



Good morning everyone. I'm Christopher Matthew Spencer and thank you for participating in this meeting and for listening to this presentation. I will endeavor to make this as fluff-free as possible, to respect time and move through the material efficiently.

I would invite you to record this meeting so that other City workers can review it if desired. You have my permission to do so.

And I wanted to let everyone on this Zoom meeting know that indeed, I am wearing trousers.

Just a few sentences about me so you know my background. I have worked as a consultant to private companies and public organizations for more than 30 years. I've owned businesses in Burbank since 1989 and I've lived here since September 1991. In addition to being a consultant, I am a professional real estate and stock investor; as well as author of self-help books. I currently sit on the board of nonprofit and for profit organizations.

I provide these ideas freely as a gift to the community in an effort to help with greater understanding and to help good things happen.

Attendees:

Mark Hatch, Deputy Fire Chief

Sana Arakelian, Fire Administrator



I'm recommending if you have questions, we handle them at the end of this presentation.

I am not expecting this meeting to resolve anything; or

That we end up agreeing on anything.

The goal is to spark ideas and serve up solutions. What you do with these ideas will be up to you. I hope they are helpful.

WHO?

- Uprise
- Solutions
- We are Burbank
- Core principles
- The needs of the many not the limited few
- Our politics
- Facts



Uprise is a group of Burbankers who have come together to focus attention on community topics.

We study, document, discuss, critique and seek solutions when warranted.

We are family, friends and people coming together with shared core principles.

We stand for individual freedom, limited government, the rule of law, peace through strength, fiscal responsibility, free markets and human dignity. Most of all we are pragmatic and expect common sense from ourselves and others.

We do not care what residents do in their bedroom or how they live their lives, or their ambitions, so long as what they want and expect isn't violating our rights or paid for by our taxes and needed by only the smallest number of residents. For those limited interests and needs, we recommend that churches, nonprofits and special interests fundraise and pay for those wishes.

We caucus during elections and more recently, we have decided to look at ballot measures as a means to achieve certain goals. We are working to support new candidates for city council, to look at changing from an at large election system to districts and to finding ways

to move Burbank away from the dependency on the local sales tax and in lieu transfers.

Even before COVID, the City of Burbank had at multiple times operated in a state of deficit so our electeds decided to ask residents to pass a local sales tax measure in 2018, resulting in Burbankers paying higher sales tax than our neighbors. At the same time, the elected decided to continue the practice of transferring ratepayer funds from utility bills with another ballot measure and paying a substantial amount of their utility billing to add to the General Fund. Using our judiciary, I twice asked judges to end the practice of in lieu transfers and provided the electeds with ways to improve revenues and reduce costs but we could not come to an accord. We are all entitled to our own facts. People decide on those facts individually. In the past, it's been said that Burbankers demand all the services that the City currently offers. A few people have spoken up loudly in support yet when we conduct surveys of large numbers of people in Burbank, our facts turn out different than the City's facts. We often hear about the needs of low income people and fragile seniors many seniors I know personally are millionaires. I even spoke with a millionaire who does not work who receives City programs yet has property and plenty of money in the bank. I know of another senior who receives nutrition program support yet due to her food sensitivities, she gives the items to her neighbor and continues to receive that support. The point is that there are many things we can discuss towards making Burbank more streamlined and cost effective.

WHAT THIS IS

- Nagging?
- Affinity
- Reality
- Communication



This is not an opportunity to pick on anyone or nag from a position of ignorance. Much time and study has gone into these ideas and I am seeking an open heart and mind when considering the possibilities. I believe that there are three factors that are important in handling life and that includes working with the City to build bridges and achieve greater understanding. They are:

Affinity, which is our spontaneous reaction to things, how we feel...a natural liking or sympathy for someone or something

Reality, which is the world or the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them; and

Communication, which is a journey of discovery. How we wish to explain our ideas to people including the City so that we can work better. These are the factors that affect our ability to get along with others and these are factors in improving relationships.

ENDLESS STAIRS

- Change
- Technology
- Loud people
- Intentions
- Information
- Specifics



Change can be hard and uncomfortable; and success is often hard to define.

