



REPORT TO THE BUFFALO FISCAL STABILITY AUTHORITY on Public Comments Pertaining to the City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan

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Submitted by:



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Table of Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	2
II. Background	2
III. Arrangements for Public Forum	3
IV. September 6 Public Forum	4
a. Process	4
b. Participation	5
V. Public Comments on City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan	6
a. Primary Themes Emerging from Public Comments	6
b. Specific Comments (<i>in chronological order</i>)	13
1. Oral Comments at Public Forum	13
2. Written Submissions (Mail and Online)	26
VI. Post-Forum Process	47
VII. Addenda	

I. Introduction

This report by the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth (Institute), a public service program of the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, is submitted at the request of the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority (BFSA) as part of its review of the City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan. The report is an annotated summary of all public comments on the financial plan, including those delivered at a September 6 public forum, sponsored by the BFSA and convened by the Institute, and those written and online comments received by the Institute.

Included in the report is an overview of the major themes of public input on the plan, as well as a listing of each submission that identifies the speaker and summarizes his or her comments in a series of bulleted points. Included addenda consist of copies of all handouts at the September 6 public forum as well as forum presentations delivered at the forum at the start of each session. A video recording of the public forum and copies of all written testimony have also been delivered to the BFSA as a verbatim record of public commentary on the financial plan.

II. Background

Pursuant to the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority Act (Act)¹, signed into law in July 2003, the BFSA is required to review the City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan, released September 2, 2003, and determine whether to accept or reject it by September 16, 2003. The financial plan makes a series of recommendations designed to help close projected gaps in the city's budget by fiscal year 2006-2007.

As part of this review process, the legislation mandates that the BFSA solicit public comment on the plan through a community or educational entity, which then must submit to the BFSA a report on such public commentary by September 10, 2003.

The pertinent section of the legislation (Sections 3856 and 3857) specifically reads:

...Not later than September first, two thousand three [The report was actually released September 2 as Labor Day fell on September 1.], the city shall submit to the Authority a financial plan which may reflect a declaration of need...The plan shall cover the city's two thousand three-two thousand four fiscal year and the three subsequent fiscal years...Not later than fifteen days after such submission, the Authority shall approve or disapprove the financial plan...

...Prior to the approval or disapproval of the financial plan of the city by the Authority, the Authority shall request community, educational or other entity or entities to seek public input and comment relating to the city's and/or any covered organization's financial plan. Such community, educational or other entity or entities shall report to the Authority on such public input and comment ten days after the city has submitted the financial plan to the Authority...

¹ 2003 N.Y. Laws 122.

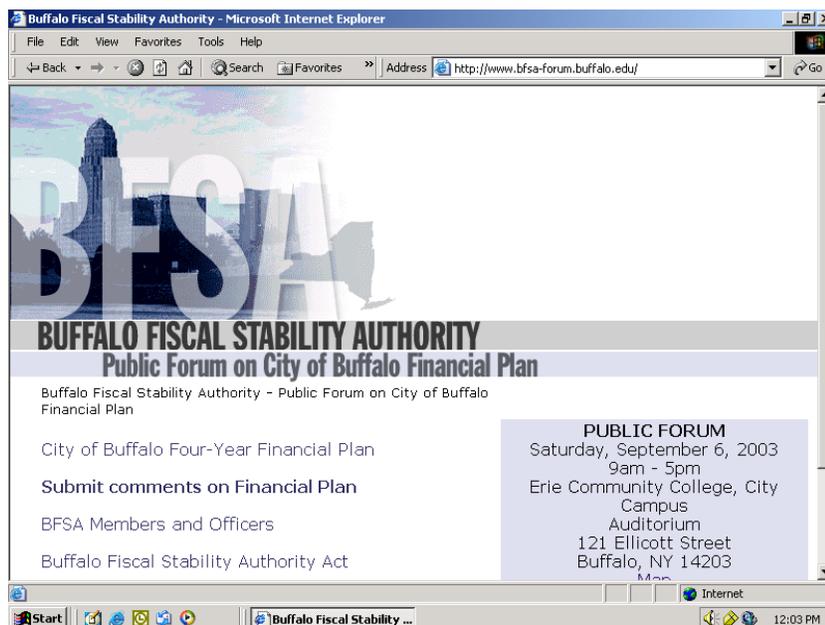
III. Arrangements for Public Forum

In compliance with the state legislation, the BFSA commissioned the Institute to convene a public forum on September 6, 2003, for purposes of collecting public input on the financial plan. The forum was held in the auditorium of the **Erie Community College's City Campus (121 Ellicott Street, Buffalo, NY 14203)**. The daylong forum agenda was divided into three sections (**9 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. - City of Buffalo; 12 p.m. - 2:50 p.m., City Schools; 3 p.m. - 5 p.m., Other Covered (City) Entities**).

John B. Sheffer, II, Institute Executive Director, chaired a panel listening to public comments at the forum. Joining him on the panel were Janet Penksa, Associate Vice President for Government Affairs for the University at Buffalo, and Danis J. Gehl, Director of the University at Buffalo's University Community Initiative. **(See Addendum B for short biographies of panelists)**.

Preparations for the forum were focused upon making it as easy as possible for citizens and groups to make their views known to the BFSA. For instance, in addition to steps taken by the City of Buffalo to distribute the financial plan, the Institute created a website (www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu) for the public to view the financial plan and prepared two news releases regarding forum details **(Addenda A and B)**. The website (see below) also provided details on the public forum, an online form for public comments and instructions for alternate methods of submitting comments (mail to the Institute, or hand delivery to the Institute or at the forum, or e-mail to bfsa-forum@buffalo.edu).

The public was asked to limit all comments to the topic of the four-year financial plan and to keep written or online comments to eight pages or less. Comments must have been received by the Institute no later than **5 p.m. Sunday, September 7, 2003**. All required fields must have been completed on online forms, and name and address included in other written comments, as no anonymous comments were accepted.



IV. September 6 Public Forum

a. Process

To ensure active public participation in the September 6 public forum, the process was designed to be as efficient, accessible and fair as possible. Thus, in addition to the forum details released to the news media and the forum website, an “Information Sheet” **(Addendum C)** was distributed at the forum, outlining specific instructions for speaking at the forum or submitting written or online comments. Also, a “Comments Form” **(Addendum D)** and three computer terminals for submitting online comments were also available at the forum.

To provide participants with additional information about the city’s financial plan and its potential impacts upon residents and organizations, a 20-minute presentation **(Addendum E, F and G)** by city, school and agency officials commenced each of the three sessions. Introducing the first session (City of Buffalo), Mayor Anthony Masiello addressed the city’s revenue shortfalls and reviewed proposed funding cuts and other cost-saving measures. For the second session (City Schools), Buffalo Public Schools Superintendent Marion Canedo reviewed measures that would be required to balance the school budget, including reductions in services and school closings. Before the final session (Other Covered (City) Agencies) Sharon West, Executive Director of the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority, and Timothy Wanamaker, Executive Director of the city’s Office of Strategic Planning, addressed the organizations’ respective budgets, deficit-closing measures and organizational priorities in the upcoming fiscal years.

The process of determining the order of speakers at the forum – random selection via a lottery conducted at the forum – was designed to be completely transparent and visible to the forum audience. To enter the lottery, attendees filled out a registration card **(Addendum H)** indicating whether they wished to speak at the forum and, if so, for which session. *[It should be noted that, although speakers were asked to register for only one session, those wishing to speak at more than one were permitted to do so when time allowed.]* Individuals were allotted three minutes to speak while those designated to speak for an organization receiving city funding or affected by the city’s financial plan were allotted five minutes to speak. Attendees were asked to complete all required fields on the registration cards, as no anonymous comments were accepted.

The registration cards of those wishing to speak were placed in one of two official raffle bins on the stage – one for individuals and one for organizations. During the forum these bins were regularly rotated, with Institute staff selecting five cards at a time and alternating between individuals and organizations. Speakers names and, if applicable, their represented organization, were listed on a screen along with the appropriate allotted speaking time. Speakers presented their comments to the three-member panel from a podium in the stage area of the auditorium.

Throughout the forum, participants were reminded that regardless of whether they spoke at the forum, they could submit comments through any alternate method until 5 p.m. Sunday, September 7, 2003.

b. Participation

Approximately **250** citizens attended the forum, while **54** orally voiced their opinions on the financial plan to the panel. Specifically, **27** citizens (**18** individuals, **9** organizations) spoke at the first session, **14** at the second (**7** individuals, **7** organizations), and **13** at the third (**6** individuals, **7** organizations). Additionally, **8** citizens submitted their comments via the three computer terminals stationed outside the auditorium; **38** offered written comments (either by mail or hand delivery to the Institute or at the forum) and **29** delivered their comments via e-mail (BFSA forum, Institute and City of Buffalo e-mail accounts).

It should be noted that all citizens and organizations indicating the desire to speak at the forum were given the opportunity to do so and neither time constraints nor the adopted process excluded any speaker.

V. Public Comments on the City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan

The following summary of all public comments received by the Institute in reference to the City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan is presented in two parts:

- (1) A narrative summary of the primary themes emerging from the public comments, and
- (2) A chronological summary of the specific points made in each submittal, whether derived from oral comments at the September 6 public forum or from online or written comments.

In total, the chronological listing includes all 129 submittals, some of which are duplicative of oral and written comments. In general, the panel listening to and reading the comments was struck by the serious nature of the submittals and the constructive approach taken by most residents and organizations. While representing diverse perspectives, the comments are connected not only by some common themes, but also by an apparently sincere motivation to assist in the challenge of securing a strong future for the City of Buffalo.

It is important to understand that the following summaries are designed to portray a fair and accurate synopsis of what was actually said or written in the public comments and is not an attempt to provide a full and balanced analysis of any given issue or proposal.

a. Primary Themes Emerging from Public Comments

As indicated earlier in this report, comments submitted at the public forum, and through alternative means, came from diverse citizens and represented multiple perspectives. A series of consistent themes, however, emerged from these public comments which are reviewed below for the benefit of BFSAs members.

It should be noted that most comments were not focused upon specific provisions of the City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan. For several reasons, this was probably to be expected. Primarily, the time frame provided in the state legislation resulted, as a practical matter, in only a day or two for public review of the city's plan. In spite of the city's, Authority's and Institute's efforts to make the report available online and in city libraries, few people had a realistic opportunity to fully study the plan in advance of the public forum. Many submittals, therefore, appear to be a statement of general concerns about the city and city finances, not particularly focused upon the recent city publication.

General Concerns with Financial Plan:

Not unlike previous coverage in the media of the City of Buffalo's financial plan, public comments submitted through the forum processes represented opposition to many elements of the proposed plan and concern regarding the process by which the budget is being

balanced. General concerns included comments on the process (lack of consultation, behind closed doors, rushed, lack of accountability) and comments on the financial proposals (penny-wise and pound-foolish, anti-children, anti-poor, lacking creativity, reliance on “if-comes”).

It is not surprising that most people taking the initiative to comment on a financial plan are motivated by concerns rather than support for such plan. In this case, the anti-plan sentiment was near unanimous among those speaking at the forum or otherwise submitting comments for the record. As indicated below, one exception to the enormous opposition to the financial plan was fairly consistent support for the city’s proposal that the County of Erie share a portion of sales tax revenues with the city.

General Concerns with State Legislation and BFSA:

Although not specifically the designated topic of the public forum, a number of those submitting comments expressed concerns on the process of establishing the BFSA and the Authority’s role in decision-making for the City of Buffalo. Such concerns focused on short timetable for deliberations, business/banking orientation of Authority members, elected office-holders on Authority being part of the problem that caused the need for a control board, lack of transparency of Authority processes and decisions and subversion of the democratic process. Several expressed concerns that most Authority members were not present at the forum to hear the public comments.

It is also true, however, that many of the speakers and writers expressed hope that the BFSA could be the catalyst for change that is badly needed in the City of Buffalo. Many of the comments focused upon the constructive role that the Authority can and should have in fashioning a strong future for the city and assisting in achieving needed reforms in county, state and federal policies.

Specific Themes

Attention to City Revenues as well as Expenditures. Many of those submitting comments focused on the need for increased revenues to city coffers and criticized the proposed plan for focusing primarily upon decreasing expenditures in order to achieve a balanced budget. Specific proposals included:

- (1) Commuter tax or fee
- (2) Regional revenue sharing
- (3) Income transfer tax
- (4) City bottle bill
- (5) Sharing of county sales tax
- (6) Increased support from county, state and federal governments (including amount and distribution of HUD funding)
- (7) Improvement of property tax base (through improved housing, historic preservation, education, etc. policies and decrease of property tax exemptions especially to private entities that do not need them.)

This theme is consistent with the sentiment expressed throughout the public comments that city services are being reduced to unacceptable levels. The belief is that the budget burden is being placed disproportionately on the citizens of Buffalo, particularly children (educational services) and the poor and will result in a lower quality of life. Therefore, only attention to increased revenues can reverse that trend.

A couple of citizens addressed the issue of the BFSA's ability to borrow funds to meet the city's fiscal needs, suggesting that the city might need to spend a little upfront to experience savings in the future. They noted that the BFSA's borrowing capacity was put in place by statute to support that initial investment. Several citizens also expressed concern that the banks would benefit from the establishment of the BFSA.

Role of Public Employee Unions. As one would expect, several representatives of the city's public employee unions submitted comments on the financial plan. It was clear the unions felt left out of the process of constructing the city's four-year plan and also that they believe they could have made substantive contributions to it. They maintain the process is opaque and unfair in spite of their offers to be partners with the city in solving current and future fiscal dilemmas. Many examples of prior union concessions in compensation and benefits were cited, but without consequence in terms of being brought into the process of devising a financial plan.

Specific examples of objections by both union and private sector service providers included a proposal by the city that firefighters also serve as code enforcement officers and Emergency Medical Technicians. It was believed these are steps which are penny-wise and pound-foolish and will result in poorer response times and decreased effectiveness by fire units. It was also voiced that the high level of training and certification of those who perform these functions would be lost if firefighters adopted these duties. Furthermore, doubt was expressed that these proposals would result in any cost-savings and in fact could be more costly than the current service structure.

Specific plans submitted in writing by public employee unions are attached to this report in the Addendum. Proposals include:

- (1) County guarantee of the city tax roll. It is estimated that this could boost city revenues by \$8 million.
- (2) Enactment of a landlord licensing fee. It is predicted that this could generate \$1.56 million annually.
- (3) Refuse disposal enforcement. At least \$850,000 could be generated.
- (4) Self sufficiency of public golf courses through increases in player fees and available grant money.
- (5) Implementation of employee involvement programs to help identify strategies to reduce costs and increase productivity.
- (6) Increase fees for Certificate of Occupancy.
- (7) Implementation of a landlord licensing fee.
- (8) Enforcement of inspection of masonry exteriors and charge a fee.

In general, employee unions believe that they are about 20 percent of the city's current fiscal problem and yet are being asked to bear nearly 100 percent of the burden of solving that

problem. Concerns expressed by the Buffalo Teachers Federation are reviewed in the section on *Education* below.

Regional and Upstate Context. In varying ways, a number of speakers and writers maintained that the city's financial plan should give greater consideration to the regional setting in which the City of Buffalo exists. Particular emphasis was placed on issues of smart growth and the need to have a vibrant central core for the Buffalo Niagara region. Many asserted that current policy has the opposite affect of driving people, especially middle class families, out of the city, thereby leaving primarily poorer citizens to attempt to carry the property tax base.

On the other hand, several speakers pointed to the need for either enforcement of current residency laws for Buffalo employees and/or imposition of tougher residency laws or commuter taxes upon non-residents who work in the city.

As previously noted, support was given to the city's proposal for the County of Erie to share the extra one percent of sales tax revenues with the City of Buffalo. This support was most frequently placed within a context that asserts that the City of Buffalo is also a unit of Erie County and has acknowledged its county citizenship by "giving up" its share of sales tax during previous county fiscal crises. Moreover, the notion of shared services and service consolidation was supported by several of those submitting comments. However, concern was expressed that there were no credible, substantive studies that demonstrated this would save money or deliver services more effectively. Particularly, the county's ability to deliver services better than the city was questioned.

It was also pointed out that Buffalo is not alone in facing daunting fiscal challenges and that other upstate cities such as Rochester, Syracuse and Albany are in basically similar circumstances. It was thought, therefore, that the State of New York should take a greater role in solving this dilemma, particularly by revising education funding formulae to give more assistance to large, poor urban school districts (see *Education* section below).

Several people expressed the concern that the city's plan was devised in the abstract, not only without consultation with local unions, etc., but also without giving adequate study to other regions of the country and how budgetary issues have been successfully approached in more vibrant metropolitan areas.

Competition and Collaboration. The competing notions of competition and collaboration were raised in varying contexts in the verbal and written comments from the public and organizations. Several people believed that the city badly needs to decrease patronage and cronyism and, instead, to inject increased competition into provision of public services by allowing public and private sectors to compete for work. One resident was careful to distinguish competition from privatization in the sense that it should not be assumed that the private sector can more efficiently provide any given service, but should be allowed to compete with public employees. Several speakers – primarily representing public employee unions – stated objections to privatization (e.g. ice rinks) and consolidation (building inspections) initiatives.

Many of those offering comments emphasized the need for improved cooperation among sectors within the city such as government, education, business, not-for-profit, labor and so on. As noted earlier, this theme was particularly strong among public employee unions which feel, in spite of previous concessions and current proposals, they have been left out of the process of devising a fiscal strategy for the future.

Similarly, many residents focused on the need for improved collaboration among levels of government. It was asserted that state and federal funding policies discriminate against urban communities such as Buffalo and that the BFSFA should join in the effort to reform such funding formulae, unfunded mandates, enterprise zone abuses, and other current barriers to economic recovery in the city. Moreover, some residents maintained that all levels of government should pay increased attention to identified “budget busters” and cost containment initiatives.

One speaker reviewed a new telephone communications process for public engagement in important community issues. It was asserted that the initiative can be an important tool of communication and collaboration to solve difficult urban issues.

Quality of Life and Relationship to Economy. Several residents spoke to the need for maintaining and improving the quality of life in the City of Buffalo and the importance of such issues for the city’s economy. For example, it was asserted that pursuit of a proposed Tree Master Plan not only improves the beauty and aesthetic environment of the city, but also limits the city’s exposure to liability resulting from falling limbs and trees. In other words, it is an issue of liability versus cost of maintenance.

Similarly, other comments focused on the importance of arts, culture and tourism to both the quality of life and economic vitality of Buffalo. The city’s recent retreat from cultural funding and failure to provide for such funding in the four-year plan was asserted to be shortsighted in light of potential for cultural tourism and artistic enhancement. It was also noted that the proposed Buffalo Comprehensive Plan (*Queen City in the 21st Century*) relies heavily upon the cultural and heritage assets of the city and these resources need therefore to be maintained and enhanced.

Opposition was expressed to consolidation of libraries within the city. It was suggested that libraries not only serve an educational role but also bring communities together and make them safer for all residents, including the elderly and that the cost of consolidating the libraries would far outweigh any projected savings.

In general, it was asserted that many families prefer to reside in the city, but quality of life considerations such as safe streets and excellent schools are driving people away. One presenter supported this argument with the example of the magnet school experience in Buffalo and how when these schools were funded adequately, families would move into the city from the suburbs in order to take advantage of their educational excellence.

Education. Perhaps the most consistent theme throughout the verbal and written comments was that of the overwhelming need for improved funding for public education in the city. It was asserted again and again that the proposed financial plan places the burden of solving the city’s budget problems on the backs of children and their future. There was

general agreement with the notion emphasized in the city school’s initial presentation that the financial plan is not a blueprint for meeting students’ needs or providing a quality education but simply a blueprint for balancing the budget.

The BFSA was called upon by a series of speakers to support the effort in Albany to reform education funding formulae in a manner that would provide a quality education to all children regardless of the district in which they reside.

Some of the speakers spoke to the unfairness of the of Buffalo’s dependent school district status, which limits its ability to raise property taxes to support education. In contrast, suburban and rural independent school district’s property tax and budget limits are set by individual local based school budget votes rather than a state constitutional taxing limit set many years ago for the upstate city school districts that may no longer be valid.

The Buffalo Teachers Federation submitted information indicating that, in order to achieve the same per pupil expenditure level as some other upstate cities, the following amounts of funding would need to be added to the budget of Buffalo Schools:

<i>Additional Funding Required</i>	<i>City</i>
\$93.4 million	Albany
\$57.5 million	Rochester
\$104.5 million	Yonkers
\$62.3 million	Niagara Falls

The teachers union also expressed concern over the way that charter schools are funded and the resulting impact upon Buffalo public schools.

Other residents commented that under the financial plan the inevitable elimination of kindergarten, school libraries, guidance and other services over the next four years is unacceptable. They maintained that children are not responsible for the current mess and should not bear the brunt of the solution. In that instructional services are 81 percent of the total schools budget, severe cuts to such services are inescapable unless increased revenues can be directed toward education. It was asserted that providing for a quality education in city schools is perhaps the most effective way to ultimately stabilize the city and its finances.

It was further suggested that the notion of “doing more with less” rings hollow in light of severe cuts already imposed upon Buffalo Schools. It was asserted that all fat, muscle and marrow has already been eliminated and there is nothing left to cut but a bare skeleton. In light of current shortcomings in the school system and, for example, a 30 percent functional illiteracy rate in the Buffalo population, revenue solutions must be identified, according to most presenters.

Issues Pertaining to Other City-Funded Entities. A series of concerns was identified regarding impact of the city’s Four-Year Financial Plan upon organizations relying on Buffalo for financial and service support. As noted earlier, a primary example was concern about the lack of funding for artistic and cultural organizations in the city. It was asserted a number of times in the comments submitted that a 100 percent cut to cultural organizations

not only affects the quality of life within the city, but the economy of the city and region as well.

It was also maintained that it is important for the city to continue its contribution to public housing. Although a relatively small percentage of the total cost, the city's portion of funding and services is critical to the success of such units. Concerns were also expressed, however, about the structure and funding of public housing and it was asserted that a "culture of cronyism and unaccountability" pervades the system.

Opposition was stated to a proposal in the city's Four-Year Financial Plan to cut Buffalo Municipal Housing Police (BMHP) from the city's budget and it was suggested that, instead, consideration should be given to merging BMHP with the Buffalo Police Department, especially in light of the fact that BMHP officers recently obtained "police officer" status.

It was asserted that funding for many human service organizations is extremely cost effective and results in a return several times the city's investment. Moreover, concerns were expressed as to the fairness of allocation of such funding. It was maintained that improved accountability could be achieved by the use of evaluation tools to gauge effectiveness.

