



Citizens' Budget Advisory Council Report May 2018

In October 2017, the City Manager proposed that the Citizens' Budget Advisory Council (CBAC) review potential opportunities for citizen engagement in the budget process.

The City of Winston-Salem Budget and Evaluation Office, serving as staff support to the CBAC, facilitated a series of citizen engagement presentations with several guest speakers.

The **FY 2017-18 CBAC work plan** included the following topics:

- Popping the Question – Budget Engagement in the City
 - o Presentation by Ben Kittelson, City of Durham
- Best Practices for Citizen Engagement
- Evaluation of Survey Tools for Citizen Input on the Budget
- Communicating Priorities in the Budget Process
 - o Budget Balancing Game (Budget and Evaluation Office Team)
 - o City Council's Strategic Objectives (Scott Tesh, OPA Director)
- Budget Engagement Communication Plan
 - o Presentation by Ed McNeal, COWS Marketing and Communications Director
 - o Communication Tools: Social Media, Newsletters, Post Cards, etc.
- Research on Citizen Participation in the Budget Process of other NC Municipalities
 - o Presentation by Heather Curry, COWS Budget and Evaluation Analyst
- Points of Citizen Engagement in the Budget Process

FY 2017-18 CBAC Members:

Members	Term expiration date	Attended Meetings
1. Sheila McLean (WF)	07/19	Yes
2. Shannon McKeen (WM)	09/19	Yes
3. Haysetta Shuler (BF)	12/19	Yes
4. Lavonza Holliman (BM)	12/19	No
5. Jesse Ide (WM)	06/20	Yes
6. Angelia Newell (BF)	07/20	Yes
7. Tanya Little (BF)	09/20	Yes
8. Nathan Borne (WM)	12/20	Yes
9. Victor Davidson, II (BM)	12/20	No

CBAC Recommendations:

- 1) The Budget and Evaluation Office should engage more with the City of Winston-Salem's Marketing and Communications Department on developing marketing communication strategies related to the budget process.
- 2) The Marketing and Communications department introduced the use of beacon technology that emits a Bluetooth signal to mobile devices in proximity to them and a push notification with a distinct message. CBAC recommends that beacons be used to inform citizens about budget public hearings, budget workshops, and community meetings on the proposed budget.
- 3) Budget staff should create a program called 'Coffee with Council' which will allow for residents to engage with Council members about the proposed budget. Meetings could be held at police sub-stations, libraries, or recreational facilities.
- 4) The Budget and Evaluation Office created an interactive budget-balancing game called Budgetopoly. CBAC had a great time playing the game during a committee meeting and recommends that budget staff conduct educational and outreach opportunities in community settings utilizing Budgetopoly as an interactive and fun tool to educate citizens on city's budget process and the difficult task that City Council has in making budget decisions. Staff should tap into existing groups to conduct these workshops.
- 5) Consider the viability of creating a digital version of Budgetopoly (budget-balancing game) for the City's website.
- 6) Consider the viability of creating a digital tax receipt so that people can see a breakdown of how their tax dollars are spent by category. The digital tax receipt software is powered by 'Balancing Act' and can be purchased through a company called 'Engaged Public', which specializes in engagement-driven strategies.
- 7) Develop interactive budget questions/surveys on social media. For example, residents could engage with the City on Twitter (or other social media sites) by picking their top priority for capital projects using a hashtag such as #2019budgetpriorities.
- 8) The City should host a physical and/or virtual "proof of performance" bond project tour of the 2014 completed bond projects so that citizens can see how their tax dollars were spent in the last bond. This physical tour would be similar to the 'Parade of Homes' event and the virtual tour can show before and after photos of the projects.
- 9) In all marketing materials, the City should highlight the operating costs related to the bond projects. Oftentimes citizens are unaware of the operating costs/impact associated with approving bond projects. As the City educates citizens on the 2018 proposed bond projects, there should be equal education about the operating expenses associated with each project.
- 10) By the next bond referendum (after the 2018 bonds), the Mayor and City Council should consider restructuring the duties of CBAC members to a more active community role, with representatives assigned from each ward. CBAC members would receive training about the City's budget process and upcoming bond projects, then take a leadership role in engaging citizens in their assigned wards on budget/bond project awareness. CBAC could also take an active role in leading efforts such as participatory budgeting.