

MEMORANDUM REPORT

MEETING DATE: November 21, 2023

TO:Board of Commissioners of the Los Altos Hills County Fire DistrictFROM:Russell Morreale, Finance Manager/ Cori Vargas, Financial Consultant

SUBJECT: Los Altos Hills County Fire District FY2024-2025 Draft Budget

Recommendation:

Receive the Draft FY2024-2025 Budget for discussion and direction to staff.

BACKGROUND

The annual process of developing a draft budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025 (FY2024-2025) began October of this year. As a component of the County of Santa Clara, the District's budget calendar complies with the County's approval process starting in February 2024 and extending to final County adoption in June 2024. The District FY2024-2025 Ad Hoc Budget Subcommittee met on November 14, 2023 to review the preliminary draft budget. The meeting included discussion and helpful observations that staff has implemented in making tonight's presentation, one that focuses on key decision points. Fiscal numbers are always a challenge to present, and we hope to demystify this District-wide budget for all members of the Commission and the public.

Last year, staff brought a budget to the Commission that was bold in its direction requesting the resources necessary to enhance service delivery. With the guidance of the Commission and the underpinning of the Strategic Plan, the FY2023-2024 budget pursued its theme resulting in a noted bolstering of much needed staffing, capital equipment, contract services, and professional services. Ultimately, a draft budget was created to align with the District Strategic Goals to continue a focus on the preservation of life and property safety of our community and surrounding neighbors.

The FY2024-2025 draft budget continues from where the prior year budget left off with a more concentrated effort to align budget allocations to Service Area Workplans (noted below). It strives to connect the District Mission, the Strategic Plan, and Service Area Workplans to budget allocations. In doing so, the building process for this draft budget was more operationally entrenched and involved the direct input of key service area managers. This evolution is more than a single year in duration, but FY2024-2025 marks the launching of a new era of budget presentation, design and workplan integration.

Service Areas:

1	CWPP-Annex 4, IHFR Planning/Coord., Grants	5	Hydrants & Appurtenance
2	Fire & Emergency Medical Response	6	Capital Assets
3	Outreach, Emergency Prep, Disaster Coord., Volunteers	7	Personnel Organization, Strategic Plan
4	Community Education & Media PIO, Risk Reduction	8	Finance, IT, Fiscal Planning, Policy

DISCUSSION

Theme of The Draft Budget

The prior year budget stated theme was, **"Resources Necessary to Deliver Services"** with a highlight on community projects, capital, infrastructure, training, contract support, staffing, and HR development. In FY2024-2025, staff is building on this theme to put its resources to optimal use. The key emphasis and approach taken this year follows:

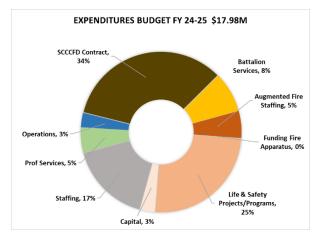
- To increase service deliverables to residents for life and property safety as proposed in the Workplan with a continued emphasis on core programs and services.
- To enhance momentum on programs that have gained synergy over the past years.
- To dedicate the planning and procurement necessary to initiate large projects, phasing them suitably, and applying resources appropriately.
- To utilize allocated funds for high impact program/project services and actively leverage contract services to achieve implementation.
- To close the gap between budget allocations and actual funds spent to develop a realistic and achievable budget while still allowing for unknowns.

The District continues to promote stability, readiness, and sustainability for years to come. The Draft Budget again presents a picture of sound fiscal strength and uses it to enhance the delivery of valued community projects and services. The focus remains on County Fire contracts for core fire and emergency medical services, augmented fire safety staffing, a comprehensive array of life & safety risk mitigation projects, community education, and community outreach. Regionalization is an even stronger theme with the heightened presence of the I-280 fuel break project. The presence of a project of the scale and duration of I-280 has had a material impact on how this budget was developed and the resulting request for supporting resources.

In the future, staff plans to update the ultimate design of the published budget document to present budget allocations by service areas. Doing so directly aligns dollars with the District Workplan, but more importantly, illustrates the direct involvement and collaboration of the budget by those managers and teams who develop them. This year has been visionary and has stretched us all and marks the first important step in taking the budget from a line-item to a service/outcome-based format.

