

Sep 17, 2025

Bianca Tirado
City Clerk, South Bend, IN

2026 Budget Questions

Dear Councilwoman Sheila Niezgodski, Chair Personnel & Finance Committee

First, I want to sincerely thank you for your tireless efforts and the time you've dedicated as Chair of the Personnel & Finance Committee. Your leadership throughout the 2026 budget hearings has been deeply appreciated. This year's hearings have not been without their challenges. Again Thank you.

As the 2026 budget hearings draw to a close, it is clear that this process has presented significant challenges. Serving as a council member means making decisions that directly impact on lives, livelihoods, and the very spirit of our community. This responsibility goes beyond policy—it is fundamentally about people and services.

Given the ever-changing and uncertain financial landscape, I'd like to propose that the Personnel and Finance Committee hold quarterly working sessions. These meetings would allow us to:

- Assess the city's financial status in real time
- Monitor and respond to changes at the federal and state levels
- Ensure our fiscal planning remains proactive and community-focused

Questions

Budget Priorities & Alignment

- What are the top three priorities driving this budget?
- How does this budget reflect our strategic goals for the next fiscal year?

Spending & Efficiency

- Which departments or programs saw the largest increases or cuts, and what's the rationale?
- How many positions were eliminate in the 2026 budget?
- How many new position were added? What Departments
- How many received raises? What departments and the percentage of their raises?

- Are there any duplicative efforts or inefficiencies we've identified?
- What metrics are we using to evaluate the success of funded programs?
- What programs/services that were funded with the America Rescue funds/Grants eliminated?

Transparency & Communication

- What mechanisms are in place to ensure ongoing communication about budget performance throughout the year? Not just quarterly requests for budget transfers.
- In order to effectively review the department's budget proposal we should receive them in a timely manner. In the past we have asked that we receive them in at least 24 hour prior to their presentations.

Contingency & Flexibility

- What contingency plans are in place if revenue projections fall short?
- Is there flexibility built into the budget to respond to emerging needs?

Budgets that I have still have questions about

- Legal
- Citizen Review Board
- Code Enforcement (Staffing)