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Anchorage Residents Have Real Talks About City Budget

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ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTVA-CBS 11 News)

Anchorage residents got the chance to tell the city exactly how they feel about what should be in next year's budget.

Wednesday's jammed packed Citizen Budget meeting was very unique because there was no debate, just dialogue and real talk with other residents on what they want to see our city and its services look like.

Its budget talk for 2011. Where no topic is off limits. Because when it comes to figuring out how to balance Anchorage's 2011 operating budget, the Assembly and Mayor Dan Sullivan want to know what services people think are important to keep in it and how should they pay for it.

"We know there is budget challenges, our goal is to make sure we listen," said Mayor Dan Sullivan.

"Watching the city go up and down up and down between taxes and how it affects the city itself and the people," said Vivian Williams, an Anchorage resident who was part of the public dialogue. "I feel like my questions and answers hopefully would be a good impact and they would hear it."

"I think we have politicians who are afraid of the word taxes, dirty five letter word," said Andrew Liebert, an Anchorage resident who was part of the public dialogue.

"There are tough choices at hand and tough decisions to be made and they don't want to go into that with any preconceptions, with any ideas about what the absolute answer would be without consulting authentically with members of the public," said Heidi Gantwerk, the

facilitator for the public dialogue.

With increased costs and declining revenues, Sullivan says either taxes have to be raised or services cut or a combination of both to maintain what people want.

Something that folks agreed with.

"I'm proud of Anchorage and I don't have a problem paying for the quality of life here," said Liebert.

"If we cut some of that down, I'm pretty sure that the citizens of Anchorage would be effected by it, I mean as it is right now, it doesn't seem like we are getting much services," said Williams.

Which is why they are willing to continue sitting at the table talking and listening about what is best for Anchorage.

"If I can do that by listening to the issues and stating my opinion in public forum than I want to do that," said Liebert.

Sullivan says these talks are crucial to the budget process as they face a potential shortfall of \$25 million dollars if taxes aren't raised or services cut.

The mayor's budget is due in front of the Assembly by October 2nd.

People were sent away from Wednesday's meeting because there was a full room.

To be apart of the public process to speak, officials say you can sign up on the city's website online right here

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