Fiscal Overview

The draft budget finds the District in good financial standing, consistent with the FY 2022-2023 financial audit report approved by the Commission this past month. Accordingly, this budget again projects a healthy beginning of year fund balance that preserves prior established commitments, a position resulting from the prudent management of the District's financial matters. These positive fund balance numbers also flow into the FY 2024-2025 projections.



The budget maintains its focus on the District's core mission as displayed by the chart of proposed expenditures by category. Including the requests for additional resource funding, the draft budget applies 72% of all expenditures towards its core mission made up of 47% for combined contract fire/emergency medical & district augmented services, and 25% for life & safety community projects & programs. An additional 3% for District owned capital equipment includes safety directed technology and equipment.

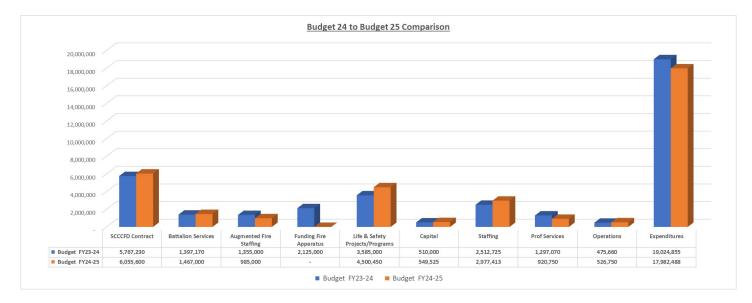
Revenues for the District, primarily property tax, is projected to increase at a normal expected rate of 3% or \$344K. This property tax trend is tempered by an overall expectation of a softening of market conditions in the projected term. Interest income has been

boosted greatly with the historic Fed Rate increases that were experienced over the course of FY 2022 and 2023. Between March 2022 and July 2023, interest rates were adjusted upward at the Federal level eleven times, a trend that has surpassed all prior trends and patterns. With these new factors, interest income is projected to increase by 24% or \$165K including

the assumption of some moderation of rates as we progress into and through 2024-2025. Total Revenues are projected at \$16.29M, an increase of 3.22% or \$508K over the prior year budget.

The FY24-25 Draft Budget proposes total expenditures of \$17.98M, a decrease of \$1.04M over the prior year as portrayed graphically below. This Draft Budget allocation still reflects a fiscal plan energized by the capital, staffing, and training resources provided in the prior year but also appropriately adjusts out FY23-24 one-time expenditures (most notably the funding of a Central Fire Truck in the amount of \$2.125M.)

This Draft Budget targets high impact program/project services and staff was challenged to align budget allocations more closely with historic actual trends. Although easier said than done, this latter goal has been addressed on a phased approach to start developing a more realistic and achievable allocation base while not forgetting the importance of allowing for those contingencies that are central to the readiness of a Fire/Emergency response district. This move also considered the residual impact of COVID-19 and a sense that market conditions will continue towards normality.



The primary reasons for the changes in the proposed budget expenditure plan as compared to FY 2023-2024 follow:

Life & Safety Allocations

- \$2.125M reduction for one-time prior year funding of a new fully equipped fleet compatible fire engine (Subject to Roll forward)
- \$225K reduction for one-time prior year funding of two District owned emergency service vehicles for field use (district proposes moving to a lease model)
- \$150K reduction for one-time prior year funding for the assessment of the fire facility at the El Monte station (planned for completion in FY23-24)
- \$75K reduction for one-time prior year funding for the implementation of a new web site (planned for completion in FY23-24)
- **\$800K** increase for the advance of internal funding for the I-280 Fuel Break Project (phase one of a 3-year project estimated at approximately \$6M)
- \$358K increase for the expected annual increase in Fire and Battalion chief service contracts
- **\$400K** increase for enhanced defensible space chipping and debris removal (a growing program)
- \$315K increase for enhanced and planned evacuation route clearing
- \$250K supplemental funding of AI Wildfire Early Detection Technology Systems
- \$100K for the performance of District wide EIR to streamline IHFR progress and project management
- **\$50K** to evaluate/purchase portable technology center for local disaster events
- **\$50K** increase to advance temporary refuge areas