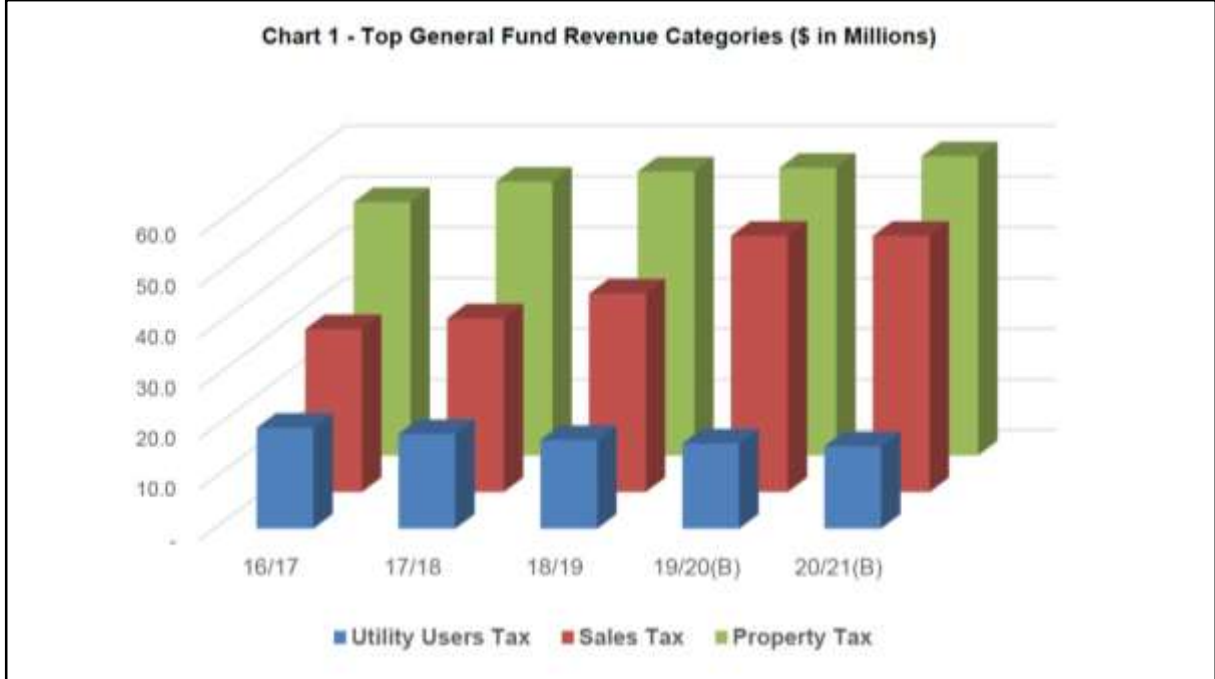
I've been a resident 32 years and Judie has been a very longtime resident as well and hopefully she can confirm this. Technology has affected the velocity at which changes are made within the City.

Access to the government is easier, and that's great. At the same time, a few loud voices can pull gravity on people and drive decisions that don't always reflect public opinion. Special interests can leverage this fact to rush their agendas through before Burbankers have an opportunity to consider all of the possibilities.

Governments have no intentions. Only people have intentions. Governments have no money, they manage the money of the People.

The best protection for all is an engaged and informed electorate.

As this presentation progresses, I'll cover general ideas and then get more specific with ideas for the Fire Department. Please bear with me.



Speaker Note: no key point changes

I'd like to discuss the local sales tax for a moment. To shore up an unbalanced City budget, the City placed Measure P on the ballot in 2018. This resulted in a ¼ cent local sales tax on all goods.

This is short term solution to a much bigger problem which is that a small number of loud voices have asked for certain amenities in the City and in order to accommodate these requests, services stay in place despite their high cost and modest demand.

Examples of this are BurbankBus which cost taxpayers \$8.9 million in one year yet usually run empty and Metro Micro offers a better service that's on demand via an app. Now I don't endorse any taxpayer funded competitor to Uber or Lyft but the BurbankBus has become an anachronism. And that's nearly \$9 million.

To keep the plates spinning, the City taxes residents more. A Burbanker pays 10.25% sales tax at Walmart, Ikea and Bobs Big Boy while our neighbors a mile away are paying only 9.5%.

Do you think the savvy buyer of \$105,000 Corvette Stingray is going to buy it at Community

Chevrolet or purchase that same care at Felix Chevrolet in Los Angeles and pay 9.5% sales tax. The unintended consequence of the local sales tax is that people work around it and that hurts our local economy.

