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Column

Resident input needed to make budget

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The city of Fort Collins provides some of our community's most visible and vital services, such as police protection, water and electric utilities, street maintenance, and flood control.

As a resident, you rely on these and other city services every day. Therefore, it is imperative that you help determine what services the city should offer and how those services should be funded.

Fort Collins has a long history of citizen involvement, and the tradition continues today. This commitment is particularly relevant as we begin the budgeting process for 2010-11.

The city budget serves as a blueprint for the type and mix of services the city provides.

The city uses a process called Budgeting for Outcomes, which focuses on the needs and desires of citizens. The first step is to evaluate overall community goals and priorities. This started with our citizen survey last fall.

The next opportunity for you to share your thoughts on these priorities is at a public budget workshop from 6 to 8 p.m. May 13 at the Drake Centre, 802 W. Drake Road.

The workshop will begin with an opening presentation about the overall status of the city's financial condition. After that, we'll ask for your feedback about priorities in specific areas of focus, such as transportation, the economy, the environment, neighborhoods, safety, cultural and recreation, and other general operations.

The national economic crisis is affecting our community. We are projecting decreases in our sales and use tax collections this year and do not expect this to turn around quickly. Sales and use taxes make up 60 percent of the city's general fund revenue. We have implemented a hiring freeze on all but essential positions, we're delaying major expenditures, and we're aggressively searching for additional efficiencies.

Despite these efforts, city services will be impacted. We're going to be facing some very difficult choices for the 2010-11 budget.

Looking ahead, we will continue to engage residents in conversation about what services this community wants and needs and what services we are willing to pay for.

The mayor and City Council, as well as city staff, rely on your input to guide decisions. I strongly encourage you to join us May 13 and become more involved in shaping Fort Collins' future.