Staffing, Operations & Strategic Planning

- \$464K for the addition of 3.5 additional Full Time Equivalent employees (3 full time-1 part time)
- \$80K for increased Liability and Workers Comp Insurance with new and reclassified staff
- **\$35K** for a new Document Management system to enhance public search capabilities

Beyond these year-to-year allocation changes, the FY2024-2025 Draft budget includes the following key budget items that continue its path of improvement and best practice developments:

- \$380K as a placeholder as the District evaluates employee benefits package for employee retention, recruitment, and stability
- \$150K Market Contingency to navigate tight hiring conditions
- \$80K for enhanced centralized IT technology services with an emphasis on public document portals, website enhancements, mapping & communications, and network back-up systems

This year, the District put a sharp pencil to line-item allocations and realigned projection where needed in the face of historic trends. Several line items in project & programs, contingencies, and professional services, were right sized in this year's budget. We took care not to go "too fast" or "too slow" in doing so, realizing that this is an ongoing process, one we will round out more fully next year as we redesign our financial systems on an outcome-based format.

Tonight, Finance will present the budget on a high-level basis following the more detailed Ad Hoc discussions. The presentation will emphasize decision points for deliberation. Concisely, the essence of the change in this year's budget can be found in a review of three key areas: programs & projects; staffing; capital; and other line-item changes. It is also key to note that the presence of the I-280 project, included in this budget on the assumption that internal funding will be in effect, was a key influence on how budget resource allocations and requests were developed.

The Fiscal Team will summarize the input from the November 21, 2023 meeting and make necessary adjustments to present the Final Draft Budget at the January 16, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Commission. The timeline for submission to the County Office of Budget and Analysis is February 2, 2024.

FISCAL IMPACT

Tonight's action presents the FY 2024-2025 District's Draft budget which proposes the establishment of total revenues and appropriations for the upcoming fiscal year at \$16.287M and \$17.982M, respectively. This projects a use of fund balance of \$1.695M to arrive at an estimated fund balance on June 30, 2025 of \$40.45M. These projections are subject to modification for actual end-of-year results determined at the end of the interim and subject year annual audit.

RELATIONSHIP TO 2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

The FY 2024-2025 draft budget supports the mission of the District for financial stewardship of District taxpayer funds, sustainability, and financial transparency.

Attachments:

Exhibit A - FY24-25 Line-Item Budget – OBA Presentation Exhibit B - FY24-25 Budget Calendar

