

City of Florence

Budget Address – 2007

June 13, 2007

Each year, by law, the Mayor is required to present a budget message as well as a report on the State of the City. Once again this year, I have chosen to combine the two.

I will give you fiscal information, highlight the projects we have completed, report on the projects in process, communicate our progress, and take a look at our future.

In January, as part of the development of the annual budget for fiscal year 2008, the City updated and analyzed our three year financial projections. The analysis showed that without significant changes the City would be facing serious financial issues. In order to be fiscally responsible for the City as a whole, and to maintain the current level of services the residents and business community have come to rely on, the City enacted increases in the payroll license fee, insurance premium fee and storm water fee for the governmental funds. The payroll license fee has been capped at a level equivalent to the social security cap each year for wages. The City also implemented increases in the water and sewer rates for operations and

maintenance and capital needs to maintain and improve the lines. All of the increases mentioned above will go into effect July 1st and have been incorporated into the FY 2008 budget. Members of City Council discussed and debated these changes at great length. I want to thank the Council members for being willing to openly discuss the needed increases, and commend them for their dedication to the city and their vision to do what was necessary to ensure our community has the needed resources for our future.

At the beginning of May, the City Council held a retreat to discuss the annual planned expenditures for each of the City departments, along with the capital projects that we hope to accomplish for fiscal year 2008. During the budget retreat, each department head had an opportunity to present to Council the budgetary issues facing their operations. They also responded to questions and concerns raised by Council about their requests for funds and the necessity for the capital projects requested. The City is presenting a budget that remains financially sound and still allows services to be delivered in the manner in which our residents have come to expect.

The level of funding for police, fire and EMS services will continue to provide for safe neighborhoods. The public service department will continue the ongoing efforts to maintain the appearance and infrastructure of the City.

Recreational opportunities, including the various City parks, the aquatic center, the skateboard park and World of Sports have been provided for as well.

The City will once again be hosting neighborhood night outs, a Memorial Day and Labor Day parade, a July 4th celebration and fireworks display, the annual Halloween event, the Christmas tree lighting and various other events throughout the year.

The budget for fiscal year 2008 represents a comprehensive spending plan for all City funds. The General Fund budget totals \$35.3 million. The operating expenditures are projected to increase 3.2% over those budgeted for fiscal year 2007. The budget reflects all known and estimated increases in costs as well as the estimated increases projected for the various sources of revenues. In addition, the proposed budget includes funds for the development of the acreage at the Old City Building Site on U.S. 42 where we hope to obtain available grant money to help fund the construction of a Senior Citizens Center as well as a neighborhood park.

The fiscal year 2008 budget also addresses the increases in costs of gasoline, diesel fuel and natural gas, the rising costs of all types of insurance including property and liability insurance and health insurance. The city is

also faced with increases in workers compensation insurance and the state mandated increases in retirement costs.

We are fortunate that we continue to experience growth and development. Total construction costs in the City of Florence for 2006 were just over \$75.7 million. 238 building permits for new housing units were issued during the year with the Plantation Pointe and Orleans Subdivisions being among the fastest growing subdivisions in Boone County. The City of Florence is the 10th largest city in the state and home to 26,319 residents. During the past year, the City of Florence grew by just over 14.1 acres through the annexation of 4 separate parcels of property.

During the past year, the City of Florence saw several personnel related changes occur. Nearly every City department saw changes in the form of on-going reorganization, retirements, or promotions.

The city is pleased to welcome Todd Woodhouse as our new Human Resources Director.

Long time Fire/EMS Department Captain Matt Zumdick retired in August in 2006 with more than 25 years of service to the City. Captain Dave Vonderschmidt has announced he will retire in August 2007 with more than 26 years of service.

Near the end of last fiscal year, the last of the 14 new Fire/EMS personnel started work for the City. The decision to bring paramedic service in-house resulted in enhanced operational efficiency and provided greater flexibility for service delivery within the Fire/EMS department.

