

Introduction to the 2022 Annual Budget

Following the Public Hearing on January 24th, Mayor Patterson-Howard revised the budget from 3.55% down to 3.27%. This document details major changes from the FY 2022 proposed annual estimate.

Implementation of Sewer & Refuse Sustainability Fee

In an effort to showcase where taxpayer money is being spent the city is moving forward with the implementation of a Sewer & Refuse Sustainability fee. These fees will go directly to the operations of both sanitation and sewer operations for the city and help with purchasing of new equipment, capital investments in infrastructure and the daily operations of staff within these departments. The sewer sustainability fee will charge all users of the City of Mount Vernon's water system \$1.25 per 100 cubic feet of water usage.

The refuse sustainability fee will charge all residential users who utilize the sanitization operations of the City \$200 per unit. For example, a 1-family house would be charged \$17 a month for sanitation. All commercial & industrial properties, that utilize city sanitation operations would be charged a flat rate of \$2000 a year for these services. For large commercial & industrial companies a surcharge may be assessed. Public Works operations have been impacted by budget cuts in Mount Vernon for over 25+ years as administrations looked for ways to cut expenses, salaries and personnel while keeping taxes lower.

MOUNT VERNON'S SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

SUSTAINABILITY FEE SCHEDULE

REFUSE COLLECTIONS
Residential Properties For Property Owners
\$0.54/Daily Per Owned-Unit
OR =
\$200/Annual Per Unit

ENHANCED STAR RESIDENTS (SENIORS) PROPERTY OWNERS
\$0.13/Daily Per Unit
OR =
\$50/Annually Per Household

NON-PROFIT PROPERTIES
\$1.34/Daily Per Property
OR =
\$650/Annually Per Property

COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES
\$5.40/Daily Per Property
OR =
\$2,000/Annually Per Property

SEWER ENTERPRISE FUND
\$1.25 Per 100 Cubic Feet = \$18.75
Based on Water Usage



SHAWN PATTERSON-HOWARD Mayor
DAMANI L. BUSH Commissioner
ROBERT HACKETT Deputy Commissioner

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DPW SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

- Replace All City-Owned Garbage Receptacles to address Litter Problems!
- Establish City-wide Rat/Rodent Prevention Initiative
- Establish Street Cleaning Crews to Clean Up Blighted Areas And Assist With Zombie Property Removals!
- Fix Our Potholes / Pave It Forward!
- Re-Invest Into Our Infrastructure (Sewer Rehabilitation, Street Paving, Traffic System Upgrades)
- Build Back Our DPW Workforce and Provide Additional Training For All DPW Operations including Driver Performance, Personnel Behavior and Boost Morale for Accountability, Communication and Efficiency
- Hiring DPW Code Enforcement Officers to address Quality of Life Issues
- Hire Additional Office Staff To Respond To Constituent Concerns In A Timely Manner!
- Implement Innovative Technology To Enhance Our Waste Removal Operations and Provide Efficiency!
- Build Capacity for Compliance with the Department of Justice ("USDOJ"), Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") and Department of Environmental Conservation ("DEC")



To that end there has been minimal investments into the sanitation operations of the City of Mount Vernon. The result has been dilapidated municipal buildings (i.e. Armory, DPW yard, firehouses and parking structures), deteriorating municipal fleet and lack of personnel for various operations. Currently, the City of Mount Vernon allocates \$16.3 million towards total DPW operations, with roughly \$7 million on Sanitation and Street Cleaning operations, the largest appropriation.

Following best practices of neighboring municipalities, New Rochelle has instituted refuse fees that coincide with yearly property tax bills. In New Rochelle, the fee is to defray the cost of collection, transportation and disposal of solid waste and recyclables from properties with dwelling units in the City. It's important to note that in New Rochelle, they do not pick up commercial/industrial businesses refuse. For 2021, New Rochelle generated \$7.7 million or 5% of their total budget revenue from this residential refuse fee. The City of Mount Vernon is enacting a similar fee which is inclusive of commercial/industrial and non-profit entities. In New Rochelle, residential units are charged 276 dollars per unit a year with a 30 dollar per unit a year cost for senior citizens tax exemption units, in Mount Vernon it is 200 dollars per unit, 50 dollars for senior citizens tax exemptions, low income & disabled exemptions and fees for non-residential and non-profit organizations.

Outlined below are the goals for the intended use of these news fees which will go a long way to upgrading service delivery, purchasing and maintaining new equipment, cleaning up dirty streets that have been impacted by dumping and litters, new code enforcement for those who violate the city codes, and increased capacity to begin making decades long capital investments into our infrastructure which includes: fire stations, police buildings, recreational centers, street resurfacing, sidewalk rehabilitation, parks and many more.

