

## City taxes to rise 13 percent

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The Austin City Council approved a 13 percent tax levy increase on Monday, but it wasn't without more proposals for tax cuts, lengthy discussion and three failed motions.

The tax levy for 2012 was approved with a 4-2 vote.

Since the state has eliminated some funding and tax breaks, the levy increase is for \$3,975,000.

Council member Judy Enright brought a plan to the table with three options to decrease the overall budget with cuts to various city departments. She wanted to challenge departments to make cuts.

"I think that people need to be challenged to do things differently," Enright said. "It's not impossible. I have confidence in them that they can find ways."

Her three motions were to cut the budget to reduce the levy by \$105,663 (about 3 percent), \$70,442 (about 2 percent) and \$35,247 (about 1 percent). The first two failed on 4-3 votes, with Mayor Tom Stiehm breaking the tie. The third motion (\$35,247) failed by a 4-2 vote.

Enright and Marian Clennon voted in favor of all three motions; Roger Boughton voted for the first two. Janet Anderson, Jeff Austin and Brian McAlister voted against all three. Steve King was absent from Monday's meeting.

Those who voted against Enright's ideas said they were supportive of them for the future, but there was concern about what kinds of cuts would be made.

"We don't know what these real dollars are going to give us," Austin said. "We're at the 11:59 hour here."

Enright maintained that although the cuts would be work, they would be doable. The council should also be able to trust department heads to make cuts, she said.

"There's a lot of unknowns out there," Enright said. "We've got to think of everybody in the community, not just the department heads."

Boughton, who had presented other cost-cutting ideas to the council during the months of budget talks, had one more idea to try and lower taxes: Eliminate the contingency fund of \$140,000 for 2012. This would have reduced the tax increase from 13 percent to 9 percent. His motion failed to get a second.

The council also approved the 2012 budget of more than \$30 million by a 4-2 vote. Clennon and Enright voted against the motions for both the levy and budget approval.