In an effort to generate more revenue for equipment that is being retired and declared surplus, the city engaged a broker for the sale rather than using the traditional method of auctioning. This equipment consisted of a 1983 pumper truck and a 1986 heavy rescue truck which was replaced with one new combined rescue/pumper truck during the past year.

The Fire/EMS Department continues to operate two fire stations 24 hours a day, seven days a week with paid personnel. We also provide volunteer staffing at our third fire station on Main Street. We count on our volunteers who make themselves available to complete our Fire & EMS department, and allow us to maintain our high level of service to the community. Volunteers are one of our greatest assets and we are extremely grateful that they are able to spend their time and energy with the City of Florence.

A few weeks ago, the Police Department said goodbye to Administrative Secretary Joan Carson who retired after more than 20 years of service to the City.

The City added 4 new police officers to the street this past year as we continue to implement Chief Szurlinski's reorganization plan in the Police Department. The City now has 58 sworn police officers offering a multitude of programs keeping our community safe. Our Bike Patrol provides opportunities within the neighborhoods; our Community Resource Officers continue to offer many innovative programs such as the very successful Citizens Police Academy, Forensic Camp (CSI) for middle school students, and the upcoming Student Police Academy for high school students. These classes have provided the city with a tremendous opportunity for up close and personal interaction with the public and a new source for volunteers. Our SWAT Team continues to serve the community successfully negotiating the peaceful conclusions to sensitive situations. Florence police cars are equipped with Mobile Data Computer Terminals that improve officer safety and allow direct access to records checks, the LINK and NCIC.

During the past year, the Public Services Department worked through the next phase of their reorganization plan by completing a comprehensive Succession Plan for the department. The succession planning process was a critical element in identifying future departmental leaders and key personnel to continue to ensure the department fulfills their mission in the future.

Recently, the department said goodbye to Billy Mitchell who retired after 20 years of service with the City.

Our 60 member public services department continues to keep our community looking first class by professionally managing and maintaining streets, sidewalks, buildings, grounds, fleet services, water, sanitary sewer, storm water, capital improvements, GIS services, urban forestry, code enforcement, and the complaint/request program.

The implementation of the Code Enforcement Board continues to have a positive impact on our community resulting in a more effective and rapid resolution of violations. Our snow removal program is second to none and receives compliments and praise every time we are called into service. We continue to count on the Public Services for excellent service.

Road improvements completed or nearly completed during the past included complete concrete replacement on Grand Avenue, Raintree Road, Rebel Drive, Lakeshore Drive, and Rose Avenue; other streets where concrete street slab replacement occurred included Nicholas Street, Blackstone Drive, Kernal Drive, Collingwood Court, Banklick Street, Belair Circle, Belair Drive, Spruce Drive, Chipman, Kelley Drive, West Dilcrest, Crimson Oak Drive, Carol Lane, Drexel Avenue, Kernal Drive, Youell Street, Wellington Drive, Pheasant Drive, Kathryn Avenue, Orleans

Boulevard, Mollie Court, and New Uri Avenue; mill and overlay improvements occurred on Kentaboo Avenue, Farmview Drive, Merravay Drive, Old US 42, and JoAnn Drive; and complete asphalt street replacement is scheduled to occur on Bustetter Drive and Frieda Place. Several of the streets that were milled and overlaid also had curb repairs, various base repairs, sidewalk repairs, and storm water improvements occur as well.

During the past year, the Public Services Department coordinated and supervised water main extensions along Blackstone Drive, the Orleans North Subdivision, US 25/Main Street area, and Rose Avenue. These important improvements will improve hydraulics in the City water system.

The New Uri Storm Water - Water Shed Study was completed. Other storm water improvement projects completed or in the process of being completed occurred on Northfield Drive, Sweetbriar Avenue, and Evergreen Drive.

