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** Alderman **
Michele Smith
 Chicago's 43rd Ward



The City Budget

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 Performing Arts**

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**Vote Early, Vote Often...
 for Lincoln Park High
 School!**

Help us shine a light on the LPHS performing arts program! Lincoln Park High School has been nominated for The Clorox Company's Power A Bright Future grant contest! They have the chance to win up to \$50,000 towards renovating the lighting in the auditorium. All individuals 13 and older can help them win by clicking here and voting for Lincoln Park High School or texting 2174pbf to 95248 from now through December 19th.

**Donate to the 18th District
 Holiday
 Food Drive**

From now through Saturday December 15th you can donate non-perishable food items to the Community Policing Office at 1160 N. Larrabee. Collected items will be donated to Near North homeless and needy families. [Click here](#) for a flyer you can

Dear Friends,

I voted yesterday to support the 2013 City Budget. Here's why:

Cost Savings in Health Care, Absenteeism and Disability

Eighty percent of our city budget is in personnel costs, so efficiencies related to employee benefits are crucial to balancing the budget. My questions at last year's budget hearings revealed that many departments suffer from excessive absenteeism, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and disability leaves. This year, many departments reported dramatic decreases - 51% in Streets and Sanitation - and large declines at the 311 and 911 call centers as well - the result of management focus and competition with private firms.

The City has also retained a firm to monitor FMLA leaves, a welcome development.

The City reported \$50 million in health care savings in the last year. Audits of claims identified about \$15-20 million in improper billing by providers and fraudulent dependents. The City also is now requiring use of generic drugs. Switching HMOs earned the City \$9 million in premiums. The City saved an additional \$20 million in enforcing wellness programs, which led to slightly increased pharmacy costs, but decreased emergency and urgent care visits.

There are still too many employees out on disability in our system. But both Police and Streets and Sanitation have initiated programs to get injured employees back to work. Streets and San. moved six employees unable to do heavy duty work to rodent control - this small change will allow 1,800 more alleys to be treated, a 34% increase. The Police Dept. has created a medical integrity unit, including instituting surveillance in 107 cases. Under the new policy, 305 officers have been returned to duty. This is progress.

print. For additional information, please call (312) 742- 5778 or send an e-mail to caps018@chicagopolice.org

Donate to Warm Hands, Warm Hearts

Join the 18th District Police in a holiday drive to help homeless and needy families. Donations of **new gloves, mittens, scarves and socks** are needed for men, women, and children. Donations can be dropped off at the 18th District Community Policing Office located at 1160 N. Larrabee. Click here for a flyer you can print. For additional information, please call (312) 742- 5778 or send an e-mail to caps018@chicagopolice.org.

Holiday Hours Next Week

In observance of Thanksgiving, the 43rd Ward Office will close early at 3:00pm on Wednesday, November 21st and remain closed for the remainder of the week Thursday, November 22nd and Friday, November 23rd. Happy Thanksgiving!

Flirty Girl Fitness Community Meeting

Please join me for a community meeting to learn about the proposed zoning change to the property located between 2201 and 2215 N. Halsted from a B1-2 Neighborhood Shopping District to a B3-2 Community Shopping District. We are considering the change in zoning in order to make the zoning designations consistent with the remaining Armitage/Halsted retail corridor and to allow Flirty Girl to apply for the additional licenses it needs to mirror its thriving West Loop

Increased Police Training

Superintendent McCarthy testified to his continuing re-allocation of police from the central office desk jobs to the street. Fifty officers now assigned to the CAPS program at headquarters will be moved into the districts. While I support the CAPS program, I believe that improvements can be made, most importantly, to build relations with beat officers.

As expected from McCarthy's earlier moves, police are retiring at quite a rate - 500 a year. This has created an opportunity to have new classes of police officers every semester, keeping the pipeline filled with new officers and maintaining a total of 12,500 sworn members of the department. This is more police hiring than in years.

The City will also invest in its own ballistics lab, costing \$3.3 million to construct, but allowing cases to be processed much more swiftly and accurately.

Support for Small Business

The Mayor proposed eliminating the so-called "employee head tax" this year, instead of next. While this tax, which imposed an additional tax for each employee hired over 50, raised only a small amount of revenue, it has represented an anti-small businesses tax, effectively punishing businesses for growing. I welcome its repeal.

The City is also continuing its efforts to streamline the business process, adopting a method to assign one employee to shepherd each applicant through the entire licensing process. This important reform required the hiring of only five new employees - but promises big reductions in the time it takes for new businesses to get into business.

Increased City Services

By having labor unions and private enterprise compete for the recycling business, city costs have decreased. Mayor Emanuel proposed those savings be allocated to pay for city-wide recycling, including in those parts of the 43rd Ward that have not had recycling to date.

Both tree trimming and graffiti are now handled in a grid "blitz" system, in which the whole ward is done in one day. Believe it or not, this is the first time that these services have been provided in this efficient manner, literally doubling the number of trees trimmed city-wide. As a result of savings, the City is going to hire additional graffiti and tree-trimming crews. Unfortunately, there is still no money in the budget for tree planting, so I'll be advocating for that in

location.

Tuesday, November 27
6:30 pm-8:00 pm
St. Vincent DePaul Center
2145 N. Halsted, Rm 351

Save the Date
for the 43rd Ward
Holiday Potluck

Bring a friend, bring a dish to the annual 43rd Ward Holiday Potluck on December 3rd. For more information and to RSVP call us at 773-348-9500 or e-mail us at yourvoice@ward43.org.

Monday, December 3rd
6:00pm-8:00pm
43rd Ward Office
2523 N. Halsted



43rd Ward Office
2523 N. Halsted
www.ward43.org

Office Hours:
Monday
9a.m.-7p.m.
Tuesday-Thursday
9a.m.-6p.m.
Friday
9a.m.-12p.m. & 2p.m.-6p.m.

Contact us:
phone
773-348-9500
email
yourvoice@ward43.org

the coming year.

Financial Exposure Risks

This year's budget continues the stabilization of our City's finances - and improves the delivery of city services. That is why I strongly support the Mayor's budget. But to get to real financial stability, we must tackle two big issues:

Our unsustainable pension obligations: Although this year's budget allocates \$479 million to fund pensions, this amount does NOT improve the level of funding. But rather than duck the issue, the Mayor and I are committed to working hard to help create a comprehensive solution to this problem. In an upcoming newsletter, we'll continue our discussion of this crucial issue.

Our debt and exposure remains too high: \$1.4 billion of our \$8 billion budget pays debt costs. The City has borrowed too much in the last ten years and we've got to come up with a plan to cut our debt load down, as well as avoid financial exposure in the parking meter deal. Our Chief Financial Officer has initiated an audit to manage our compliance with the parking meter contract.

The Budget Process

While the two weeks in October are titled "budget hearings," they are in practice oversight hearings of each department's activities. Aldermen typically ask about activities and services in their own wards. I think this is because our ability to understand each year's budget is quite limited - we receive the budget only a few days before hearings begin and have no independent joint resources to consider the 4" thick document. Had there been an independent budget office for City Council, past budgets could have been improved. I'll press for this improvement in future budgets.

Conclusion

There is a temptation in politics to simply grab a headline. But governing a city requires doing those things every day to support people's lives so that they can be free to do their jobs and raise their families. This budget accomplishes that goal. We have a lot of big issues ahead - but we are on our way.

Sincerely,

The City Budget
43rd Ward Alderman Michele Smith

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