

San Antonio Express-News

Consider nonprofits in city budget talks

By Scott McAninch for the Express-News

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The city of San Antonio faces a difficult budget outlook next year that includes a \$27 million to \$34 million deficit due in large part to rising employee health care costs.

As the executive director of the San Antonio Nonprofit Council, I commend the city for its proactive approach to addressing the financial stability of our community.

Nonprofit organizations within the San Antonio Nonprofit Council have seen firsthand the impact of budget cuts on the lives of the less fortunate in our community. We advocate for a responsible approach to the city's budget that will serve community needs now and in the future.

Nonprofits play an integral role in our society. We are the safety nets for the most vulnerable, especially during recessions and in times of crisis.

The City Council and city management are proactively looking to continue current service levels while maintaining the city's strong financial position and bond rating.

While I understand the great importance of police and fire departments in ensuring community safety, we must also focus on the prevention of crime and quality of life for the community. Currently, the city allocates 67 percent of its general fund budget to the police and fire departments. The remaining 33 percent is for services such as street maintenance, parks, libraries, health, animal care, code enforcement and human services, including funding to community-based nonprofit agencies providing social services.

While programs run by many nonprofit organizations are not considered public safety, they do contribute immensely to the well-being of the whole community. Nonprofits are key partners with police and firefighters in supporting the safety and prosperity of our residents, and we encourage the police and firefighter unions to join us in identifying a responsible budget approach for the good of the community.

Last year, the city reduced its contribution to nonprofits by 5 percent. Further reductions will be detrimental to our neighborhoods and our prosperity as a community. The services provided by local nonprofit agencies are too important to lose.

We hope that the police and firefighter unions and the city can continue at the negotiation table with open collaborative conversation that will be beneficial to not only public safety but all city services.

Scott McAninch is executive director of the San Antonio Nonprofit Council.