I know firsthand of a local entertainment company that maintains a warehouse in another state, buys all their needs in this lower sales tax state then trucks these items into Burbank on a private vehicle, thereby avoiding the high sales tax altogether.

These tax schemes may serve as short term fixes but they are not long term solutions and cost cutting is the only long term solution.

USE MOLASSES

- $RT = a + b \log_2 (n)$
- Time and energy
- Ministerial actions
- Administrative decisions



This is the formula for Hick's Law. Named after the British psychologist William Hick. Hick and his partner Ray Hyman determined that people bombarded with choices have to take time to interpret and decide; obviously the amount of time required to make decisions grows with the number of decisions placed in front of a person. Where "RT" is the reaction time, "(n)" is the number of stimuli present, and "a" and "b" are arbitrary measurable constants that depend on the task that is to be carried out and the conditions under which it will be carried out. "A" could be finding the right present online for your mother-in-law; "B" could be an onscreen chat with your mother-in-law in which she reminds you it's her birthday tomorrow.

Decisions of all kinds require energy and time. Every moment saved accumulates and those accumulations of saved time will result in fewer, but better decisions. When you don't have to make a decision, then don't make the decision.

When action is legally required, then take it.

When action is not legally required, then throw molasses on it. Allow ample time for not only the council and staff to consider the ramifications of that decision but

also the residents.

CONTRACTS

- "I do"
- "I want a divorce!"
- Chapter 2 Article 1
- "Best value"
- No such thing
- \$10K or less
- Monthly
- P-Card



Outsourcing is like the journey of marriage. The City wants to outsource and there's no lack of dating opportunities with potential partners on their best behavior. The City offers attractive contracts and hopes to find that perfect match made in Heaven.

Independent contractors are sales organizations and their goal is to move from their first wink to the altar as rapidly as possible. But like all marriages, things can go wrong after the honeymoon is over.

Chapter 2, Article 1 of the Burbank Municipal Code discusses the various nuances of Purchasing and Contracting for the goods and services that the People require.

The term "best value" has been incorporated into the definitions of the code. I'll read just the pertinent part. "BEST VALUE: A value determined by evaluation of objective criteria that relate to price, features, functions, life-cycle costs, experience, and past performance. A best value determination may involve the selection of the lowest cost proposal meeting the interests of the City and meeting the objectives of the project or a tradeoff between price and other factors specified in the solicitation."

While contractors will perpetuate the seemingly invincible fallacy that contract

standards demand minimum terms such as three to five years, there is no such thing as a standard agreement. Of particular focus for me is when human capital is contracted. A few suggestions I have are to never engage in such terms as to open up the People to receive potentially mediocre services from human capital agencies. Whether we're talking about mowing laws, administrative services, or polygraph testing.

Bidding requires human resources and time. It is in the best interest of the City to streamline this. Annual aggregate purchases (\$10,000.00) or less per vendor, per year, per departmental division require no bid. There are other exceptions that should be reviewed.

For human capital agreements, I'd recommend month-to-month agreements. These agencies have turnover like any other employer but their back office investments are usually already set up. Short contracts keep these vendors on their toes.

Whenever contracts and bidding can be avoided but quality service is identifiable, use a p-card instead.

THE MOVING IMAGE

- Online courses
- Simple!
- Library
- Flexible application
- Residents
- Views



Online courses are great. I have learned more in the past three years using online courses than in the prior 30 years. Recording evergreen information is easy, quick and affordable. Pre-recorded information allows subject matter experts to help learners indefinitely.

No need for fancy graphics, animation and editing. What people want is the education. The content. Some of the most popular videos out there were captured on a phone with no post production work whatsoever.

A course library is easily managed, rapidly deployable and remotely accessible. I've seen the City's videos and they are wonderful. In some cases the time and cost invested in them seems more than was necessary.

Media is also a wonderful tool for inspections and other exchange of information between city workers as well as with the public.

Videos are also a useful tool to help educate residents on a variety of safety and procedural topics.

The City generally puts out videos on YouTube that receive very few views and there are multiple solutions that can also be part of another discussion about that topic specifically.

MEASURE H

- Measure H
- The promises
- General Fund
- Capture
- Fairness



Measure H, the “Los Angeles County Plan to Prevent and Combat Homelessness” creates a one-quarter of a cent sales tax, which generates funds for the specific purposes of funding homeless services and short-term housing. It was passed in 2017 by a supermajority vote.

