

**Brian:** City Manager Mary Bunting will be starting the Budget Chat at 12. Feel free to enter your questions in advance for her to answer when she gets in!

Tuesday March 8, 2011 11:37

**Mary:** Welcome everyone! Glad to be here today...

Tuesday March 8, 2011 11:59

**Mary:** I want to thank everyone who turned our for our Budget Week polling sessions. As a reminder, we are still doing on-line polling. If you haven't already taken our budget poll, please consider taking a few minutes to express your preferences at [www.hamptonvalues.com](http://www.hamptonvalues.com)

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:01



**Tom:**  
How did budget week go?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:02

**Mary:** Tom: Thanks for asking. We had four sessions last week. I have not seen the final numbers but I think there were a little under 100 folks who turned out. That's less than last year but we have had almost 400 people take on our on-line poll. That's about double the number who took the on-line poll at the same time last year!

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:05

**Mary:** It is really important that we get as many people as possible to take part in the polling effort. We want to make sure the results we get are as reflective of the larger community as possible.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:06



**Lilly:**  
I am a Hampton City employee but not a resident of Hampton. Can I still participate in the on-line poll (survey)?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:07

**Mary:** Lilly: Thanks for asking. The poll is really designed to better understand Hampton residents' opinions. That said, the survey does ask people to indicate where they live, work or invest the most of their time. I will be doing some employee polling toward the later part of the month as it relates specifically to work place matters.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:09

**Have you participated in the online budget poll?**

Yes

( 45% )

No

( 55% )

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:09



**Debbie:**  
I understand that there is a potential \$15M budget shortfall for FY12. What are your anticipated proposals to help the City through this next year?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:10

**Mary:** Debbie: I want to emphasize that the beginning "shortfall" of \$14 million is just that - a departure point. That number reflects all the expenditure requests that Council needs to consider as well as the best estimate of revenues when that beginning number was developed. As an example, there is a roughly \$1 million increase for HRT in that number because that is what HRT requested. It is unlikely that we will fund that entire request. I also expect revenues to come in slightly better now that the General Assembly has finalized the State budget.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:12

**Mary:** Debbie: Continuing... After years of scaling back departmental budgets, we will have to make tough choices. We are looking at our services to see which can be further reduced and/or eliminated. That's why the citizen polling is so important. We will, of course, look to avoid negative impacts on our great work force as much as humanly possible.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:14



**T:**  
Mary, I appreciate you being vigilant and creative about seeking some form of compensation for us, but I am concerned the about the gift card proposal on two major accounts. One with the expense involved in setting up a program to be used by Hampton retailers there will be incredible pressure to continue funneling all or part of employees' compensation increases into the form of gift cards by the businesses who spent to invest in the program wanting a return on their investment and a large guaranteed customer base. Also, it will in the long run lower or flatten employee salaries when compared to others in the region making Hampton less competitive and slowly causing a brain drain out of Hampton of capable employees.

**Mary:** T: I do not intend to use the gift cards to compensate employees. That part of the gift card initiative was abandoned several months ago. However, in speaking with the businesses in our community, they indicated a desire to have a "Keep it Local" gift card opportunity for the larger population. I offered to facilitate such a group. The costs of the program would be the responsibility of the business owners. The City would merely be the convener of the effort. The effort - if successful - would enable any resident to buy these gift cards for their gift giving occasions and know that they were supporting local businesses.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:17

**Don:**

Is the budget polling data going to be published? If so; When and where?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:17

**Mary:** Don: The budget polling data is being posted at [www.hamptonvalues.com](http://www.hamptonvalues.com) - the four individual polling sessions' data is already up. We are working on the consolidated polling data for presentation to Council tomorrow. The on-line data will be updated when that polling concludes later this month.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:19

**Heather:**

how has the feedback been on tax increase question? I thought you did a great job presenting the info to make people realize the rate might go up, but they may not be paying more due to decline in assessment.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:19

**Mary:** Heather: Between the sessions and the on-line polling so far, there is a majority support for some minor tax rate change that does not impact the average homeowner because of declining real estate values. Of course, the polling is ongoing and does not obligate any final decision-making.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:21

**Wythe:**

I understand there are a number of topic groups meeting. What is the topic or subject of each group?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:21

**Mary:** Wythe: There are two efforts ongoing with smaller groups.

First, my staff and I are visiting various neighborhood and other organized groups to discuss the budget. In those sessions, we will largely cover the same information we did in our public polling sessions except we will not do formal polling. We will instead have an informal conversation about the budget. If you would like to schedule such a session for your group, please feel free to contact us.

