



April 20, 2020

Mayor & City Council Members
City of Fort Bragg
416 N. Franklin St.
Fort Bragg City Hall, ext. 147
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Re: Addressing the Budget Challenges Ahead

Dear Mayor Lee and Members of the Council:

On behalf of the hardworking employees of the City of Fort Bragg we urge the City Council to take their time to make thoughtful decisions about how to proceed to address the projected budget shortfall. We are fortunate to have reserve funds that will provide time for the city to have a clearer picture of what is coming. The reserve funds are there because of many sacrifices and cuts staff has taken over the years to do more with less. These funds are intended for a time like this. If we are saving them for a rainy day, that day is here. The General Fund Operating Reserve has \$1.46 million, the Recession Reserve \$489,929, and the current balance in the Internal Service Funds is \$627,453. This will give the City Council time to consider more information and not take precipitous action. There is a real risk that doing so will undermine vital city services.

The Federal government has established programs through the Coronavirus Response Act that provide reimbursement to the city for employees who need to stay home because of the 'shelter in place' order or need to care for school-aged children. Expanded unemployment benefits also provide a potential cushion for dedicated city staff who need to be temporarily laid off or have their hours reduced because of a drop off in duties. While the city takes steps to balance its budget, it can do so in a judicious manner that protects its employees so they are able to weather this crisis and return when the emergency passes.

Further work should also be done to see if the city can secure funding through FEMA or from the State of California under the recently passed CARES Act. Staff is highly motivated to find funding and identify grant opportunities to help the city stay on track.

We are just starting to hear the tentative discussions about reducing restrictions and reopening the economy at both the state and national level. Let's not rush into drastic action with positive trends are on the horizon.

Sincerely,

Alden Ramos, Heath Daniels, Joanna Gonzalez and Laura Bianchi Limbird
Fort Bragg Employees Organization, SEIU Local 1021