Measure H promised voters to fund mental health, substance abuse treatment, health care, education, job training, rental subsidies, emergency and affordable housing, transportation, outreach, prevention, and supportive services for homeless children, families, foster youth, veterans, battered women, seniors, disabled individuals, and other homeless adults.

The General Fund monies are currently being used to cope with the homeless who have medical emergencies, overdoses, set fires in public places and engage with the fire department and police.

I’m recommending that the City increase efforts to capture those Measure H funds to insist on more local control and use of them to shift the cost of dealing with the fires, overdoses and other local issues created by the homeless.

Now this isn’t going to be easy. It may require highly persuasive action. The County has not demonstrated a willingness to release all the funds that they have taken from Burbankers which amounts to as much as \$9 million and growing. But Burbankers were promised that

these funds would be used to help the homeless and the General Fund should not suffer because it is easier to use that money than fight for what is right and good for all Burbankers.

POLYGRAPH

- \$275 per hour
- *United States v. Scheffer*
- Polygraph Protection Act
- California Labor Code §432.2 LC.
- Discouraged
- Consensus lacking



I promised to get more specific to the Fire Department in this presentation. Currently the Fire Department contracts for Polygraph screening and examination services for firefighter candidates at the rate of \$275 per hour. I'm recommending the City discontinue the use of these services.

United States v. Scheffer (1998), 523 US 303.

Employee Polygraph Protection Act prohibits most private employers from using lie detector tests, either for pre-employment screening or during the course of employment.

California Labor Code 432.2 LC. Says that no employer shall demand or require any applicant for employment or prospective employment or any employee to submit to or take a polygraph, lie detector or similar test or examination as a condition of employment or continued employment.

While the City is exempt from these restrictions as all governments are, most people I know don't want to be hooked up to a machine and grilled with a bunch of questions. I see this as a needless expense. Potentially good candidates may be discouraged knowing that polygraphs are used.

What is most compelling of all is there is simply no consensus that polygraph evidence is reliable: The scientific community and the state and federal courts are extremely polarized on the matter.

SUCCESSION PLAN

- Challenges
- Change
- Formalize
- Steps
- Lower costs



Life can be messy. Illness, personal emergencies, family challenges, accidents and even sudden death are part of the Reality I spoke of in the beginning of the presentation.

Workers can become suddenly injured on duty, no longer able to work for various reasons, or may have to attend to a sick relative in another state. A serious car accident can be a life changer.

I looked but cannot find a formal, written succession plan for Burbank's public safety workers. The process of searching for talent on an urgent basis becomes expensive, stressful and sometimes the City hires outside consultants, further increasing the cost to taxpayers.

A formal succession plan identifies potential successors and identifies how the department will develop its next in line talent. Here are some important steps in a formal succession planning process:

1. Create selection criteria for the future leaders
2. Identify potential candidates (internal or external) and maintain a living document of potentials
3. Assess potential candidates
4. Design a Development Program for identified next in line leaders

5. Create a Leadership Transition Plan including a time frame

Formal succession planning reduces the randomness in an organization's hiring and promotion processes. A formal plan establishes the steps, policies and procedures to select next-in-line leadership. A formal succession plan has a high probability of reducing recruiting cost for leadership positions when sudden vacancies occur.

DRONES

- DFR
- Fast
- Eyes
- Dock and charge
- Light pole platform?



I've studied the use of Drones as First Responders in policing. I believe that drones could help cut costs for the Burbank Fire Department and I'll explain my thesis.

From the two farthest points I could find, Burbank is just around five miles across. Drones are fast and can be deployed and on an emergency scene faster than a crew of people.


An advanced view of a scene would allow the Fire Department eyes on the ground to rapidly assess the needs of the moment including the number of vehicles and workers estimated for the problem at hand. A car accident will have different needs than a building fire.

Drones now can dock themselves and charge themselves.

Consider placing drones up high on platforms in strategic places within the City to allow them to arrive in a minute or two once activated. Why not place them high on light poles? You would not need that many. Burbank has a small geographic footprint.

IDEAS

- Volunteers
- Fundraising
- Booster group
- Billions
- Boosters I know
- Successful
- Endowment



Clayton is a village in the town of Clayton in Jefferson County, New York. Their population was less than 2,000 as of the latest census. Their fire department is all-volunteer and the Clayton Fire Department Booster Club sells raffle tickets and hold a drawing three times a year to fund their fire department.

