

Top Results from Employee/Public Suggestions

Shared arrangements with other cities or public agencies:

Ideas	Staff Comments
Share services/positions with the Albany School District	City & AUSD staff are exploring feasibility and cost/benefit of shared arrangements in information technology, and facilities rentals and maintenance
Share equipment with other agencies	City will start new procedure to require exploring shared possibilities before purchasing equipment not used on a daily basis. Issues to consider: Cost/benefit of savings vs. use fees and travel time.

Employee Salaries & Benefits

Ideas	Staff Comments
Have employees pay 50% to 100% the employee share of PERS	Police employees will pay the percentage of pay equal to the full amount of the employee share starting 7/1/11. Managers, supervisors, professional staff and others in the Albany Municipal Services JPA and public safety management will pay one-half the employee share starting 7/1/11. The City's goal is for all employees to pay the full employee share of the pension cost.

Overtime & Retirement

Ideas	Staff Comments
Use Flex-Time approach rather than overtime pay	Can be accomplished for shifts that do not need backfilling (typically non-public safety), as long as Fair Labor Standards are followed
Cut unnecessary overtime	Police Dept. has reduced overtime over past few years Fire overtime under review.
Offer early retirement incentives; hire back some retirees on contract to reduce costs	Early retirement incentive employed for City Clerk position. City Attorney retired effective 7/1/11, and is contracting back for 6 months at a reduced cost to the City.
Combine positions upon retirements	It is the City's practice to evaluate positions when they become vacant. For example, City Clerk duties and responsibilities are being assigned to other persons while position is held vacant.

Operate City services differently

Ideas	Staff Comments
Reduce service/counter hours (close Fridays?)	Reduced service/counter hours will occur for most areas if there are furlough days or other reduction in work hours. The City Manager is exploring reducing service/counter hours in City Hall to reflect reduction in staffing and to provide focused time to complete work (e.g. permit reviews, agenda packets, accounts receivable, etc.)
Close down between holidays – December – January 3 days	Many cities close down for a few to several days at the end of the year, such as between Christmas and New Year's. This is a potential furlough time if there is a reduced work year.
Look at restructuring public works and information technology for efficiency	Staff is exploring potential for shared services in these two areas with the Albany Unified School District.
When vehicles are replaced, move toward smaller, more energy efficient vehicles	The City has an Environmentally Preferential Purchasing Policy that applies to vehicle replacement. Options are limited for fire engines, ambulances, patrol vehicles, and certain public works vehicles. There are few other vehicles in the City's fleet, and the City extends their useful life as much as possible. For example, the Building Inspector has transitioned to using the ~ 10-year old vehicle assigned to the former Fire Chief.
Reduce water usage = reducing costs to EBMUD	Staff recommends reducing or eliminating irrigation on the Ohlone Greenway when the BART retrofit work in Albany is within range of getting underway. The City continues to lobby EBMUD to extend a recycled water line to the Ohlone Greenway
Eliminate or reduce number of vehicles/fleet/cell phones	The City has reduced the City's cell phone use and costs, and is reducing the fleet by one vehicle.
Reduce use of rental property (e.g. Maintenance Center)	The City is purchasing property on Pierce Street on which to build and own a Maintenance Center, which is the only property currently leased by the City.
Vehicles & Equipment – sell and share	From time to time the City sells its old vehicles and equipment. The City will review its vehicle and equipment list to evaluate whether any should be sold
Use staff rather than consultants or contractors as much as possible; For example: try to be efficient/low cost with the General Plan update	Cities with a small number of staff often have a greater number of consultants and/or contractors because staff often does not have the time and/or the expertise for a certain project. The City Manager will recommend that the General Plan update be prepared with the least amount of outside consultants as possible; this will mean the City being prudent and focused with the scope of work.

Ideas	Staff Comments
Training/Education for employees to increase efficiency.	Training is often a line item that cities cut in lean budget times, and Albany is no exception. For employees to continually learn best practices in working faster and better means investing in training and education. The City Manager recommends that the City look to reinstate training budgets as soon as possible so that employees can keep developing skills, knowledge and abilities to best serve the public. Educational reimbursement has been increased for police personnel and JPA/managers.

Modify/Reduce City Services, Projects, Policies and Subsidies

Ideas	Staff Comments
Keep community engagement with CERT training, and seek reimbursement for CERT training staff time and expenses from Alameda County	Police and Fire are pursuing reimbursement and grants for CERT training and other disaster preparedness efforts by the community engagement specialist
Place a moratorium on new policy issues	New policy initiatives should be evaluated against the available staff and advisory bodies' time, focus, and other resources, so that the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the City Council get achieved. This can be accomplished in conjunction with the periodic progress reports on the City Council objectives.
Stronger prioritization of projects	Same as above.

Technology

Ideas	Comments
Tailor services to on-line transactions; do more on-line business forms and services	The City is in the process of developing a Technology Master Plan to prioritize recommendations for technology upgrades; this includes more on-line transactions. The Recreation Department is changing to a no-fee on-line registration program.
Computerize permit system to share all information at once; use automated internet permitting to speed up the processing and earn more fees for the City.	Staff recommends developing this idea into a City objective and identifying a funding source.
Look for other operations' computerization to increase efficiency/services.	Worth exploring.
Renew business licenses on-line (at least for renewals with no changes)	Worth exploring
Go paperless with everything (receipts, etc.)	Worth exploring.

