Public Comments submitted after April 19th Workshop

How might Albany deliver services differently or more efficiently?

- A judicious use of volunteers can reduce *some* staff work. The arts and green festival has been a good model for volunteers working on city events. Although some staff time is necessary to guide the process, competent and experienced volunteers can organize and staff events like this. Some clerical work can also be done by volunteers. Staff needs to spend time training and supervising volunteers which often dilutes the value they provide.
- Combine with other public agencies to reach more economies of scale? Share maintenance equipment and or space with AUSD or UCV especially with large ticket items that are expensive and not used every day.
- Leverage something from the University in exchange for the fire protection Albany provides to the Village (assuming we don't contract out fire service) I think I read UC purchased a fire truck for Berkeley fire department in exchange for services.
- Modify or suspend the IPM policy until such time as there is staff to weed by hand every area. You can have no staff or no chemicals but I don't believe you can have both. Due to limited staff in public works, it is impossible to keep all of the streets, parks and public building landscaping looking as perfect as we would like.
- The sharing of the fire chief is an interesting idea and the short term contract enables staff and council to evaluate its success or make any adjustments in a timely manner. One of the services that are important to Albany citizens is the rapid and professional medical care including transport provided by AFD. This service seems to be the major portion of their calls. Is there a way to divide the fire and medical service provided and contract out fire protection and keep the paramedic services? In the budget workshop presentation, salaries in the fire department were shown to be above the average of local cities demonstrating the need to make major changes in this department.

How might Albany generate more money to provide City services?

- Increase the commercial tax base. This can come from new or renovated businesses such as the Whole Foods project and Safeway. The Whole Foods project is especially interesting because it moves property that was previously off the tax rolls onto the tax rolls. Both projects also include small stores which create a small town atmosphere while adding more businesses to the economy

- Consider ideas to streamline and enhance the planning department. Would hiring another planner assist in moving projects through faster? Is there any way to expedite the permit process? How can we make relocating to Albany easy for new businesses? Collaborating with the Chamber on various programs, like façade improvement, will help make Albany businesses grow.

- Examine business permits. Does each operator in a nail or hair salon or massage parlors have their own business license? What about permits for dog walkers? Do all of the vendors around the schools and in the parks have business licenses? What about permits for taxis? There are lots of them late at night on San Pablo, which is great, but can we get money from them?

- Discuss implementing a program of parking permits and paid parking including such questions as – what is the goal of the program? Does it make fiscal sense? Do we have staff to implement and manage it? Where does the money go? How will it affect the business community? Albany is small enough that one plan with a variety of components must be implemented for the entire city. Anything done on a particular street will impact other streets and there will be a ripple effect throughout the entire city. Start with parking meters on Buchanan St. at the waterfront.

- Consider the installation of state of the art cell towers. What type of revenue would the city get from these towers?

- Form a consortium with other agencies for purchasing. Chief Tubbs mentioned purchasing fire department uniforms with another agency and this could be done for uniforms, supplies, equipment etc. in all departments, not just public safety.

- Consider corporate sponsors and partnerships for events and programs. This is common practice for recreation programs. Naming rights for fields is another possibility.

- Consider combining programs etc. of the recreation department, the library and the AUSD adult education? Is there duplication of activities which could in some way be consolidated for cost effectiveness?

What is important about local control?

Local control gives a city personality and is one thing that differentiates one city from another. Albany is so small that our very existence is threatened by a loss of local control. The schools are the engine which drives this town followed closely by public safety. The quick response time, competent personnel, and high quality service are important to residents. People choose to pay lots of money both to purchase a home in Albany and also for taxes (supported by the electorate) to support these services. Without local control these services would possibly diminished or eliminated, housing prices would drop as the reasons to live here lessen and an unstoppable slide toward no longer being a city begins. Having said all of that, I am not opposed to considering every possible alternative to providing necessary services so long as we aware of the consequences of losing local control and the importance of preserving our unique and independent Urban Village.

What criteria might Albany use in selecting which services to contract and with which agencies?

What do we already share? How close is the other agency? What is the fee and for how long? What happens if the conditions change? How do we get out of outsourcing a service? Is there any way we can make a trade? What do we lose? Gain? What collaborative opportunities are available?

What does Albany need to consider in fiscally planning the future?

I think it is worth considering what services are absolutely necessary, what are necessary and what are nice to do. This will help guide staff and council in determining priorities in both good and bad times.

