



Strategic timing is everything!

In most cases, your community is like every other community in North Carolina (if not the Nation), you continue to face mounting service needs and costs but not enough revenue to fund them. As you move into 2019, now is a great time to strategically review and prioritize your most critical service needs and determine what's possible. Provided below are a few key steps and time parameters to help you with this mission.

- **Step 1 - Strategically identify and prioritize your most critical needs in early February 2019.** While everything is important, not all things are critical or need to be done now. To this end, it is important for you and your Board to first determine and prioritize your most critical service needs (i.e., these are typically the problems or issues you hear about most often from citizens!) and then, determine what you want to do to address them. For example, in Greensboro in 2015, we determined that street repair and resurfacing was one of our most critical service needs. This priority need was informed by the number of calls and complaints our Council members and staff received about the issue and, validated by our bi-yearly pavement management survey which indicated our streets were in very poor condition.
- **Step 2 – Explore and determine possible revenue options to address your most critical needs in early March 2019.** There are typically revenue options to help fund your most critical service needs and priorities. In certain cases, these options will be readily apparent and in others they will require some additional research and/or creativity to accomplish. In Greensboro, we researched and landed on two options to help meet our street repair needs. The first was to use our legislative authority to increase our local vehicle fee from \$10/vehicle to \$30/vehicle and, the second was to include additional funding in a Citywide Transportation bond. When combined, both options provided us with the ability to effectively increase our annual street resurfacing efforts by 250% per year for 5 years.
- **Step 3 - Develop a game plan to help you fund your most critical needs in early April 2019.** This plan needs to include a good communication and outreach strategy, outline the steps needed to approve any new revenue sources, and provide specific information on implementation timing, expected results, and specific projects to be funded. In



Greensboro, our plan clearly defined the problem driving the need, included steps and timing to process both revenue sources, and was very specific in identifying what the additional revenue was going to accomplish and who was going to benefit. For example, the vehicle fee increase component was included as part of our recommended FY 15-16 budget and did not go into effect until the start of the next calendar year (January 2016). This deferred timing effectively helped keep the item out of our budget discussions. For the bond component, we developed a comprehensive list of city thoroughfares and streets that would be resurfaced during the 5 years of bond support. This “what you see is what you get approach”, helped our citizens see and understand the value of their support for and investment in the bond. The bond passed with 80+% voter approval.

In summary, strategic timing is everything! There is no need to delay in addressing your most critical service needs. There are typically options to fund them. It just requires a little creativity, leadership, and effort to accomplish but the results can be significant and transformative for your community. Please feel free to call or email me to learn more.

Jim Westmoreland, PE
Retired City Manager, City of Greensboro
Managing Principal, Westmoreland Strategic Enterprises, LLC
jwestmoreland@westmorelandstrategicenterprises.com
(336) 420-4411