



## Oak Ridge considers \$5.7 million budget

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Oak Ridge North has proposed a \$5.7 million budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

This year's budget is more than \$500,000 higher than the previous year's figure of \$5.2 million due to the inclusion of new bonds, said Paul Mendes, city manager.

The city also expects to keep the same tax rate as last year, 63 cents per \$100 of appraised property value.

"Considering the recession, Oak Ridge North is doing well," Mendes said. "Oak Ridge North is still a good place to live. It's what a home town is supposed to be."

The fiscal year runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30.

City council also approved \$4.6 million in certificates of obligation to upgrade the city's sewer system during its May 26 meeting.

A vote to make the budget official will take place during the Aug. 24 council meeting.

### Water well update

Council was presented two options during the

Aug. 10 meeting regarding an access road to water well 3 located near the Village of Oak Ridge Grove subdivision: adopt a measure to create a park and walking trail or create an access bridge off Oakhurst Drive.

Councilman Peter Nett said residents of Oak Ridge Grove don't want a park. In addition, any walking trail built would only measure around 200 feet.

"The trail would be so short, it's an insult," Nett said.

As he has done in previous meetings, Nett said he supports the construction of a bridge.

Resident Jim Kuykendall said a park would produce a "win-win situation" for everyone.

"A park is something everyone could use," he said.

Council members James Walton and Leah Gray also favor constructing a park.

Chuck Campbell, a resident of the Spring Oaks subdivision, said he has garnered 76 signatures on a petition that opposes the bridge.

Campbell said he lives on Oakhurst Drive approximately 50 yards outside of Oak Ridge North.

Even though Spring Oaks is outside of the city, the construction of a bridge would have a great impact on the community.

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"The bridge would take out the last bit of woods in our subdivision," he said.

In addition, security would be an issue. Since Spring Oaks is outside of the city, there would be no police patrolling the area, he said.

According to Campbell, the construction of a park would be paid for by the Oak Ridge North Development Corp., which currently has a surplus of funds. A bridge would come directly out of taxpayers' pockets.

Councilman Steve Holcomb said he is not in favor of either measure.

He said his primary interest is to keep as many trees as possible in the area.

During the discussion, some members of the audience suggested that both Nett and Holcomb excuse themselves from voting on the issue due to conflict of interest.

Nett resides in the Village of Oak Ridge Grove and Holcomb's son owns property in the subdivision.

Nett refused to excuse himself. Holcomb said his son is living outside of the country and the property is currently up for lease.

Regarding the issue of building a park/walking trail or bridge, council voted to table the subject until the Southern Montgomery County Municipal Utility District presents a specific proposal on the bridge.

The price of the bridge has only been estimated. It could cost anywhere between \$150,000 and \$250,000, of which the city would pay half.

## Biofuels investigation continues

Council held an impromptu closed executive session at the end of the meeting to vote on waiving the city's attorney-client privilege amidst an investigation of dealings between the city and Biofuels Power Corp.

City attorney Scott Bounds said the Montgomery County District Attorney's office made the request to obtain information regarding the Biofuels investigation, which centers on two lease agreements and purchasing of equipment between Oak Ridge North and Biofuels Power Corp.

Bounds said he doesn't know the exact reasoning behind the request or the type of questions that will be asked.

The attorney-client privilege keeps information divulged to an attorney confidential.

Councilman Don Tucker was against the waiver.

"I think it violates a person's constitutional rights," he said.

Nett disagreed and added the city should help law enforcement whenever possible.

Council voted 3 to 2 in favor of waiving the attorney-client privilege.

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Gray, Nett and Holcomb supported the measure,  
while Tucker and Walton voted against it.

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