Staff compensation is going to be a major issue going forward. Basic salaries need to be competitive in order to attract the best and most qualified employees. With the exception of the fire department Albany seems to be below the average of local cities. As health care costs continue to rise, some creative solutions will be in order. Council needs to show leadership and reduce their plans to the level provided to staff. They need to remove the in lieu payments from their package. They are not full time employees and should not be treated as such.

Health care coverage will be driven by other competing agencies. Albany must have a competitive package to attract the best people. I imagine over time the amount of coverage will diminish as costs continue to rise.

PERS contributions will have to be shared by the employee and the employer which is common in public agencies. The APOA has already agreed to do this and I imagine other groups will have to do this also.

As the City moves out of these desperate financial times (and we will) it is important continue to be conservative. Albany has a history of paying off debt as money is available to prevent being over extended when funds are more limited. During good times, it is imperative to continue to act in a prudent and responsible manner and not commit to programs or compensation packages that cannot be continuously funded during the next downward cycle.

Questions & Answers from April 19th City of Albany Community Conversation
Balancing our Values and Budgets during Tough Economic Times

1. *Who is in charge of and holds decision making authority of our City's Budget?*

   The City Council is the responsible authority for adoption of the City Budget.

2. *What percent of the budget is restricted funds?*

The budget discussed at the workshop was the General Fund Operating Budget and this budget of approximately $17,000,000 is controlled by the City Council, and is not restricted by any local, state, or federal authority. The total budget for all funds for fiscal year 2010-11 is approximately $25,000,000. Thus, of the total City budget of $25,000,000, thirty two percent is restricted.

3. *Why is the general "fund balance" now $5 million – it was $3 plus million before? Is that the same as the Reserve Fund?*

The General Fund, fund balance at June 30, 2009 was $5,025,037, of which $3,560,007 was Unreserved/Undesignated (Reserves). This fund balance increased to $5,065,478 at June 30, 2010 as a result of revenues exceeding expenditures during the 2009-10 fiscal year. The Unreserved/Undesignated portion of the fund balance at June 30, 2010 was approximately $3,600,000, with the remainder being designated or reserved for special purposes. The final audited balance has not yet been reported.

The schedule below was presented at the Council budget workshop.

GENERAL FUND RESERVES

	Fiscal Years Ended			
	2007	2008	2009	2010
General Fund Expenditures	$13,786,79 9	$14,963,97 6	$16,034,36 9	$15,831,37 4
Minimum Target Reserves - 25%	3,446,700	3,740,994	4,008,592	3,957,844
Undesignated Fund Balance	3,182,581	3,209,486	3,560,007	3,600,000
Under Target	$264,119	$531,508	$448,585	$357,844

4. What percent of the City's annual expenditures is related to debt service payments?

General Fund expenditures in fiscal year 2009-10 were $15,759,826 and of these expenditures, $19,901, or 0.1%, was for debt service. Total expenditures for governmental funds in fiscal year 2009-10 were $27,356,185 and of these expenditures, $1,846,515, or 6.7%, was for debt service. In addition to the governmental funds debt, the City has a special assessment district for which the annual debt service is approximately $475,000, and the City's enterprise fund (Sewer Fund) pays annual debt service of approximately $630,000 per year.

5. What would a sales tax of ¼ cent generate in revenue?

Based on taxable sales for the 12 months ended September 30, 2010, the City's sales tax consultant (auditor/monitor) projects that an increase in the local sales tax rate of an additional .25% (1/4 cent) would yield revenue to the City of $400,000 to $500,000.

6. What would a parcel tax of $50 generate in revenue?

There are 5,737 parcels in the City, so a strictly drafted parcel tax would yield revenue of $286,850. However, all parcels are not equal and if the tax was based on an equivalent residential units (ERU) formula typically applied to parcel taxes, the number of units would be 7,000 to 8,200 ERUs, yielding revenue of $350,000 to $410,000.

7.   Could the property transfer tax be raised? How?

Raising the real property transfer tax would require approval of a measure placed before the voters in an election, and would have to be passed by a majority of the voters in the election. Placing a measure on the ballot would either have to be done by approval of the City Council or by citizens circulating a referendum petition. The next general municipal election is November 2012, and if passed, the change in tax would most likely be effective 1/1/2013.

8. How much does it cost to place a measure on the ballot?

At a general municipal election, when members of local offices (City Council, School Board, City Treasurer) are on the ballot, there is a very minor incremental cost to print and publish materials. The estimated cost to conduct a special election separate from the general municipal election is $50,000. It may be possible to conduct a mail ballot special election for a lesser amount.