I'm not aware of Burbank using volunteer firefighters, however the idea of fundraising sounded excellent to me so I asked my staff to do some sleuthing around.

A Booster Group operating under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code could fundraise all year to subsidize the budget, and additional wants of the Burbank Fire Department.

To examine community support of nonprofits, we conducted an audit of 990 forms for all Burbank-based organizations and found that \$1.642 Billion was raised in fiscal year 2021 with \$1.763 billion in cash on hand among all Burbank nonprofits.

In 1992, exactly 30 years ago, I served as the Vice President of the Wilshire Community Police Council, a very active booster group for the Wilshire Division of the LAPD and organized their fundraising efforts. The organization held many beneficial fundraisers.

To give you one such example, the Fire Department Relief Association of Northfield

Minnesota raised \$6,243,375 and had assets of \$7,114,388. Booster groups offer unique benefits to government agencies and our surveys show that residents like to provide additional financial support.

I also recommend endowment fundraising as a solution for clients. This can also include gifts from estate planning and large corporate donors. The funds can then be placed into an index such as the S&P 500. As an example, the S&P 500 returned 16.55% annually on average over the preceding 10 years. Nonprofits have been using endowments with great success. USC has a \$13.93 billion endowment. One of the most famous endowments in the world is that funded by Alfred Nobel who passed away in 1896 and 125 years later, the Nobel Foundation is able to give each winner more than \$1 million in cash prize money for winning the award based on Nobel's careful financial planning when he passed away. I am recommending that the City look at the possibility of using booster groups and carefully invested endowments as a means of supporting additional funding wishes as opposed to looking at tax increases. To give you some perspective on this, Nobel's money has now grown to more than \$631 million as of 2020 after one and a quarter centuries after his passing.

BILLING

- Billing contract
- Paramedic
- Inspection
- Better



Corinne Wittman-Wong charges the City \$250,000 for both paramedic and fire inspection billing services. That's the latest figure I curated from a copy of her contract. It may have even gone up since then. I propose that the City can cut this cost without compromising service. My proposal is multi-faceted.

As to the paramedic billing, this is probably something that the Fire Department needs to handle all-year-round. While I fully support the idea of outsourcing administrative tasks, I believe there is a lower cost means of handling paramedic billing and I encourage the Fire Department to examine cloud invoicing programs that allow remote workers to enter and send invoices from anywhere, anytime, online. My company uses Freshbooks and Freshbooks is very well-known, secure and respected. It allows unlimited invoices to be send and online payments collected for \$50 per month plus nominal credit card processing fees. Again that's what we use and I am neither an owner nor investor in the company. Stripe, Quickbooks and many other cloud invoicing systems exist that permit teams to issue invoices.

Addressing the Fire Inspection billing, I'll share an example and my ideas to eliminate or greatly reduce this cost and administrative burden from the Fire Department. I own properties. At my properties, each of my locations has dry chemical fire extinguishers. They cost roughly \$65 plus tax each at most. Fox Fire Protection, the licensed vendor I use in

Burbank, charges me \$13.50 to recharge and tag this extinguisher plus if I'm too busy to drive to them, they charge \$35 for on-site service. The Fire Department then inspects their work and charges me \$50 which is more than the work itself. Presumably to cover the cost of Corinne Wittman-Wong's invoice and some reimbursement for the time of the inspectors. I'm skeptical that \$50 covers both in candor.

I believe there is a simple, better and lower cost way of handling the inspection billing.

TRAIN THE TRAINER

- One and done
- Five years
- Videos
- Bonded
- Inspection media
- Audits



The system I'm proposing is an easy one. Train the trainer. In other words, allow reputable, licensed vendors to do all the work.

Licensed fire protection vendors that have been in business for at least five years, may inspect, recharge and self certify the work they do.

The Burbank Fire Department develops a video learning course and shares it with these vendors.

All such vendors must buy a surety bond of no less than \$15,000 and liability insurance if they want to self-certify their work.

They send inspection videos or still images to a central email or upload it to DropBox or Google Drive, or a similar established platform.

To ensure quality work, the Fire Department can conduct 1% random audits of their work. Anyone found doing deficient work will be required to retrain and if the problem occurs again, they can be banned from self-certification for one year. These companies can charge a small additional fee for having to buy a bond, complete training and handle the additional work of sending or uploading their inspections. I spoke with Fox Fire Protection about my

idea and they loved it.

