

Councilmember Rich read the following statement for the record:

"I see the budget as a strategy to give us direction on how we spend our city's revenue or money. Last year this Council commissioned the PARCA study as a prerequisite to initiate an additional one cent sales tax to meet an emergency shortfall of City of Mobile revenues. The Alabama Affairs Research Council of Alabama or PARCA study released its findings a few months ago.

This study, by an independent body, recommends that 'the City of Mobile should make the funding of capital needs for meeting its core responsibilities a first-priority matter, and that if it comes down to a fiscal choice, the City should curtail contributions to outside activities rather than neglect its own core responsibilities.'

Let me repeat this statement so there is no mistake...'the City of Mobile should make the funding of capital needs for meeting its core responsibilities a first-priority matter, and that if it comes down to a fiscal choice, the City should curtail contributions to outside activities rather than neglect its own core responsibilities.'

The PARCA further noted that the City is spending only a small fraction of its capital money on actual capital needs such as drainage, streets, roof repairs, new technology, keeping vehicles in shape or replaced, and so on. Much of the rest goes to debt service on big ticket items like funding for the GulfQuest Maritime Museum now under construction and on bringing a college bowl game to Mobile. Not to mention contributions to the Mobile Area Education Foundation and the restoration of the Battleship Alabama and United Cerebral Palsy. All worthy endeavors, but they are not a basic service of our City of Mobile.

PARCA also points out that delayed maintenance means more expensive repairs or replacements later, and in some cases more City employees need to be hired because of it. I ask the Administration and my colleagues, does the 2012 budget before us today reflect any of the points summarized by the PARCA study?

Unfortunately there appears to be little change in the direction our City spends its money from last year. It's more of the same. In fact, we are being told that next year the City will face another financial crisis without additional revenue or spending cuts. It is because of the PARCA study's findings and the ominous projections for 2013 and beyond that I really cannot support this budget as it is written.

The time is now, not in 6 to 9 months to start righting the ship. Hard decisions will be necessary. Can we afford to continue contributing to all the outside contractual agencies at the expense of our basic City services? Can we afford our present employee health plan? When do we finally ask the public through referendums if they are willing to fund certain important projects such as GulfQuest or do we continue to borrow and to shudder when we see the loan paybacks in the budget overshadow all expenditures? And I was very intrigued when the Mayor said to bring the curfew to a referendum because I'm hoping that I'm seeing a movement

within the Administration to talk about referendums for the City of Mobile. It's not an unusual thing to do when you're going borrow money or when you need additional funds to support your services. We have to trust our citizens.

Do we need another PARCA study or an independent audit of ways to streamline our government? Probably not, since we tend to ignore many of these studies that we pay dearly for.

We must protect the basic services of our City without burdening our citizens. This is not playing politics or being divisive. This is looking at a budget before us that is guaranteed to fail and this has been acknowledged by our Administration. I would like to request the Administration to come up with a budget plan that realistically projects no deficit in 2013 without seeking addition taxation from citizens that are already financially stressed and have already contributed \$24 million in their extra penny sales tax. I am willing to help in these assessments and deliberation in any way necessary. Thank you."