The other effort is our community planning process. There are ten strategic plan work groups that are currently meeting. You can find out more about this effort at the [www.hamptonvalues.com](http://www.hamptonvalues.com) web site.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:24

**Drew:**

when do you think we'll be to a point of adding money back into the budget... how many more years of shorfalls do we have?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:24

**Mary:** Drew: That's a hard question to answer. Our revenues are largely driven by the economy. For instance, our largest revenue source is the real estate tax. As long as housing values are declining, we will have losses in this revenue category unless we are willing to change the tax rate to offset that loss. Another major category of funding in state revenues. As the State as struggled to balance its budget, they have cut localities.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:26

**Jay:**

I attended the public meeting at Jones and heard what I would consider false statements from fellow attendees. As I am sure they permeate through our community, is there an effort, document or website to set the record straight or deal with any misperceptions?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:26

**Mary:** Jay: You make a fair point. I agree we need to do a better job of ensuring residents have a complete and accurate understanding of the actions we take. I recently filed a vacancy in our Marketing & Communications office with a seasoned professional who should be able to help us with that effort. More immediately, we are working on posting the answers to the questions asked in these polling sessions on-line. ([www.hamptonvalues.com](http://www.hamptonvalues.com))

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:29

**Kings Way:**

Will it still be necessary to consolidate departments?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:29

**Mary:** Kings Way: I believe in consolidation of departments when it both achieves better service for our customers and saves money. Last year's consolidations all met both of those objectives. When/if I see additional opportunities for service improvement and cost savings, I will certainly propose them.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:31



**B:**

how do you motivate staff to keep going and in many cases take on more work with all these cuts and public scrutiny on their salaries? I've never been so glad to work in the private sector with all that I've been seeing. It's a shame people don't see your employees as a valuable service themselves.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:31

**Mary:** B: I think it is a challenge in both the private and public sectors. We are all asking employees to take on more responsibility without more pay. This message is often a hard one to swallow regardless of where you work. I try to remind our employees how special and talented they are, how much what they do matters to our community and how much I appreciate their efforts to rise to any challenge. I also try to take time out to recognize special acts such as when our employees performed so amazingly during our snow storms.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:34



**LP:**

I attended an in-person polling events. My wife did the survey online. She and I had a really different take on the questions because at the in-person one they showed a summary of our answers and a lot of us wanted to maintain or even increase services. So I voted to increase taxes b/c with a budget shortfall, I can't ask for same/more services without paying more (or cutting something, right?) The online survey is easier to miss that point - is there a way to get that message out?? I didn't always get that point

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:35

**Mary:** LP: We wish more people had attended the public polling sessions because it does provide for more context and dialouge. It is hard to replicate all the benefits of that on-line. However, on-line polling is critical to ensure we get people's input who can't make it to those events. I will think a bit more about other ways to get that message out. It is an important one.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:37



**Lydia R.:**

At the budget meeting I attended, some of the things that I thought were important ended up rating low but I think cutting those services would be a detriment to the public. If something is rated low does that mean that it automatically gets cut even if there's a major benefit to the citizens?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:37

**Mary:** Lydia: The short answer is no. Just because something is rated low will not automatically translate into reductions. The polling is important to give me - and the Council - a point of reference. However, there are many other factors I must balance as I make a final recommendation to Council and the community. Such factors include state/federal mandates, return on investment, numbers of residents benefiting from the service, etc. All that said, I am definitely interested in reflecting general community values.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:40



**Andy:**

Mary, I was surprised that the survey did not ask people whether they supported an increased in the Boat Tax above the current .00001 they are assessed. Also, there was no discussion on the RV/camper tax/motor home tax which is also .00001. But, then the car tax question proposed raising the tax a potential 10 cent/\$100 of value. Why not have these users pay a share of taxes which could allow the car tax to lower or stay the same and generate revenue for the City? Why not at least ask the question - what was the rationale?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:40

**Have you visited [www.hamptonvalues.com](http://www.hamptonvalues.com) yet?**

Yes

( 71% )

No

( 29% )

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:43

**Mary:** Andy: I did not ask about the boat tax because this issue has been raised and debated before Council on at least three occasions in the last several years. Council has consistently decided not to raise it. I did not think it was my place to resurface this issue. I believe in moving forward once clear direction has been set.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:44



**Concerned Citizen:**

I am curious as to the demographic results of the polling. Are they reflective of Hampton's population? Are we really targeting the Hampton citizenry as a whole through this polling effort?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:45



**Christine:**

Hi Mary, You're all doing a great job. I'm concerned though, with both the budget and community planning processes that those Hampton citizens on the lower socio-economic scale are not likely to be adequately represented (either they don't have regular computer access, don't get the newspaper). You say you and your staff are visiting various neighborhoods - why wouldn't you give those groups equal access to answering the survey?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:45

**Mary:** Concerned Citizen/Christine: The polling efforts are only one piece of our budget outreach efforts. We are also doing organizational chats that get factored into the process as well.