WHO?

- Support
- CREST
- A-players
- Great workers



Annual inspections will require some administrative support.

CREST Youth Employment offers students ages 16 - 17 paid employment in which they receive job skills training as well as on-the-job training within a City of Burbank Department. Inspections can be timed in such a way that CREST students can handle all of the administrative support. It would be a great experience and may even attract students to the profession of firefighting. Frankly, I think you'd find a lot of enthusiasm among young people just to get a chance to work in some capacity for the fire department.

You don't need an army just A-players and with CREST, it is easy to know which are the A-students.

Most young people already are experts with computers. I have hired BEST students, the civilian version of this program and they were always wonderful workers.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Reports
- Cost \$ & hours
- Needless
- Record and post



I've got a few closing thoughts on cost savings and I'm sharing them with you realizing you may have very little to do with their implementation as policy but I wanted to circulate the ideas anyway to give you a chance to weigh in at the right time. Staff reports represent a tremendous allocation of valuable time and resources. I am recommending to the City Council that staff report requests be voted upon. In other words, currently any City Council member can ask for a staff report. I'm recommending that a request for a staff report be made as a motion, seconded and voted upon before staff time is committed to producing staff reports.

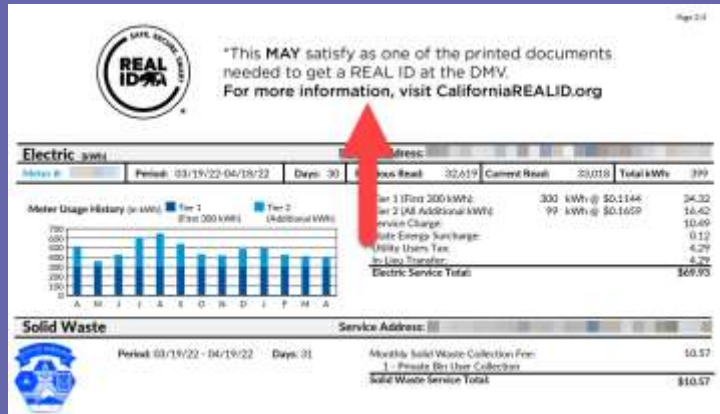
I am also suggesting that the City Council require that staff reports show a dollar figure on them that shows how many staff hours, estimate of their staff time cost be tallied and placed at the top of the report.

This provides transparency to the cost of staff reports and may very well discourage City Council from asking for needless reports in the first place.

I'd also recommend that City Council permit staff to pre-record their reports as an alternative to writing them. In truth, I'd recommend all staff presentations be prerecording and posted online to permit at least two weeks of viewing by the elected officials, staff and residents before City Council considers a report, a proposal or any other deliberative item.

SURVEYS

- Loud voices
- Burbank Water and Power
- Google Forms / Google Workspaces
- \$10 ~ Godaddy
- Complete!
- Finding truth



Before I end this presentation, I'd like to circle back about my earlier claim that the loud few voices have been guiding decisions in our City. Some might argue that I am one of the loud, few voices, however I can assure you that my opinions are not merely my own. Our team has conducted surveys of the residents at large scale to ask opinions. We also speak and meet with stakeholders and residents.

I've spoken with Burbank Water and Power general manager Dawn Lindell about getting the word out to residents. She didn't hold any grudges about the past legal cases and was in fact very interested in making improvements and finding efficiencies. We covered a very robust list of ideas.

One of the ways that the Fire Department leadership and the City generally can survey the residents is very cost effective. Google Forms is part of Gmail and the paid service known as Google Workspace. In a very short time, a survey can be set up with Google Forms. I'm happy to demonstrate this to the staff at any time.

A domain for that survey can be purchased for less than \$10 from Godaddy.

And Burbank Water and Power has a very robust mailing list. In fact the most robust around, it's everyone who has utility service and that's every home and office in Burbank.

Using surveys that you initiate from the utility billing can help you determine what services the residents really want rather than listening to the anointed self-appointed experts in the community who have special interests and agendas. Not too surprisingly, a very large percentage of residents would choose to eliminate some of Burbank's services. I'll take that up with the leadership at the correct time. I hope that you will consider these ideas and I thank you for your consideration.

