

From: [Madalena Burke](#)
To: [Finance Commission Public Comment](#)
Subject: Adopt the Care First Budget
Date: Tuesday, May 18, 2021 11:19:58 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of South Pasadena. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Finance Commission,

I am a resident of South Pasadena, and I urge you to adopt the Care First Budget Proposal for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. The last year has exposed deep flaws in the treatment of many members of our community. The Care First Proposal outlines many important issues that we as a city can have a real impact on if we only choose to. Decades of neglect need to be addressed when it comes to environmental and transportation issues, as well as bringing better social and housing services to our community. I believe the city has an obligation to use their surplus funds to provide social services and affordable housing to members of our community. I strongly support defunding the police and reinvesting in alternative forms of public safety. The Care First Budget outlines some great ways to take steps in this direction. Thank you.

Best,
Madalena Burke

From: [Caitlin Lainoff](#)
To: [Finance Commission Public Comment](#)
Subject: Budget Proposal
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 1:07:14 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of South Pasadena. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I urge you to support the Care First Budget Proposal for 2021-22, and I applaud the recommendations you have made to advance it. I believe it is time for our budget to reflect our town's values of equality, justice and inclusion. Given the budget surplus, there is no better time than now to take the steps necessary to begin to address the issues that have been neglected for far too long in our city. Issues like affordable housing, environmental abuse, transportation and improved social services desperately need our attention. I urge you to adopt the budget. Thank you for your time.

Best,
Caitlin



May 26, 2021

Re: Comment, Agenda Item 1, Review and Recommendation Regarding the FY 2021-2022 Proposed Budget

Dear South Pasadena Finance Commission:

This week, as we reflect upon the murder of George Floyd by the police, we are reminded of our roles in building safe communities for all people, inclusive of our Black, Latinx, and Asian neighbors who have been historically left out of government decisions in our city. We have set forth our vision for a more inclusive city in the [Care First Budget](#).

Hundreds, if not thousands, of residents here in South Pasadena believe in the urgency of our time to enact budgets and policies for racial, economic, and environmental justice. The time is now, not tomorrow. We are pleased with several proposals in the city staff report about the budget and would like the Commission to consider our comments as you make your recommendations to the City Council.

We demand a foundational shift in the city's approach to social services. The city's investment in public safety should not be primarily with the police department. Rather, the city should take a more expansive view with programs and services that better ensure our safety and well-being. In 2020-2021, the city spent one-third of our general funds on the police department, nearing \$10 million or \$381 per resident for policing alone. This spending is more than 80% of police departments in California.¹ As a result of the city's outsized spending on police wages and salaries, the city has forfeited opportunities to robustly fund other city programs and services.

City staff has "discouraged" the implementation of new or enhanced social service programs funded by large injections of one-time revenue from the cell phone tower lease and federal stimulus money. (Budget Staff Report, p. 4.) We disagree with this outlook. This is a limited view of the future with an assumption that the status quo of general fund spending must continue as is. If funding is reallocated from the outsized police budget, new programs which require ongoing expenditures can be supported by the general fund. That is why, for the next fiscal year, we recommend the city allow no growth in the police department's budget and that it permanently cuts all current vacant positions in the department—not re-fund any police positions. The city should then use the coming fiscal year to study how future cuts can be made within the police department, especially with the role of the new Crisis Intervention Team.

We enthusiastically support creating a Crisis Intervention Team. But, to be clear, this mobile crisis response should not be managed by the police department. The basis for creating a Crisis Intervention Team at this juncture is to take away law enforcement's role in responding to

¹ In 2017, with a police budget of \$8.32 million or \$320 per resident, the city already spent more police funding per capita than 82% of police departments in California. Police Scorecard, South Pasadena, <https://policescorecard.org/ca/police-department/south-pasadena> (last accessed May 25, 2021).

mental health crises. We want to provide people with an unarmed response service that does not involve any threat of lethal force. Thus, the Crisis Intervention Team should not be an extension of the police department, but should be viewed more like an emergency health service. This team could more appropriately be housed in the Fire Department, which is already connected to the city's dispatch system and provides emergency responses.