Union Contracts

We recognize that our City of Mt. Vernon employees are the lowest paid municipal employees in the region. They have been valiantly serving since 2018 without union contracts in our four collective bargaining units which are the Police Benevolent Association (PBA), International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 107, Teamsters 456 and Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA). In 2020/2021 many who are "Essential Workers" risked their lives and health to work through a pandemic. We watched them "show up" daily and continue to serve our City without "Heroes Pay" and broken or minimal equipment. In the ARPA budget we have included \$3m for premium pay to our essential workers within our unions. Additionally, have included \$3.1m in this budget to begin the discussion on new union contracts going forward. We will work with our new Comptroller to create a way to address retro pay to our workers.

Assessed Valuation

- The assessed valuation of the city has once again dropped to \$145,623,221 a decrease from last year of \$947,557. The City is in the process of hiring a Director of Economic Development & Empowerment to support the growth of the commercial & industrial base of the city to help offset the decreasing assessed value. Furthermore, discussion have been held around a city-wide reassessment which hasn't taken place in 50+ years.

Restoring Public Safety

This budget restores critical public safety positions back into the budget that were taken out in 2021. The restoration of five police officers and five firefighters have been added to this budget. Recently, the city has hired nineteen (19) new police officers and eight (8) new fire fighters will keep Mount Vernon safe and provide protection for these public safety departments that are dealing with the frontline impact of COVID-19.

ARPA Budget

The City is utilizing ARPA funds to staff various departments with new and restored personnel to ensure the flow of government services during the pandemic. A detail breakdown of those positions is available in the budget document presented at the Board of Estimate & Contract. Within the ARPA budget, there has been a focus on creating positions that increase public safety coverage, youth services, sanitation operations, building department improvements, sustainability management and boost economic development. This administration believes that a focus on the growth of our economy, and an increase of youth, senior and community services will help us rebound from the pandemic. There is also a focus on the building department to hire plan examiners and clerks to unclog the backlog of permits and create a revenue for the department.

Revenue

Highlighted are noticeable changes from the previously proposed annual estimate.

- Real Property Transfer Tax – Reduced to \$2,700,000
- Public Works Code Enforcement – Increased to \$75,000. Hiring of new code enforcement officers will yield increase revenue due to enforcement actions and improve quality of life.
- Parking Meter and Permit Fees – Decreased to \$2,850,000 based on review on fees and meter collection from FY 21
- Sewer Rents (Sewer Sustainability Fee) Increased to \$2,313,243. Based on collection of new fees that is restricted for the use of sewer operations, fringe benefits and maintenance.
- Refuse & Garbage Charges (Refuse Sustainability Fee) Decreased to \$6,700,000 to lower the burden on non-profit organization and community stakeholders. Based on collection of new fees that is restricted for the use of sanitation operations, fringe benefits and maintenance.
- Street Opening Fees & Permits – Decreased to \$700,000 based on information received on reduced opening and permits fees related to Con Edison and other work.
- Fines & Forfeited Bail Criminal Court Fines (Parking Tickets) – Increased to \$3,200,000 based on historical data received by parking bureau.
- Water Fund Transfer – Reduced to \$850,000 based on data and water improvement obligations from the Board of Water Supply
- ARPA Technical Compliance Positions - \$887,319 represents ARPA funds used for compliance positions in this budget, the number is inclusive of fringe benefits. The separate ARPA budget was approved in 2021 and is available on the website. Positions highlighted in the budget have included ARPA next to them to reflect this change.

- **Zombie Home Program** - \$555,014 represents ARPA & LISC funds to be utilized for tearing down zombie homes in Mount Vernon. Following the public hearing, Mayor Patterson-Howard included funding for this program based on concerns from residents. The funding also covers the cost of a one staffer.

Departmental Appropriations

Benefits & Miscellaneous Items

We have added **\$1,723,322** to address our **union contracts** with the four unions of our city, included in this figure in the \$1.4 million judgement for the fire union that was negotiated by a former administration. This number is not a full reflection of the commitments needed, but the lack of funding allocated towards these contracts were highlighted by the State Comptroller in a previous audit. This number does not address retro payments.

An increase of tax refunds to \$1m to support historically underbudgeted **tax certiorari** going back nearly a decade. We've increase in **Judgement & Settlements** to **\$1.25m** to adjust for true cost of costly litigation from prior administrations. The recent State Comptroller Audit highlighted that **\$5.4 million**, has been spent between 2018 and early 2020 on **litigation fees** to lawyers and settlements. We have included an increase of **retirement** to **\$14.2m** as reported by the Comptroller's office in late 2021. An increase of **police overtime** to **\$1.05m** to reflect true cost that have been incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and badge drain which has left vacant positions and an increase in overtime.