A number of sanitary sewer studies and sanitary sewer projects were completed in the past year or are in the process of being completed. Studies completed included the Fowler Creek Sewer Shed Capacity Study, the Pheasant Run Sewer Shed Flow Monitoring Study, the Tee Street Flow Monitoring Study and the Vivian Drive Sewer Overflow Study. Sanitary

sewer capital projects include the Ewing Boulevard/Dream Street Sewer Replacement Project. The Phase III and Phase IV of the Turfway Road 30” Sewer Relining Projects were completed.

Earlier this spring, the Ewing Boulevard bike path was milled and overlaid. Numerous sidewalk improvements occurred along City streets to eliminate safety hazards in the community. Recently, the Public Services Department completed a cooperative project with the Boone/Florence Water Commission that involved the replacement of the fence around the Center Street water tower. The cost of the new fence was shared between the City and the Boone/Florence Water Commission. The fence is similar to the fence around the nearby Center Street Cemetery.

The proposed budget includes funds to implement the next phase of our signage program which includes wayfinding signage and supplemental guide signs along the interstate designed to help residents and visitors more easily find the various destinations and districts in Florence.

Our commitment to provide top quality recreational facilities for our residents continues as we begin the fifth year of operation of our Family Aquatic Center on the Government Center campus. The Aquatic Center is a beautiful water park designed to provide something fun to do for the entire family. The Florence/Boone County Skate Park is also in its fifth year of

operation on the Government Center property and it continues to be a regional favorite.

Development continued on our newest park located off Burlington Pike between Wallace and Kathryn Avenue known as Stringtown Park. During the past year, a trail system was completed in this 8.4-acre park that was partially funded by a grant. Construction recently started on a much needed picnic shelter in popular Stringtown Park as well. Parks and Recreation continues to provide other recreational activities such as baby-sitting classes, tennis lessons, and scrapbook classes.

Through the efforts of United States Senator Jim Bunning and the State of Kentucky, and along with Boone County, Kenton County, the Cities of Florence, Elsmere and Independence, funding is being provided for the improvement of Industrial Road. After many delays, the portion of Industrial Road between U.S. 25 and U.S. 42 was bid out this spring and Lawrence Construction submitted the low bid. Construction on the 5-lane road with sidewalks on both sides is due to start soon. The portion of Industrial Road between U.S.25 and Turkeyfoot Road will not be bid out until additional funding is secured. This phase of Industrial Road is planned to be a three-lane road with sidewalks.

The redevelopment of Mall Road remains an important priority for the city. Approximately \$16 million dollars worth of private construction and redevelopment occurred along the road during the past year. Some of the improvements included the redevelopment of the former Chi-Chi's site, the tear down and reconstruction of the old Taco Bell using the most current Taco Bell prototype, and the new food court, retail space, and atrium at the Florence Mall. Construction is expected to start later this summer on the new state of the art 14-screen National Amusements movie theatre on the Mall Property near the expressway. The new theater is expected to open late spring 2008. We have been in contact with our Chamber of Commerce, local, state and federal elected representatives and continue to work on ways to obtain the funding for the reconstruction of Mall Road itself. After meeting with Governor Fletcher, Transportation Secretary Nighbert, and many other local legislators, the City is working to have Mall Road placed in the State's Six Year Road Plan so the City will then be eligible for State Design/Build Funds in order to move the Mall Road infrastructure improvements forward.

During the current year, a consultant was hired to help the City evaluate the facilities and services offered at the city owned World of Sports Complex. Findings should be available for review by Council early in the

next fiscal year. During the past year, the Public Services Department has worked extensively with the Army Corp of Engineers on the project to convert the existing lake near holes 1 and 2 of the golf course, back to a stream with a conservation easement. This project will be paid for using State of Kentucky Mitigation funds and was initiated due to the extensive and costly work required for this lake and the dam supporting the lake. Work on this project is expected to begin during the next calendar year.