9. What is the per capita citizens' amount for staff salaries in Albany and how does that compare with other cities along the San Pablo corridor?

Albany's salaries are $492 per capita. Here are the figures for some of the other cities of somewhat comparable size: Pinole $509, El Cerrito $669, Piedmont $791, and Emeryville $1,561. Hercules and San Pablo do not have municipal fire departments.

10.   What was the total cost of consultant services and contracting services issued by the City in 2009, 2010 and projected in 2011, 2012?

Consultant and contracting services are recorded in the accounting classification of Professional Services which is a broad category in which consultant services is minor portion. General Fund Professional Services are charted below. They are classified by services that are reimbursed (such as by permit applicants), and those that are not reimbursable (such as specialized services).

GENERAL FUND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
ACTUAL AND BUDGETED

Period	Reimbursable	Non Reimbursable	Total
Fiscal year 2008-09	333,130	884,408	1,217,538
Fiscal year 2009-10	387,383	659,860	1,047,243
Fiscal year 2010-11(10 mo.)	297,761	441,945	739,706
Fiscal year 2010-11 budget	375,800	776,387	1,152,187
Fiscal year 2011-12 budget	375,800	718,247	1,094,047

11. How much of these plans/studies have been implemented and what were the costs of implementation?

Most of the professional services are for activities other than developing plans/studies. The plans developed in the above fiscal year include *Voices to Vision* about the Albany waterfront, which is providing guidance to the property owner on what the community would support, and an Economic Development study, which is being implemented as part of the City Council's work plan primarily through the work of City staff and the local business associations, with some outside assistance related to the redevelopment zone and identity/branding work.

12.   Albany is comparing its City employees' salaries/benefits/pensions with employees of other cities. With as high as benefits and pensions are across the board, that's comparing our City employees with dollars that are too high. You should be comparing

salaries/benefits/pensions with those of us who pay the property taxes, and thus pay City employees' salaries/benefits/ pensions. I, and many people I know, have had salaries, rates and/or hours cut. Our overtime is cut or capped, and we work for flat rates. This is what all of us who live in Albany do. We pay your salaries/benefits/pensions; you employees should do the same, shouldn't you?

What this question suggests is basing compensation on factors other than comparison with other cities, and raises the idea of considering the compensation of residents in setting city salaries. The City Council has the option of considering this approach, while also recognizing other factors such as the type and level of skills, knowledge and ability it is seeking in its applicants and employees, the availability of those qualifications among prospective employees, and whether to seek to retain employees who are competitive for other cities' positions.

13. How did salaries and benefits get to where they are relative to other cities and the private sector?

When the economy was booming, there was a lot of competition among cities, and between cities and the private sector, for public employees. Cities had difficulty attracting and retaining employees who were being wooed by private sector salaries and bonuses. At various times, competition was particularly fierce for positions such as police officers, engineers, accounting technicians, planners, paramedics, and other support, operations, technical, and managerial staff. Turnover is expensive for any organization because of recruitment and training costs. Albany made efforts to attract and retain quality personnel who had not only good skills, knowledge, and ability for the jobs, but could also provide the wide range of duties employees in a small city perform.

14. How do Albany's post-retirement costs compare with other cities?

Albany has three advantages over many other cities with respect to post-retirement obligations:

1) The City avoided entering into obligations for retiree health benefits. So while other cities are facing rising costs and liabilities to pay for retiree health benefits, the City of Albany pays only the fixed cost required by PERS of $104/month (plus CPI), and a certain amount into a health benefits account for some long-time employees.

2) The City was able to pay off some of its pension obligations, thereby avoiding higher pension costs currently and going forward.

3) The City's pension plans for police and fire is the "3% at 55 formula", rather than the higher-cost "3% at 50" formula in place in most Bay Area public safety agencies; the City's "2.5% at 55" formula for non-safety is about middle-of-the-road for pension benefits in the area.

15. Can't the City reduce employee pensions?

Cities and other public agencies are restricted from reducing pension benefits for current employees. They can reduce pension plans for new hires if agreed upon during the collective bargaining with employee groups. PERS has a set range of benefit plans available for contract. The City is pursuing this so-called "two-tier" approach.

