

NITRO FIGURING HOW TO TRIM BUDGETS

Publication: THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE
Published: Tuesday, February 23, 2010
Page: 2A
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Nitro city officials are trying to figure out how to cut their departmental budgets.

Last week, members of **Nitro** City **Council** asked all city department heads to find savings amounting to 2.5 percent of their budgets. City Treasurer John Young said an unexpected downturn in business and occupation taxes and lower-than-expected revenues could result in a city deficit of \$100,000 or more.

"Pretty much everyone's within their budget," Young said Monday. "It's just that our revenues are down."

According to **Nitro** Mayor Rusty Casto, three car dealerships recently shut down in town. Revenue from Tri-State Racetrack & Casino has also been down.

Young said city business and occupation taxes are down by about \$44,000, while racetrack revenue is down about \$60,000. City department heads were asked to come up with ideas for budget cuts and talk about them at a meeting on Monday.

"What will our budget deficit be June 30 if we don't put the brakes on?" Casto asked Young at the meeting.

"I project we're going to be down \$100,000 to \$120,000," Young replied.

Young said the 2.5 percent across-the-board budget cuts are calculated to save the city about \$121,500. He said departments that are already under budget may not have to cut at all, but others may have to stop spending or make cuts.

All department heads were given a specific dollar amount they need to trim. For city Police Chief Jack Jordan, the magic number is \$29,000, about the cost of a police officer's salary.

Jordan said he is already down by three police officers. He was planning to hire a new policeman, but decided to hold off to save money.

"That's all I can do [to save \$29,000]," he said.

Casto has to find \$1,200 of savings in the mayor's office budget. With most of the budget already allocated, about the only line item left to cut is salaries.

He said he will probably take the \$1,200 out of his own salary to meet the target.

Young was to meet individually with department heads on Monday afternoon to hammer out details of the budget cuts.

He also asked city officials to have their proposed budgets for the 2010-2011 fiscal year, which starts July 1, ready by the end of the week.

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