Implementation Issues. Several concerns were expressed in both oral and written comments pertaining to legality, constitutionality or practicality of implementation of certain provisions of the city's Four-Year Financial Plan. Although few specifics were cited in such comments, the basic concerns were:

- (1) The city's plan projects revenues based upon sources which are speculative such as the sharing of county sales tax with the city
- (2) Some of the city's proposals deal with contractual issues which are the properly the subject of collective bargaining and/or current employee contracts and cannot be unilaterally decided by the Mayor or city
- (3) The city's plan calling firefighters to do building code enforcement is a violation of the Taylor Law, as building inspectors have "exclusivity" to the work and may also violate Civil Service law and provisions of the new city charter
- (4) Some of the city's proposals require approvals either by public referendum (change in city charter) or by other levels of government (change in sales tax distribution) and cannot be unilaterally imposed by the Mayor or city

It was suggested that the Four-Year Financial Plan was hastily developed with insufficient attention to the means and prerequisites of implementation of proposed changes by the city.

b. Specific Comments (in chronological order)

1. Oral Comments at Public Forum

Session 1: City of Buffalo

Rolaine Stoddard, #1 [See also Written Submissions]

- Studying government at UB with Students Building America, specifically cost containment in government
- Identified 15 “Budget Busters” at every level of government which can’t be eliminated but can be controlled
- BFSA, large and small business, and community must work in partnership
- Three Themes: Citizens no longer have ability to pay all costs in government; government action ripples out into the community; asking for Student Service Project Commission
- Focus on small business development

Michael Drennen, President, AFSCME Local 650, #2

- Representing about 540 professionals and employees of city providing services that increase quality of life in city and attract new residents
- We represent lawyers, public safety personnel, employees providing transportation to seniors and operating recreation centers, accountants, MIS staff, internal supports such as payroll, largely invisible
- We’ve already been reduced by over 100 members and have taken zero percent increases over past 10 years as well as health care concessions
- We’ve submitted a plan to the mayor that offers cuts without layoffs
- We believe there are several problems with the mayor’s plan: it relies on revenue sources from county; there’s no borrowing even though the BFSA has authority to borrow and the BFSA legislation contemplates borrowing

David Colligan, Buffalo Green Fund, #3 [See also Written Submissions]

- Worked on reforestation and tree master plan for the city that was released this year
- Trees add to the quality of life; if we reforest Buffalo we’ll “have it made in the shade,” but if we ignore them we have tort liability by not eliminating or trimming hazard trees
- Several years have passed since the last tree removal; 591 priority one removals needed, over 2,000 priority two and 1,000 priority three; also more than 2,000 priority one trimmings needed (and over 10,000 more priority two and three trimmings)
- Costs for five-year plan: \$1 million first year, \$1.2 in years two and three, \$860K year four, then \$775K in year five; personal liability lawsuits would cost far more than that; pay a reasonable amount now or pay an unreasonable amount later

Samuel Herbert, #4

- Private citizen representing concerned citizens throughout the City of Buffalo
- We want to thank the mayor for approving the construction of the wading pool at MLK Park
- Advocate for generating new dollars, thus eliminating the need for layoffs
- Favor a commuter tax for suburbanites who work in the city
- A departure fee should be charged to businesses who leave the city for the suburbs
- We should also have an entry fee that taxes businesses coming into Buffalo

Andrew R. Graham, VOICE-Buffalo, #5 [See also Written Submissions]

- Chair of Sprawl Task Force for VOICE-Buffalo
- Buffalo is a victim of federal and state unfunded mandates and special interest legislation such as Taylor Law
- Please review our 20-minute video on the topic, then have a discussion with us
- We need regional revenue sharing (reference David Rusk)
- No municipality has the revenue to leverage the change the region needs; “the city can’t do it alone”
- Must concentrate development in areas of existing infrastructure, and where public transportation and walkable communities are available

Christopher Connelly, #6

- The city needs to reestablish trust with its citizens; trust has been weakened by promises that are made but not followed through, for example the Peace Bridge renovation has been in the works for years but never finished
- Citizens are hurting; they need income
- When you think about cutting look at the private sector and corporate entities that are receiving benefits and concessions from the city
- Downtown has UB, theatre, architecture, but suburbanites are afraid to come downtown and say it’s scary; trust needs to be built between the city and residents in the region

Kevin J. Fitzgerald, President, AFSCME Local 2651 Building Trade Inspectors, #7 [See also Written Submissions]

- Represent 67 union members, mostly building inspectors
- All members are city residents; are the second highest revenue generator in the city
- Lost seven inspectors in the past few years, didn’t get any overtime increases in over 18 years; also no summer hours or Blue Cross insurance (one of the first to opt out)
- New three year contract includes 1-1.25-2 percent raises and the three-tiered prescription plan
- Against having firefighters doing building inspections which would eliminate 18 inspectors; also a violation of the Taylor Law and the negotiated contract, and perhaps even the city charter (it was a “cut and paste from a past study)

Beverly Hiestand, #8

- To address the fairness of this hearing – requiring citizens only three days to look at plan is a sign that public input obviously isn't being encouraged here; this is also suggested by the fact that only representatives of organizations – excluding private citizens – are given two extra minutes to comment; moreover, all decisions are being made behind closed doors and then made public
- The people here didn't create this crisis; rather, oversees locations have attracted businesses that were once here, huge tax breaks have been given to the rich, and money goes toward supporting wars, not the people, local schools, or programs that directly benefit city residents; we need to look at where public resources are being spent at all levels: federal state, county, and city
- The banks and other large corporate entities are the ones with the money; the rich, not the poor citizens in Buffalo, should pay to bail us out

Rob Zachrich, General Manager, Rural/Metro Medical Service, #9 [See also Written Submissions]

- On record opposing emergency medical services part of the fiscal plan, which would train firefighters as EMTs and bill the ambulance services \$75 for each paramedic service provided
- There is no clinical or operational need for this to be offered by the city, it's only about the financial aspect, and neither of the agencies that oversee EMS in the region have asked for this change; the group researching this have not released their findings (counter to the claims of the city that the group has endorsed the city's proposal)
- Over \$1 million in start up costs (as opposed to the city's claim of \$200K), which would eliminate their anticipated revenues
- Rural/Metro operates at no cost to the city taxpayers and would like to meet to discuss this further

Chris Barbera, #10

- Members of the BFSA do nothing more than “oversee the plantation”
- Ask that the sins of the poor, by the poor and for the poor be forgiven

Lawrence Panaro, Secretary/Treasurer, AFSCME Local 264, #11 [See also Written Submissions]

- Local 264 has a history of progressive initiatives with the city, such as reworking health insurance and redistricting sanitation services, accepted three zero pay raises over a five-year period, and has a rate of decline in the department far in excess of the city's population
- Have submitted a proposal for fiscal reform that contains revenue increases in refuse disposal and enforcement and parking tickets/towing and storage, guaranteeing the city's tax roll by the county, traffic adjudication by the city, capital improvements to the water system by American Water Inc., and employee involvement programs
- Parts of the mayor's plan address the needs of the city, but privatization or consolidation don't work as lowball bids rise dramatically after the department is eliminated, and consolidation costs are rarely as low as they initially appear

Kathleen Chandler, #12

- It is insulting that the BFSFA isn't even here to hear what the public has to say; is this hearing is even going to be made available to the public?
- The BFSFA has no office, no telephone number, etc. even though they have \$1.2 million for these purposes
- The whole direction of the BFSFA's attack has been against the people
- Citizens and employees of the City of Buffalo need to take control and look outside the box the BFSFA has created for themselves and for their strategy
- We'll be forming a group that will be meeting at the end of September

Bill Orr, #13

- Don't privatize the city's ice rinks
- Revenue can be increased as the city charges \$85 per hour but others charge around \$160 per hour (like the Amherst Pepsi Center)
- Don't have firefighters do building inspections, it could hamper public safety

Toni Shank, #14

- It seems like the residents of the city have no control, but neither the BFSFA nor city seems to have the solutions
- We need to fund education and services to meet the needs of city citizens – this isn't a police state
- Why should health care and other employee benefits be cut, as these things are not unreasonable to ask for
- We the citizens need to form and take control of the situation

Richard Kern, #15

- Concerned about consequences of HUD on poor people; we don't even know how much HUD money comes into the city (\$150-200 million is his estimate)
- This money is detrimental to the city's poor people; actual housing sales average half of their assessed values in many neighborhoods because HUD makes things worse by building more housing
- We have to find out how much HUD is bringing into the city and do a cost/benefit analysis; we have to bring them to the table
- "Culture of cronyism and unaccountability" in the city
- People are prosecuted (literally) for speaking out against the city
- Residency enforcement is needed; laws are already on the books but all don't live in the city who should

Ellen Kennedy, #16 [See also Written Submissions]

- Native of Buffalo, product of public schools, work at Buff State and president of Citizen Action
- The BFSFA should support the police plan that calls for one-officer patrol cars as it makes sense financially and operationally
- Any plans to merge services with the county must be carefully examined as there is no basis for believing that the county can do these things better or cheaper

- New revenue sources need to be found; when the county was in debt, the city gave it an additional one percent of the sales tax, but now when the city has problems, why is it wrong to ask county for that one percent back – we’re only asking for the share we had, not a handout
- Nassau County received money for a bailout, so why aren’t we

Joe Foley, Local 282 Professional Firefighters Union, #17

- We have discussed with the city dozens of recommendations that could save millions, but at the end of June the negotiations stopped
- The financial plan will not work without union involvement
- Concerned about the city’s lack of care for the safety of the citizens of Buffalo; five firehouses in the city are closing, and this is without professional recommendation
- By laying off firefighters and closing firehouses, overtime is simply increased – an expensive alternative
- Labor is 20 percent of the problem but the mayor’s plan puts 100 percent of the problem on the firefighters’ backs

Amber L. Slichta, #18

- Long-time resident, homeowner in the City of Buffalo since 1995
- Focus and interest lies in smart growth issues – give people incentives to buy homes in the “less desirable” areas of the City of Buffalo (look at specific programs that similar cities have utilized)
- Certainly other areas need attention as well (trimming city payroll, etc) but the core of the city are its neighborhoods and you need to bring residents back to live in the city

Mary Anne Coyle, #19

- Student of strategic planning in the regions of Minnesota and Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- Any city is by its very nature in a condition of dependency, with its revenue coming from property taxes and external resources
- Jobs should not be given for the sake of giving jobs – they must be necessary with employees properly trained and professional

Rosa Gibson, Community Activist, #20 [See also Written Submissions]

- Seniors have no representation/advocate in the City of Buffalo
- Citizens don’t have any idea what the budget really is
- Political structure is the problem; politicians cry that the city has no money, but always seem to find money for their own raises, perks, etc.
- HUD and block grant funds should be for those who contribute to the tax base, not those that are tax exempt; the BFSAs need to look at these grant funds very closely

Danilo Lawvere, #21

- City teacher
- The BFSAs are out of control – that is, out of our control

- Why in this city do the banks come first and then the services on which the citizens depend are curtailed – people have a right to these services
- By increasing funding for services you put the control back in the hands of the people

Patrick McNichol, #22 [See also Written Submissions]

- Director, New Millennium Group
- City of Buffalo should use competition to break up public monopoly; this is a strategy that employs the strengths of both the public and private sectors
- Milwaukee’s leadership has used it for a decade, and it has proved to bring self respect and confidence to city workers, refuting the notion that city workers are unqualified and require protection of their jobs
- Competitive bidding can offer far more savings (government does not have to make a profit); fines can be imposed for missed deadlines or poor quality

Elizabeth Berry, President, Save our Libraries, #23 [See also Written Submissions]

- City’s Financial Plan is really a “land use plan”
- The 15 Buffalo libraries are core assets of the City’s neighborhoods and neighborhoods need to be revitalized in order to rebuild the city
- Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council study reflects 40 percent of residents don’t have access to a car and that must be taken into account when discussing the future of the city’s libraries
- Libraries are key to workforce development and lifelong learning
- Libraries reflect the rich diversity of their neighborhoods
- Construction of new “hub” libraries would not be cost-effective; current libraries serve the community well and it would be cheaper to maintain them

Paulette Woods, #24

- The city should consider an income transfer fee – this is not a commuter tax – which allows city employees to put funds back into the city in return for benefiting from public employment
- Unfair to balance a budget on the backs of the poorest people of the city; let the people who are getting those high salaries give something back
- Buffalo ends up serving as the recreational grounds for the suburbs and an employment center for those not living here and not paying property taxes

Valerie Niederhoffer, #25

- City patronage jobs are a real problem—too much cronyism in Buffalo’s City Hall
- Salaries are too high, a salary cap should be imposed

Kathleen Peronne, #26

- As a citizen, demoralized, especially in response to the educational funding cuts which threaten an important service for the future of this city
- Implore the BFSAs to preserve teachers aides, educational funding

- Giambra and Masiello need to compromise to ensure the city can return to solvency and important city services are maintained

Joe Donofrio, #27 [See also Written Submissions]

- A planner; speaking from a planning perspective
- BFSA should send the city's plan back for reconsideration based on what we can actually control
- Project city finances over those resources that we can control
- Look at how we can achieve a vibrant urban core (when looking at line item revenues and costs)
- BFSA should send the city's plan back to ask city to reconsider it from a regional perspective (from how the city fits within the county, the region, etc.)

Session 2: City Schools

Loretta Renford, Commission on Citizens Rights, #1 [See also Written Submissions]

- Grandparent of pre-k student, product of Buffalo city schools
- There are good teachers out there, but the overall quality of education is weak and some teachers are incompetent; parents, elected leaders and administrators need to realize that something is desperately wrong with the system, and if we don't do something our next generation will become "a disgrace that's going to be hung on our backs"
- Need to pass on honest information to BFSA and hold their feet to the fire (and the city's as well)
- Save money on travel expenses by bringing people to Buffalo instead of traveling to conferences
- Contract bargaining needs to be more equitable and feasible
- Mayor and corporation counsel need to do a better job with money for education and education law; "we are the agitators, they are the legislators" and they need to do what we want them to do

Mark Garrison, Teachers Forum for Empowerment and Rights, #2

- Activist for Teacher's Forum for Empowerment and Rights
- Education is a right; the BFSA is denying this right by saying that finances may jeopardize this right and that kindergarten can be eliminated
- The quality of education and other social problems in Buffalo and elsewhere needs to be made a priority
- The people in Buffalo need to organize and make education and other social rights a priority and ensure that the BFSA does too
- Elective government is being eliminated on the basis that the city doesn't have the finances and is in debt
- Citizens must take control of decision making

Kinzer M. Pointer, BPS District Parent Coordinating Council, #3

- It is certain that the children have a right to an education, but the question is what kind of education are we giving them; right now we are not providing enough money for education – we’re down to just the bone and we’re “operating as a skeleton”
- The most important thing the BFSA can do to stabilize the city is to provide a good education for our children; this is the challenge to the BFSA
- Need to adopt best practices in other communities and employ them here, but this takes money

Don Van Every, Buffalo School Board Member, #4

- Buffalo is on the cusp of a disaster
- The big five cities in New York State are being discriminated against by state law that sets forth different funding formulas for these cities, affecting their ability to fund educational expenses
- Asking the BFSA to help the cities across the state change state formulas for funding schools; we need greater equity at the state level
- Our teachers aren’t paid disproportionately more than their counterparts elsewhere
- When it comes to education, we need to advocate for changes and equity in state policy

Philip Rumore, President, Buffalo Teachers Federation, #5 [See also Written Submissions]

- The context in which the Board of Education operates is critical to understand
- Buffalo is far behind in per pupil expenditure compared to comparable cities; \$62 million to reach Niagara Falls, \$104 million Yonkers, \$93 million Albany, and \$57 million for Rochester, but even if the city were to tax at its maximum that would only be another \$12 million
- New York State is currently providing 80 percent of the Buffalo school district’s funding, so it’s hard to lobby Albany for more funds
- Erie County is only providing six percent of the budget, less than Monroe or Onondaga counties, so Erie County has to provide more funding such as the extra one percent of the sales tax; in the past Buffalo did this for the county and now they won’t be there for us
- Charter schools are another drain on funding as the district has to pay per pupil, even if they do not come from public schools; also, the children come from across the district so it’s not that easy to just lay off teachers to compensate
- It is difficult to attract and retain good teachers as it takes longer for them to reach maximum salaries than it does in other communities

Perry M. Jowsey, III, #6

- Education is the hallmark of any productive and successful society
- In Buffalo, we have a glaring educational problem, namely, adult illiteracy
- Thirty percent of Buffalo’s population is illiterate, meaning that they can’t read at a 5th grade reading level or higher
- Seventy-six percent of persons receiving public assistance are illiterate

- Parents who can't read often raise children who can't read; it's a vicious cycle, and we need to focus on this population to decrease illiteracy in Buffalo
- This would improve Buffalo's financial and social situation

Robbie Billingsley, #7

- County should share its sales tax
- The district should be able to levy its own tax
- The bottom line is that we need more money for education, whatever the source
- In the past our magnet schools like City Honors attracted people into the city, now that's not the case; we are losing our middle class base because of our schools, and that means we're losing our tax base
- The most important place for city money are the schools, as that will improve the tax base

Tony Palano, President and Principal, BCSA, #8

- Represent a group of school principals, administrators and school superintendents
- Been at MLK Multicultural Institute for 18 years, which is a magnet school – but really in name only
- Our programs there have been crushed; have 32 kids in kindergarten, a library with no books, a librarian who's there only every other day, no technology teacher even though we have computers, and one math teacher for over 950 kids
- The BFSAs needs to be sensitive to the fact that sometimes we just can't do more with less when teachers and services are already spread so thin
- We can't compete with suburban schools; these are issues and concerns that face city schools on a daily basis
- Our products are our children, and we get one chance; if we decrease funding, their future is going to be affected – this is one of the reasons parents are leaving the city for the suburbs, they want something better for their children

Joseph Rautenstrauch, #9 [See also Written Submissions]

- “We shape our tools and then our tools shape us;” but when our world changes and our tools don't then there is a problem
- Buffalo is part of the county which is a part of the state, and the state has a problem
- State law limits our ability to address our problems such as the ability to annex new land or the competitive economic development incentive process, so now the state must encourage us to work together as a team
- Sharing the one percent sales tax is a bad idea, but the county should act as “a quarterback” in encouraging regional programs and shared services

Joann Cole, #10

- Western New York coordinator for quality education
- The BFSAs, a state entity, should work with the state education commissioner and lawmakers to ensure that every child in Buffalo receives a quality education
- This is a right that is provided by the state constitution

- The Governor has the power to look into the recent lawsuit that we've won after 10 years of fighting that addresses the school funding formula
- The Campaign for Fiscal Equity is asking for a down payment for districts that would be affected by this case

Theresa Kelly Callahan, President, Leonardo da Vinci Parent Association, #11

- Leonardo da Vinci is a magnet located on the campus of D'Youville College designed as a college prep program; they are average students that, through the program, are completely ready to enter college
- There aren't enough teachers at da Vinci to offer senior language, math or science; this makes it impossible for the children to compete in this world
- Education needs to be a top priority

Kathleen Chandler, #12

- Representing the Buffalo Forum
- The financial plan doesn't provide a plan for education; this is the job of the school board, and they shouldn't be asked to compromise
- This is a plan that isn't acceptable by anyone
- All cuts are wrong; the state is required to fund these mandates (education) – it's not our responsibility to harm children by making cuts demanded by the BFSA

Marlies Wesolowski, #13 [See also Written Submissions]

- Former school board member
- County should share the one percent sales tax
- The district should be allowed to become fiscally independent; that will make the district more accountable to the citizens because they have to vote on the budget, and this will also allow the district to raise their own funds

Ken Robinson, #14

- Citizen and parent whose daughter transferred back into the Buffalo school system, and also a school board member
- The projections that are being presented isn't a plan for success or student achievement which will allow students to be productive later on
- Support the Campaign for Fiscal Equity that has been fighting hard for equity in funding
- We need fiscal stability as well as a plan that ensures educational attainment

Session 3: Other Covered (City) Agencies

Lawrence Brose, Executive Director, CEPA Gallery, #1

- Culturals and the arts are important to the economic growth and fiscal recovery of the city; studies (including in Buffalo) prove this
- It is also a quality of life issue, and if you're looking to attract businesses and people to the region then the culturals provide a "key element" of what keeps people here
- The culturals have been responsible for putting and keeping this city on the map

- The city has completely abandoned cultural funding, resulting in very tough choices and staff reductions; at CEPA we went from a staff of nine to three, and these folks have left the city, resulting in “brain drain”
- It is “foolish” not to have arts funding included in the recovery plan, and we’re the only entity that the city has cut by 100 percent – and yet we’re still here and we’re marketing ourselves
- The CVB is using cultural tourism and the quality of entertainment to bring people and conventions to the region

Marlies Wesolowski, Executive Director, Urban Human Services Center of WNY/Co-Chair, Buffalo Community Center Collaborative, #2 [See also Written Submissions]

- The Collaborative is providing a vast array of basic services to citizens throughout the city, and has 200 volunteers on its board
- For every dollar the city gives us, \$10 comes back on the investment
- Our agencies have lost funding; we’ve had layoffs, and now a 28.5 percent cut is proposed by the plan which just can’t be incurred – revenue is already spread so thin
- We’ve been meeting with mayor and looking at strategies to use our money even more effectively
- The city needs to come up with a fair process for funding allocation; moreover, there needs to be increased accountability and evaluation for effectiveness of allocated funding
- We’ve suggested to the city at least 51 different factors the city could look at to ensure that funds are being used effectively

Charles I. Hendler, Interim Executive Director, Preservation Coalition of Erie County, #3

- Concerned with the upkeep of historic properties to remain economically viable for businesses and homeowners
- In the plan, it is considered that property values remain the same in the out years; should there be a strategy to raise property values, or will values really go down
- Land use planning throughout the county is an important issue for the city, and the city should take a lead on this since sprawl affects the city
- Building inspectors’ duties being citywide and not targeted in one neighborhood results in troubles from HUD, and transferring these duties to firefighters is a mistake

Rudolphus Boans, Jr., #4 [See also Written Submissions]

- President of Frederick Douglas
- Has been working with youth for years; concerned with enhancing quality of life for youth
- Frederick Douglas has been undergoing changes that can’t be explained.
- Comments might be better served on paper, which will be submitted

Eva M. Doyle, #5

- Buffalo public school teacher, newspaper columnist, and grandmother
- Schools need to be funded adequately; children need a proper education so that “no child is left behind”
- In a United Nations Children Fund study the United States ranks 18 out of 24 countries in education
- Teachers use their own money to purchase items for students because of lack of funds
- In the words of an African proverb – “Children are the wealth of a nation”

Michael Mulderig, Buffalo Municipal Housing Police, #6 [See also written submissions]

- Our union has voluntarily downsized
- We’ve taken less pay to save jobs, and there have been significant concessions
- By giving us police status, we are now eligible for more grants and revenues
- If you eliminate our police department, you’ll have problems
- We’re willing to work with the mayor, and ask that you take a look at what we’ve already done

Stephanie Barber, President, Hamlin Park Association, #7

- The BFSA must set our fiscal house in order, and must have the courage to do so
- Over the last eight years, the physical public housing buildings look 100 percent better, and it’s no longer a dumping ground for anyone – you have to qualify for public housing
- The city contributes a very small percentage for public housing, but must continue to do so
- Residents of public housing receive few city services (housing police instead of city police)

Norman Bakos, Solutions Partnering (DOT) Organization/Wellness Institute, #8

- Volunteer, unsalaried coordinator of the above-named organization (www.solutionspartnering.org)
- Communications process that will be discussed this Friday, September 12, which is a citizens’ lobby – a town meeting – allowing citizens to voice their comments electronically, 24 hours a day (this month the topic will be casinos, but there’s a different topic each month)
- This is a way of educating the public about hot button issues; demographic data will be collected along with comments via phone
- Don’t confuse this with a random sample survey, this process can receive tens of thousands of calls from interested citizens who call us; we don’t call them
- This is 21st century technology that will facilitate citizen participation and education; this is a tool that can provide the BFSA with public comment and input

Lynda Stephens, #9 [See also Written Submissions]

- The city did not reach this point by itself; the county, state, and federal governments as well as businesses all contributed to the problem
- After 9/11 the state canceled some aid to Buffalo, and in turn the federal government did not provide adequate reparations to the state after 9/11
- New York State doesn't receive as much as it gives to the federal government
- Other examples of the state contributing to the problem: In the Clean Water Clean Air Bond Act \$7.8 million went to Lancaster (almost half of the allocation), and sprawl was promoted by widening the thruway
- Schools get state aid based on a skeleton budget, while suburban districts get their aid based on a more complete budget – base our aid on model budgets

Celeste Lawson, Executive Director, Arts Council for Buffalo and Erie County, #10 [See also Written Submissions]

- There are statements in the city's new comprehensive plan that emphasize the significance of arts and culture in Buffalo as well as the city's rich heritage
- As the City of Buffalo goes, so does its arts and cultural opportunities
- Industries that traditionally were the staples of the economy such as manufacturing are no longer; in contrast, public administration and tourism are growing sectors
- There are thousands of jobs in Buffalo that are in the tourism/culture sector
- While the mayor's plan recognizes Buffalo's heritage and culture sector, the city suspended funding for arts and culture in 2001 and it has not yet returned
- Among the city's list of eight competitive advantages to attract businesses, four areas of importance are closely linked to arts and culture, however, there is no investment being made to strengthen arts and culture
- The arts and culture community is open to working with the city to find creative ways of addressing the situation

Richard Kern, #11

- Public housing in this city, as the city has gotten poorer and vacancies have skyrocketed, has contributed to poverty
- The Hope VI project is a "scandal," money is spent to refurbish, then soon demolish properties
- There should not be a municipal housing authority in the city – it should be metropolitan so that poverty is spread throughout the county and not concentrated in the city
- The economic cost for two people in public housing is \$1,500 per month
- If you're going to keep a housing authority it should be in charge of all public housing

PJ Lund, #12

- Buffalo public school teacher
- A widespread myth that we are all being asked to accept – scarcity; we're told that there's not enough money or that there's no money in the City of Buffalo

- The truth is that the City of Buffalo has an enormous amount of wealth that's created by all the hardworking people within the city
- Why the myth: Because there are interests served by the myth
- The reality is that there's plenty of money; the BFSFA will bring even more money that will likely be channeled it to the interests being served by the myth, maybe the banks

Roosevelt Cutter, #13 [See also Written Submissions]

- Has distributed his work to officials near and far, including the World Bank, and now the BFSFA – a timeline of what the board should look at for the next 30 years (emergency short term and then long term), and a summary of themes like quality of life
- The problems we're having are being had in other cities and towns in this state, other states, and overseas
- Encouraged by the outspokenness of the people here today
- Our government has remained stagnant over the years
- We're in a democracy, which means continuous interaction between you and the people who represent you
- Our quality of life is already defined for us in the Preamble to the Constitution

