

As I'm sure you are aware, since my last update to our neighborhoods, the City Council and I have been working on the City budget, the single most important expression of our values.

We passed a budget that beefs up the City's commitment to public safety via enforcement and prevention, investing in an unprecedented increase in police officers as well as supporting the critical programming needed to keep our neighborhoods safe.

The budget is too big and the amendments too numerous to speak in any real detail, so first let me apologize for only being able to provide a summary and, second, please accept my invitation to contact me any time to talk about your thoughts and questions on the details. In summary:

- 30 new officers will hit the beat in the coming year
- Funding for pre-school and after-school programs, important mechanisms for keeping kids out of trouble in the first place, was protected
- Efforts to de-fund our neighborhood planning councils, important vehicles for bringing neighbors together to problem solve, were defeated

I take very seriously my responsibility to carefully consider every part of the budgets – Capitol and Operating – including nearly 100 amendments that we considered at the City's budget committee (the Board of Estimates) and from the Council floor. Every vote was an important one, and I considered each with District 12 at the forefront of my mind.

I promised to work for safe neighborhoods and getting to the root causes of crime. This budget advances both goals. I promised to help keep our neighbors informed and engaged. This budget advances those goals. And I promised to represent you, the residents of District 12. I appreciate the many e-mails and calls I got as we readied for the budget, and my votes reflect the input you offered. Since I heard a whole range of positions on a variety of issues, I'm sure some of you will disagree with some of the votes I made. Throughout, I tried to balance what the majority of constituents said to me with the tough fiscal choices we had to make. Thank you for making this a collaborative effort.

To be sure, there are some who will want to claim that somehow I was not supportive of additional resources for our police department. Those claims will relate to an amendment I voted for to authorize 18 officers now and an additional 12 as soon as the Council gets its long-awaited police staffing study and a plan for paying for these officers into the future. This budget will strain our resources now and for many years; I thought it important to have a plan in place for the best use of additional officers and a way to maintain them. Please resist the urge to believe that this was somehow an attempt to cut the number officers we'll have on our streets. I have great respect for our police department and the work they do and am working closely with them to address the specific safety concerns you have shared with me.

There were many, many more items in the budget. The City struggled mightily to balance, in the words of one of my colleagues, police, prevention and pocketbooks. The last part is as important to me as the first two; with that in mind, I made sure that I voted for a variety of cuts to the City budgets in order to cover the costs of the items I voted to add. I think in the end we struck a tenuous balance and engaged in an important discussion about City priorities. That discussion will certainly continue, and I look forward to the discussions you and I will have in the year ahead.

In the meantime, as always, your day-to-day and big-picture concerns and ideas are of great interest to me. I look forward to seeing you around the neighborhood.