16. Who negotiates with the union groups?

The City hires a negotiator from a local non-profit entity, IEDA, which represents many public agencies in collective bargaining. The Human Resources Manager also participates in negotiations. The negotiator is given direction by the City Council and reports to the City Manager.

17. Explain how a furlough program lowers costs and how it affects employee compensation.

A furlough program reduces the number of hours per year that employees work. Employees' pay is reduced by the same percentage that the hours are reduced. Lower salaries result in lower costs for benefits that are priced based on salary (pension, Social Security, Medicare, etc.).

18. Has the City considered unpaid leave/furlough program to cut down the salary?

Yes.

19. The forthcoming 4.0% and 4.5% contributions to PERS by some City employees (directors, managers, supervisors and professionals) are lower than many other cities. Why can't the City ask more?

The City is asking more. It is the goal of the City to have employees pay the entire 8.0% (non-safety) or 9.0% (safety) employee contribution. Police employees will begin paying 8.0% or 9.0% this July. The City is in negotiations with its miscellaneous employees (SEIU) and with its Fire employees.

20. How much money would be saved if staff reduced their salaries by 5% for those who earn $90,000-$100,000, and 10% for those who earn over $100,000?

Salary and PERS savings of $13,207 for the two employees earning $90,000-$100,000 base salary plus incentives. Salary and PERS savings of $426,467 for the twenty-eight employees earning over $100,000 base salary plus incentives.

21.   Can the employees pay more of the pension and health benefits cost?

Employees can pay more towards the cost of pensions, although PERS does regulate how far employers can go in the employee pick-up formula. Employees can pay more health benefits costs. Both the pension and the health benefits payments by employees are subject to collective bargaining negotiations between the City and the employee associations.

22.   Is overtime included in the calculation of the pension pay? If included why not remove overtime in calculation?

Overtime is not included in the calculation of the pension pay.

23.   Is the 20% of monies not allocated to salaries, benefits or overtime flexible enough to bridge the budget gap?

That does not appear likely at this time.

24.   How many of recreation activities/camps were used by Albany vs. Non-Albany residents?

 Albany Residents Registrations:
  July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010 -------6,569
  July 1, 2010 to April 28, 2011 -------6,306

 Non-Residents Registrations
  July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010 -------7,427
  July 1, 2010 to April 28, 2011--------6,971

25.   Are these recreation activities self-sustainable economically?

Cost recovery varies in each of the Recreation and Community Services divisions.

Teens, Seniors, and Special Events have the least cost recovery. Teens and Special Events recover approximately 23-25% of expenses, and Seniors approximately 44% of expenses. Facility Rentals are approximately 50% cost recovery, although this number is expected to improve now that the Community Center Tower has been repaired. Child Care and Recreation

Classes are approximately 83%-85% cost recovery, the Cable division is approximately 93% cost recovery. Adult Sports is 104% cost recovery. The Civic Arts program is a very small budget and is 6% cost recovery.

*26.	Can we increase the fee for non-Albany residents/participants?*

Yes, the City can increase the non-resident fee. Currently, non-residents pay an additional $10 per person, per class.   When cities evaluate non-resident fees, they consider what other providers charge and what the market will bear since these services are optional.

*27.	How can the City Charter sections 14-1.5 and 14-1.6 transfer the cost of replacing the public sidewalk in front of our house caused by the City of Albany's Camphor tree on the City of Albany owned strip?*

This inquiry raises the question of how the City can require a private property owner to maintain the sidewalk, even when it may be damaged by a tree in the parking strip. State laws found in the Streets and Highways Code (sections 510 and 5611, for example) contain very similar provisions to Albany Municipal Code sections 14-1.5 and 14-1.6. The City derives its authority to pass its ordinances under its inherent police powers. The State likewise has a similar power under its legislative authority.

Residents and city officials sometimes refer to trees planted in the parking strips as city trees. This is not necessarily an accurate statement. When land is subdivided, as it was in Albany for the most part several decades ago, developers are typically required to create roads, curbs, parking strips, sidewalks, and landscaping. Once planted, a tree within the public right of way is not technically owned by the city. The tree becomes the responsibility of the owner of the private property contiguous to the right of way. As such, the owner becomes responsible for the tree and the maintenance of the sidewalk or other elements within the public right of way. It may be more accurate to say that the tree is owned by the owner of the private property that is contiguous to the public right of way. So, if a public park (land owned by the City) was next to a public right away with a tree in the planting strip, that tree would be owned by the City.