2. Online and Written Comments

Rolaine Stoddard, submission date unknown [See also Oral Comments]

- Want to be appointed to work as a staff member on the BFSFA; have 2 ½ years experience studying local municipal employees, government cost containment, e-procurement and e-government
- Submitting a copy of *Roadmap to Economic Recovery*, a proposed City of Buffalo re-engineering, in-kind consulting engagement; this summarizes the research insights gained from a team of 200 students and 75 professional mentors who contributed to an e-government student service program

Nancy A. Naples, Comptroller, County of Erie, 7/17/03

- As Erie County Comptroller, would like to offer the BFSFA the resources of the office, and welcome the opportunity to work with you
- Submitting a copy of *Proposal to Consolidate the City of Buffalo and County of Erie Comptrollers' Offices*, a report that was released in April 2003
- In this report, we note the striking similarities in the charters of the city and county's comptrollers' offices
- We also note the scheduled implementation by the county of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), a fully integrated financial system that would allow integration of the city's accounting system
- We conclude that the consolidation of the city and county comptrollers' offices would result in significant economies, amounting to a net annual savings of \$1.7 million

- This report also addresses legal requirements for consolidation and provides a proposed timeline

Roosevelt Cutter, 7/17/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- The situation in the city is the result of decisions made over the last three-quarters of a century
- The entire organization of Buffalo needs to be changed
- To accomplish this, the following needs to be accomplished: (1) stop the financial and societal bleeding; (2) stabilize the healing process, and (3) adopt a “We the People” social and economic city growth
- Have enclosed nine copies of a CD containing my analytical work which addresses a metrology for researching, designing, developing and maintaining major, complex systems and an attempt to incorporate visionary social impact into city planning based on my work

Peter J. Smith, 7/22/03

- The first BFSA to be open to the public was not well organized at all; it appeared unplanned and very casual, which is disappointing considering what’s at stake
- Because citizens should know as much as possible as the BFSA proceeds, the BFSA should follow the Common Council’s lead by making their meetings televised live and recorded for subsequent broadcast several times on one of the public access channels
- This will make a huge difference in the way the panel is perceived, particularly if most BFSA meetings are open to the public and executive sessions are few and far between

Sam Hoyt, 144th District Representative, New York State Assembly, 7/23/03

- Submitting public comments that were received on the composition, purpose and powers of a BFSA
- These were solicited during the legislative process that led to the creation of the BFSA, primarily through my website, town meetings and letters written to this office
- Because all of those who responded were told that their comments would be shared with the BFSA once it was created, those comments are now being turned over
- The contents of this enclosure are divided into four categories: “(1) correspondence specific to the makeup of the BFSA, (2) correspondence with significant coherent content, (3) correspondence with general comments and opinions, and (4) correspondence with little content or irrelevant content”

Joseph Golombek, Jr., North District Representative, Buffalo Common Council, 8/4/03

- Offer a list of strategies for turning around a half century of decline in the City of Buffalo, including:
- Revamping the sales tax formula
- A moratorium on any new connections to water or sewer systems in Erie County
- The expansion of the Metro-Rail

- The establishment of a Presidential Libraries at the Richardson Towers
- The dissolution of the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority
- The sale of underutilized and nonessential city and school board properties
- A change in the city's fiscal year
- The implementation of the Landlord Licensing Law which has been on the books since 1998 but never enforced
- The provision of technical assistance to Buffalo Citistat
- A change in the homestead and non-homestead tax system
- A mandate that city employees live in the city
- The creation of a Department of Public Safety out of the Police and Fire and Inspections Departments with no lay-offs
- The hiring of more police
- The use of the Erie County's Sheriff Department to patrol events at the HSBC
- Reform of the Buffalo Police Benevolent Association
- Expansion of the City of Buffalo Water and Sewer Authorities
- Termination of "summer hours"
- Revamping of the Community Development Block Grant process
- The move of City School Board Elections to November
- The elimination of forced busing; and the reform of the Custodial Engineers Contract

David J. Colligan, Buffalo Green Fund, 8/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Served as chair of a coalition called Reforest Buffalo, which in partnership with the city's Forestry Division, the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, and The Buffalo Green Fund, completely reforested two Olmsted parks, seven Olmsted parkways and seven Olmsted circles; two additional Olmsted parks as well as scores of city streets have also received extensive reforestation
- Project administrator for The Buffalo Green Fund's citywide tree survey, which was conducted with funding from the city that was more than matched by federal and privately raised funds; the tree survey has culminated in the completion of a draft Tree Master Plan, which was released to the city's Office of Strategic Planning
- Adherence to the priorities and budget set forth in the Tree Master Plan which, based on knowledge of urban forestry programs across the nation, is cost effective and fiscally prudent, will not only save the city money over the long haul, but it will help to garner new dollars for the city
- For example, the Tree Master Plan makes the removal of hazard trees a priority; if not removed, the city's liability caused by an accident involving one of these trees would be greater than the city's entire Forestry Division budget, which is now being leveraged by our group to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant money and private donations, not to mention thousands of hours of citizen volunteer time
- It would be penny wise and pound foolish to reduce the Forestry Division's already small budget; not only is it being used to add to the beauty of the city, but it can be used to remove potential liability traps and leverage significant amounts of federal and private sector support

William J. Thygesen, 8/6/03

- Submitting a resume for a position as a Deputy Fire Commissioner
- Enclosed a list of money saving suggestions for the city's fire department, including creating a new EMS Division; a reduction of nine engines; the building of nine new larger fire stations; the elimination of single company houses; the addition of three rescue trucks; etc.
- While these strategies will initially cost the city money, long-term savings amounting to millions will be realized
- Attached a report released by the New York State Comptroller's Office in August 2000, entitled *Fire Department of the City of New York: Billing and Collection of Emergency Medical Services Fees*

Joe Berridge, Urban Strategies Inc., 8/13/03

- Worked with many communities around the world to address the same kinds of problems that are facing Buffalo today, and believe we can help the BFSA successfully fulfill its mandate successfully
- Strategies for making Buffalo an attractive location for commerce, community and culture include: (a) capitalizing on the waterfront, (b) building on assets such as hospitals, the health care industry and UB; (c) repairing Buffalo's image which is highly based on neighborhood appearance; (d) taking a regional approach; and (e) having strong leadership make tough decisions ("a size 40 man shouldn't be wearing a size 60 jacket")

Michael Kless, 8/17/03

- City departments should focus on their central mission (e.g. firefighters should be fighting fires, not doing building and vehicle maintenance); having fire personnel doing building inspections just doesn't make sense
- Any new firehouses that are built should have the same design so parts, equipment, etc. can be purchased in bulk
- As paid personnel in the fire department are decreased, more volunteer firefighters should be recruited
- Laid off employees should be brought in to fill in for vacations, illnesses, etc. and paid at a per diem rate

Lynn Marinelli, 11th District Representative, Erie County Legislature, 8/18/03

- Talks with constituents have revealed several priorities:
- Consolidated regional economic development is a top priority
- Some level of county financial support of Buffalo is favored by a majority, as is the county's continued support of culture, recreation, tourism, library and parks management
- There's not substantial support for consolidation of fire, police or emergency services
- A significant number supports sharing of the one percent sales tax surplus with the city

- Among the items relating to the city that should be reviewed for inclusion in next year's 2004 budget are: the sharing of the one percent quarterly sales tax surpluses; monies to facilitate a consolidated County-Buffalo economic development entity; financial support of Olmsted Parks Conservancy as the governance and maintenance structure; assistance with library maintenance in city branches; and the Department of Public Works budget should reflect a takeover of certain City of Buffalo border roads

Lisa Bolt, 8/18/03

- The City of Ottawa went through an amalgamation process in 1999; enclosed a paper copy of a report on the amalgamation entitled *Report to the Minister: Local Government Reform in the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carlton*
- The report addresses current realities faced by Ottawa, the consultation process, options for change, the recommended solution, a financial analysis of creating one city-one-tier with community satellite offices (the recommended solution), and transition management

Brian M. Higgins, 145th District Representative, New York State Assembly, 8/22/03

- Urge you to support the agreed upon city police contract and use it as a model for a similar agreement with the Buffalo firefighters
- We in Albany are aware that the initial cost to the city for the police agreement will be high, but we are confident that greater cost savings will be realized shortly thereafter and over the long term
- Based on the higher up-front costs, we adopted legislation in the last few days of our most recent legislative session that provides for \$20 million in additional state aid and borrowing capacity
- Would also like to remind BFSA members that while costs relative to personnel is a significant issue, equally important is revenue generation and the identification of new sources of revenue
- "The solutions to the city's financial problems cannot and should not be borne solely by the police and fire unions, and innovative solutions-involving city appropriation of a higher percentage of the county's additional one percent sales tax or through other means—must be considered as well"

Christina Parks, 8/29/03

- City taxpayer and a former systems analyst who has a money saving strategy for the city
- The city currently returns partial payments of tax bills because the city's system (MUNIS) isn't set up to accept partial payments
- City cash flow and revenue would increase if a database program accepting partial payments was created
- Could create a database program for the city that would accept partial payments, and it would not cost the city a lot of money

William Travis, President, AFSCME Council 35, 8/27/03

- AFSCME Council 35 represents 2,000 employees who work for the City of Buffalo, the Buffalo Board of Education, and the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority
- Submitting to the BFSA the fiscal plan that we submitted to the City Clerk Office, which has many recommendations we believe deserve further consideration
- These recommendations offer suggestions for revenue enhancement and expense reductions, including increased parking and refuse disposal enforcement; increases in public golf course fees; the enactment of a landlord licensing fee; the establishment of a proper franchise fee; increased grant writing efficiencies; the county's guarantee of the city tax roll; traffic ticket adjudication; the privatization of residential and commercial recycling; capital improvements; employee involvement programs; and the restructuring of city facilities
- The impact of all of our recommendations is estimated to be \$10- \$15 million
- Our recommendations are an open invitation to the city and the BFSA to discuss the financial crisis we have today and develop strategies to address it

Marilyn Foit, 8/29/03

- If the BFSA could convince the Erie County Legislature to reduce the hours that voting polls are open on Primary Day, the city and other municipalities in Erie County could save money
- Currently all election districts in Erie County pay four election inspectors for 15 hours (6 a.m. to 9 p.m.) to man the polls on Primary Day
- Oftentimes, only a handful of voters show up, meaning these four people are paid for very little work
- In Niagara County polls are open only nine hours, from noon to 9 p.m.
- As an alternative to cutting hours, voting districts could be consolidated with one polling place serving several voting districts

Dorothy Collins, 9/2/03

- Approved for a low-cost home rehabilitation loan under the Westside Initiative, a program established around 1998 that's funded with federal HUD dollars
- Has anyone ever received money under this program? It's been 2 ½ years since I was approved, and I haven't seen a penny yet; rather, I've been hit with a slew of code violations, and an acquaintance of mine has had a similar experience
- Over 30 contractors have said that they will not perform work under this program since they haven't been able to get paid; moreover, the bids received from city contractors have been almost twice that of contractors contacted on my own
- If you are investigating the city's financial situation, please look into what is happening to these federal funds

David J. Colligan, Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, 9/3/05 [See also Oral Comments]

- Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is requesting the City of Buffalo's active support in its efforts to apply for assistance from the National Park Service to plan the development of a linear park system

- Would be created along the Niagara River starting at Fort Niagara at Lake Ontario and the Niagara River and ending at the Olmsted-designed South Park in the City of Buffalo
- This park system would be accessible to all, and it would include trails, greenways, and open spaces
- The linear park would emulate the Ontario Niagara Parkway system along the Canadian side of the Niagara River that is visited by an estimated 14 million tourists each year

G. Sims, 9/4/03

- To cut expenses, the city should consider increasing the workweek of firefighters from 48 to 55 hours, which is customary in most places

Andy Chaplin, 9/4/03

- Consolidation is the key to cutting expenses; start with the smallest or logistically simplest department and consolidate it with the county
- To increase revenues, we need a development plan that encourages people to purchase homes in the city
- City employees should be required to live in the city
- Additional strategies for increasing revenue might include increased tax sharing with the county; this should be on a temporary basis, perhaps reviewable every five years
- To increase downtown business, clean up to the stretch of along Main Street where the Metro runs above ground; it's an eyesore (perhaps we could obtain suggestions for improvement from local art students)

Dave Ruch, 9/4/03

- The city must invest in arts, culture, heritage and tourism
- These sectors are essential to the quality of life in the city
- They have been recognized nationally as perhaps Buffalo's most significant assets

Rebekah Dubose, Local Color Gallery, 9/5/03

- Pay more than lip service to developing local arts organizations in an effort to revive the city
- The arts are a proven economic development force in the city as well as the region
- This sector should be included as resources that will contribute to the recovery of the city and region

Susan Lumadue, 9/5/03

- In an effort to cut expenses, the city should consider merging housing inspectors with community-based housing organizations; not only would this result in cost reductions, but it would increase accountability
- As a strategy for creating new revenue sources, community-based housing organizations might be deputized to write housing summons and issue tickets for items that destroy neighborhood quality of life, thereby serving the dual goals of generating income for the city while maintaining the quality of life for its residents

David Ulrich, 9/5/03

- Concerned that the BFSA is focusing on only one of the two inter-related problems facing the city; the first being inefficiency and mismanagement, and the second being the lack of available funds resulting from state constitutional limits on the city's ability to raise revenues, as well as the amount of poverty and tax- exempt property within the city
- Would like to see BFSA members use their influence to encourage realistic political change addressing the second problem rather than focusing solely on the first
- BFSA members would do better to focus on solutions than attack each other publicly
- If the submission by the mayor is an insufficient long-term plan, then its shortcomings should be examined and discussed rationally – it shouldn't be attacked and blasted as a charade by another BFSA member; this is detrimental to the BFSA's goal of creating a healthy city in a healthy region

Caroline Hassett Buerk, 9/5/03

- Lifelong resident of Erie County who now lives in the city after living in Amherst for many years, and support the city's plan
- If the county can't share the sales tax it collects because its expenses are too high, then perhaps expenses across the entire metro region need to be cut
- The Erie County Medical Center has drained county taxpayers for years with deficits over and above Medicaid costs, with latest deficit reported being \$58 million
- If ECMC can't operate within budget and decrease its deficit, then why have a county hospital since private hospitals also accept Medicare and Medicaid and are operating with over capacity
- If SUNY needs ECMC as a teaching hospital, let the state and its taxpayers share the deficit
- The county can afford to share if it ran efficiently; if it can't, BFSA might become "ECBFSA" in the not too distant future

Marjoe Ward, 9/5/03

- Buffalo is messed up; the same list of incompetents keeps getting re-elected even though they contribute to worsening problems
- Why are Giambra and Masiello serving on the BFSA
- Has anyone ever heard of conflict of interest or just plain common sense

Susan Lumadue, Buffalo Community Center Collaborative, 9/5/03

- On behalf of the Buffalo Community Center Collaborative, we protest the 28.54 percent cut to public service agencies called for in the mayor's four-year plan
- We consist of 12 not-for-profit agencies that provide direct housing and human services to over 75,000 city residents; we are funded by the city's Community Development Block Grant; all of our employees who are block grant funded live in the city of Buffalo and earn salaries that are significantly lower than other city-funded agencies; our agency board of directors consists of over 200 volunteers

- For every \$1 in block grant money we receive, we leverage an additional \$10 in outside funding
- We are committed to stabilizing member agency self sufficiency; identifying and implementing cost saving strategies; efficient resource delivery and client advocacy
- In addition, we've been working with the city to implement an accreditation process and outcome-based funding for community-based organizations
- The proposed cut jeopardizes services and the quality of city residents and neighborhoods; we've already cut services and experienced layoffs – we are already operating at the “bare bones” minimum

Maureen Oakley, 9/5/03

- Question the need to raise garbage fees as much as proposed when the city continues to pick up garbage from those businesses and residents who never pay their bill
- What has the city done to collect this outstanding revenue
- Perhaps if the city imposed some type of repercussion, it could recover some of this outstanding revenue and the fees charged to residents who faithfully pay their bills would not have to increase as much as proposed

Trudy Stern, Local Color Gallery, 9/5/03

- Develop local arts organizations as part of the spearhead into recovery
- Right now we have so little in the way of resources that everyone is forced to compete with every other effort
- Consult with local architects and artists; we have tremendous talent here
- The arts are a proven economic development force for this city and region and should be included for our recovery

Susan Lumadue, University Heights Community Development Association Inc., 9/5/03

- Mayor's proposed cut of 28.54 percent to our agency's current Community Development Block Grant would be devastating; it would eliminate much needed services to seniors, youth and families in the city
- These block grants are the backbone of the community center
- Every dollar of city aid leverages \$10 worth of services; last year, we received \$150,000 in block grant funding and provided over \$1,000,000 in human services
- We have consistently provided quality services and have received great community feedback; factors such as these should be taken into account by the city in allocating grant money

Maureen Oakley, 9/6/03

- Would like to comment on the lack of attendance at the first session of the public forum by members of BFSAs, with the exception of Tom Baker, Rich Tobe, and the Mayor; their lack of attendance is “not only appalling but apathetic and egotistic”
- Many citizens who spoke remarked that public input was not being given the weight it should; the lack of attendance by board members, particularly those who live in the area, just reinforces this

- Videos are being made and notes were taken, but these can't convey the emotions – anger, passion, disgust, hope and intercessions for assistance – that were expressed by those who were present
- Question to the political leaders: Whatever happened to doing the right thing
- For the sake of the city and its residents, all issues should be examined by the BFSA carefully, professionally and soundly

Alice Gerard, Buffalo Alternative Press, 9/6/03

- The city is dying but there is hope
- The city needs to reinvest in its arts resources, which have proved to be a powerful economic development tool here and elsewhere

Sam Hoyt, 144th District Representative, New York State Assembly, 9/6/03

- The BFSA is a crucial long-term remedy for the city's financial woes; the city faces a difficult conflict between providing crucial services without adequate funding – services will be cut, but the BFSA should avoid hasty and knee-jerk decision making
- The city's dire financial situation should lead to creative remedies; all ideas should be considered and nothing in this situation is a "sacred cow"
- Buffalo needs new revenue sources; Medicaid needs to be reformed, the city should pursue its share of the county's additional one percent sales tax, the Taylor Law for residency requirements should be reformed as should the state legislative structure for school aid

Joseph Allen, 9/6/03

- The city should consider a "bottle bill," as increasing deposits could be a source of revenue for use by parents and teachers associations for sports, music and arts at schools

Buffalo International Action Center [Representative spoke at forum but name not listed on handout – she carried the yellow flyer entitled "This hearing is a sham."], 9/6/03

- Frustrated with the short period for citizens to review the financial plan, as well as the BFSA's closed-door meetings
- Unions and citizens didn't create Buffalo's problems and therefore shouldn't have to pay for them

Rolaine Stoddard, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Proposes the "Heal Western New York Student Service Project," developed by University at Buffalo students (see appended) which pulls together students (university and high school), faculty, teachers, universities, schools, governments and private businesses to work on "financial intervention" projects
- Through this initiative the city/government is relieved of performing or assuming the financial burden of certain tasks and services while students are educated and performing community services

David Colligan, Buffalo Green Fund, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Buffalo's Forestry Bureau has done an admirable job of keeping up with high-priority tree removals (high risk trees) but additional manpower is needed
- A routine program of tree maintenance (from pruning of dead limbs to maintenance of healthy trees) should be instated, as this can reduce future hazard mitigation costs

Andrew Graham, Chairman, Sprawl Task Force, VOICE-Buffalo, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- The city is victim to unfunded mandates and special interest legislation
- This organization has produced a 20-minute video on Buffalo's history as well as recommended steps to improve the city's financial situation (not included in report – contact agency)
- Possible steps include regional revenue sharing, which also increases the region's borrowing power, as well as containing sprawl and reinvesting in city's infrastructure

Rob Zachrich, General Manager, Rural/Metro Medical Services, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Oppose the city's financial plan regarding its proposal to train firefighters as paramedics, a level of care provided now by Rural/Metro and Twin City ambulances
- The city's plan demonstrates a lack of knowledge about the revenues and costs of providing emergency medical services in an urban area and is, in effect, a duplication of services; Rural/Metro paramedics respond to 30,000 calls for help annually and work closely with city firefighters – at no cost to city taxpayers

Lawrence Panaro, AFSCME Local 264, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Local 264 has shown a willingness to work together and has agreed to many concessions, such as establishing public/private partnerships for water management and accepting cuts in health care benefits
- In the report "Fiscal Recommendations for the City of Buffalo," (appended to report) several recommendations are made to help the city out of its financial problems, including increasing parking enforcement, towing and storage revenues, enforcing refuse dumping and returning recycling to the public sector

Ellen Kennedy, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- The city should carefully consider merging services with the county – they are not always the most capable of performing these services
- The city needs to seek new revenue sources and should pursue the one percent sales tax as well as the one-officer patrol cars
- Education is key and the BFSA should imagine if their children were in the city's schools as they make their final decisions
- The BFSA has a rare opportunity to structurally change the city and advocate for state and federal legislative reforms

Rosa Gibson, Community Action Information Center, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- The BFSA is mired in politics, due to Masiello's and Giambra's appointments
- This is not a governing body in which the people can take confidence
- Its priorities should be to reduce population decline, maintain education quality and hold fees and taxes stable

Elizabeth Berry, President, Save Our Libraries, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Libraries are key to the quality of life in Buffalo and should not be consolidated
- They offer all citizens, especially youth, free educational services and bring together communities; their presence in neighborhoods make them safer for the elderly

Joseph Donofrio, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- This plan is based on an if-come, that is revenues that are not guaranteed (county's one percent sales tax)
- The city must distinguish from being "fiscally viable" and having a "vibrant urban core;" what is good for the city is different from what is fiscally viable
- The BFSA is a rare opportunity to structurally change this city
- The financial plan should be returned and revised

Loretta L. Renford, Commission on Citizen's Rights and Community Relations, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- This organization began with a mission to improve race relations in all city communities and deal with citizen police complaints; the group was also to draft a report for the mayor with recommendations regarding these issues
- The organization had a difficult time working with the city to obtain and communicate information, while its staff was taxed by the workload, so the commission was dissolved
- This organization deals with an important facet of the city's health – community relations and race relations; it asks that the BFSA consider the role and importance of this organization and restore its functions

Philip Rumore, President, Buffalo Teachers Federation, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Buffalo public schools would need an additional \$57 to \$104 million to reach the per pupil expenditure of other similar school districts – schools here are vastly under funded
- The city and state have been nearly completely tapped as sources of revenue, but Erie County could provide a revenue source for city schools if it shares more of its sales tax
- Charter school funding is also debilitating to city schools
- Buffalo City Schools are performing "miracles" in the face of its shortfall of funding

Joseph Rautenstrauch, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Buffalo's ability to respond to crisis is limited by state law preventing a region's municipalities from sharing services or from expanding boundaries; this has crimped economic development and the financial health of Buffalo
- There is a duplication of governments in Erie County and Buffalo
- Buffalo has a tendency to focus on past decision – both good and bad – while it needs to move its focus to the present
- The BFSA should examine state laws governing administration, financing, taxing ability and the formation of local municipalities and school districts – they need reform

Craig Leone, Buffalo Municipal Housing Police, 9/6/03

- Buffalo Municipal Housing Police (BMHP), whose salaries are federally funded, answer 10,000 calls for service a year and make about 800 arrests, protecting both housing residents and those living nearby
- Rather than cut BMHP, which will curtail these important services, the Buffalo Police Department should consider merging with the BHMP, which could assist the BPD during busy times without costing taxpayers any money while preserving these important BMHP jobs
- This has been done successfully in other cities, including New York City

Michael Mulderig, Buffalo Municipal Housing Police, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- BMHP unions have already shown a willingness to accept concessions in health care, downsizing, and minimum manpower levels
- BMHP live in the city, own homes and have just obtained “police officer” status, making them eligible for more grants and funding
- Couple the BMHP cuts with the downsizing of the Buffalo Police Department and this city could see a significant increase in crime

Lynda Stephens, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Buffalo did not arrive at this difficult financial position on its own – federal, state and county governments have contributed
- For instance, the state has denied Buffalo adequate education funds based on a misleading funding equation based on the district's “skeleton” budget rather than a “model” budget
- The federal government hasn't given the state or Buffalo adequate funds to assist with recovery after 9/11
- Erie County has refused to share its one percent of the sales tax; Buffalo is suffering indirectly from unfunded state mandates such as Medicaid; businesses have left this region, driven by profit margins