Office of the Mayor

An increase of \$80,000 to add the position of **Director of Constituent Services** to Mayor's office. Included in the Mayor's strategic plan was the creation of an office of Constituent Services to deal with community concerns and to serve as a liaison to various neighborhood associations, civic, business and faith non-profit leaders. This position will also fast track and coordinate response to complaints through various departments.

Finance Department

Two positions have been created in the finance department, the first is a **Budget Analyst/Grant Compliance officer** (\$92,363) that focuses on ARPA compliance. and the second is an **accounts payable clerk** (\$65,954).

Human Resources

A **new deputy commissioner** (\$82,500) to deal with various personnel decisions and other HR-related activities. The City of Mount Vernon has over 700+ employees and one commissioner to oversee all these employees is not efficient. We are looking to expand staff training, accountability and performance measurements.

Management Services

Three new positions have been added to this department. An **IT Specialist** for Public Safety (\$79,815) to help streamline the IT upgrades, maintenance and reporting in our public safety departments. **Junior Web Developer** (\$43,187) to help maintain the brand-new city website

along with other online applications that are being implemented. **Director of Communications** (\$90,000) has been added to increase the city-wide communication.

Department of Public Works

Three positions have been added to DPW regarding compliance with DOJ/EPA consent decrees and the replacement of our 100+ year old sewer system. A **Stormwater Coordinator** (\$75,000) and a **Clean Water Engineer** (\$125,000) and **Sewer Engineer** (\$125,000) have been included in this budget.

We've added two new **code enforcement officers** (\$51,805) to increase oversight on bad actors who violate codes and bring down the quality of life in our neighborhoods. These officers will also be working on weekends, when general oversight is lax to ensure compliance with city ordinances. Additionally, as our community is greatly impacted by climate change and needs an individual to focus on building out a green infrastructure and switching to green focused policies we are hiring a **Director of Community Outreach and Sustainability** (\$82,197) that will help transition Mount Vernon into a green future. We also restored a previously defunded position: Watch Person (\$61,320) to the budget which is responsible for the oversight of the DPW yard which is a 24-hour operation.

Police Department

We added a new **Deputy Commissioner of Parking** (\$100,000) to the budget to help strengthen and bring order to the parking bureau and to streamline revenue generation for that department. This also includes restoring one **parking enforcement officer** (\$44,722) which was cut from the previous year.

Included are three new **crime analysts** (\$55,000 each) that will help put officers back onto the street (who make over 90K) who are currently in these roles now. We also included a **new community service aide** in the Animal Shelter (\$56,142) to relieve an officer who was filling into that role. These changes will allow the city to place four more officers onto the street to provide public safety in the community.

We also added \$12,000 to the auxiliary police budget to reflect an accurate cost associated with them.

Fire Department

To deal with the oversight and safety of firefighters we are restoring a Fire Lieutenant (\$108,398) and five firefighters (\$40,071). This increase oversight and staffing will help protect firefighters and help with fighting fires in the city. We have also allocated \$125k for the rental and maintenance of Temporary Station House 4.

Buildings Department

Continuing to overhaul the operations of the department and improve workflow we are adding Two licensed **plan examiners** (\$85,000) using ARPA funds, a **plan room clerk technician** (\$48,507) and a **building clerk** (\$41,415). These new positions based on repeated complaints by residents about the timeliness and operations of the department will help with expediting and streamlining permits and other processes within the department. We are also hiring a grant

funded position of **Zombie Home Coordinator** (\$55,014) to deal with the demolition of zombie homes throughout the city.

Recreation Department

Restored in this budget are the positions of an **Assistant Director** (\$47,812), one **Senior Recreation leaders** (\$34,319), one **bus driver** (\$34,319), and **Security Aide** (\$40,296). Staffing was reduced as programs did not meet in person due to Covid. Programs are up and running again and must be properly staffed.

Memorial Field

We've added \$228,693 to budget for the opening of Memorial Field which will consist four workers dealing with the maintenance and supervision of the field.

Planning Department

Utilizing ARPA funds we are hiring a **Director of Economic Development & Empowerment** (\$125,000) to help boost commercial investment and empower our business community. This position is critical to jumpstarting Mount Vernon's economy by investing in the development and empowerment of our small business community. We are also hiring a **Grants and Research Administrator** (\$73,826) to help target the billions of dollars of grants that are flowing from the federal and state agencies. Additionally, we are hiring a **GIS administrator** (\$70,631) to help with EPA compliance which will be utilizing and to map out our infrastructure needs regarding sewers, stormwater, water lines and capital projects throughout the city.