



During the City Council's budget work session on Tuesday night, the council was given a forecast of how increases to the tax levy might look over the next few years. It showed an increase of about 10% for 2024, and an increase

that could possibly be as high as 19% in 2025 based on the possibility of the city building a new ice arena and dramatic increases to the city parks maintenance budget.

Setting the ice arena aside, Councilor Davin Sokup asked whether the funding increase to the parks budget should be cut in half. Wages, he said, have not kept up with inflation, and a property tax increase right now could be painful to a lot of people. Sokup also pointed out that the city intends to increase the Commercial/Industrial tax base, and it is his opinion that large tax increases should wait until that happens.

"The city budget should be set where people are at," he said. "And basing the budget on rising property values is a mistake"

Mayor Pownell responded that the reasons for the increase to the parks budget are mostly to get caught up after more than a decade of maintenance neglect.

*"Maybe we won't be everyone's favorite council, but we have to act responsibly. I have served on councils in the past that worked to keep the tax levy as low as possible in order for members to maintain their social status. We have to be more responsible than that."*

Speaking with Jeff Johnson on the KYMN morning show Wednesday morning, the mayor reiterated her feelings that taking care of the things the city already has in place must be a priority, and if the city does not do that, it only becomes more expensive down the line.

*"But there's also a really deep cost if you just delay all of that to future generations, and that to me, is irresponsible governance. It's hard. We need to find solutions that are doable for our community. But there is a really significant cost to not finding solutions on how to fund all of these things."*

The mayor said part of that responsibility is taking a holistic and balanced approach to funding the city. If cuts are to be made to the Parks Department maintenance budget, she said, then cuts must be made elsewhere in the city budget as well.

The council will discuss the budget again during another work session on Tuesday night. The vote to set the preliminary tax levy will be on Tuesday, September 19th.

Jeff Johnson's full conversation with Northfield Mayor Rhonda Pownell and City Administrator Ben Martig can be heard here (<https://kymnradio.net/2023/09/06/mayor-rhonda-pownell-and-ben-martig-discuss-northfield-city-council-meeting-and-budget-work-session/>)

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Rhonda is blaming past administration for her agenda of spending. Not even touching her bikeways, water plant, etc.

Nor addressing future projects that will push up levys and taxes.

Isn't this her 2nd term? So, blaming herself and gaslighting at the same time?!

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