Our in-person sessions were fairly diverse in every factor except age - we did not have many young people turn out. Our on-line polling is much more reflective of a younger audience. When we add all of this date together, plus the other community outreach, I hope we will have results reflective of the entire community.

By the way, we do have internet access available to any resident in our public libraries.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:49



**Debbie:**

If a real estate tax increase was effected, would it have a sunset time period?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:49

**Mary:** Debbie: Each year the real estate tax rate is revisited. The rate can either be increased or decreased. For instance, from FY 2000 to FY 2009, we lowered the tax rate from \$1.25 to \$1.04 (which is where it has been since that time) because of increasing housing values.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:52



**Terri:**

And to Jay's question -- citizens too should seek out answers before they add to the rumor mill... I come here a lot and ask the Mayor when I hear things and want to know the facts. The ask city hall feature on this site is helpful too.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:52

**Mary:** Terri: Thanks for the post!

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:52



**Kathy:**

Thank you for mentioning your new Marketing and Communications position... - Why weren't citizens asked if we wanted to fund that? It seems that some new (considerable) expenses are unfortunately "off the table..."

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:52

**Mary:** Kathy: While I think it is appropriate to ask residents to share their input on the value of city services, I am ultimately responsible for figuring out how to best implement that guidance. Knowing the value the Council and community places on communication with residents, I felt it important to fill this critical vacancy.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:57



**T:**

I understand that cuts are needed to maintain a balanced budget and that employee costs are a big chunk of these costs. But I do remember as article in the DP that had Hampton's employee to citizen ratios as one of the lowest (if not the lowest) in the region. So, we are a fairly lean organization already and further cuts are just cutting the ability to of the organization to function effectively and efficiently (when things are missed and overlooked – causing the City more costs over the long run by having to correct these things at the public costs.) Is this taken into account when crafting budgeting and assessing employee compensation?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:57

**Mary:** T: Yes, I am taking all of that into account in making my recommendations to Council. This Wednesday I will share the data you reference so the Council and larger community will have a better understanding of just how lean this organization is compared to others.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 12:59

**Mary:** I can't believe the hour is up already. I will go ahead and answer the questions in the queue and then sign off. Thanks to all who have participated today whether with questions or just following on-line. I will also be glad to answer any questions you may have if you email me directly at [mbunting@hampton.gov](mailto:mbunting@hampton.gov)

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:01



**DP:**

Hampton has been a major player in the Youth Civic Engagement field for over a decade. With the past city budget troubles, there were major shifts in how the youth are supported (getting rid of the coalition for youth). Also, the city employs several youth to represent the youth in the city. How does the city plan to keep the youth in mind when preparing the budget this year.

**Mary:** DP: I actually have a chat scheduled with the Youth Commission very soon. Their feedback will be shared with Council. Although we scaled back in this area last year, we still have a major focus on youth via our Youth, Education and Families section of the Human Services Department. One reason we felt comfortable scaling back as we did is that we have achieved something few communities have been able to accomplish - we have integrated an emphasis on our young people in all that we do.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:03

**LP:**

Is the new court house off the table?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:03

**Mary:** LP: The courthouse was approved in the FY 2011 budget and revisited by the new Council. The Council voted to continue to the project as authorized in the FY 2011 budget.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:04

**Hampton-citizen:**

I had a hard time making an informed decision on some of the CIP questions. I'd love to know more on the Freeman Dr. extension, HRSD proposal, Greenman House, and the King Street gate improvements before I made my answer on the budget pole. But I didn't have it and I'm willing to bet a lot of other citizens couldn't make an informed decision so it just clicked - it was an unimportant want not need. How is this taken into account and how come more background information wasn't provided on some of the questions - especially CIP questions?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:04

**Mary:** Hampton citizen: We added the capital budget questions because citizens last year asked us to do so. The best way to input on the capital investments is really during the development of the 5 year Capital Improvement Plan process which is done in the fall. This fall, we will have a more comprehensive opportunity to discuss, and poll, about these types of projects.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:07

