

February 4th, 2009

TO: Lincoln Citizens

FROM: Mayor Chris Beutler

RE: "Taking Charge" Document

The Mayor's Office looks forward to beginning a new conversation on our annual City budget. The "Taking Charge: Progress Measures & Program Prioritization" document is the culmination of a long and meticulous effort to develop goals for City government, indicators to measure progress toward those goals and a ranking of City programs based on how they contribute to the goals.

The result is the first phase of a document that I hope will serve as our guide in working with the City Council and the public to develop the 2009-2010 budget.

I wanted to provide some information on the structure and thought behind the document as you review it.

The document is divided into the eight broad outcome areas we have been discussing for the past several months. The outcomes are listed in the order determined by the citizen survey conducted during last year's Priority Lincoln process. Please do not place too much emphasis on the exact order of the outcomes. It is important to remember that the difference in percentages between many of the outcomes in the citizen survey was very small.

Each "Citywide Outcome" has several "Goals" that are prioritized in order of importance in meeting the outcome. The goals were developed in a group process that included City staff and private sector contributors.

"Progress Indicators" are generally listed with each goal. The progress indicators were chosen to provide objective measures on which to base program decisions.

City programs are listed with each goal. They are divided into "Tiers" based on the group discussions about how important the program was in achieving the goal.

The document gives us a framework from which to compare programs for inclusion in the 2009-2010 budget. Programs in more highly ranked "Tiers" and more highly ranked "Goals" are more likely to be included in the budget. But the final decision on whether programs are included in the budget also depends on our City revenue situation, City Council decisions and public input.

Please take into consideration the following as you view the document:

1. ***Federal/State mandates.*** The fact that the City is “mandated” to perform an action does not necessarily reflect its value in accomplishing a goal. We chose to evaluate programs and activities based solely on their relevance to achieving the goals. As a result, you will see some programs that are mandated in the lowest “Tier.” I am interested in your thoughts on how we handle this matter as the process advances.
2. ***Programs that Cover Multiple Outcomes.*** Many programs could be placed in multiple outcomes and multiple goals. Some services such as “recreation centers” were split across outcomes based on who was being served and the nature of the specific program offered in the recreation center. We chose not to list programs in more than one outcome or goal to avoid confusion. You may have thoughts on where programs are most accurately placed.

We look forward to continued discussion and input on where programs should be ranked and to what “Goal” they should be attached. We strongly believe this process will be helpful in establishing the basis for the 2009-2010 budget. The outcome-based budget process allows us to inform the public of our budget deliberations at a much earlier stage, so we can better respond to your concerns.

I am gratified by your interest in reviewing this initial effort. We look forward to hearing your ideas on how we can improve our goals, indicators and rankings.