Finally, many residents may not be aware of the fact that they may have fee ownership of the land where a sidewalk, parking strip, or curb is. These areas are usually referred to as the public right of way because when the land was subdivided, the sub divider was required to provide those public amenities.

*28.	Will there be a sidewalk reimbursement fund this year as there has been in past years to at least reimburse 50% of the homeowners' sidewalk replacement cost?*

In the past several years the City has allocated funds to be available on a first-come, first-serve basis to reimburse property owners for up to 50% of the cost to replace sidewalk areas where damage is caused by the roots of trees in the parkway strip. The funds for fiscal year 2010-11 have been exhausted. Whether funds will be allocated in 2011-12 will be determined as part of the budget adoption. A one-year pause on this reimbursement program has been identified as a potential contributor to balancing the budget.

29.   How can the City encourage home sales so that the transfer tax will rise? For example, can there be waivers to encourage home buying?

According to local Realtors, there are more people interested in buying a home in Albany than there are homes for sale. It is an interesting question as to what might trigger more property owners putting their houses up for sale. While one idea could be to waive the property transfer tax, this tax does not appear to be a driving factor in whether owners list their properties for sale.

30.   Has the city considered taking a more active role to initiate a "broker: service to attract mid to large size business to come to the City?

The City discusses available properties with commercial real estate agents and brokers, property owners, and prospective businesses. The City has initiated inquiries about potential businesses to move to Albany, most notably in the City's redevelopment district on Cleveland Avenue and Eastshore Highway. In addition, Albany is a member of the East Bay Green Business Corridor and the East Bay Development Alliance, which are consortiums of cities that provides assistance in seeking new businesses, retaining existing businesses, and related investment strategies.

Cities of a larger size, larger budget, and/or larger redevelopment agency sometimes have staff members who, with policy direction on the specific businesses or types of business to recruit, continually solicit businesses to locate or relocate in their cities. The City of Albany dedicates a portion of one staff person, with some outside assistance, to work on economic development projects and programs. The relatively small size of Albany's commercial parcels and buildings, and the fact that the redevelopment agency does not have the authority to assemble parcels that most agencies have, puts it at a competitive disadvantage for new mid to large sized businesses.

The City could do more to attract businesses, but it would require additional funds for staff and/or consultants. It would also depend on local support for medium to large-sized businesses to locate in Albany.

31. *Please explain how the leaving of a planning position vacant saved money when you calculate lost revenue from delayed permit approvals and lost permit opportunities from discouraged applicants who did not apply for permits?*

The City has worked hard to avoid significant delays in processing planning applications. Some applications have moved relatively slowly, such as the Safeway, University Village, and St. Mary's projects, but the speed has been a result of iterative refinements in project design initiated by the Planning and Zoning Commission or by the applicant rather than because of lack of attention from staff.

The consequence of the open planning position has been that the Planning Manager has focused more on planning applications at the expense of on-going long term planning initiatives. Examples include the Housing Element, refinements to the Planning and Zoning code for telecommunications, annual monitoring of St. Mary's High School, etc.

32. *Has the city considered shared services - not contracting, but forming a regional type group of service such as fire services & sewer services, etc.?*

The City has discussed some regional services with nearby cities and other agencies, and we anticipate that there may be increasing interest in a tight economy. There are challenges to regionalizing services, and Albany's location at a county line presents additional difficulties to partnering with neighboring cities to the north.

33. *With the City Clerk retiring, who will process election information?*

The City Council is appointing an existing staff member (most likely the Assistant City Manager) to serve as the City Clerk and perform some of the functions of the position while overseeing other staff members performing other of the duties. The person in that position will perform the election duties directly or the City will contract for those services on as as-needed basis. The next scheduled municipal election is November 2012.

34. *Does the City have other options than Alameda County for vector control services?*

That is something that the City will research.

35. *City should charge some minimum fees on fire services (e.g. smoke detector installation, CPR training, etc) during the economy low times. Has the City considered this?*

The Fire Department charges $25 for either CPR or First Aid. The First Aid classes are offered twice a year, and CPR is offered four times per year. We anticipate that these classes generate about $2,000 – 2,500 annually.

When a smoke detector is installed we only charge $16 to cover the cost of the detector. We only install the detectors in senior housing and for our disabled residents. We have not charged fees for several of the allowed permits in the Fire Code to be a better partner with our Albany businesses.