EXHIBIT A

Los Altos Hills County Fire District		Actual FY21 (2020-2021)	Actual FY22 (2021-2022)	Actual FY23 (2022-2023)	Budget FY24 (2023-2024)	Est. FY24 (Not Final) (2023-2024)	Draft Budget FY25 (2024-2025)	
SAP Acct #	LAHCFD Acct #	Revenues						
4001100	4001100	Prop Taxes - Curr. Secured	11,922,143	12,509,304	13,443,875	13,886,000	13,886,000	14,300,000
4001200	4001200	Prop Tax - Unitary	51,583	58,159	64,849	65,000	65,000	65,000
4001210	4001210	Prop Tax - Unitary Railroad	1,075	1,217	1,285	1,300	1,300	1,300
4002100	4002100	Prop Taxes - Curr Unsecured	734,274	679,725	709,238	714,000	714,000	708,000
4006100	4006100	Senate Bill 813	385,057	342,624	541,280	315,000	315,000	251,800
4301100	4301100	Interest - Deposits & Investment	261,815	248,920	868,578	685,000	998,900	849,100
4419100	4419100	HOPTR (Homeowner's Prop Tax Relief)	41,388	40,719	39,734	38,900	38,900	38,100
4813810	4813810	Other/Misc. Revenue	3,404	620	-	200	200	200
4980220	4980220	Tax Revenue - Excess ERAF	49,646	101,549	79,132	74,000	74,000	74,000
		Total Revenues	13,450,385	13,982,837	15,747,971	15,779,400	16,093,300	16,287,500
		Operating Expenditures:						
5220100		Insurance Premiums						
	5220101	Liability Insurance (FAIRA)	1,934	23,083	20,672	40,000	23,000	72,500
	5220102	Workers Comp (State Comp Insurance Fund)	4,385	12,061	19,474	32,000	60,000	80,000
		Total Insurance Premiums	6,319	35,144	40,146	72,000	83,000	152,500
5225500	5225500	Commissioners Fee	14,400	8,000	9,500	18,000	18,000	18,000
5235110	5235110	Maint Structure & Grounds	4,815	5,145	9,744	70,000	50,000	20,000
5250100	5250100	Office Expenses	9,894	21,352	36,934	25,000	54,000	37,140
5251000	5251000	Workshops, Conferences & Seminars		6,526	23,916	65,000	45,000	65,690
5258200	5258200	Professional Services - Internal	193,770	231	462	500	500	500
5259200	5259200	Property Tax Admin Fee	109,924	115,554	125,591	127,000	127,000	133,350
5260100	5260100	Publications and Legal Notices	15,459	8,978	5,014	10,000	7,500	10,000
5281610	5281610	IC - Cost Allocation Plan		59,994	78,934	28,160	28,160	29,570
5340000	5340000	Self Insurance Claim (W Comp Los Altos)	10,310	2,055	1,424	10,000	11,905	10,000
5350100	5350100	Miscellaneous/Operations Contingency	500	5,517	20,634	50,000	32,000	50,000
		Total Operating Expenditures	365,391	268,496	352,299	475,660	457,065	526,750
		Salaries, Benefits & Payroll Taxes						
5108400		Permanent Employees - Special Districts						
	5108401	General Manager (Full-Time)	168,003	210,207	242,349	242,000	230,000	243,500
	5108402	Community Ed & Risk Reduction Manager (Part-time)	82,322	95,138	96,631	119,200	100,000	107,100
	5108403	District Clerk (Part-Time)	51,697	48,812	50,967	71,400	60,600	65,300
	5108404	Emergency Services Manager (Full-Time)	44,000	105,950	151,009	166,570	162,400	179,300
	5108405	Programs, Planning & Grants Manager (Full-Time)		35,256	186,570	198,000	185,400	200,480
	5108406	Operations Manager (Full-Time)		89,579	18,258	198,000	71,300	202,800
	5108407	Tech Analyst/Project Manager (Part-Time)			45,680	96,200	83,900	94,000
	5108408	Finance Manager (Part-Time)				109,250	110,500	114,500
	5108409	Field Manager (Full-Time)				198,000	148,800	175,580
	5108410	General Analyst (Full-Time)				130,000	106,000	126,200

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget	Est. FY24	Draft Budget
Los Altos Hills County Fire District	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	(Not Final)	FY25
	(2020-2021)	(2021-2022)	(2022-2023)	(2023-2024)	(2023-2024)	(2024-2025)