Rob Zachrich, General Manager, Rural/Metro Medical Services, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- On behalf of the 550 EMTs, paramedics and health care professionals at Rural/Metro, we oppose the mayor's plan to the extent that it calls for training firefighters as paramedics to provide the level of care already being provided by Rural/Metro Ambulance and Twin City Ambulance in the city
- There is no clinical or operational need for this service to be offered by the city; rather, it's a duplication of services already being provided – Rural/Metro has 40 years of proven service in the City of Buffalo, at no cost to city taxpayers
- The Buffalo Fire/EMS Task Force, which was established by the mayor, does not endorse this initiative, as reported by the City of Buffalo; this group hasn't even met since last spring when the original research on this began
- The city's start-up estimate of \$200,00 underestimates the expense which we believe will be well over \$1 million; moreover, with an aging and declining population and a local health care industry that does not recognize fee for service payments, the cost of the city's plan will far outweigh any revenues the city believes can be generated

Patricia Ulrich, 9/6/03

- Resident and high school biology teacher in the city for 33 years, with a son who graduated from School 56 and City Honors High School
- Urging the BFSA to badger the state's legislators to equalize the funding formula for public education
- It makes me ill when to see the gap in educational opportunities between the "haves" in the suburbs" and the "have nots" in the city
- If city schools are to be saved, they must be able to attract top-notch administrators, faculty and educational resources, but for this to happen the fiscal inequity must be addressed

Advisory Board for Lovejoy Elderly and Youth (ABLEY); Bailey Delevan Community Center; Concerned Ecumenical Ministry; CRUCIAL Human Services; North Buffalo Community Development Corp.; Northwest Buffalo Community Center; Old First Ward Community Center; Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center of WNY; Seneca-Babcock Human Services; Valley Community Center, 9/6/03

- Collectively, these groups provide housing and human services directly to more than 75,000 and indirectly to more than 25,000 Buffalo residents; these groups employ 247 people, most of whom reside in Buffalo
- Groups have been successful in leveraging \$10 for every \$1 in block grant funding received; developed plans to reduce inefficiencies in service provision and improve self sufficiency of each organization
- Cuts in the city's block grant funding have already impaired these groups, and the additional 28 percent funding cut outlined in the financial plan could decimate these agencies

David Granville, Buffalo Arts Commission, 9/6/03

- The arts should be included in the four year financial plan because of the role the arts play in contributing to the quality of life of our city and region

- It is clear how previous public investment in the arts has yielded a positive economic return for the city, and if the city wishes to continue to benefit from the arts' economic return then the arts must be a recognized stakeholder and included in the fiscal plan
- Future public investment in the arts is needed so as not to lose the benefits of previous investment
- The city must continue to invest in the arts, culture, heritage and tourism as they will contribute to the recovery of the city and region

Benjamin J. Bidell, Consultant, Buffalo Arts Commission, 9/6/03

- In today's global economy, the businesses needed to speed economic recovery are increasingly relocating to cities with a higher quality of life and quality of place
- It only makes sense, then, to invest in those sectors of the economy that directly contribute to improving quality of life and quality of place, such as arts and culture
- Such investment is good for long-term economic recovery, and also addresses an excellent short-term solution to an escalating problem
- The city will see an immediate return on its investment, as arts and cultural venues generate much needed revenue through sales tax and other forms of economic spin-off
- Therefore, the fiscal stability plan should include investment in arts and culture if the city is to speed economic recovery

M. Tisby, 9/6/03

- Concerned that federal tax revenues from the US Dept of Education as well as US Dept of Labor revenues are routinely being co-mingled with Erie County and City of Buffalo funds and not being used or available for the stated purpose
- Federal Workforce funds (WIA funds) may be being used to meet payrolls of personnel departments in various municipalities but citizens eligible for these services are denied access to take civil service exams and are asked to pay unlawful gratuities to selected Erie County employees
- These actions are in violation of legislation in the Workforce Act 1998
- The fundamental right to employment is being denied, especially to women who reside in municipalities outside of Buffalo that are under the jurisdiction of Erie County who are not registered Republicans

Robert Willoughby, 9/6/03

- Joel Giambra's stance on regionalism means county priorities first and no more county taxes, but if Buffalo is in trouble, the county is in trouble.
- If giving Buffalo a share of the one percent of the sales tax means asking the voters of the county (including Buffalonians) to restore our taxes to the level he cut them from then that is what should be done
- The BFSA should urge Giambra to do this, as it is unlikely he'll do it on his own

Jerry Butler, 9/6/03

- Resident of Marine Drive
- The City of Buffalo now wants the Marine Drive Apartments back because they are on prime property on the waterfront, but the waterfront is not only for the rich.
- Marine Drive Apartments Inc. secured this facility turning it into a jewel on the waterfront when it was originally considered a failure, and as a result we have excellent management and happy tenants living in a safe environment that is self-sustained

Patrick McNichol, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Use competition to break up the public monopoly on dozens of non-police and fire services in the city as they are detrimental
- Competition is not privatization; both the public and private sectors should be able to compete against one another for these contract and duties
- This has been successful in other areas (reference Wealth of Cities by Mayor John Norquist and The 21st Century City by Mayor Stephen Goldsmith), and has been done with union support
- The current parks proposal is to merge the city's department into the county's, but that is just putting it into a larger monopoly and is not fostering competition
- The public sector has some competitive advantages in that they are not trying to make a profit on the service and they do not pay taxes, both of which should keep their bids competitive

Raj Mehta, 9/6/03

- Employed with the city for over 25 years, and involved with the processing aspect of the budget since the 1980s
- In the last 20 years the city's total general fund budget has always been around \$300 million, in spite of inflation, cost increases of health insurance and New York State enforced costly mandates; in the same period the New York State Budget has gone from the \$30 billion to \$90 billion range
- Every state and county leader feels a need to demand that the city cut its costs and get more efficient, but in dealing with many state agencies and county departments over the years the state and county are the inefficient ones, and they have contributed to the city's problems
- Lack of revenue does not define inefficiency, it is how you expense those revenues

Debra Jackson, 9/6/03

- City workers should contribute to their health and pension plans
- Patronage positions that cost the city millions of dollars should be cut, especially since these people are not delivering our services at the proper level
- Return empty lots to the tax base by proactively developing a process for reaching out to potential buyers (especially adjacent homeowners)
- Institute a commuter tax; receive a portion of the county sales tax
- Merge some of city services, such as snow removal, with the county

Michael Love, Resources Black, 9/6/03

- The initial reaction to the BFSA and the issues which brought about its formation are quite daunting, and are made even more so by the complicated nature of the issues involved
- Fiscal policy and service to a large and diverse community are complicated and are what needs to be addressed

Walter Williams, 9/6/03

- Buffalo needs more jobs, better housing for low income residents and better funding for the public schools and for higher education
- The buildings all over the east side of Buffalo need to be either demolished or fixed up where businesses can exist for economic investment or for low income home ownership, and slum landlords need to be fined for not fixing up their property
- The city should not have a residency law
- The Mayor, the Common Council, and the School Board should be limited to eight years in office
- The City does not need a BFSA to solve Buffalo's problems, because many of them live outside the city and they will not be able to solve all the problems that face Buffalo and the people who live here
- The state sales tax should be abolished
- There needs to be two police officers in each car, not one, because of the city's high crime levels

Celeste Lawson, Executive Director, Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- In response to the Mayor's comprehensive plan, *Queen City in the 21st Century*, many references are made to the city's rich history and heritage and the significance of preserving, creating and promoting art, culture and heritage
- The plan finds that tourism is a growing sector, both nationally and locally; moreover, among the eight listed competitive advantages the city has to attract businesses, four are associated with arts, culture and heritage
- Against this backdrop and the increased role that arts, culture and tourism is expected to play in economic and social development in Buffalo, funding for cultural organizations was suspended by the city in 2001 (proposed funding for that year was only 0.6 percent of the city's total tax levy of \$130 million), and funding has not yet been reinstated
- Additionally, the mayor's plan makes no provision for investment over the next ten years in the infrastructure of arts and cultural facilities or programming; in short, the plan seems to pay only lip service to a commitment to strengthen and sustain arts and culture
- In light of this, we are asking the BFSA to look for strategies that would establish dedicated and permanent support for our sector and which will supplement the historical and unwavering cultural funding provided by Erie County

Michael Drennen, President, AFSCME Local 650, 9/6/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Local 650 members are workers in the city, but also residents of the city
- Presented a plan to the BFSA, mayor, and Common Council that would improve the financial condition of the city; a package of solutions that in total should lead to lower costs and better delivery of services
- We are not the problem, and we must be part of the process from the start
- In the days since the mayor has released his proposal every constituency, the citizens, other levels of government, the business community and labor have soundly criticized the plan – although the mayor’s staff had “no chance,” given the time constraint and their inability to reach out to the aforementioned constituencies
- Major problems with the mayor’s plan are its reliance on increased sales taxes, no borrowing included in the plan, and phantom savings projections

Michael Brown, International Association of Black Professional Firefighters, 9/6/03

- The lack of public turnout reflects not so much lack of public interest, but insufficient information about the forum and the mayor's proposal
- It was disturbing to have no input from common council members or current officeholders
- The actions of the BFSA members have taken place largely behind closed doors
- Hope that public comments are heeded and that the BFSA members have enough respect to review the videotape
- The entire process is a charade and a violation of the spirit of the legislation

James P. Tauriello, 9/7/03

- Higher taxes and fees can't be tolerated in the city or Western New York region to decrease huge deficits over the next several years
- It seems the only way to control costs is to address the number of city employees since personnel is the city's greatest expense; this includes addressing wages and benefits as well as the impact of labor contracts and work rules that prevent effectiveness and efficiencies
- The “collective ineptness” of government and political leaders in controlling these factor have created the financial mess we have today

Donald W. Nice, 9/7/03

- Masiello’s plan merely passes everything off to county taxpayers
- His plan cuts fire and police to inadequate levels, but not any of his “high paid cronies that have jobs that require no effort”
- Masiello shouldn't even be on the BFSA since he is a major factor in the city's problem

Marlies A. Wesolowski, Executive Director, Urban Center/Co-Chair, Buffalo Community Centers Collaborative, 9/7/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- The P.C.C.B. Inc., d/b/a Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center of WNY and the members of the Buffalo Community Center Collaborative are very concerned about the city's recommendations relating to the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency; our

12 agencies receive Federal Community Development Block Grant funding from the city; we've been told that the city can no longer reimburse us for our expenditures until the BFSA approves our contracts, even though we've been asked by BURA to continue providing services under our contract – we are asking the BFSA to act quickly in approving our contracts

- A second concern is the proposed 28.54 percent cut on current year funding: We've already lost all of our grant-in-aid funding, Division for Youth funding, and we've accepted a 10 month rather than a 12 month contract with a 5.6 percent reduction in funding; using the Matt Urban Center as an example, the impact from cuts in city and state funds has amounted to \$283,500; cuts are occurring at a time when demand for services has increased ten-fold
- We are asking that the city establish fair and equitable funding standards to allocate aid, and that all grantees should be held to these standards, not just a select few; accountability and evaluation is another critical component to allocating city funds effectively; we are asking the city to involve agencies in developing these standards

Rev. Dr. G. Stanford Bratton, Network of Religious Communities, 9/7/03

- The city has provided “superficial crisis response” to serious structural financial problems; creative strategies for addressing some of the issues faced by the city have emerged over the years from inter-religious conversations, but these have gone unacknowledged by the city
- The mayor's proposal continues an “antagonistic approach” to unions, the county, the state and the citizens of Buffalo; while there must be a more equitable formula for sharing the county sales tax and for legislative and constitutional changes at the state level, continually engaging in the “blame game” is self destructive
- The mayor's plan appears to protect the patronage system at all costs
- The BFSA must aim to develop greater cooperation and sharing between the city, the county and the state; it must also insulate itself from interests that seek to break union contracts for their own financial interest
- The BFSA should focus on building a healthy city where people will choose to live based on factors such as quality schools, including kindergarten for all children, safe neighborhoods with adequate police and fire protection, and a tax structure that is fair and just for all
- There should continue to be opportunities for public input, comment and participation

Timothy O'Hara, 9/7/03

- The mayor's plan demonstrates that the mayor doesn't understand that the city needs to be re-engineered from the ground up; doing business the old way just won't cut it anymore
- With a smaller population, we need to cut expenses, not raise taxes, as higher taxes will only accelerate urban flight
- The county should help the city, but not in the way the mayor envisions – services that can be performed regionally should be taken over by the county, however, under no circumstances should the county hand over even one cent to the city as this is equivalent to a parent giving each of two children \$10 and then taking money away

from the responsible child to give to the irresponsible child when the latter blows all of their money

- In summary “no handout, no bailout!”

Ayesha F. Nariman, MBA, Nariman for Congress, 9/7/03

- Over the past decades, there have been many examples of public finance mismanagement, both at the city and county levels, including the creation of the city’s mass transit system, “a rail line from nowhere to nowhere;” the building and tearing down of a \$400 million low-income high rise by the Housing Authority; and “non-stop chatter about rejuvenating Buffalo's fabulous waterfront that has come to naught”
- To rejuvenate the city, we’re going to need revenue enhancement; while waste and mismanagement of public dollars must be denigrated, “taxation is the price we pay for citizenship, and should be worn as a badge of honor”
- Regionalism is also critical, but this is not synonymous with take over; rather, we need to study the provision of services at all levels – “services should be performed by the branch of government closest to the people, unless there is bigger bang for the buck for consolidation of services at the county level”
- We also need to support our inner schools as “the failure of our schools will in turn lead to failure of our youth;” too many cuts here is “mere shortsightedness”
- Neighborhood rejuvenation should also be supported to attract new businesses and homeowners
- On waterfront development, we should take heed of examples set by other northern, rust-belt cities that have transformed their waterfront into “white-collar economies”
- Cost cutting strategies that should be explored include pay cuts, enforcement of living wage laws and the elimination of patronage jobs
- Our elected leaders need to be more concerned with the people they serve than with their own careers

Rudolphus Boans, Jr., 9/7/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- The Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority needs a complete overhaul
- Public safety is getting away with murder; most residents live in fear
- The same holds true of managers; we’ve been trying to get rid of several of them

Kevin J. Fitzgerald, President, Building Trade Inspectors Local 2651 AFSCME, 9/7/03 [See also Oral Comments]

- Represent 67 union members; the majority is building inspectors, all of who are certified and experienced and all are city residents.
- Our primary concern over the mayor’s plan is the proposal to have firefighters do code enforcement inspections thereby eliminating 13 building inspectors
- This plan has not been well thought out and leaves many questions unanswered: Does this plan violate Civil Service law; does the city charter have to be amended before the plan can be implemented; isn’t this plan a violation of the Taylor law; are the cost savings projected really attainable; does it take into account the cost of overtime and training; and how will it impact firefighter response time

- Our department is currently the second highest revenue-generating department in the city, operating at a surplus; we have continually taken on additional duties with no salary increases
- We have already lost 7 inspectors over the past two years, but our overtime budget hasn't increased a penny in 18 years; we do not have summer hours; we were the first union to negotiate out our Blue Cross and Blue Shield, saving the city hundreds of thousands every year; we save the city over \$121,000 annually by doing mandated environmental and asbestos surveys in-house
- Before any plan by the mayor is put in place, give us an opportunity to present you with further details on a common sense, honest and non-political analysis of our department; to go forward, discussions and negotiations are needed by both the city and the union

VI. Post-Forum Process

This report, in addition to verbatim copies of public comment (videotape of public forum and hard copies of online and written comments) will be delivered to the BFSa at their board meeting on Wednesday, September 10, 2003. At this time, Institute Executive Director John B. Sheffer, II, also will orally present the report and its findings to the BFSa.

Similar to the city's financial plan and details regarding the public forum, wide distribution of and accessibility to this report is useful. To that end, with the consent of the BFSa, the Institute will post the report on the BFSa website (www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu). Also, it is our understanding that the City of Buffalo will air the entire forum on the city's government access channel (Channel 21 in the City of Buffalo) several times during the next month, and that the BFSa will release the report to the news media. The public forum website, including access to this report and the financial plan as well as a link to the eventual BFSa website, will be available for the foreseeable future.

VII. ADDENDA

- A. News Release, August 26, 2003**
- B. New Release, September 3, 2003**
- C. Information Sheet**
- D. Comments Form**
- E. City of Buffalo Presentation**
- F. City Schools Presentation**
- G. Other Covered (City) Agencies Presentations**
- H. Registration Card**
- I. One copy of the videotape of the forum and all written and online comments will be submitted to the BFSA**

ADDENDUM A

Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority

News Release

For Release: Immediate
(August 26, 2003)

Contact: Rachel Mansour (716-829-3777 or rmansour@buffalo.edu)
Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth
(This contact is for purposes of this release and the September 6 public forum only)

BFSA ANNOUNCES SEPTEMBER 6 PUBLIC FORUM FOR COMMENTS ON CITY'S FISCAL PLAN

UB Institute Will Convene Session at ECC-City Campus

Buffalo, NY – The Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority (BFSA) announced today its plan to hold a public forum in compliance with state legislation passed in June. The review process requires an intensive evaluation by the BFSA of Buffalo's proposed four-year fiscal plan between the city's release of the plan on September 1 and the deadline for the BFSA's action fifteen days later.

Included in the review process will be consideration of public comments made at a forum planned for Saturday, September 6 at the city campus of Erie Community College.

BFSA chair Thomas Baker announced that the fiscal plan will be accessible to the public upon release of the plan by the city to the BFSA on September 1 or 2. In addition to steps the city itself is taking to make the plan available to the public, BFSA is creating a website (www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu) where the public can view the city's four-year fiscal plan and specific information on the September 6 forum, as well as submit online comments in response to the plan. The website will be accessible to the public as of Friday, August 29.

Following up on an action taken at the BFSA board meeting of August 6, Baker also announced that the University at Buffalo's Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth (Institute) has been asked to convene the September 6 public forum on

the fiscal plan. Pursuant to the state law, the purpose of the forum will be for the Institute to listen to public comments on the city's plan and then summarize the comments for the BFSAs to use in their deliberations on the plan. The state statute provides for the role of an education institution to convene the forum and prepare the report for the BFSAs.

The public forum will be held on **September 6** from **9 a.m. to 5 p.m.** in the **auditorium** of the **city campus of Erie Community College**, 121 Ellicott Street, Buffalo. The session will be chaired by John B. Sheffer, II, Executive Director of the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, and will include two other panelists who will listen to the public comments and assist in summarizing them in the report to the BFSAs. The final report on the forum, to include comments delivered at the public forum as well as those submitted online or by mail to the Institute, will be presented to the BFSAs at their meeting on Wednesday, September 10. All comments from the public must be limited to the topic of the city's four-year fiscal plan.

Baker said that the legislation for the BFSAs is unique in that similar laws for other BFSAs in the state, such as Nassau County or City of Troy, did not provide for convening of public forums.

"We are very eager to have the perspective of the public on the city's plan and we are looking forward to considering the Institute's report in our deliberations," Baker said. "The state law provides for an extraordinarily short time period for the board and public to review the city's plan, for the public to comment on it, and for us to approve or disapprove it. We are going to do everything we can, however, to make it work."

The September 6 forum will be divided into three parts – **city (9 a.m.)**, **schools (12 noon)**, and **other covered (city) entities (3 p.m.)**. Brief presentations will be made by the city on each topic and then individuals (3 minutes) and representatives of organizations affected by the city plan (5 minutes) will be given the opportunity to comment. The ECC auditorium is handicap accessible and citizens with special needs may contact the Institute at 829-3777 to discuss potential accommodations for such needs.

Interested citizens and organizations are encouraged to submit written or online comments in order to ensure inclusion in the process and to help minimize the possibility of an over-crowded public forum. Written comments may be submitted to the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, University at Buffalo, Beck Hall, 3435 Main Street, Buffalo 14214 or online comments to the forum website at www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu. To be included in the Institute's report to the BFSAs, all written and online submittals must include name and address of the person(s) offering the comments and they must be received by the Institute by 5 p.m. on Sunday, September 7. It is requested that submittals be limited to a maximum of 8 pages.

Institute Executive Director John Sheffer said every effort will be made to carefully review and accurately summarize citizens' comments for the BFSAs. It is

important to understand, he added, that the forum focuses solely on the city's four-year fiscal plan and not the BFSA itself or other issues.

“I have been impressed by the BFSA's commitment to make this forum a vital part of the review process of this fiscal plan,” Sheffer said. “The Institute will do all we can, within the very short time allotted by the state, to get the BFSA a useful report that fairly portrays the diverse perspectives we receive from the public.”

ADDENDUM B

Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority

For Release: Immediate:
(September 3, 2003)

Contact: Rachel Mansour (716-829-3777 or rmansour@buffalo.edu)
Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth
(This contact is for purposes of this release and the September 6 public forum only)

News Advisory:

Further Details on September 6 Forum Sponsored by Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority

The UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth today released further details on this Saturday's public forum on the City of Buffalo's four-year financial plan. As earlier announced, the Institute has been asked by the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority (BFSA) to convene the September 6 session required by state legislation creating the authority last July.

Executive Director of the Institute, John B. Sheffer II, said preparations for the forum are focused upon making it as easy as possible for citizens and groups to make their views known to the BFSA.

"Several alternatives are available to the public to submit comments for inclusion in our September 10 summary to the BFSA," Sheffer said. "A person may verbally comment at Saturday's forum or submit their views online on the forum website or mail/deliver their written comments to the Institute. The state has allowed for a very short period of time for this entire process, but the BFSA has asked us to make the system as accessible as possible to the public."

In order to be included in the Institute's summary to the authority, comments must be actually received by the Institute by 5 p.m. on Sunday, September 7. Comments should be limited to the topic of the four-year financial plan submitted September 2 by the City of Buffalo. The fiscal plan is available for review online (see below) and is being distributed through the central library to about a dozen additional library locations.

Joining Sheffer on the panel listening to public comments will be colleagues from the University at Buffalo, Janet Penksa and Danis Gehl (see short biographies attached). Sheffer reconfirmed arrangements released last week by BFSA chair Thomas Baker and added further details as follows:

Date/Time: Saturday, September 6, 2003
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
(doors open at 8:30 a.m.)

Place: Erie Community College – City Campus
Main Auditorium
121Ellicott Street, Buffalo
(handicap accessible through south door to ECC from Swan Street)

Topic: City of Buffalo’s Four-Year Financial Plan
Forum will be divided as follows:
9 a.m. – City of Buffalo
12 noon – City Schools
3 p.m. – Other Covered (City) Entities (Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority and Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency)

Each of the three sessions will be commenced with a **20 minute presentation** on that portion of the Four-Year Financial Plan covered by the particular session. Representatives of the city, school board, and covered agencies will be making the presentations.

(The Four-Year Financial Plan is available as of September 3 at the City of Buffalo’s website (www.city-buffalo.com), the forum website (www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu) and at approximately a dozen libraries throughout the city)

Panelists: John B. Sheffer, II, forum chair
Janet Penksa
Danis Gehl

Time Limits: 3 minutes for individuals
5 minutes for representatives of organizations receiving city funding

Order of Speakers: Chosen by lottery for each of the three topic areas
(registration cards will be chosen at random from a box)

Alternative Methods for Submittal: (a) Online (www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu)
(b) Mail (Institute for Local Governance & Regional Growth, University at Buffalo, Beck Hall, 3435 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14214)
(c) Personal Delivery (same address – see map on website)
(d) Personal Delivery at Forum (submit to registration desk)
(e) Online at Forum (two computers available for this purpose)
(It is requested that written comments be limited to eight pages)

Information On Forum: Website: www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu
Email: bfsa-forum@buffalo.edu
Phone: (716) 829-3777

Sheffer said that careful notes will be taken at the forum by the panel and separate note-takers, and comments will also be video-recorded for a verbatim record of the session that will be appended to the Institute's report. Subsequent to Saturday's forum and the Sunday deadline for submittal of written comments, the Institute will summarize the full picture of public comments in a report to the BFSAs. Sheffer said the report will be formally submitted to the authority at its September 10 meeting.

-30-

Attached: short biographies of panelists

September 6 Public Forum

Short Biographies of Forum Panelists:

Danis J. Gehl

Danis Joyce Gehl is the Director of the University Community Initiative (UCI), a public service unit of the University at Buffalo (UB) that works with community stakeholders in the UB South Campus area. As UCI Director, Ms. Gehl has overseen projects concerned with local and regional housing markets, assessed community-based housing delivery systems, analyzed residents' attitudes regarding neighborhood conditions, and worked to develop collaborative community crime prevention strategies and to promote positive community images. Prior to coming to UB Ms. Gehl, a resident of the City of Buffalo, worked for many years in the housing and human services fields. She was the Executive Director of Kensington-Bailey Neighborhood Housing Services and Director of the Family Advocacy Program for Child and Family Services.