Next, we support the city's proposals to fund several new staff positions in the Planning and Public Works Departments to meet our city's affordable housing and infrastructure needs. We hope the Public Works Department position will be tasked with implementing several environmental and transportation initiatives. However, if that is not the intention of this new position, we recommend the city to fund at least one more new position, an Environmental Programs Manager, and use one-time funding to hire a temporary Transportation Manager or consultant to prepare the necessary plans to tap funding already earmarked for South Pasadena traffic management and complete streets projects. Residents have waited too long for the traffic relief and safety enhancements these projects would provide.

We share the city's priorities to assist the post-pandemic needs of the community and to improve the way the city addresses the needs of the unhoused and individuals with mental health issues. To ensure staff is adequately supported, we recommend that the city establish a Housing Commission to work alongside the Planning Department and its increased responsibilities in enforcing our city and state's housing laws. We also ask the city to establish a Homeless and Housing Resource Center with the city's one-time funds and/or general funds while it develops permanent operational funding for the center. The growing homeless crisis in the greater Los Angeles region calls for all cities to step up and do their part.

The city's strong financial position in the upcoming fiscal year allows the city to do even more for racial and economic equity than what city staff has proposed. In addition to programs that have been proposed, we urge the Commission to consider funding programs to support Black-owned businesses, pilot a local guaranteed income program, and provide more services to support our children and youth, including a city jobs program.

We are aware of the great task ahead of the city to get these programs permanently and deeply rooted so they can bloom into real progress. We support the direction the city's budget discussion has headed in light of our demands for a more racially and economically inclusive city, and we appreciate the Commission's service to our community.

Sincerely,

Anti-Racism Committee of South Pasadena
Black Lives Matter South Pasadena
Care First South Pasadena
South Pasadena Tenants Union
William Kelly, on behalf of Transition South Pasadena

From: [William Kelly](#)
To: [Finance Commission Public Comment](#)
Subject: Comments to the Finance Commission for it's 5-27-21 Meeting Re: South Pasadena's Proposed FY 21-22 Budget
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 11:13:31 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of South Pasadena. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Greetings:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments as you consider the city's proposed FY 21-22 budget.

For many years, South Pasadenans have been promised improved services, traffic congestion relief and safety enhancements, action to address and adapt to the climate crisis, and downtown revitalization. In addition, dramatic changes to the economy that have created huge inequities in wealth and income, the relentless increase in the cost of rental housing, rising homelessness, and the disgusting display of racial and political hatred have added to the demands and expectations placed on cities, the level of government closest to the people.

That's why it's important to fully include Care First's proposals in the upcoming budget. Certainly, many of Care First's proposals are reflected in the budget, and as a 27-year resident of the city I am glad to see this change in direction. Yet, there are several additional proposals that have been left out, including:

- Hiring a transportation program manager to marshall the plans and paperwork needed to access money already earmarked for city transportation projects;
- Creating a youth jobs program to give our students valuable skills and experience, as well as exposure to the world of work and different occupations;
- Funding a full-fledged crisis response team service and placing it under the Fire Department or Community Services Department, rather than under the Police Department;
- Doing more outreach to attract bids and quotes for various city services and supplies to Black-owned businesses in particular to help strengthen the economic status of Black communities, which have long suffered from unequal treatment and discrimination stemming from the era slavery; and
- Clearly funding a new and additional position of environmental manager to raise the profile of environmental programs within the city staff structure and to implement already planned measures at a pace and level commensurate with the burning challenges of global warming and mega-drought.

In addition, the budget is hazy concerning a city commitment to freeze police

hiring. It should include a clearcut commitment to freeze hiring for the next year and to shift the resulting savings to other services that benefit social well-being in South Pasadena. While the Police Department represents the biggest portion of South Pasadena's budget, it remains unclear how those expenditures benefit residents. It's notable that a starting patrol officer with a high school diploma and six months of training makes just a bit less than a starting civil engineer, who could design and oversee engineered traffic controls that would slow traffic and improve safety for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists alike 24-7-365, not merely a few hours a few days a week when an officer stakes out an intersection. Social workers make less than police, which is why the Cahoots program in Eugene, Oregon, saves the city money. Accordingly, while police hiring is frozen, the budget should fund an audit of the department to see how its operations could be streamlined and savings maximized. We have to face the fact that the large budget for police has effectively squeezed out the city's ability to provide other services and it is unclear how this large budget actually enhances public safety.