	5108411	IHFR Specialist (Full-Time) (From Grants Specialist in FY24)				75,000	-	150,000
	5108412	Events Coordinator (Full-Time) (from P/T in FY24)				54,500	27,250	112,000
	5108413	Technical Analyst (Full-Time)				130,000	65,000	131,800
	5108414	Project Operations Manager (Part-Time)						86,800
	5108415	New Project Specialist FT (1.0 FTE) (Assume mid-year hire)						86,800
	5108416	New Admin Specialist FT (1.0 FTE) (Assume mid-year hire)						69,400
	5108417	Salaries / Market Contingency						158,033
	5108418	Employee Benefits				441,900	-	380,000
		Total Permanent Employees - Special Districts	346,022	584,942	791,464	2,230,020	1,351,150	2,683,593
5101100	5101100	Temporary & Seasonal Employees			103,924	100,000	60,000	76,800
5103000	5103000	Overtime		11,796	20,742	45,000	30,000	45,000
5110500	5110500	Medicare Tax - Employers Share	5,017	8,653	12,608	28,030	23,675	32,310
5113020	5113020	Social Security - Special Districts	21,453	33,546	49,814	105,775	96,080	129,390
5113040	5113040	Unemployment - Special Districts	1,204	1,302	1,772	3,900	6,000	10,320
		Total Salaries, Benefits & Payroll Taxes	373,696	640,239	980,324	2,512,725	1,566,905	2,977,413
5255100		Professional & Specialized Services						
	5255101	Annual Audit Charter	20,081	20,081	17,000	28,000	29,100	32,750
	5255102	Accounting Services	39,600	39,600	41,200	45,000	45,900	50,500
	5255103	Outside Legal Fees	129,662	73,920	56,656	150,000	75,000	150,000
	5255104	Outside Professional Services	90,501	99,861	191,748	693,270	468,830	443,700
	5255105	Professional & Specialized Serv. Contingency		-	-	50,000	-	50,000
5255100		Total Professional & Spec. Services	279,844	233,462	306,604	966,270	618,830	726,950
5255500		Fire Contract Services						
	5255501	SCCCFPD Service Contract	5,105,340	5,279,346	5,492,616	5,767,230	5,767,230	6,055,600
	5255502	Battalion Chief Services	1,236,816	1,278,972	1,330,638	1,397,171	1,397,170	1,467,000
	5255503	SCCCFPD Supplies, Maint. & Reimbursements	2,345	2,627	2,799	5,000	5,000	5,000
	5255504	Extra Fire Season Staff	67,059	-	-	100,000	-	100,000
	5255505	Type 3 Fire Engine Rental	34,830	-	-	50,000	-	50,000
	5255506	Palo Alto Fire Station #8		390,840	435,752	500,000	486,800	525,000
	5255507	Fire Protection Hand Crews		-	-	300,000	25,000	105,000
	5255508	SCCCFPD Apparatus & Enhancements	363,095	(179,134)		2,125,000	-	
	5255509	SCCCFPD Fire Engine Water Tender		475,836		-	-	
	5255510	Contract Services Contingency	-	-	-	400,000	-	200,000
5255500		Total Contract Services	6,809,485	7,248,487	7,261,805	10,644,401	7,681,200	8,507,600
5257130		Contract Services (Consultants)						
	5257131	Independent Contractor - Consultants	72,151	116,418	74,892	280,800	85,000	143,800
	5257132	Contract Serv. (Consultants) Contingency	-	-	-	50,000	-	50,000
5257130		Total Contract Services (Consultants)	72,151	116,418	74,892	330,800	85,000	193,800

			Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget	Est. FY24	Draft Budget
Los Altos Hill	s County Fire D	District	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	(Not Final)	FY25
			(2020-2021)	(2021-2022)	(2022-2023)	(2023-2024)	(2023-2024)	(2024-2025)
5282200		Projects and Programs						
	5282201	IHFR Defensible Space Chipping & Debris Removal	295,406	429,078	734,615	675,000	820,000	1,055,000
	5282202	IHFR Defensible Space Debris Monthly Dropoff	44,568	55,547	56,178	60,000	60,000	80,000
	5282203	IHFR Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Program	1,167	16,489	8,015	300,000	40,000	300,000
	5282204	IHFR Evacuation Route & Veg. Management	43,680	273,008	230,434	495,000	711,000	809,500
	5282205	IHFR Open Space Fuel Break Program		1,450	-	220,000	50,000	75,000
	5282206	IHFR I-280 Fuel Break Project			51,146	200,000	185,000	1,000,000
	5282207	IHFR Goat Grazing Program	19,556	24,928	27,179	50,000	29,750	44,750
	5282208	Emergency/CERT/ARK Supplies	28,515	37,724	31,444	75,000	75,000	65,400
	5282209	Vegetation and Response Equipment & Maint.			-	35,000	5,000	35,000
	5282210	Hydrant/Infrastructure Repair, Maint. & Additions	99,365	137,556	137,108	350,000	95,970	220,000
	5282211	Neighborhood Evac. Drills and Outreach	-	-	-	30,000	30,000	15,000
	5282212	Firewise Communities		16,914	12,752	50,000	25,000	82,000
	5282213	Temporary Refuge Areas		-	-	25,000	5,000	75,000
	5282214	Planning, Project Management & Programs Oversight	15,598	28,259	39,462	50,000	50,000	62,500
	5282215	Communications & Outreach		18,143	17,862	75,000	48,000	87,800
	5282216	Emergency Access Roads	-	-	-	445,000	25,000	168,500
	5282217	Projects & Programs Contingency	-	-	-	450,000	-	325,000
		Fire Service Water Flow Improvements	209,760					
5282200		Total Projects and Programs	757,615	1,039,096	1,346,195	3,585,000	2,254,720	4,500,450
		Total Operating Expenditures	8,658,182	9,546,198	10,322,119	18,514,856	12,663,720	17,432,963
5561000		Special Districts Fixed Assets						
		2023 F250 Truck and Enhancements (Lease)				125,000	10,075	25,850
		Ford Transit Van Eco-Boost and Enhancements (Lease)				100,000	10,075	10,350
		IT Equipment and Software				75,000	75,000	45,000
		Video/Audio Equipment				35,000	35,000	15,000
		Facility Health & Safety Maintenance (on-going)				175,000	75,000	100,000
		CED Dedicated Small SUV (Lease)						10,150
		A.I. Wildfire Early Detection Technology Systems						250,000
		Disaster Facility Equipment						50,000
		Staff Power Bank						2,175
		Field Power Banks						6,000
		Document Management Systems						35,000
5561000		Total Special Districts Fixed Assets	-	-	-	510,000	205,150	549,525
		Total Expenditures	8,658,182	9,546,198	10,322,119	19,024,856	12,868,870	17,982,488
		Net Change in Fund Balance	4,792,203	4,436,639	5,425,852	(3,245,456)	3,224,430	(1,694,988)