Janet Penksa

Janet Penksa is the Associate Vice President for Government Affairs for the University at Buffalo (UB), responsible for advising the President, Provost and other University administrators on a wide variety of matters concerning government and the strategic positioning of the University. A resident of the City of Buffalo, Ms. Penksa manages and directs the University's efforts to acquire state and federal funding through the relevant appropriations processes. Prior to joining UB, Ms. Penksa was Fiscal Secretary to the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, a position directed by New York State statute to serve as chief advisor and lead negotiator for Assembly leadership on all fiscal and economic matters, as well as to manage final preparation and legislative approval of the state budget. Ms. Penksa also served the Ways and Means Committee as Director of Budget Studies, Deputy Fiscal Director and as a fiscal and budget analyst, specializing in local government finances.

John B. Sheffer, II (panel chair)

John Sheffer is Executive Director of the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth and oversees the Institute's engagement in numerous city and regional initiatives. He has recently served as chair of the search committee for the City of Buffalo's Executive Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and as part of a consultant team on the city's new comprehensive plan. A resident of the City of Buffalo, Professor Sheffer is a former New York State Senator and Assemblymember. In 1999, Sheffer was named "Public Administrator of the Year" by the American Society for Public Administration, Niagara Chapter, for his work at the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth.

ADDENDUM C

Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority

INFORMATION SHEET

September 6 Forum: City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan

The Institute has been asked by the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority (BFSA) to convene today's public forum to solicit comments on the City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan (online at the City of Buffalo's website – www.city-buffalo.com, the forum website– www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu, and the city's central and select branch libraries).

The panel and separate note-takers will carefully chronicle the entire public forum, with speaker comments also video-recorded for a verbatim record of the session. All comments submitted via the forum and alternate methods (see below) will be summarized and incorporated in the Institute's final report, to be presented September 10 to the BFSA for its deliberations on the financial plan.

Forum Agenda:

9 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. – City of Buffalo

12 p.m. – 2:50 p.m. – City Schools

3 p.m. – 5 p.m. – Other Covered (City) Entities (Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority and Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency)

Each of the three sessions will commence with a **20-minute presentation** on that portion of the Four-Year Financial Plan covered by the particular session. Representatives of the city, school board and covered agencies will be making the presentations.

Panelists: **John B. Sheffer, II**, forum chair, Executive Director, Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth

Janet Penksa, Associate Vice President for Government Affairs for UB

Danis Gehl, Director of the UB University Community Initiative

Submitting Comments on the City of Buffalo's Four-Year Financial Plan:

NOTE: All comments must actually be received, whether by mail (regardless of postmark date) or hand delivery or online, by the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth by 5 p.m. Sunday September 7.

Option 1: Enter Lottery to Speak at Public Forum

- Fill out registration card (available from Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth staff and volunteers. All attendees of the public forum are asked to fill out the card, regardless of whether or not you wish to speak).
- Complete all required fields – **no anonymous comments will be accepted.**
- Indicate the one session at which you would like to speak. **You may register for one session only.**
- Return card to Institute staff stationed at auditorium doorways.
- You will be entered into one of three lotteries (one for each session). Please note that due to limited time, you are not guaranteed a chance to speak today. (See alternative methods of comment submission below).
- The **order of speakers** will be determined by **random selection** (via official raffle bins) for each of the three sections of the forum. Speakers for each of the three sessions will be alternatively chosen from two raffle bins - one for individuals and another for designated representatives of organizations. The order of speakers (five at a time) will be listed on a screen in the stage area of the auditorium.
- Speakers will present their comments to the panel from the stage podium. The next two upcoming speakers are asked to approach the stage and sit in the chairs behind the podium until it is their turn to speak.
- **Time limits:**
 - An **individual** has **three minutes** to speak
 - A **designated representative of an organization receiving city funds** has **five minutes** to speak.
- A timekeeper at a table in front of the podium will indicate when speakers have 1 minute left (“1 Minute Left”) and when their time is up (“Stop”).

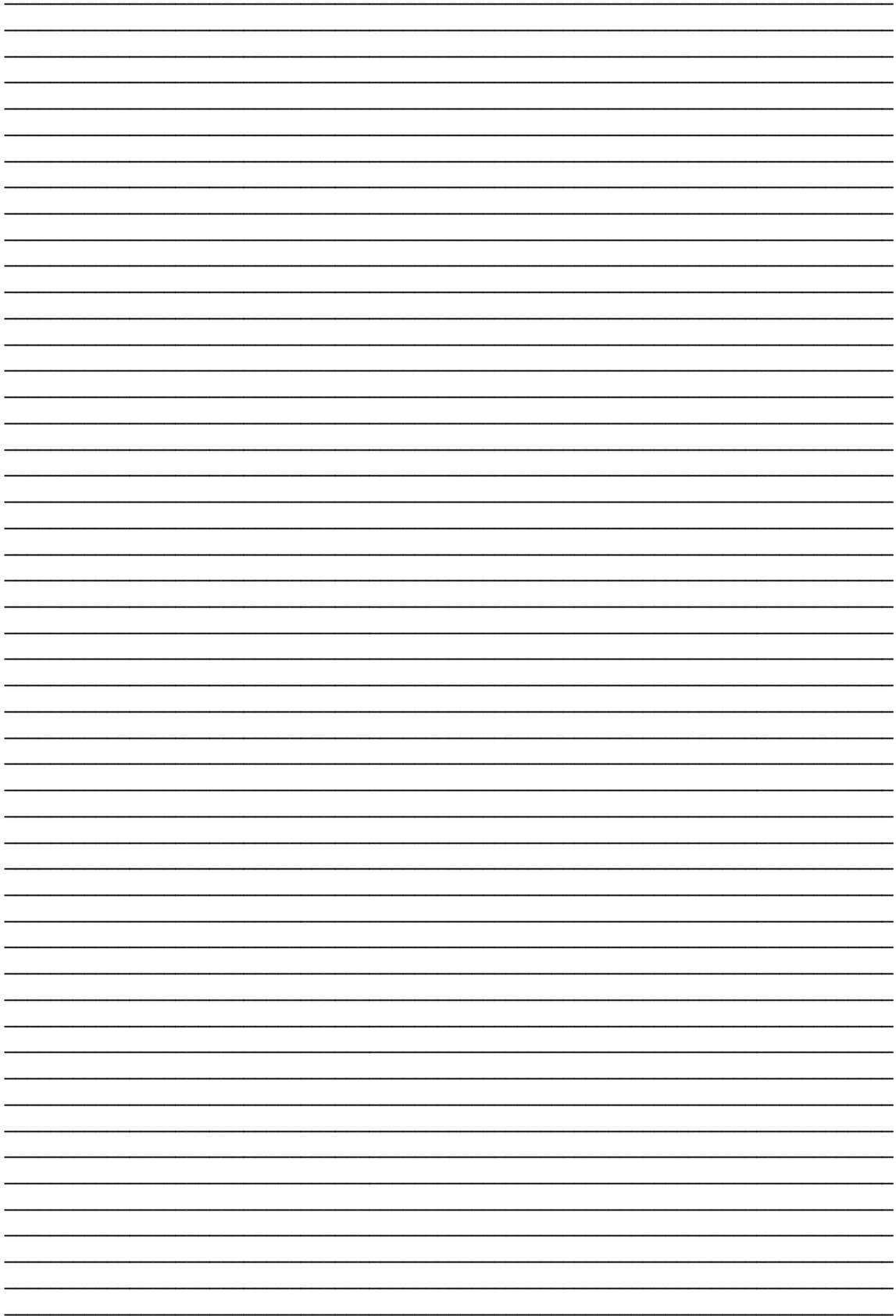
Option 2: Alternate Methods for Submitting Comments (select one method, please)

NOTE: Please limit written comments, whether submitted online or by hand delivery or mail, to eight pages or less. All required fields must be completed on online forms, and name and address included in other written comments. No anonymous comments will be accepted.

- Fill out attached Comments Form and submit to the Information Desk outside the ECC auditorium. Additional Comments Forms are available at the Information Desk
- Personally deliver comments at public forum (submit to Information Desk).
- Submit comments online at one of two computers near ECC’s Ellicott St. entrance.

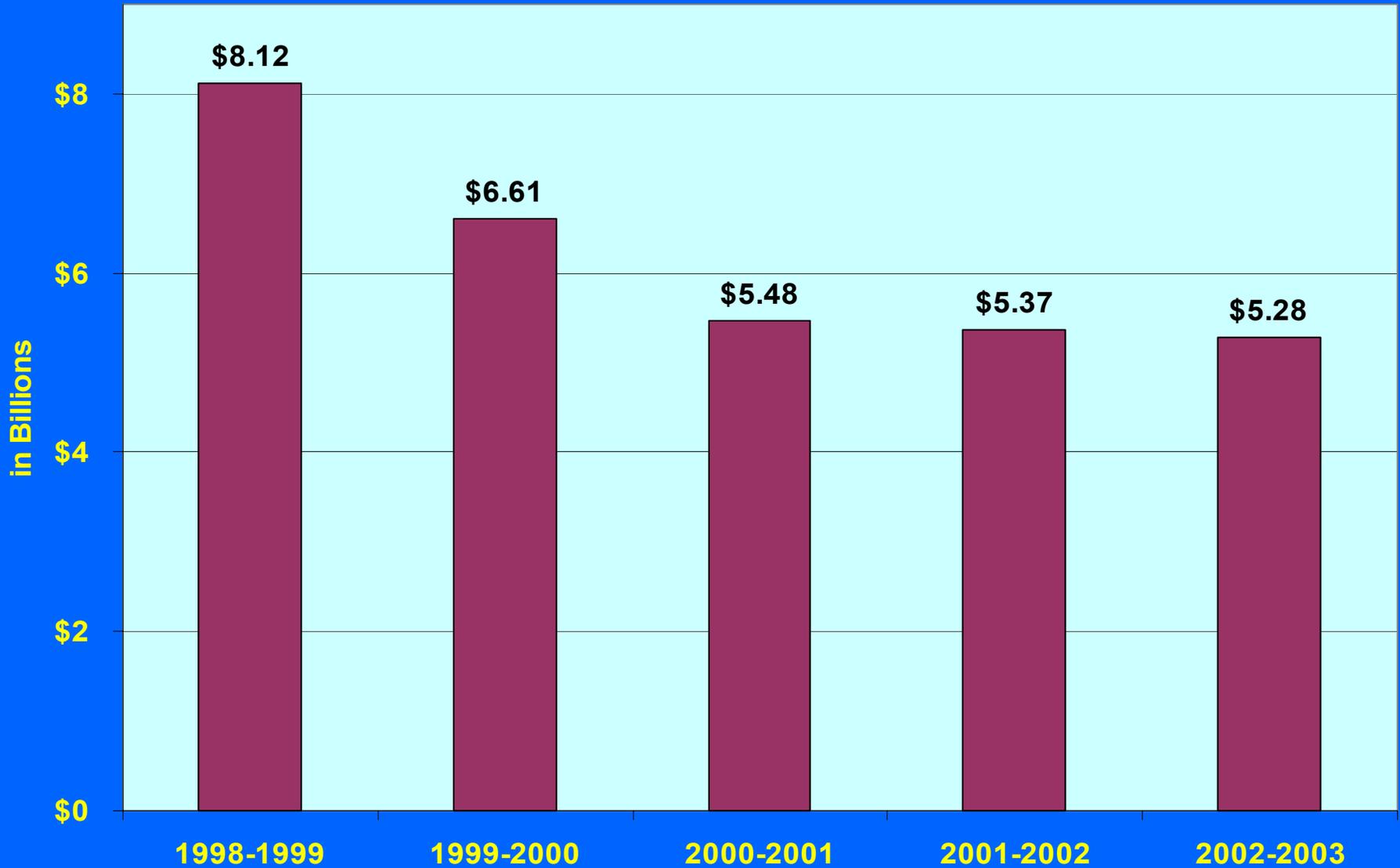
- Personally deliver to Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth (University at Buffalo, Beck Hall, 3435 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14214). Those comments sent through the mail must also have **arrived (regardless of postmark date)** at the Institute by **5 p.m. Sunday, September 7, 2003**.
- Submit comments online to the public forum's website (www.bfsa-forum.buffalo.edu) or via e-mail (bfsa-forum@buffalo.edu).

*Thank you for your participation in this important forum.
Your comments are a valuable part of the BFSAs process.*



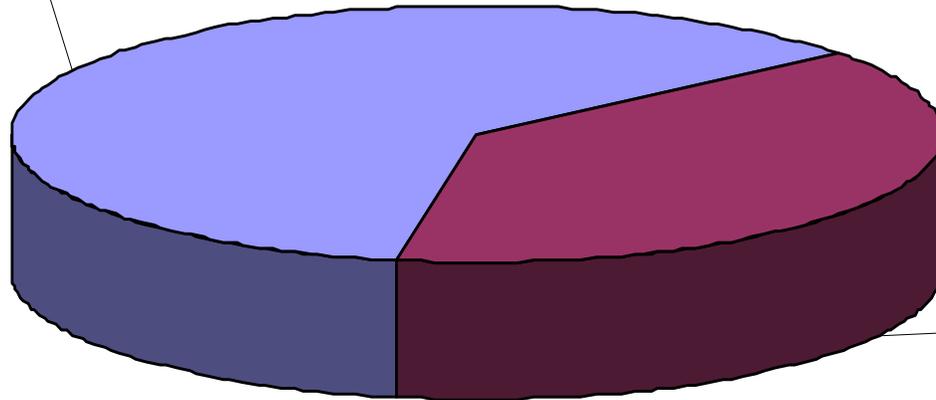
ADDENDUM E

Taxable Property Value Declines \$2.8 Billion In 5 Years (*FY 1998-99 through FY 2002-03*).



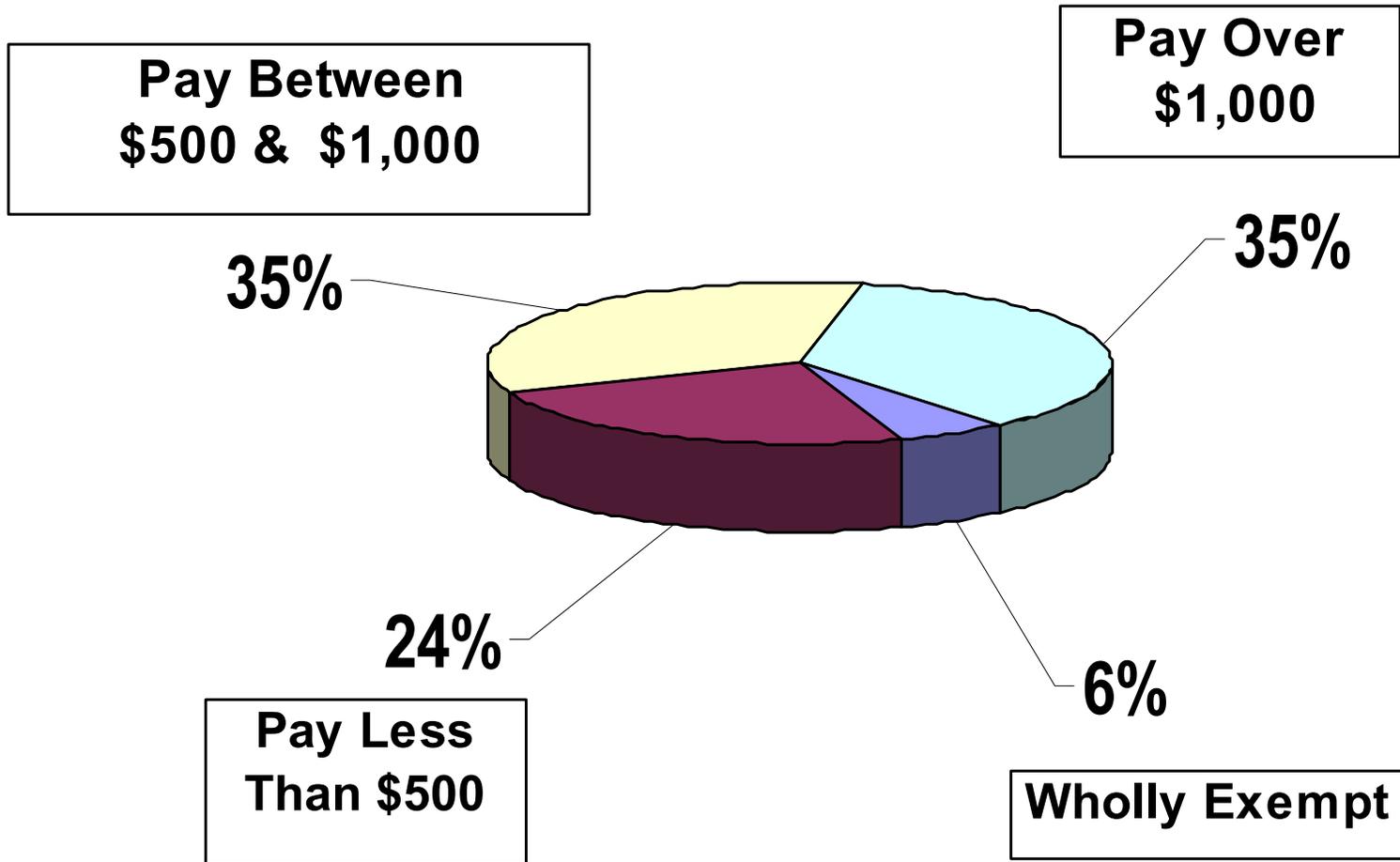
Taxable vs. Exempt Property

Taxable Assessed
Value
61%

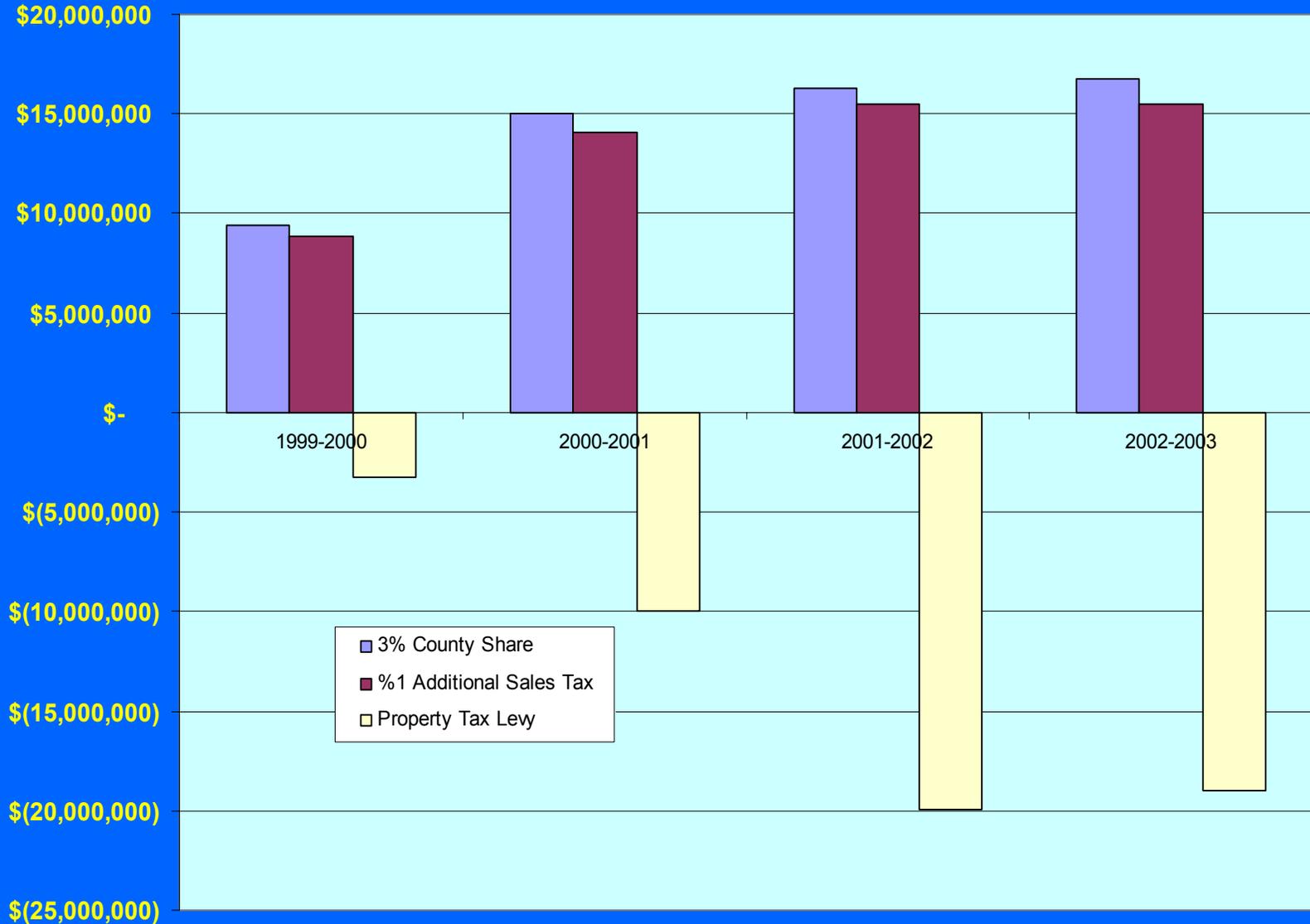


Exempt Properties
39%

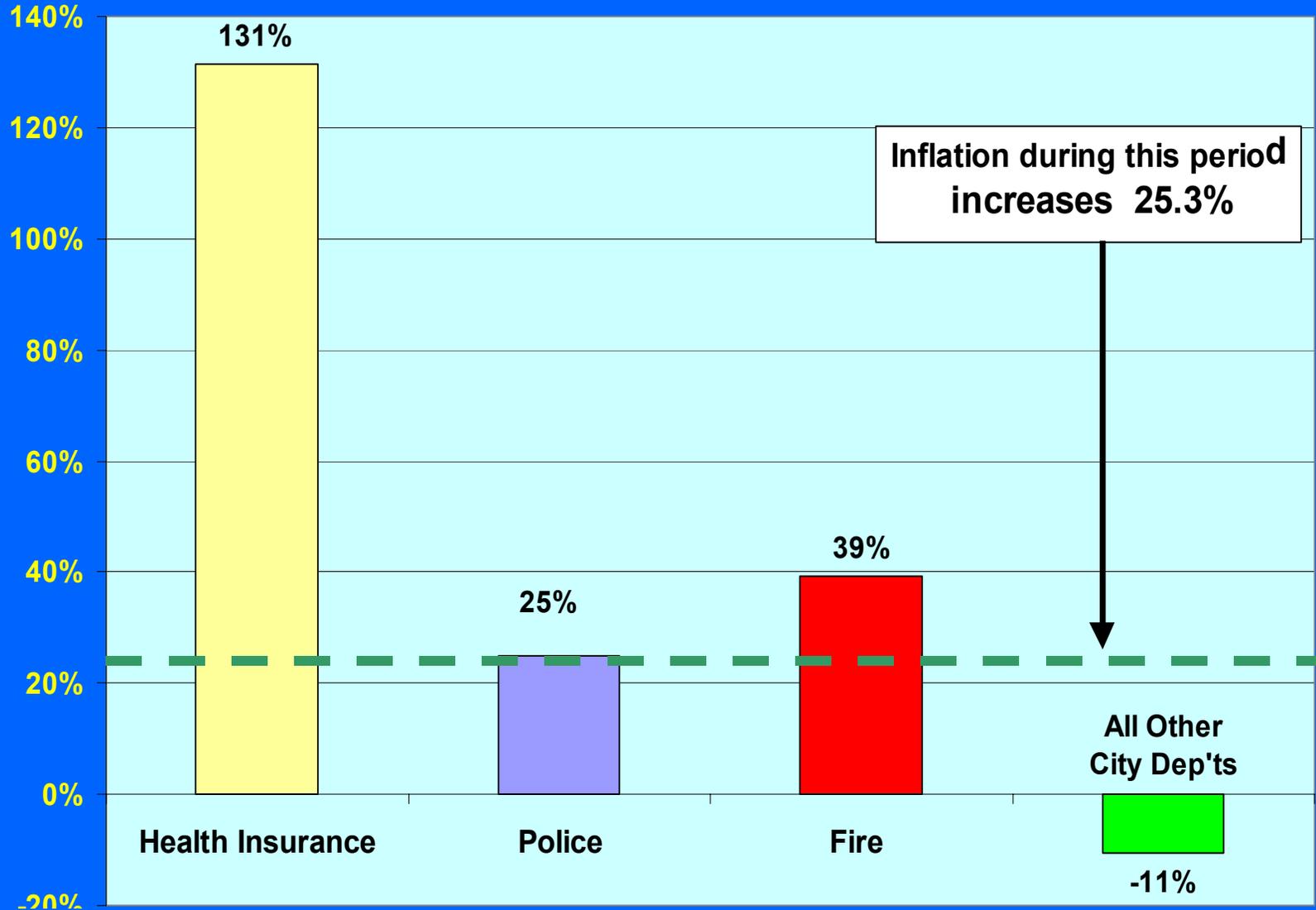
Average Residential Tax Bill



As the County Share of the Sales Tax increased, the City Property Tax Levy declined

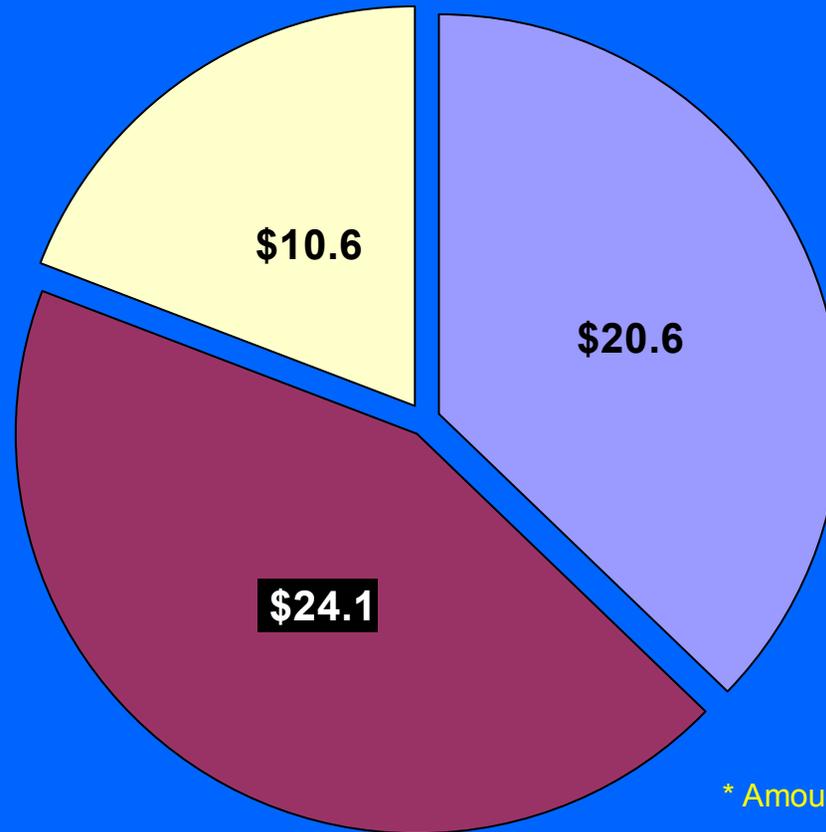


Percentage increase in Health Insurance, Police and Fire Personnel, compared to all other Expenses and Inflation since FY 1993-94



What's Growing the Gap?