In addition to hiring staff to work on affordable housing in the Planning Department, the budget should outline expenditures to support affordable housing. For instance, the inclusionary ordinance allows developers who do not include affordable units in their projects to pay an in lieu of fee for compliance. The budget should project expected revenue from these fees and include detail on how the funds will be used to create and support affordable housing in South Pasadena. In addition, it's crucial that a portion of the American Rescue Plan funds be earmarked now to fill in gaps in other COVID-19 rental assistance programs in order to prevent evictions and an increase in homelessness.

Finally, designated reserve funds must be reexamined. It is fundamentally unfair to taxpayers that the city horde funds ad infinitum without providing public goods. Likewise, city residents pay taxes to the state, county, and regional agencies for a variety of services, but there are questions about the degree to which the city and its residents benefit due to the limited staff capacity to develop local programs to qualify for these funds. South Pasadena is effectively leaving money on the table as other cities race ahead with engineered traffic calming measures, tapping funds to improve the environment, building affordable housing, etc. In short, it's time to look toward and move into the future, rather than clinging to a past, which is disappearing before our eyes.

Bill Kelly
626-893-9311 (phone)
wjkelly7@gmail.com

From: [John Srebalus](#)
To: [Finance Commission Public Comment](#)
Subject: Public Comment - 5/27 Finance Commission / Agenda Item 1
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 5:14:37 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of South Pasadena. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Finance Commissioners,

I very much support the Care First Budget Proposal for 2021-22, and I appreciate your efforts to advance it. (Full disclosure: I am a founding member of Care First.) It is time for our budget to better reflect our city's values. Reflexively funding a larger and larger police presence at the expense of human services no longer withstands scrutiny. It is in fact contrary to both our national conscience and our macroeconomic realignment post-George Floyd. Communities have tackled changing priorities in a variety of ways, and we expect South Pasadena to grab the zeitgeist and push us boldly forward.

This past year has exposed deep flaws in the treatment of many members of our community. We can and must ensure a basic level of security and dignity for our most vulnerable and the community as a whole by investing in human services, affordable housing and 21st Century public safety. That is why I support the Care First Budget Proposal for 2021-22.

I was pleased to see your recommendation to allocate funds to develop a 24-hour Crisis Intervention Team. But it is critical that the Crisis Intervention Team be fully independent of the police department and staffed with appropriate service providers. Unarmed response absent any threat of lethal force is fundamental and the basis of such successful models as CAHOOTS in Eugene, OR. The Crisis Intervention Team should not exist as a supportive role for the police department. This team could easily be housed in the Fire Department, which is already connected to the city's dispatch system and provides emergency responses.

There are promising signs that affordable housing is finally becoming a public priority, yet here in South Pasadena it took three years to adopt an inclusionary housing ordinance. We need additional staff to make affordable housing a reality—a need you have recognized in your allocation of funding for two associate planners. The city also needs better programs for our unhoused neighbors that are publicly operated and not based on charity.

I urge you to adopt the proposals in the Care First Budget Proposal this evening. Thank you for your service to the city, and for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards,
John Srebalus

From: [Noah Kuhn](#)
To: [Finance Commission Public Comment](#)
Subject: Public comment for Finance Commission Meeting 5/27
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 4:41:35 PM

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Hi there!

My name is Noah Kuhn and I am a 14-year resident of South Pasadena (in district 2), as well as a student at SPHS. I am writing to you today to express my strong desire to see the budget for the SPPD defunded significantly, and those funds redistributed to community services like subsidizing affordable housing, creating more mental health resources for youth especially, expanding youth classes and enrichment opportunities, increasing services for our unhoused community, and funding more public art projects. Thank you so much.

From: [William Kelly](#)
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Bill Kelly

