

April 19, 2006

Dear Fellow Council Members,

Our annual county budget session will take place from Monday, August 7th through Wednesday, August 9th. This will include our regular Tuesday regular session within the budget session. Perhaps we can schedule the more accessible and smaller budgets for that day in order that we will not be overly stressed. Incidentally, that is also Councilman Woods' birthday so I will bring something to sweeten the day as a counterpoint to our challenges.

This past year the months have flown by and I am pleased to let you know that one of the simple measures I have taken in order to get to the heart of some of our council matters has been very satisfying---that of keeping short, informal office hours in the Central Service room near the entrance to the Auditor's office. Cathy Smith and Margaret Hollers have been so helpful in getting the word out, arranging quick appointments for department heads, and meeting the spur of the moment organizational requests that result from this small measure of special time. The brief meetings I have during these hours have helped me a great deal with keeping in mind the background information that clarifies the county's needs, goals, and priorities. It is also a time during which I am able to ask questions in order to gage future priorities or past plans that department heads desire to be more fully realized, resolved or understood by the Council.

We have three and a half months until the annual budget session takes place. Between now and the beginning of August, I would like for us to hold an additional council work session once a month, specifically for working on budget goals and priorities for 2007.

Our Council Attorney, Margie Rice, has been indispensable to me with the task of summarizing many of the issues we must keep in mind for the timelines, advertising, and prioritization of the complex goals we should have as we ramp up to the budget session. The Personnel Advisory Committee's work this past year will also play a large part in our annual budget session's overall picture of our county employees' futures.

Finally, the subject of our special session devoted to Juvenile Justice issues is something we have reached a critical turning point with and we must have continuing discussion about fostering positive change towards the conclusions and vote of that evening's historic meeting. A round table community discussion would be a next step that I'd like to urge the Council to fit into our calendar before August.

Any and all of your comments, insight, and expertise are greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Sophia Travis