(FY2004-2005 to FY2007-2008)



* Amounts in Millions

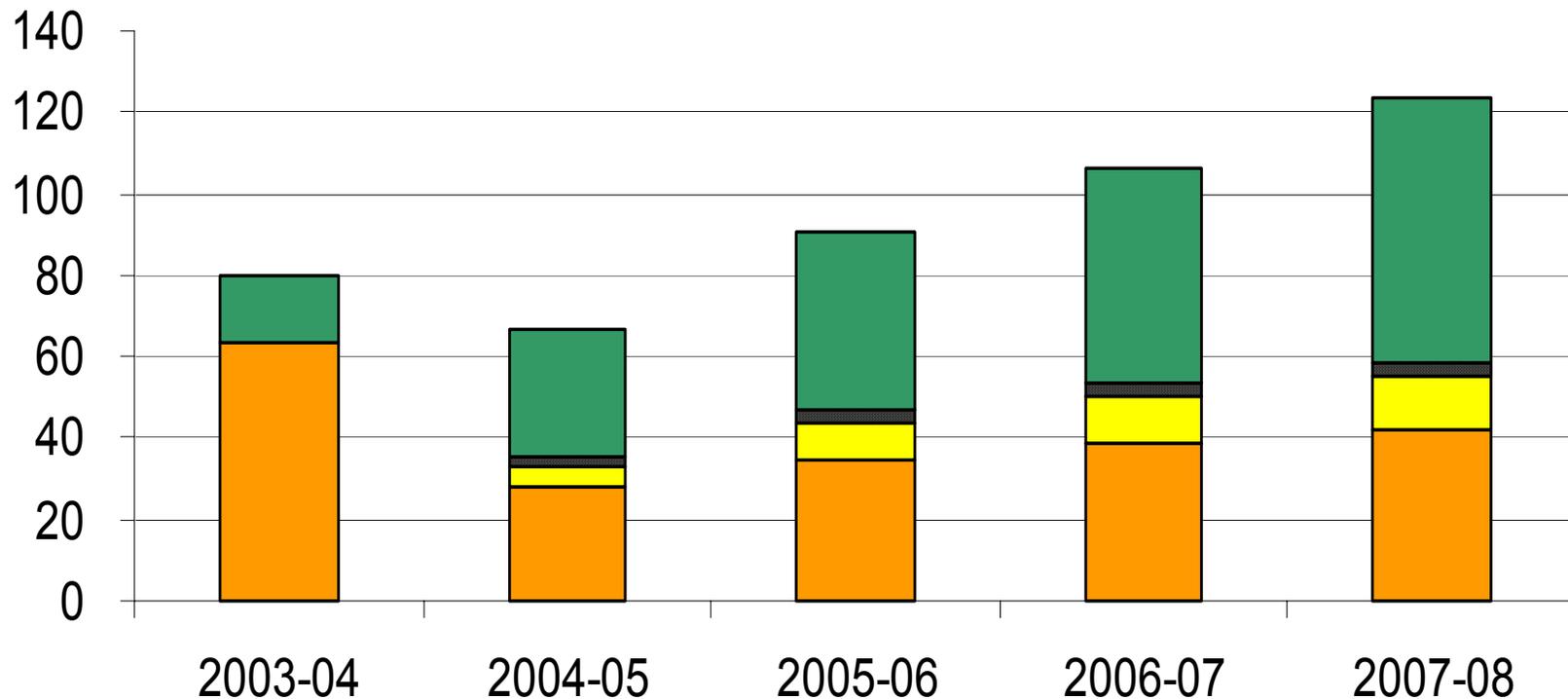
Health

Pension

Other Costs

Gap Closing Elements

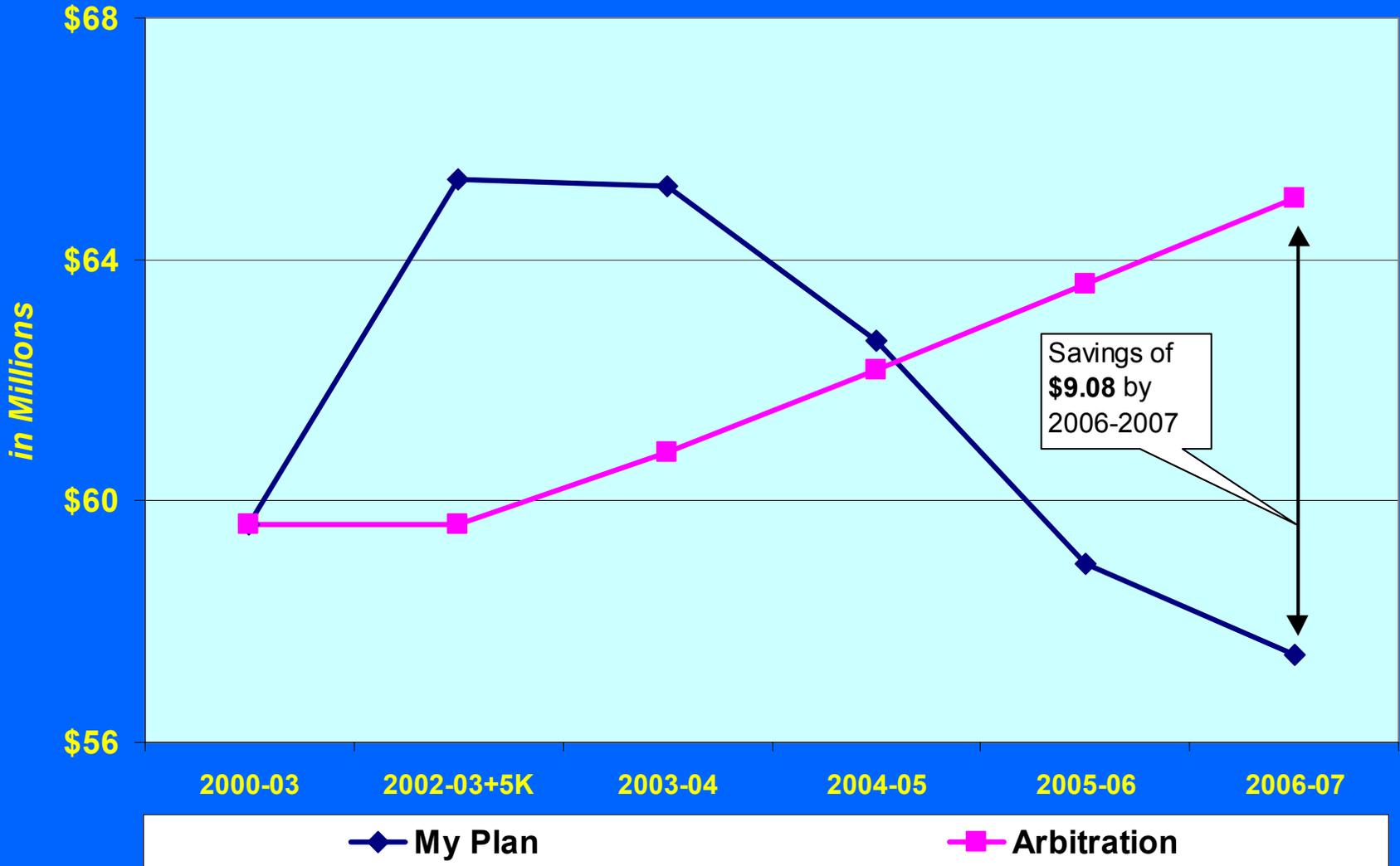
In \$ millions



City Initiative With Union With County Sales Tax

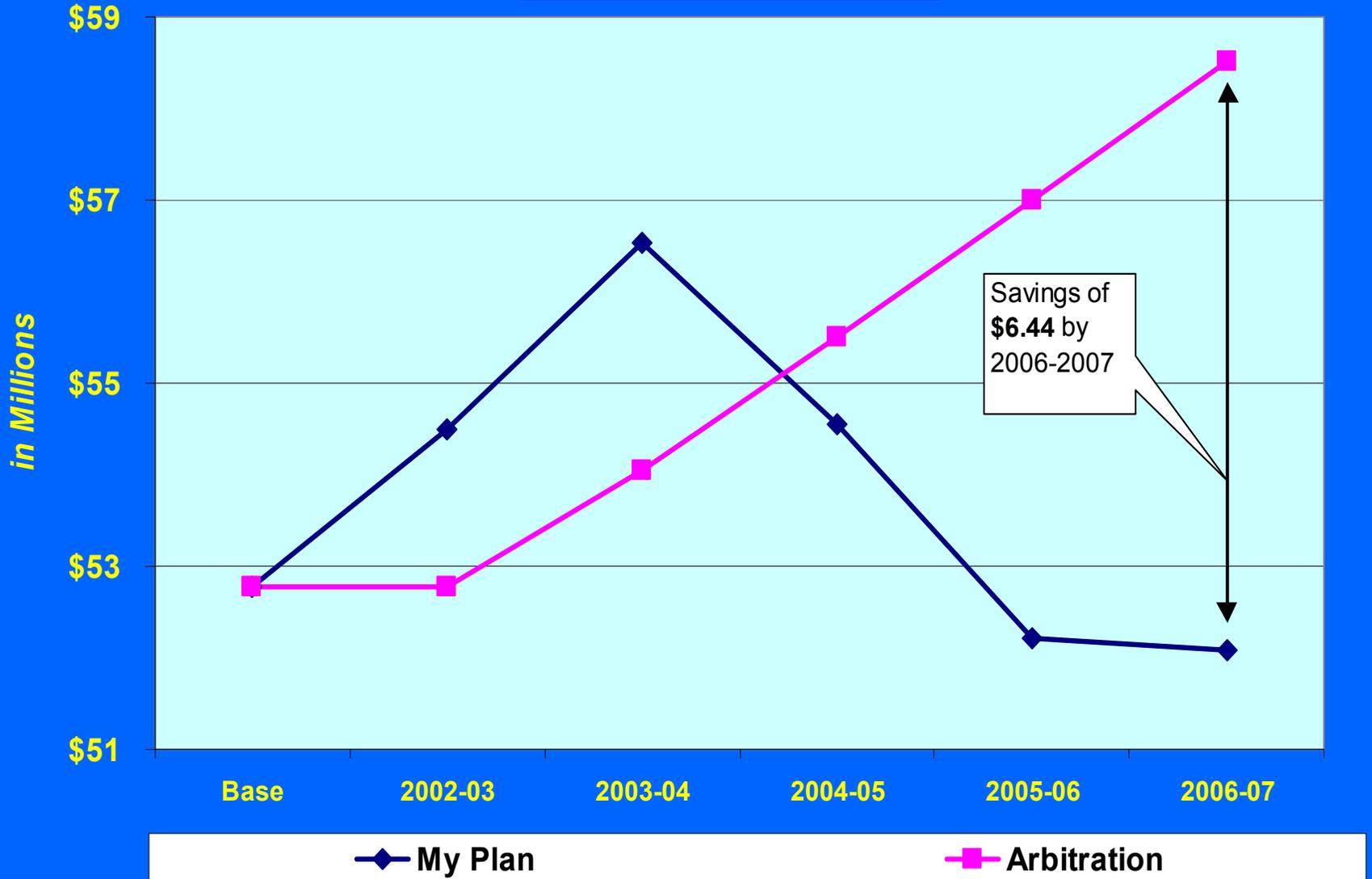
POLICE

My Plan vs. Arbitration



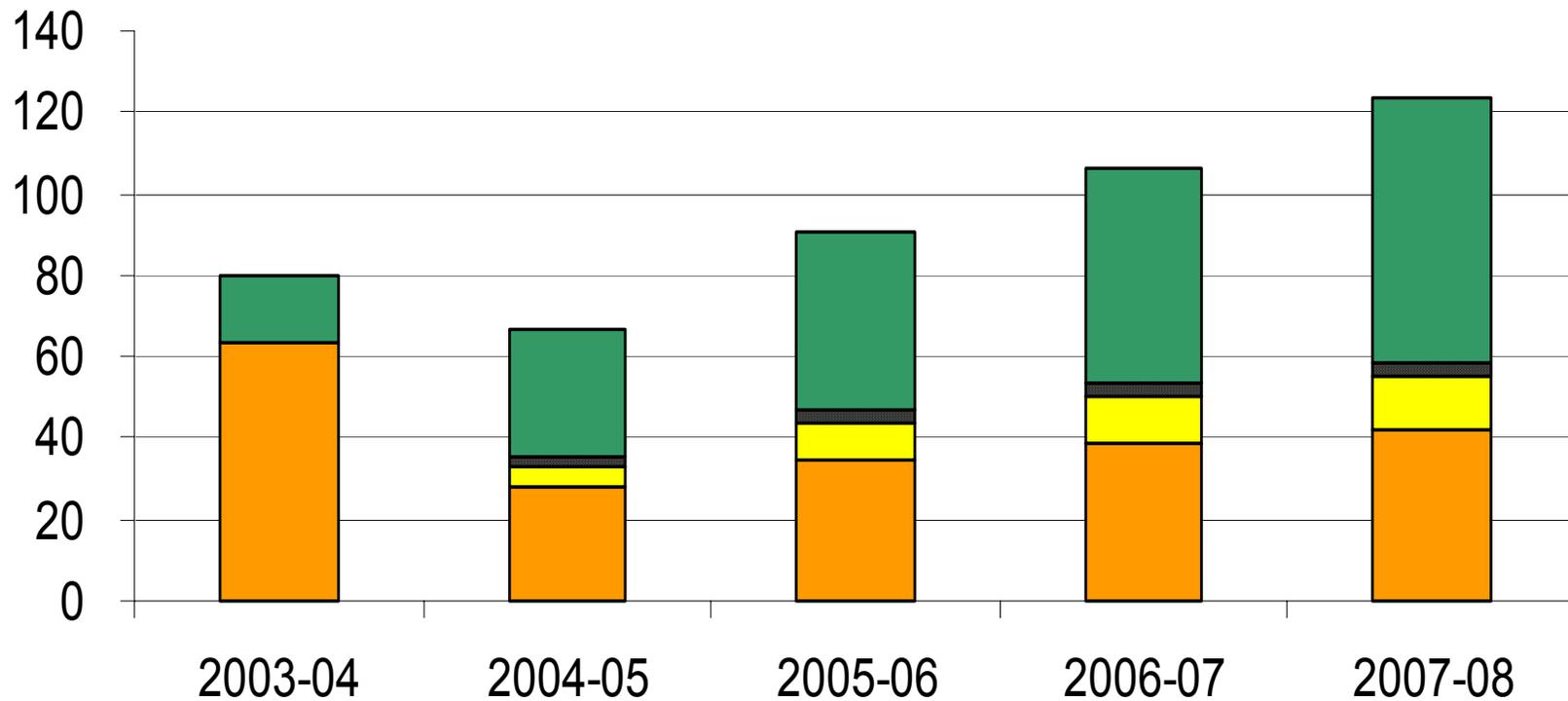
FIRE

My Plan vs. Arbitration



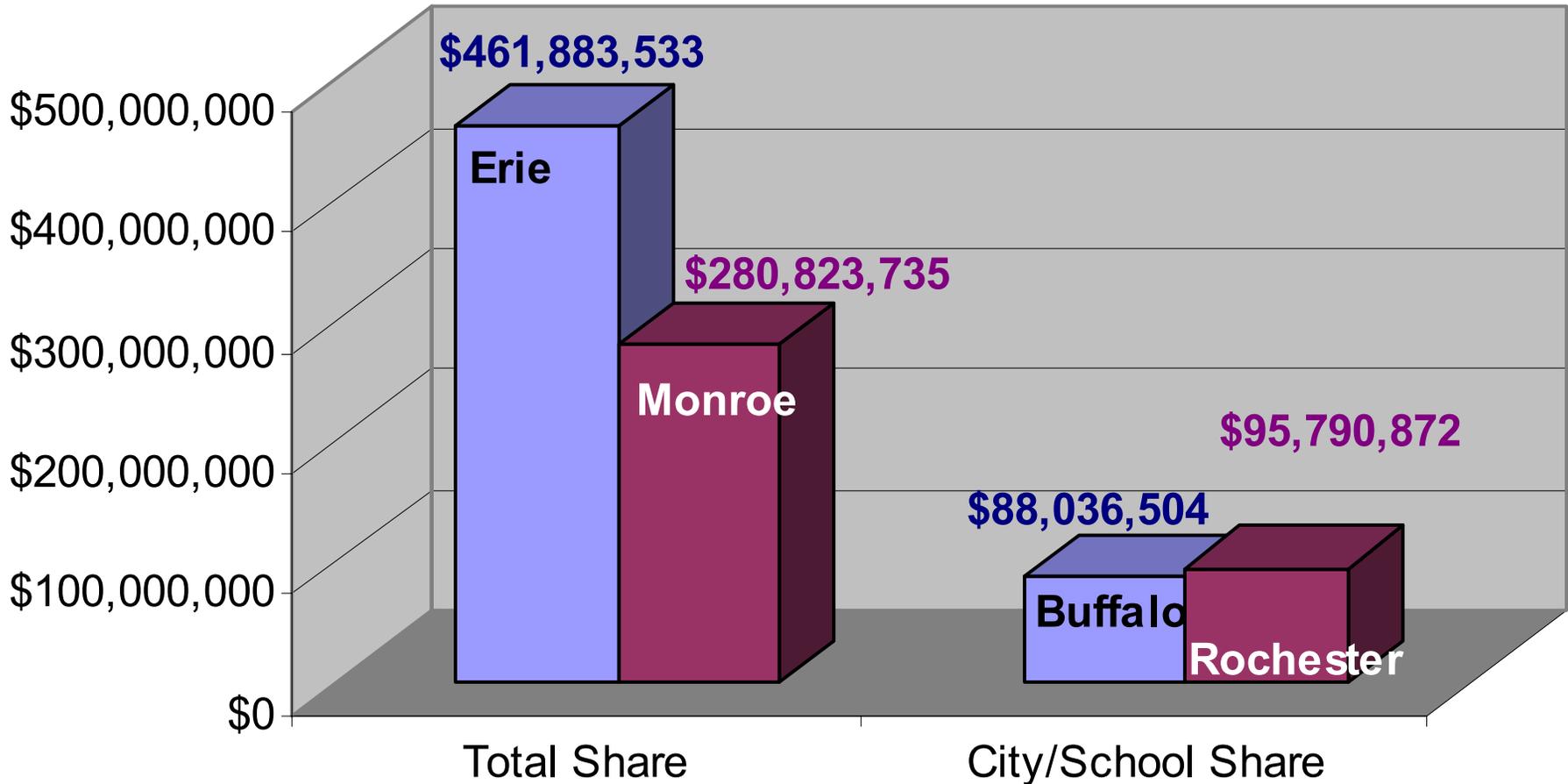
Gap Closing Elements

In \$ millions

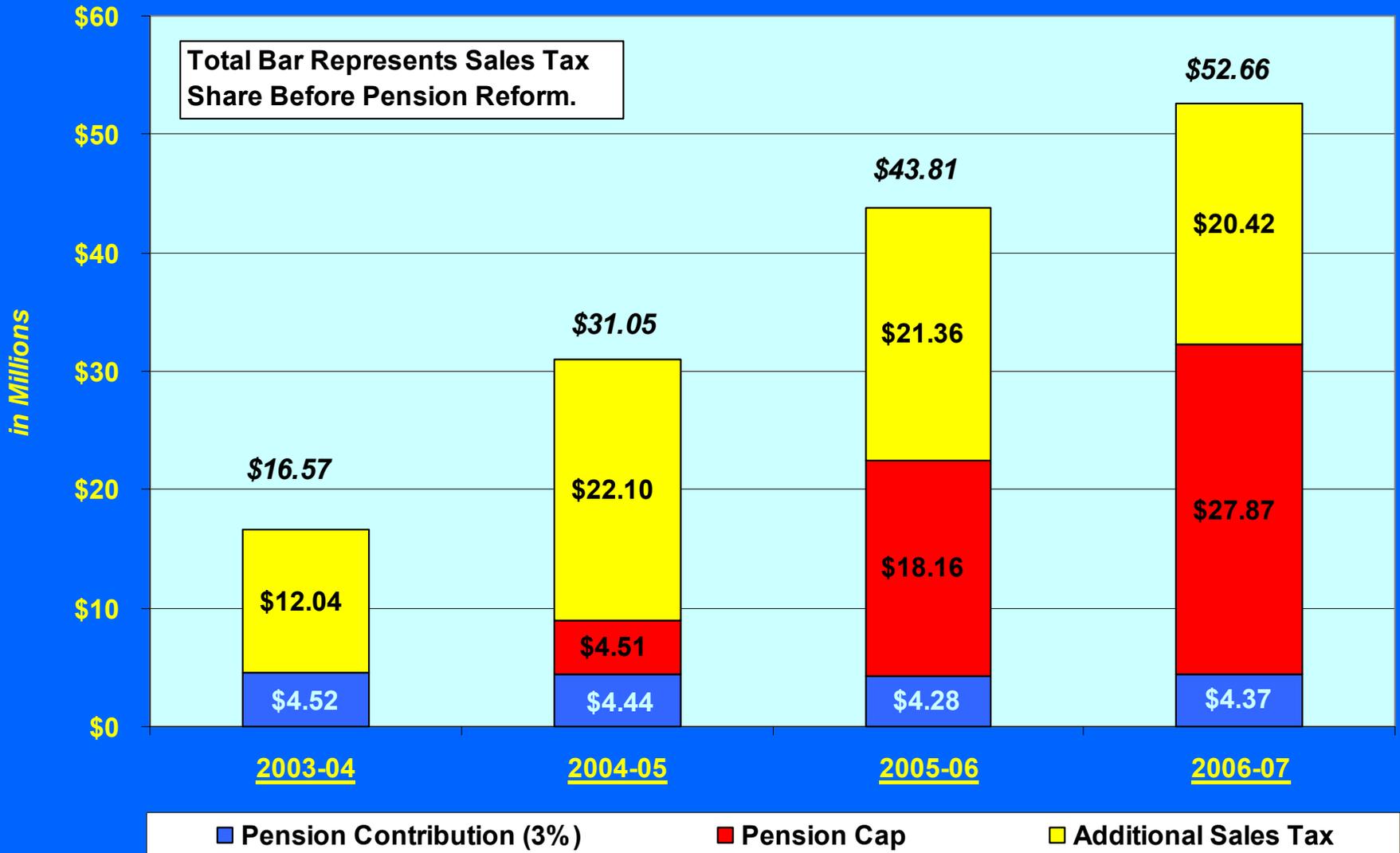


City Initiative With Union With County Sales Tax

Comparison of Sales Tax Share

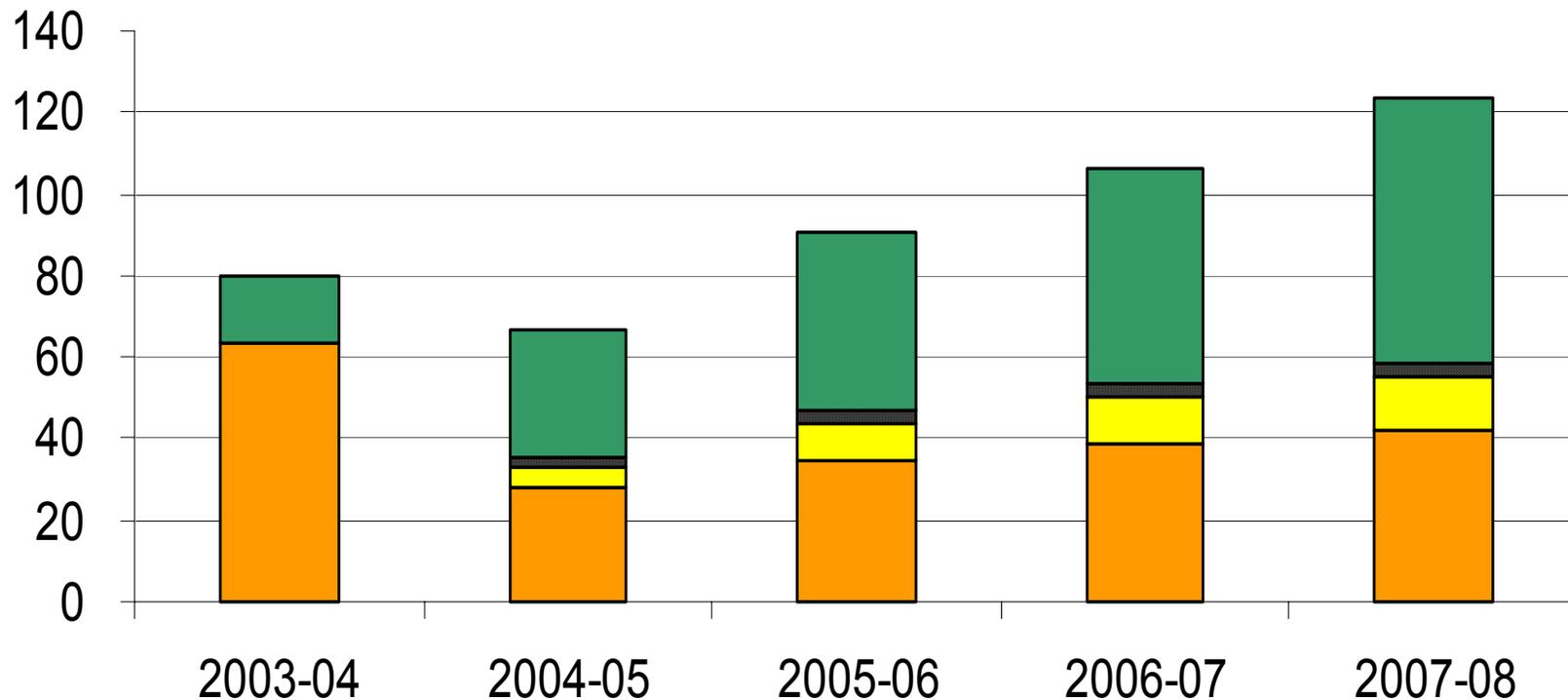


With Pension Reform Sales Tax Needs Greatly Decrease



Gap Closing Elements

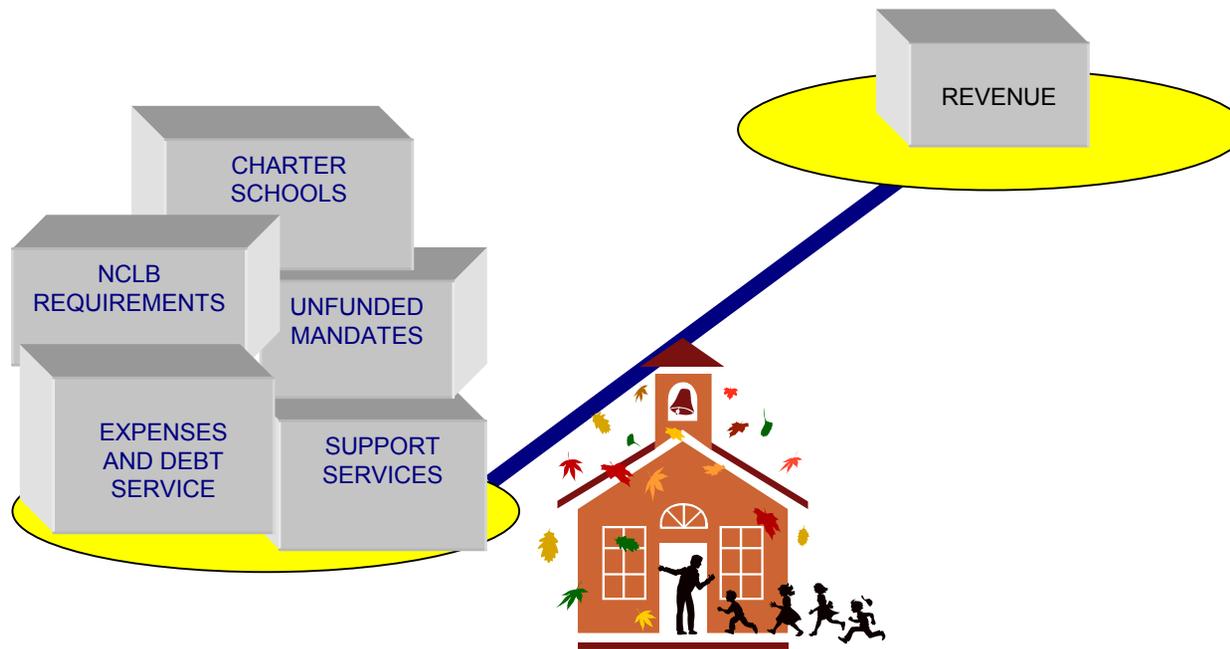
In \$ millions



City Initiative With Union With County Sales Tax

ADDENDUM F

BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT FOUR YEAR GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL PLAN 2003-2004 TO 2006-2007



This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

**The Buffalo City School District
has a balanced budget for the
2003-2004 school year ...
*But at what price?***



Your child's education - ***PRICELESS***

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *"Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all."*

The Buffalo City School District is responsible for providing an education to:

44,000 Public School Students

- ~ 9,000 students with disabilities
- ~ 3,000 students learning in 52 different languages

...and responsible for providing ancillary services to:

- ~ 9,000 Private School Students
- ~ 3,000 Charter School Students

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*



This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*



This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

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This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

T

PERTINENT FACTS

THE BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT IS:

- A **dependent** school district
- Cannot increase revenues
- Has limited ability to control most of the escalating costs

IN ORDER TO BALANCE THE BUDGET THE BOARD HAS HAD TO:

- Reduce staff and increase class sizes
- Close schools
- Eliminate some non-mandated programs and special programs

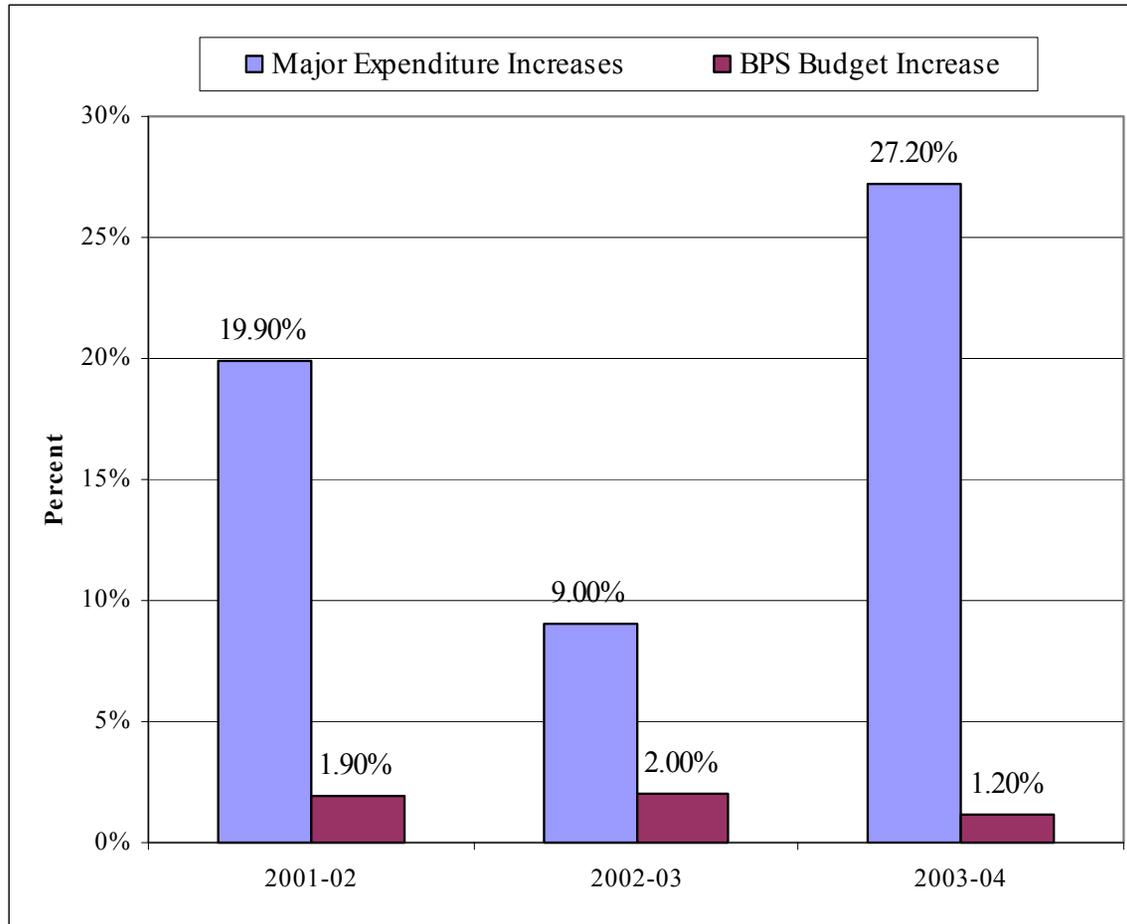
THE BOARD IS CONTINUING TO FOCUS ON THE *BUFFALO REFORM AGENDA* IMPROVEMENTS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- Student Academic Achievement
- School Choice and Parent Involvement
- Accountability
- Professional Development
- Decentralization

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

GROWTH TRENDS

The BCSD has limited control over major expenditure increases that include Charter Schools, Debt Service, and Benefits



This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

BASE REVENUE - MULTIYEAR PROJECTIONS

(in millions)

	Budget	Projections		
	2003- 04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
STATE	334.8	325.3	325.3	325.3
CITY	68.7	68.7	68.7	68.7
COUNTY	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5
OTHER	12.8	12.8	12.8	12.8
- Reimbursements				
- Tuition				
- Medicaid				
- Indirect Cost				
- Miscellaneous				
FUND BALANCE	5.7	-	-	-
STABILIZATION FUND	-	0.9	0.9	0.9
CATEGORICAL GRANTS	<u>57.0</u>	<u>57.0</u>	<u>57.0</u>	<u>57.0</u>
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE	\$ 507.5	\$ 493.2	\$ 493.2	\$ 493.2

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

**ELIMINATION OF THE
2003 – 2004 GAP**
(in millions)

Projected revenues	\$ 507.5
Projected expenditures	<u>544.9</u>
INITIAL GAP	(37.4)
Attrition and other staff reductions, program adjustments, and closing of facilities	<u>37.4</u>
ADJUSTED GAP	<u><u>0.0</u></u>

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