36.   Can we reduce fire department costs from 6 to 5 staff requirements because of our large overtime costs?

Overtime is caused by several factors which include sick leave for self and family, jury duty, vacation, on the job injuries, mandated training, and vital regional meetings that keep employees up to date on various aspects of the job: (**E**mergency **M**edical **S**ervices, or **EMS**), disaster preparedness, fire prevention, public education, training, and daily operations, to name a few.

The Fire Department used to be staffed by seven people at all times. The Department cut back to six people per shift in the mid-1990's as a cost saving measure. Since there is no additional staff to cover when a person is out for any of the reasons above, those shifts are filled on an overtime basis. Some overtime costs are recovered; for example, when we participate in fighting fires or assist in any disaster in California, we are reimbursed for the costs of our staff and equipment assisting at the incident as well as the costs for backfilling all personnel here at home. We do actively watch our overtime costs and do everything possible to minimize its effect.

The entire city departments combined overtime is approximately 5% of the total budget. To save on overtime, we could increase staffing to at least seven per shift and then allow one person to be off duty at any time. This would reduce the amount of overtime but it does front load the cost to increase the staffing level by three positions.   If in the alternative the shift was not backfilled, the department would lose the flexibility to respond to simultaneous or subsequent call(s) for service.

37.   What is the staffing level, and what services are provided by the Fire Department?

The Fire Department is staffed by 18 firefighters, one Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal, and a shared Fire Chief. They fight fires, handle medical calls, respond to hazardous conditions, perform over 1,000 business and fire safety inspections, educate the public, and perform CERT and CPR training. Albany receives a high level of quality fire services with far less personnel when compared to most other fire departments in the area.

On a daily basis the Fire Department has six firefighters to staff an engine, an ambulance, and the truck. In any of the other neighboring cities this would be staffed with eight firefighters but we accomplish this by "cross-staffing." The type of unit responding to a call, and the staffing level are determined by the type of call that the fire department is dispatched to and the order in which it was received.

For instance, the ambulance has two people that operate this unit with both of them being paramedics. The engine responds with the ambulance as we do not know when a third person is needed to assist with a patient's medical needs when transporting a critical patient to the emergency room. When this

does happen the fourth firefighter can return to the fire station with the engine and team up with the two other firefighters to form a three person engine or truck. This allows a three person staffed reserve engine on the truck, which is also staffed with a paramedic, to respond to another call for service and allows them to perform most of the functions needed; realizing that they will need assistance from another adjoining city or other mutual aid resources to minimize the impact of the incident. Without six personnel on duty at all times, we cannot handle a simultaneous call for service of any consequence. So utilizing our six personnel per shift is trying to meet the standards of service levels and the safety requirements of our firefighters while trying to operate at a cost savings level for the City budget.

Four firefighters on an engine or truck is the industry standard for minimum staffing based on several factors which include: level of service. Fires, as well as medical calls, are dynamic and do change quickly. Three, and even four persons, are regularly needed to assist with the following on medical emergencies: splinting extremities or spinal immobilization onto a backboard, conscious and unconscious patient carries, multiple patients, patient access above/below ground, contact information, and medical history retrieval, CPR regularly requires at least four people to provide the necessary care to treat and transport a <u>single</u> patient.

Regarding response to fires, the industry standard is four firefighters on each engine or truck. Using four firefighters allows shorter start to finish times of handling an incident, allows faster completion of the four critical events of firefighting which are: Entry into the building, rescue, water on the fire, and ventilation. It also helps prevent firefighter injuries which reduces overtime costs to the city, prevents exhaustion due to physically taxing activities and helps minimize the damage to the personal residence or commercial business.

Reducing the level of staffing would also reduce the **F**irst **R**esponder **A**dvanced **L**ife Support, or **FRALS** revenue that the City receives from Alameda County. Additionally, reduced staffing could jeopardize Measure "N" funding that was passed with our community to help support the fire department in meeting the community's needs. It also would prevent the fire department from assisting any other city with an out-of-Albany emergency as we would not have any available personnel or equipment her in the City. That would most likely have repercussions to any other city responding to Albany when we would need assistance.

So to answer the questions of staffing levels; we cannot reduce our number of firefighters on duty without sacrificing the level of service provided by the Albany Fire Department.

38.   Can fire services be shared with other cities?

We have already started to explore ideas of providing services by alternative means. The new Fire Chief is the first example of this concept. The Chief is already exploring other options of sharing costs of service as well as joint purchasing to lower the operating expenses for the Albany Fire Department but for our surrounding cities as well.