Our tree planting program is continuing, thanks to the efforts of the Urban Forest Commission and the willingness of this and prior councils to budget monies for the projects. I think we will all agree the tree-lined streets are making a difference and are a positive enhancement to our city. The Urban Forest Commission completed the third phase of the Houston Road area project last year that also extended down Spiral Drive and Spiral Boulevard.

The Administrative Department is made up of the Mayor's office, Finance Department, City Clerk, Human Resources and IT. They provide general management of city operations, support in the form of tax collection and licensing, water bill collections, economic development, the city's Human Resources needs, records maintenance by the City Clerk, computer infrastructure and web page maintenance, as well as Public Relations and

coordination of Community Events. The department also produces new resident orientation information packets designed to help the newest members of our community become familiar with all the programs and services the City has to offer. The support services provided by the Administrative Department are an important and sometimes forgotten part of the smooth operation of city government.

The IT Department continues to perform upgrades to the city's computer network with much needed modern equipment and programming. During the past fiscal year, the City's web address changed from a .com address to a .gov address. The City's web page can now be found on the world-wide web at www.florence-ky.gov. We continue to explore other uses of e-commerce including downloading forms for occupational licenses and other city services.

In order to maintain public confidence in the fiscal stability of the City, a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report of the City's financial records are prepared each year by our Finance Director and that report is then audited by an independent audit firm. The report and results of the audit are used by Council and by rating agencies to evaluate the City's financial condition. The City's Comprehensive Report has been recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association for excellence in financial

reporting for the fourth consecutive year. Many thanks go to Linda Chapman and her staff for all the hard work required to receive this prestigious award for the City.

On a continuing basis throughout the year, City Council is also provided with a monthly financial report which shows variances between expected revenues and expenditures so Council is able to monitor whether the current budget needs any adjustments.

The community meeting rooms here at the Government Center continue to be well used and provide an added benefit to our citizens and community groups who require a safe and affordable place to hold meetings. The Veterans Memorial remains a source of pride and provides the perfect backdrop for community events held, including the Memorial Day ceremony, and Veterans Day.

The Northern Kentucky Area Development District opened an office in the Government Center this year which provides the needed space for the operation of the WIA Youth Program and the recently funded Kentucky Works Program. Also located in the Government Center are the satellite offices for the Boone County Circuit Court Clerk and the Boone County Clerk. This provides the citizens of Florence as well as other parts of Boone County with the ability to renew driver's licenses and automobile tags

without making a trip to Burlington. This is one more way the city continues to provide access to local and state government offices and services.

In closing, I would like to mention that your elected officials realize that local government is very unique compared to private industry and even to other State and Federal government units. The fact that any member of the community can voice their concerns to their local elected officials, at any time, via the website, a phone call or by attending a Council meeting demonstrates that uniqueness. The City is literally open 24/7 whether it is to handle a 9-1-1 call, perform snow removal, respond to a traffic accident, repair a water line break, address a citizens' concern, or respond to a medical emergency. We understand and appreciate that every decision made and/or service offered will affect at least one person in the community, and that a local government cannot exist, work or play without its residents and business community.

The city remains committed to our biggest asset and that is the people who work and volunteer to provide the very best service to our citizens. No matter what we identify as needs within our city budget, the implementation and execution of those needs fall on the shoulders of our employees and volunteers. It is through their hard work and dedication that our community

remains safe, attractive, affordable and fun. We truly appreciate their efforts!

The proposed Fiscal 2008 budget makes the best use of taxpayer funds, maintains our high level of service and is fair. I will remind you all that the budget is a working document, subject to change, as needed throughout the year as Council deems necessary.

Our dedication to providing the highest level of service at the lowest possible cost remains our goal. Again, I would like to express my sincere thanks to our employees, the many volunteers and each of you on council for your dedication, support and encouragement. There will be many challenges facing Council in the future, but I am confident the decisions we make will be in the best interest of the city. Our future is bright. I look forward to the completion of these and many other projects during the next fiscal year. We continue in the knowledge that Florence is a great place to live, work and play and our commitment is to make it even better.