operating and capital budgets for the next fiscal year. State law requires that all cities in Iowa submit a balanced budget to the State Auditor by March 15 for the fiscal year that begins July 1. The adopted budget is then posted to the City website.

I hope this summary provides you with a better understanding of Dubuque's budget process. My City Council colleagues and I are committed to community engagement and we invite you to participate in this process and advocate for issues that are important to you and will improve our community.