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget	Est. FY24	Draft Budget
Los Altos Hills County Fire District	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	(Not Final)	FY25
	(2020-2021)	(2021-2022)	(2022-2023)	(2023-2024)	(2023-2024)	(2024-2025)

Balance Sheet

Assets	Cash	31,122,992	33,635,026	39,226,442	34,929,513	42,246,652	40,601,665
	Accounts Receivable / Prepaids	60,870	95,034	305,731	100,000	350,000	300,000
	Total Assets	31,183,862	33,730,060	39,532,173	35,029,513	42,596,652	40,901,665
Liabilities	Accounts Payable	190,610	260,859	609,951	300,000	450,000	450,000
Fund Balance	Committed to Operations	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
	Committed to Emergency Operations	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
	Committed to Buildings and Improvements	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000
	Committed to Wildfire Protection Technology	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
	Committed to Hydrants and Infrastructures	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
	Total Committed Funds	14,000,000	14,000,000	14,000,000	14,000,000	14,000,000	14,000,000
	Assigned Fund Balance	15,032,562	19,469,201	24,895,054	20,729,513	28,146,652	26,451,665
	Fixed Asset Add-Back			(19,453)			
	Salary Accruals			46,621			
	Total Fund Balance	29,032,562	33,469,201	38,922,222	34,729,513	42,146,652	40,451,665
	Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	31,183,862	33,730,060	39,532,173	35,029,513	42,596,652	40,901,665
	Investment in Capital Assets	1,960,690	1,887,412	1,829,693	1,998,357	1,998,357	1,998,357
	Salary Accruals			(46,621)			
	Net Position	30,993,252	35,356,613	40,705,294	36,727,870	44,145,009	42,450,022

DRAFT BUDGET CALENDAR

Budget Calendar	Date
Staff /Budget Team coordination and data gathering	Sep- Oct 🗸
1st Ad Hoc Budget Subcommittee Community Meeting	Nov 14th 🗸
FY 2024-2025 Draft Budget –LAHCFD Commission	Nov 21st 🗸
2nd Ad Hoc Budget Subcommittee Community Meeting (If needed)	Dec-Jan
FY 2024-2025 Draft Budget –LAHCFD Commission	Jan 16th
Submission to County OBA	Feb 2nd
FY 2024-2025 Final Draft Budget –LAHCFD Commission	Feb 20th
Board of Supervisors FY 2024-2025 Budget Workshops	May 13-15
Board of Supervisors FY 2024-2025 Budget Hearings	June 10, 11, 12
Commission adopts FY 2024-2025 Final LAHCFD Budget as adopted by BOS	June 18th

LOS ALTOS HILLS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT (LAHCFD) – DRAFT FY 2024-2025 BUDGET