General observations about the budget discussed at the recent Finance Committee meeting include the ever-expanding size of the administration:

Was it as recently as last year that the city council voted Mayor Perrin a raise, as he claimed he also did the work of a city manager? The lawyer and the clerk also got raises, I think? Now, the new mayor comes in at top salary and immediately plans for additional personnel who help reduce his workload? There was also discussion in the meeting about other higher salaried additions coming at Us as the new administration takes charge.

All of this stands in stark contrast to CColeman's questions about lower wage positions, some still unfilled. That discussion exposed that the city has been knowingly underpaying workers since pay was last adjusted in 2016, yet, again, raises to those with seats in the council chambers, with more consultant ananlysis and recommendations coming.

Overall, it sounds like Mayor Copenhaven plans on expanding the costs considerably in pay and bodies. Higher paid managers need many lower paid "doers" to justify the need for managers, while adding administrivia that comes with larger operations, such as more meetings, as new layers of bureaucracy are added. CBryant and CLong seemed to have a thriftier bead on a 33% increase in personnel costs, costs which always create ripple effects to costs elsewhere, such as retirement contributions, etc.

Periodically, there is uproar across the country when the federal government shuts down but, today, there is little consideration for the private sector taxes that allowed government workers & elected officials to keep their most valuable asset this past year, their jobs. Harken back to March 2020, the virus and the tornado. Put yourself in that mindset with one difference - a business owner with employees that rely on the income the business generates. The fears of greatly reduced revenue never occurred, despite the still not re-opened mall. How? Increased sales tax collection, i.e., the costs of state and local government grew through the sales tax.

The now, 10-month emergency demands that every expansion of the cost of government in 2021 be stopped. The guvner's "perpetual emergency" restricts Jonesboro businesses and people, especially small businesses and community engagements, yet the guvner ignores enforcement on corporate retailers who reap greater benefits and profits. Has the city analyzed the offset of taxes paid by larger than mom-and-pop businesses, businesses that did not receive tax credits from the state, Craighead County, and Jonesboro? Are the taxpayers of Jonesboro suffering the premium of the higher costs of government because big-box stores, groceries, etc., get continued tax breaks that reduce revenues and, thereby, increases pressures on the residents and visitors?

Lasty, the millions of dollars of reserves that the city has built up over the past few years is theft of the taxpayers' wallets. How is it that, in a time where families and workers struggle through the impact of these many restrictions, the largely private sector economy is guaranteeing and subsidizing the paychecks of the city employees, who've borne little of the lost employment suffering, like the mayor, the city staff, and this city council. When do the residents get subsidized for the ongoing and increased burdens put on Us all by ever-increasing costs of government. Rather than enabling budgeted increases, perhaps the city can tap the reserves judiciously to implement a much smaller reserve, with pay-as-you-go risks for once-in-a-great-while emergencies, like an ice-storm 12 years ago? With the easy access to federal and state funds, how about expanding the options and modernize the thinking for less guvment in 2021 and into the future?

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