IMPACT OF REDUCTIONS

Administrators

- 21 Central Office (25%)
- 8 School (5%)

Teachers

- Classroom
- Attendance
- Guidance Counselors

- 370.25 (9%)

Clerical

- 53 (10%)

Teacher Aides

- 178.5 (16%)

School Closings

- Four closed
- Two leases terminated

Building Engineers

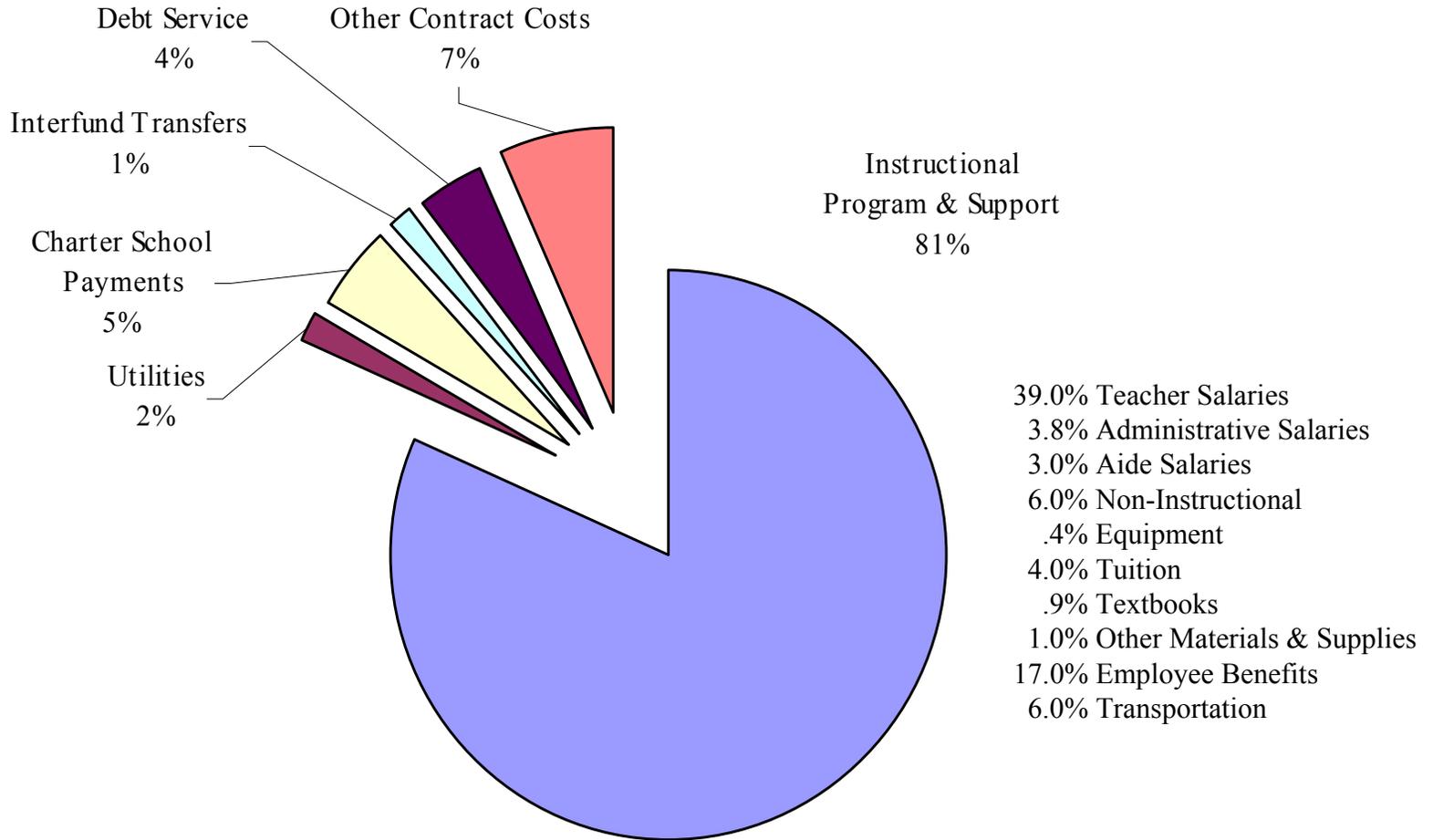
- 4 (4%)

Laborers

- 11 (9%)

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

2003-2004 GENERAL FUND BUDGET



This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

SUMMARY OF MULTIYEAR PROJECTIONS

(in millions)

	Budget	Projections		
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE	507.5	493.2	493.2	493.2
TOTAL PROJECTED EXPENDITURE	<u>507.5</u>	<u>545.3</u>	<u>576.0</u>	<u>609.3</u>
GAP	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ (52.1)</u>	<u>\$ (82.8)</u>	<u>\$ (116.1)</u>

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

ELIMINATION OF THE 2004 – 2007 FINANCIAL GAP

(in millions)

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
GAP	<u>\$ (52.1)</u>	<u>\$ (82.8)</u>	<u>\$ (116.1)</u>

BCSD MAY ACCOMPLISH:

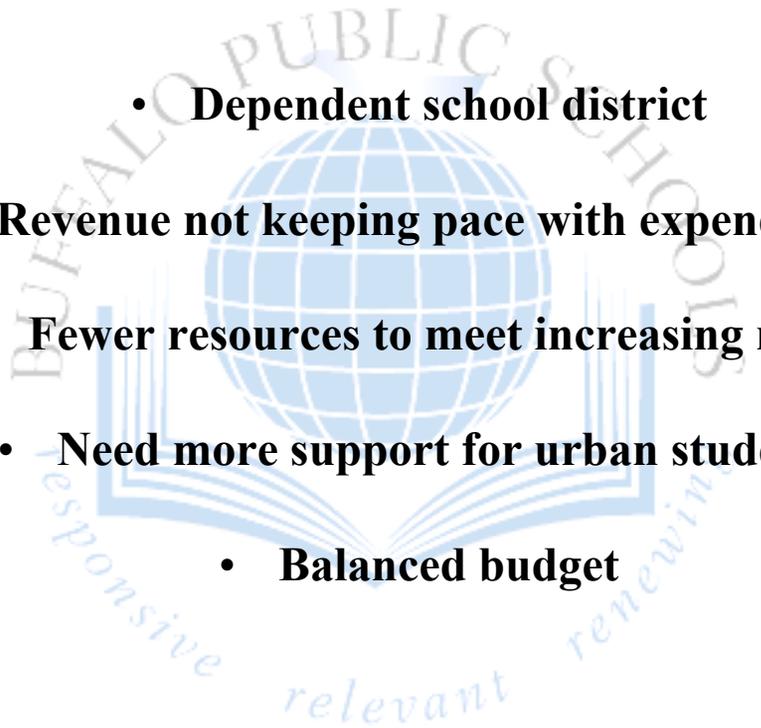
- Close facilities (includes staff, utilities, engineers, etc.)
- Staff Attrition
- Management of Benefits and Contract Negotiations
- Elimination of some sports, non-mandated music, art
- Elimination of some non-mandated related staff (i.e. Administrators, Guidance, Attendance, Kindergarten, Teacher Aides, Library) Improve Efficiencies

BCSD NEEDS ASSISTANCE:

- Possible revision of state aid funding formula
- Additional sales tax from county
- Possible Increase in City Revenue
- Forgive MBBA bond related to teachers' settlement
- Use of stabilization fund

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

SUMMARY

- 
- **Dependent school district**
 - **Revenue not keeping pace with expenditures**
 - **Fewer resources to meet increasing needs**
 - **Need more support for urban students**
 - **Balanced budget**

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*



This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*



This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

REINVENT
REDESIGN
RECONSTRUCT
RELEVANT

This is a blueprint for closing the financial gap; it is NOT a blueprint for closing the achievement gap and meeting the goal of *“Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.”*

ADDENDUM G



Lakeview on the Park Hope VI

BUFFALO MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Presentation to the

BUFFALO FISCAL STABILITY AUTHORITY



Frederick Douglass Homes



Stuyvesant Apartments



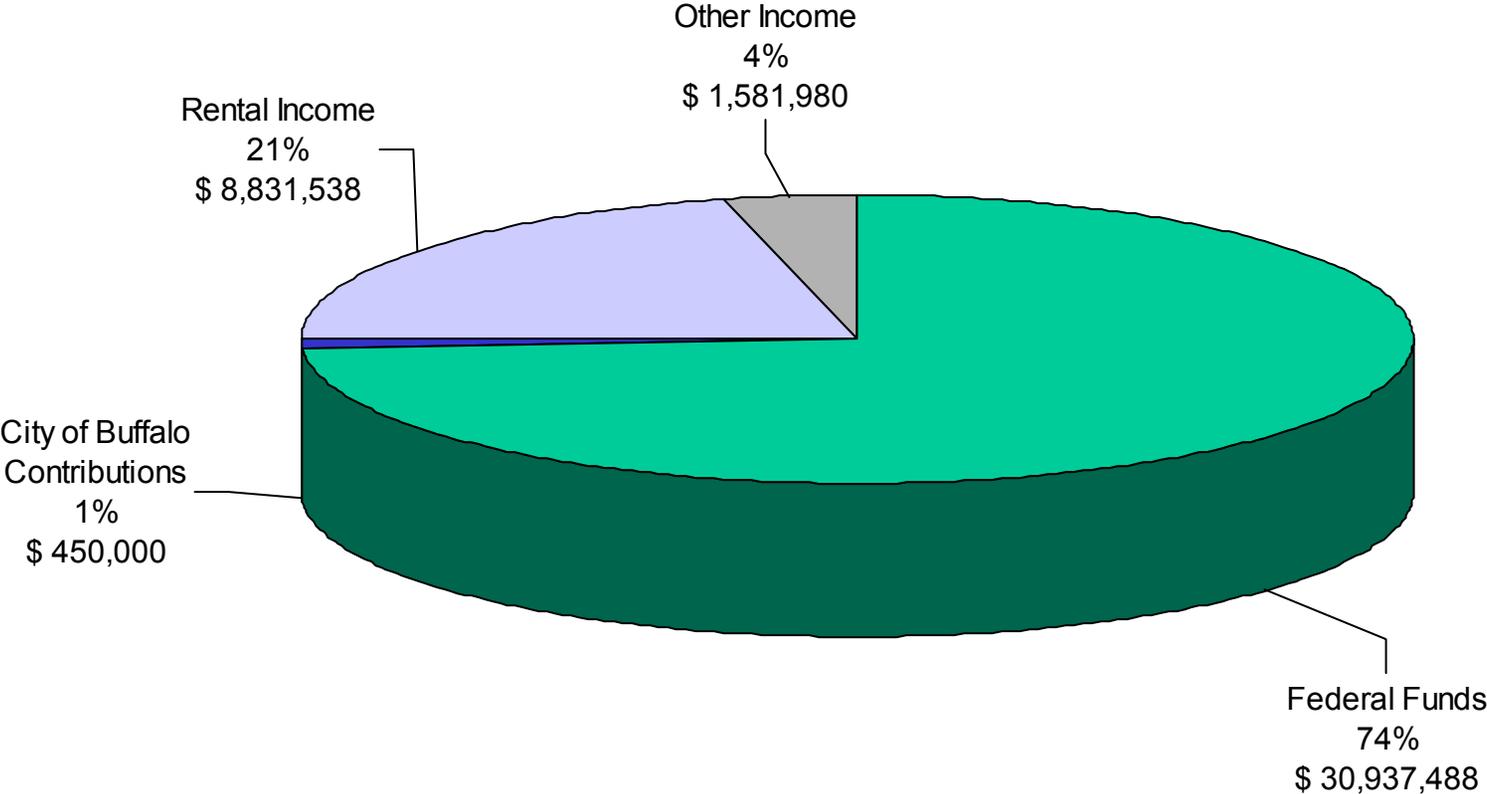
BUFFALO MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

BUFFALO MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Demographics

- **27 Public Housing Development sites in the City of Buffalo**
- **4398 apartment units**
- **Total Resident population 6,983**
 - **Senior/Disabled - 2019 (28.9%)**
 - **Number of employed - 994 (43% of eligible to be employed)**
- **1059 leased up Section 8 certificates - 1059 families**
- **26 sites managed by BMHA**
- **Lakeview Hope VI managed by SHNIR Management Company**
- **BMHA is the managing partner of Fredrick Douglass Homes**
- **Marine Drive - privately managed**
- **Kensington Heights - closed**

BMHA Sources of Income



BMHA FISCAL IMPACT TO THE CITY OF BUFFALO

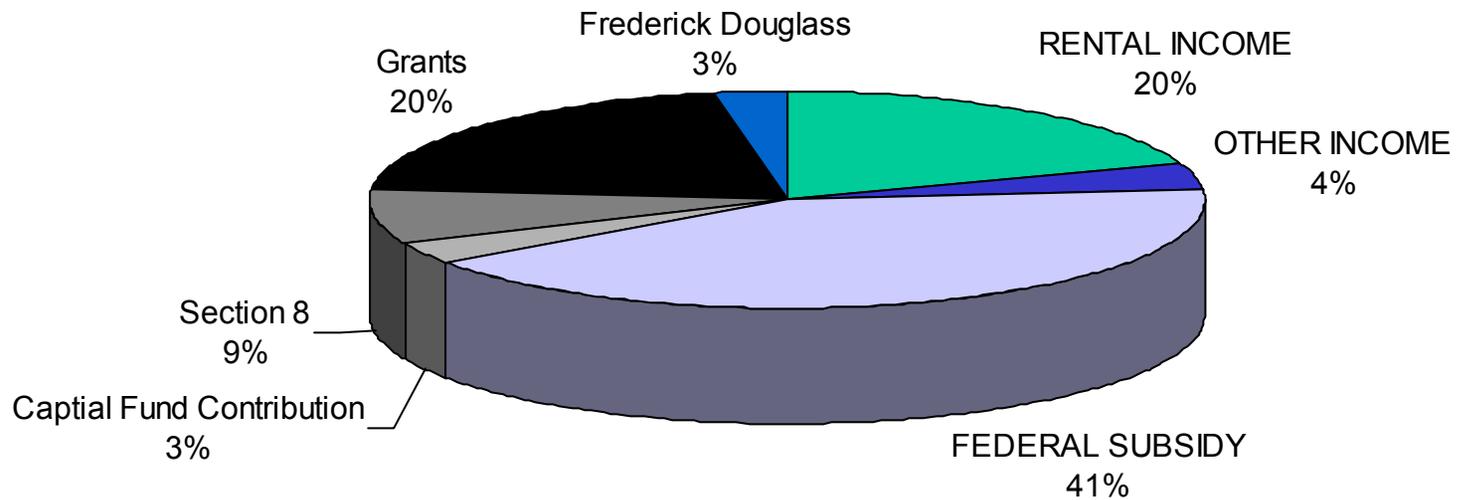
•*Saved City \$2 Million per year by using state operating reserves since FY2001*

- by moving Ferry Grider Homes into federal portfolio.
- and remaining senior Frederick Douglass Building into the federal portfolio.
- The remainder of Frederick Douglass Homes has been privatized and receives \$450,000 subsidy for management services for Phase I and Phase II.
- After Phase III is completed for FY05, the total contribution will be \$535,000.

