

City Council's Finance Committee concluded its departmental budget analysis at its Oct. 11 meeting by reviewing the budgets of the City's development and police departments.

Development Director Dave Betz and Development Planner Eric Fischer presented an overview of their department budget to the committee, using a format adopted by other City departments that shows savings and revenues generated by the department and listing department functions that are completed in-house versus those that are outsourced.

Betz cited several ways that the development department has saved money in 2010-2011, including a reduction in hours for a part-time zoning inspector (a savings of \$6,285) and the completion of a Bartholomew Run tree replacement project in two years rather than four.

"We saved \$20,000 with that because we were able to get a volume discount on the trees purchased," Betz said. He added that the City's solar retrofit project will generate an estimated energy savings of \$18,000 per year, and said it would be difficult to put a total on the amount saved by having Fischer serve as an IT technician in addition to his development duties.

The department's revenue generation has come from various sources, including zoning certificate fees (\$16,210 in 2010), development review application fees (\$9,276 in 2010) and tree-sharing income from the City's homeowner associations (\$8,750 in 2010). The one-time ARRA energy efficiency grant to the City is worth a projected \$821,661.

Committee member Tom Counts asked Betz how much of the department's time is devoted to economic development in the City as opposed to zoning issues. Betz said that typically changes from week to week. He said zoning enforcement happens "pretty much every day," but added that long-term development is an ongoing challenge as well.

"Our low tax rate is helpful when it comes to attracting business, but we don't have the size facility that a lot of people need," Betz told the committee. "That makes it a lot tougher to get some of the larger employers, but having them would exacerbate the traffic issue."

Counts asked Betz and Fischer what tools are missing from the City's economic development toolbox that would be helpful to have in the coming years. Betz cited a need to spend more on marketing the City to potential businesses.

"One important thing we've done is create the Community Improvement Corporation," Betz said, referring to the newly formed group that works to provide incentives to attract and retain business in Powell.

Committee member Richard Cline said he's pleased with the creation of the CIC and the work the development department has done to bring business to Powell.

"I would be interested in seeing a game plan for 2012 through 2014 to see what you could plan with those resources and see the areas along the Sawmill corridor that could be annexed," Cline said.

Betz said money is saved by performing most of the department duties in-house, including zoning enforcement and administration, economic development and zoning code revisions. Outsourced duties include using an architectural advisor to provide recommendations to the City's Planning and Zoning Commission and Historic Downtown Advisory Committee, and using a court reporter for certain zoning public hearings.

Police Chief Gary Vest and Deputy Chief Steve Hrytzik represented their department at the meeting, and provided a similarly structured report to the committee that highlighted savings, revenue generation and an overview of outsourced and in-house duties. Police department savings over the past year, according to Chief Vest, have come from a reduction in overtime (a savings of approximately \$15,000); reappropriation of clerical duties, which shifts clerical responsibilities from officers to a new clerk at a lower salary; and the creation of the Powell Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association, which provides volunteers at various community events and reduces the number of officers needed.

"The department is run relatively frugally," Vest said. "If we see a savings, we pass it along. But our role doesn't fall much into the raising money side."

Vest said one of the department's challenges has been to stay small while anticipating growth in the community.

"We have to gear our services toward the crimes of the community. We offer a high level of service for a local community," he said. "You could get by with less, but then you wouldn't have Powell."

Counts said City Council has heard "loud and clear" from residents that they want the level of police service that the department provides. He asked Vest how the department would be affected by an increase in development in the City.

"We need to be where we are now, and I'd like to get back the one officer that we lost (from the budget)," Vest said. "But we could expand without doubling the size of the agency and not take too much away."

The department's revenue generation has come from peddler permits (\$1,200 in 2010), fingerprinting (\$7,691 in 2010 when expenses are factored in) and alarm system fees (\$3,275 in 2010). Duties that the department outsources in an effort to save money include vehicle maintenance, crime lab testing and radio communications.

Committee members thanked those in attendance for their reports, and agreed that the process of reviewing department budgets over the past five months has been productive and informative. Counts suggested putting together a summary of the committee's meetings and findings for City Council, along with a qualitative statement that provides Council with any conclusions derived from the review process. Committee members agreed and plan to have something to City Council in November.