**cindy:**

excellent question Andy.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:07

**Lydia R.:**

But it seems like the assumption is that if you rate something as a want then it should be cut. I might rate libraries as a want because we can survive without them unlike ambulance services (but the community would suffer greatly from the library's loss & I would suggest maintaining their budget). Also just because something rates as a need like police or fire doesn't mean you shouldn't look at cutting their budgets. They may have overinflated budgets that could use some cuts.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:07

**Mary:** Lydia: Thanks for your comment. I do believe we acted in this way as we developed last year's budget. For instance, while we did not cut on-street patrolling in the Police department, we did eliminate some vacant positions that did not impact manning levels. And, we did not cut the library for precisely the reason you note (by the way, the community rated it as a need last year).

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:10

**Hampton Crabber:**

I am concerned about using polling as the most viable method for gauging the future of the City. Taking the online poll does not give you a lot of information about each area or project so there seems to be a great deal of misinformation circulating about these items. There are many in our community who do not have easy access to computers or understand how the polling works. If only 500 people participate, and not all of them are even Hampton tax payers, then this is only 3 percent of the population speaking for the entirety. Also, I found it frustrating how the information was presented as wants or needs based on last year's results. It seems to cast automatic bias on some categories. With that, there was no opportunity to vote for increasing the budget for those items which were previously considered wants but there was for those that were considered needs. Some of those services classified as wants I felt were still critical to the future success of the City and had already suffered cuts in the past. We elect officials and hire professionals in our City government because they should be able to make informed decisions that are in the best long term interest of the community. I do hope the online polling is only being used as a point of reference as you have said because I wonder what good are our leaders if we are going to put all of the weight and merit on a somewhat subjective online poll?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:10

**Mary:** Hampton Crabber: The polling is absolutely only a point of reference, albeit an important one. I truly believe that I have a professional responsibility to provide my best guidance to the Council and the community. I do not abdicate this role by inviting the public to participate and better understand the challenges we (and other cities) face. I value the input and will reflect it as much as possible but I will also honor my professional obligation to make recommendations based on all available information.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:13

**Jay:**

To what extent, if any, does the actions of other localities and school boards regarding salary increases enter into Hampton's overall compensation discussion?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:14

**Mary:** Jay: The actions of other localities and school boards are a point of reference. We strive to remain competitive in our compensation package so that we can attract and retain the best possible workforce.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:15



**Concerned Citizen:**

When you mention younger audience do you mean Hampton's "young people" (high schoolers and college) or do you mean young professionals and families (ages 25-45)? Also what about ethnic background and education levels?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:15

**Mary:** Concerned Citizen: I do not have the data immediately in front of me but I believe it is a mix of the two with more coming from the 25-45 category.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:16



**Wythe:**

How much do we spend in bond payments?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:16

**Mary:** Wythe: The total debt service payment is 7.5% of our total budget.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:17



**Guest:**

Can you talk about the Marketing & Communication priorities? Departments have a large volume of info that needs dissemination; it seems issues of interest to management and boosting council visibility preclude day to day citizen needs.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:17

**Mary:** Guest: We try to work on the needs of all citizens. If you have specific concerns or ideas, please email me at [mbunting@hampton.gov](mailto:mbunting@hampton.gov)

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:19



**Terri:**

Kathy - in a way you were asked about it, in the survey you were asked about funding for that department. I as a citizen see this as a management decision. You want her to ask you about funding for office supplies every time she needs a new pad of paper?

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:19



**LP:**

Hey, the polling and survey are better than it used to be when just smaller groups of vocal people showed up and influenced council.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:21



**Rae:**

Mary, thank you so much for taking the time to answer all the questions of the citizens of Hampton. It is really wonderful to be part of a city where the administration takes the time to listen to it's citizens.

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:21

**Mary:** I think that addresses the questions that came in before 1:00. We will continue to have many opportunities to address budget questions over the next couple of months. Please feel free to email or call if you have additional questions, concerns or comments. Also, if you would like to schedule an organizational chat for a group you belong to, please contact me or my office.

Have a great day!!!

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:22

**Brian:** Thank you for participating in today's chat! Remember to join us tonight at the Hampton Roads Convention Center for tonight's Community Plan Update Checkpoint meeting.

For more information about the FY12 Budget or the Community Plan Update Process, visit [www.hamptonvalues.com](http://www.hamptonvalues.com)

Tuesday March 8, 2011 1:22

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