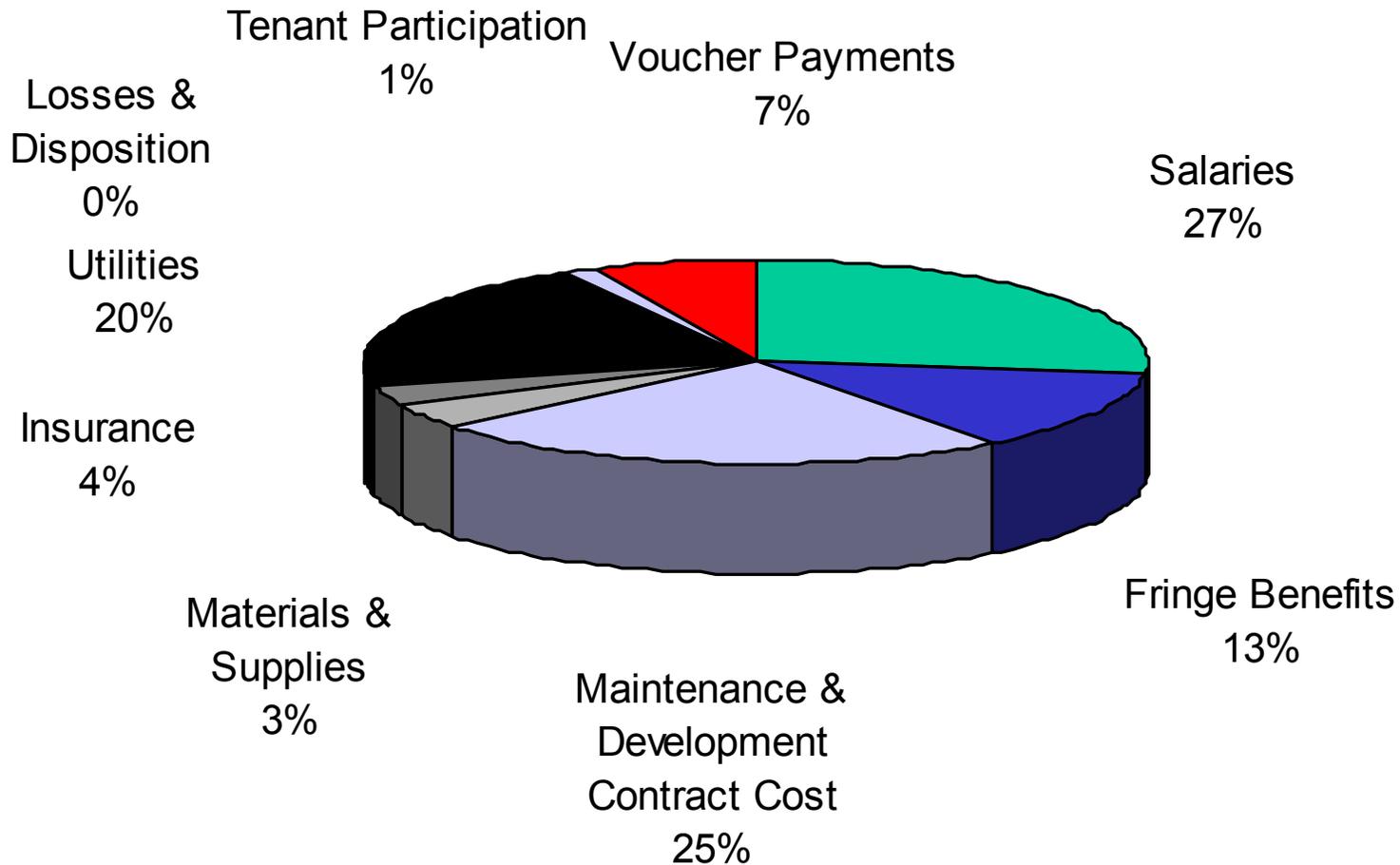
**BUFFALO MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY-WIDE
BUDGETS - FY04**

HUD LOW RENT OPERATING	\$29,670,000
RENEWAL GRANT BUDGETS	\$ 808,688
NON-RENEWAL GRANTS	\$ 7,797,123
CAPITAL FUND PROGRAM & REPLACEMENT HOUSING FACTOR	\$ 9,134,012
FREDERICK DOUGLASS	\$ 1,116,288
SECTION 8	<u>\$ 3,554,969</u>
	\$52,081,080

BMHA Income Distribution
July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004
Total = \$41,081,006



BMHA Expense Distribution July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 Total = \$41,912,101



FEDERAL LIPH PROGRAM

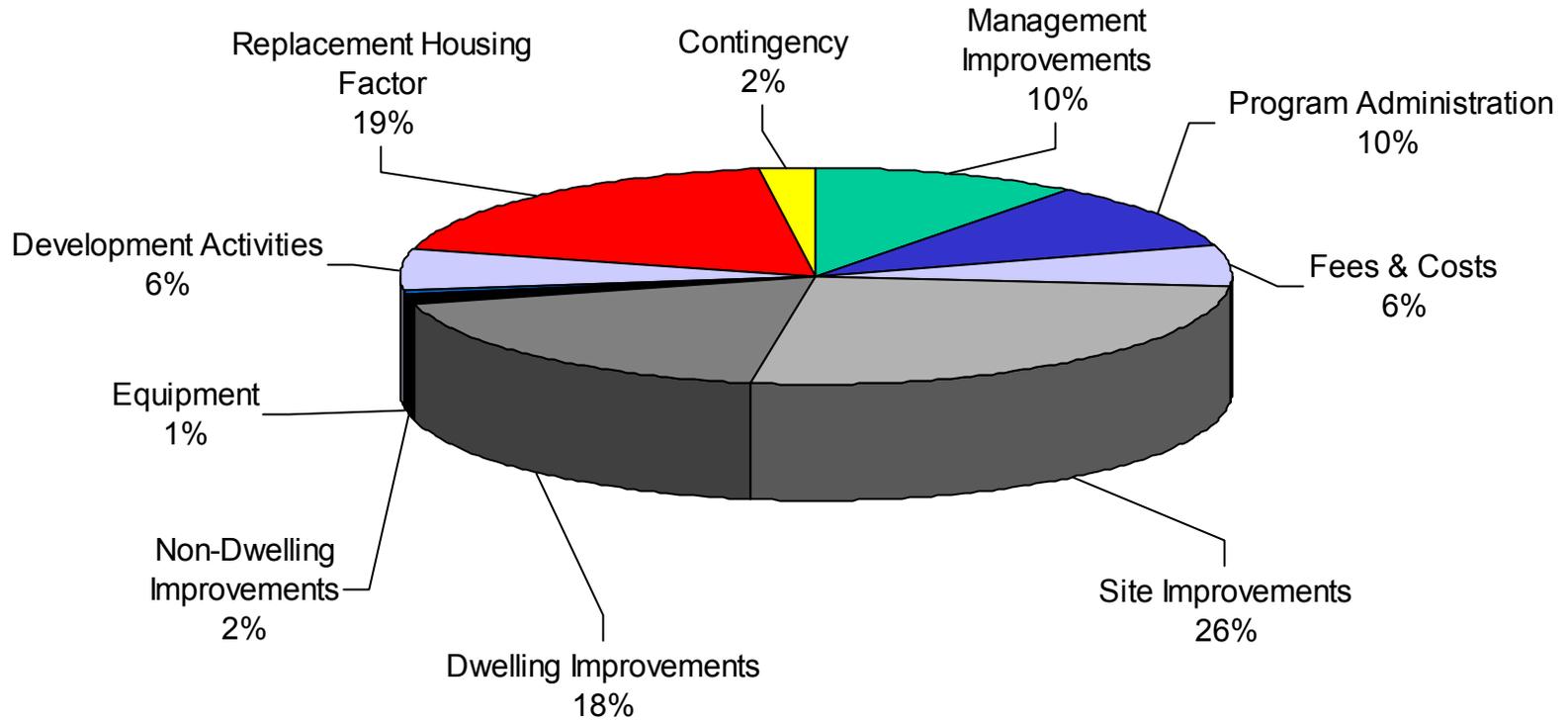
PERSONNEL COSTS FOR OPERATIONS

Property Management & Family Support Services Salaries	\$ 1,558,539
Engineer Salaries	\$ 916,724
Maintenance Salaries	\$ 4,959,452
Administrative/White Collar Salaries	\$ 2,252,581
Public Safety Salaries	<u>\$ 2,001,070</u>
	\$11,688,366
Terminal Leave Costs (separation)	\$ 205,000
Benefits	\$ 4,706,654

The current benefit rate has escalated to 40% of salaries. This rate has doubled over the past few years. Per HUD classifications, benefit costs include all health, dental and life insurance costs, FICA costs and NYS retirement system costs. Please note workers comp insurance is NOT included.

BMHA Capital Fund & Replacement Housing Factor Program

Total = \$7,925,580



NEW YORK STATE

LOW INCOME PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAM

The City of Buffalo until 2001 contributed \$2 Million per year to subsidize the units in the State sponsored housing program. Per an agreement with NYS DHCR (Division of Housing and Community Development), the deficit for this program is being drawn down through NYS program reserves. This was approved by the NYS DHCR contingent upon the transfer of the NYS Ferry Grider location to the Federal program. That transfer was completed in January of 2003. It is anticipated to cover all costs through complete disposition of this portion of the NYS program.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS ASSOCIATES – Currently in process of transferring 59 units to the Federal program. The remainder of the units will be privatized.

Target date for transfer into federal portfolio is December 2003

Completion of privatization is targeted for September 2004

Only future liability of City is to FD Associates in the total amount of \$535,000 for all three phases.

KENSINGTON HEIGHTS – Closed.

RFP for redevelopment and privatization has been issued so that this property can be returned to the tax rolls.

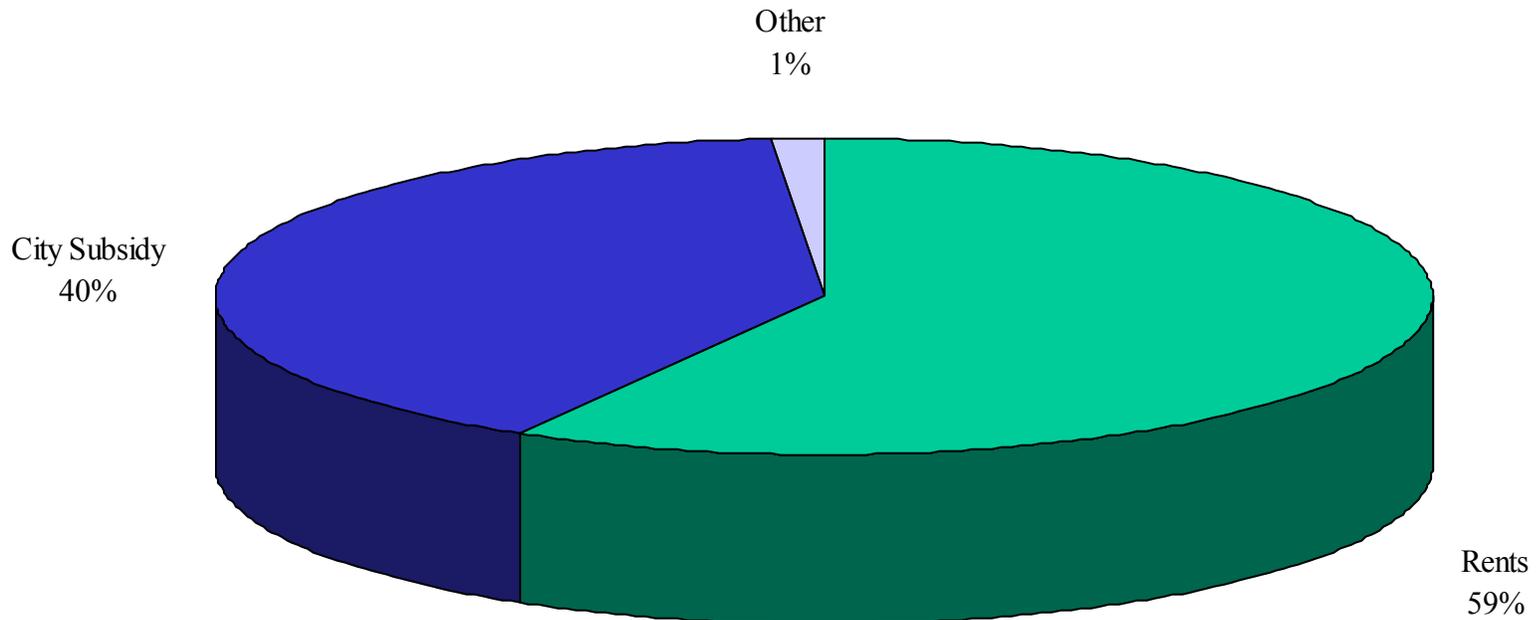
MARINE DRIVE APARTMENTS – Currently searching for a management firm to take over operations as of January 2004. Once a management firm has been put in place, the BMHA will prepare a four year plan for that location.

Frederick Douglass Associates

BMHA Managing Partner

Income Distribution

July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004

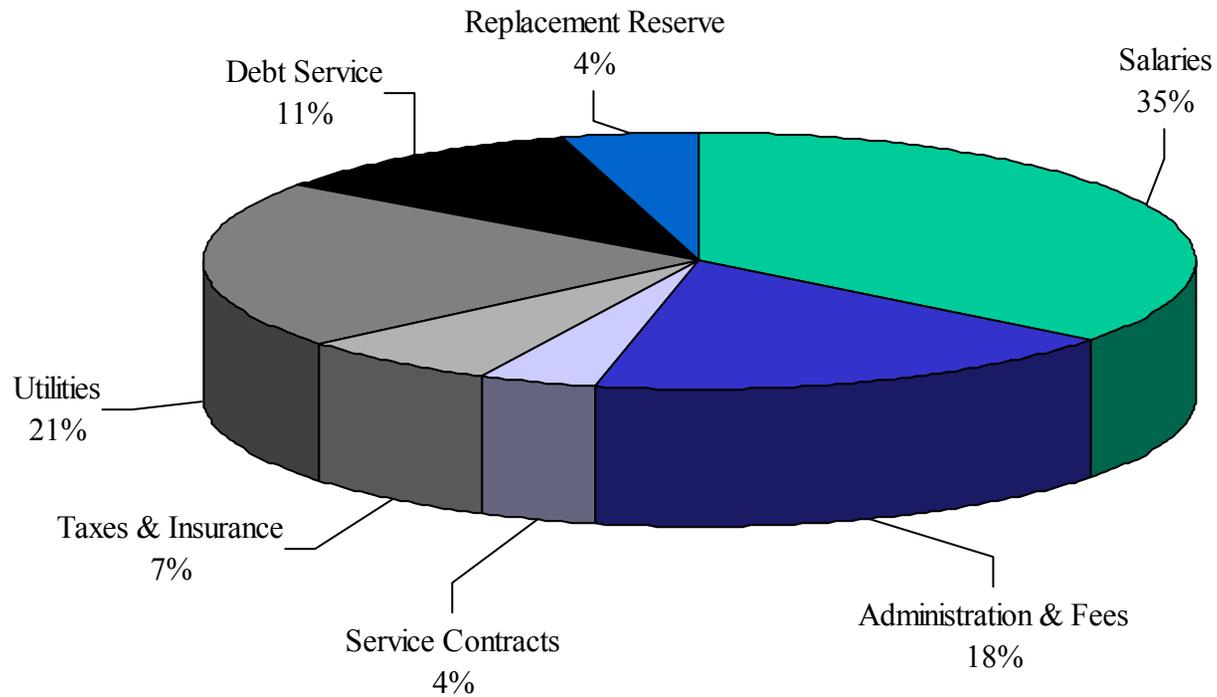


Frederick Douglass Associates

BMHA Managing Partner

Expense Distribution

July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004



BUFFALO MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

SECTION 8 PROGRAM

- The BMHA is presently assigned 1,200 certificates and 1059 are leased up.
- The projections for leasing of the certificates for the next 4 years are
 - 1,180 each year - 95% utilization rate
- Starting in 2004 the BMHA will add the following additional certificates to its portfolio: (this projection also runs through the year 2007)
 - 172 Project-based certificates for new builds in designated areas and non-concentrated minority and poverty neighborhoods.
 - 48 Certificates for Hope VI Phase III at Lakeview on the Park.
- The BMHA provides a pass-through service for the Pilgrim Village Program serving as the fiscal agent receiving an annual Administrative Fee of \$26,132.

ASSUMPTIONS FOR FOUR YEAR PLAN

- HUD operating subsidy will continue to be funded annually by Congress at 95%
- Inflation factor is 3% per year as per HUD published rates
- Capital Funds continues to be reduced
- BMHA will continue to get renewable grants
- Frederick Douglass will continue to receive the fixed city subsidy as per the signed contract as part of the Comer Settlement
- Marine Drive and Kensington Heights will be privatized and be returned to City's tax rolls
- 95% lease up rate for 1420 Section 8 certificates
- Redevelopment of Jasper Parrish Homes – begins
- Lakeview Homes HOPE VI Redevelopment Complete
- Frederick Douglass Associates Redevelopment complete
- Employee pension and health costs continue to increase
- Public Safety Department will decrease by 12 officers over 18 months

FOUR YEAR FISCAL STABILITY CONCLUSION

**BMHA IS CONFIDENT THAT IT CAN
BALANCE ITS BUDGET WITH THE
FEDERAL SUBSIDY AND OTHER
CURRENT SOURCE OF FUNDING**

Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning

“Four Year Fiscal Plan”

“Our work today is making Buffalo’s Neighborhoods better for the next generation, the next century.”

“Our job is to create economic, housing and quality of life opportunities in Buffalo’s Neighborhoods.”

Timothy E. Wanamaker, Executive Director

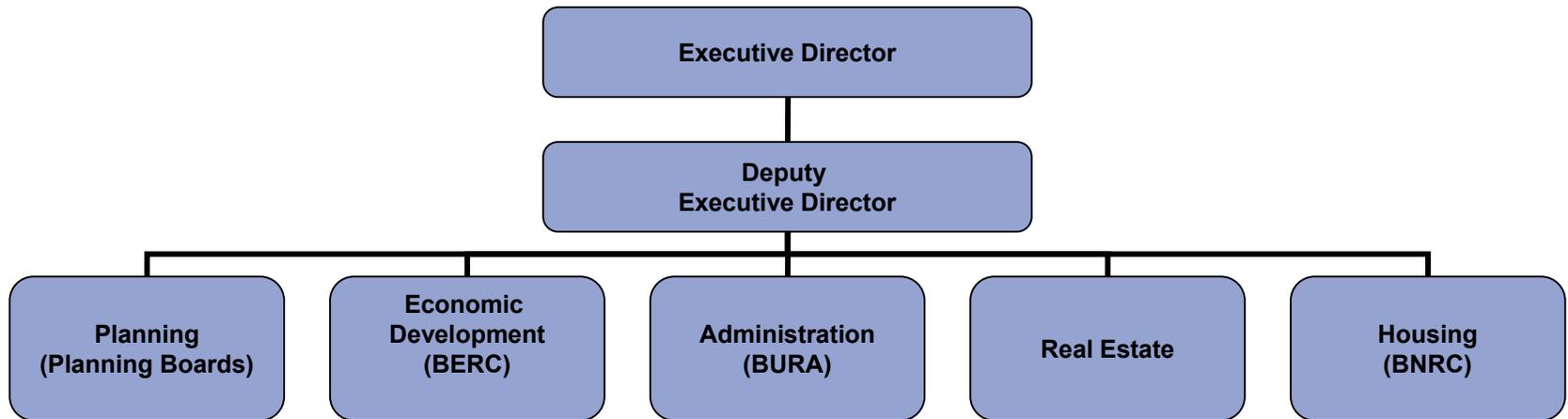


Presentation Agenda

- Organization Chart
- Budget Report
 - Innovation & Priorities
 - Budget Assumptions
 - Budget Summary



Office of Strategic Planning *(Re-)Organization Chart*



Administration Division (BURA)



Entitlement Programs Budget

Revenue

CDBG	\$19,923,000
HOME	\$5,271,726
ESG	\$747,000
HOPWA	\$473,000
CDBG Program Income	\$2,000,000
HOME Program Income	\$500,000
Total	\$28,914,726



Entitlement Programs Budget

Dealing with a Deficit

- Deficit

- \$2,354,395

- Solutions

- Create a balance between reductions to programs and program delivery after careful evaluation
 - Partner with HUD to eliminate deficit
 - Create efficiencies to program delivery thereby reducing cost.



Innovation & Priorities

- Retooled Entitlement Program Budget Process
- Priorities set based upon the City's Comprehensive Plan and Citizen involvement
- New processes and procedures to ensure performance within OSP (BURA)
- New processes and procedures to ensure performance of grant sub-recipients



Budget Assumptions

- Successful implementation of an **enhanced** Community Participation Program
- Successful implementation of the “Neighborhood Revitalization Program”
- Successful implementation of a retooled Entitlement Program Budget Process
- Anticipates grant revenues remain constant
- Growth in pension cost expected to decrease due to future portfolio gains
- HUD approves revised budget



Budget Summary

- Balancing of Entitlement Budget
- Creation and Balancing of BURA Operating Budget
- Development of Innovative processes and procedures to manage Block Grant Programs
- Setting priorities for Block Grant Investment



ADDENDUM H

BUFFALO FISCAL STABILITY AUTHORITY	
Public Forum	September 6, 2003
REQUIRED	Name: _____
	Address: _____
	City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
	Email: _____ Phone: _____
Are you representing an organization? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the organization receive funding from the City of Buffalo? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Organization or Affiliation: _____	
Do you wish to speak? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Which session? (Please check one)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 9 a.m. - 11:50 a.m. City Finances	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 p.m. - 2:50 p.m. School Finances
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Other Public Entities	