Economic Development

Ideas	Comments
<p>Work to attract more business to Albany; be more active in promoting and retaining businesses to stay; hire someone dedicated to economic development; encourage Shop/eat locally (incentives, advertising); Seek particular businesses (chain stores); attract more diverse retail opportunities for higher-end market; bring revenue generating business rather than more nail salons.</p>	<p>The City is working with the Chamber and Solano Avenue Association to brand and market Albany as a destination retail, services and business investment location. The City-sponsored branding results are being recommended for approval by the City Council.</p> <p>The City has allocated part-time staff and consultant assistance; more could be done with additional resources</p>
<p>Develop waterfront area to increase revenue including the Bulb (i.e. Pt. Richmond, Emeryville); Hotel on Waterfront (hotel tax) Health Club – Brewery – Bike Rental – Bird/Wildlife Observation Point – Boat Dock – Convention Center Develop the Albany Bulb and sell it; allow slot machines at Golden Gate Fields; allow construction on unused parking lot at golden gate fields but only if waterfront improvements included.</p>	<p>The Voices to Vision waterfront planning completed in 2010 provides guidelines for what the Albany community wants on the waterfront</p>
<p>Seek development as opposed to open space</p>	<p>These are policy choices of the community; Voices to Vision planning provides guidelines on balance between development and open space on the waterfront.</p>
<p>Encourage development in the redevelopment areas (Eastshore, Cleveland)</p>	<p>Staff is working with property owners, realtors, and area economic development organizations; development in general is experiencing a “pause” due to economy. By moving the City’s Maintenance Center off of Cleveland with purchase of Pierce Street property, it opens up more commercial opportunity.</p>

Idea	Staff Comments
Relax parking requirements for commercial development if it spurs construction	The Planning & Zoning Commission could consider ways to reduce or streamline parking requirements
Streamline process for independent business; expedite major projects like Safeway and Whole Foods; Find ways to expedite major revenue improvements	The Planning & Zoning Commission could consider different approaches.

Fees/Fines

Ideas	Comments
Alarms: Charge fees for false burglar alarms and other alarms; charge alarm registration fees	Worth considering
Pay for parking: Install parking meters in commercial areas and on Buchanan @waterfront; Explore cost of installing parking fee boxes; put parking permit programs in residential neighborhoods; charge for residential on-street parking "Price For Parking" 2 car free – 2 cars you pay; establish and charge for preferential parking; Business owner permits for use of parking spaces	Traffic & Safety Commission is looking into parking permit programs; As for parking meters, the Traffic & Safety Commission received a presentation that gave some pause as to whether they are the revenue generators they appear to be; research and analysis for Albany locations would be needed. As advances in paying parking meters electronically evolves – making it more convenient - distaste for parking meters in business areas could diminish. Staff recommends trying paid parking with a permit/fee program for Buchanan Street at the waterfront before parking meters for the commercial district
Increase after-school program fee	Underway
Charge for smoke detector installation by Fire Department for able-bodied persons	Worth exploring
Charge "non-residents" fees	City currently charges a \$10 non-resident fee for recreation programs and services. New 2011-12 Master Fee Schedule raised it to \$12. Have to consider what the market will bear since the recreation services are optional.
Dog Walking Licenses; Charge for dog owners to use dog parks	The City could require a business license for professional dog walkers; The City does not have a designated dog park.
Expand street sweeping coverage areas	Street sweeping compliance is currently under review for a report to City Council on potential expansion of no-parking enforcement, with an evaluation of cost/benefit. Report to Council anticipated in September.
Increase facility capital replacement fees (rentals)	The fee was increased by \$2 in the 2011-12 Master Fee Schedule.
Bill insurance companies for fire services	This is already being done.
Evaluate tow, recreational vehicle parking & other fees; increase fines; charge a vacation watch fee; establish a vehicle impound fee program	Fees for services generally must reflect the cost of providing the service

Sales of services/property use

Ideas	Comments
Bill public for consultations (e.g. building, planning, engineering)	Possibility for a trial period
Raise fees to rent City facilities	Fees were raised in 2010-12 for uses other than Albany non-profit organizations. City should not charge more than market can bear since this is an optional service
Rent the childcare facility	City has started to rent childcare building, and Teen Center building, for birthday parties
Rent space on city property for cell towers	Would need to comply with City wireless facilities ordinance and not interfere with city operational needs.
Recreation Center sponsorships/fields (advertising for fees); Advertising “underwriting” on KABL and City website	Staff recommends experimenting with sponsorships and/or advertising on KABL, the Recreation Activity Guide, and fields, with Council approval of this approach
Teen Center – Charge for late pickups and late childcare	Done
Recreation – create new classes and market facility rentals more	Ongoing
Provide State Mutual aid resources	City does participate in mutual aid opportunities, which are reimbursed by the State
Sell police dispatch services (e.g. Kensington)	Worth considering
Offer Notary services for a fee	Worth considering
Offer finger printing services and charge for it	Police Department is looking into experimenting with this on a trial basis, starting with Albany residents only, by appointment only, and subject to staff availability

Taxes

Ideas	Comments
Increase sales tax	Majority approval of voters required to use revenues for general purposes. City can increase sales tax up to ½ cent (could be a smaller increment). Revenues would fluctuate with the amount of retail sales in Albany. Current estimates are that each ¼ cent could generate about \$400,000/year
Increase property transfer tax	Majority approval of voters required to use revenues for general purposes. City currently charges \$11.50 per \$1,000 of sales/purchase price, which in 2009-10 generated \$1,063,000 in revenue.
