

SECTION  
★ **B**  
**METROPOLITAN**

www.kcstar.com

THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Friday, January 19, 2001

**Budget proposal divides council**

By LYNN HOHSELEY  
The Kansas City Star

No new taxes for city services. That was the refrain from a vocal group of Kansas City Council members Thursday as they had their first in-depth discussion about the proposed 2001-2002 budget.

But that anti-tax sentiment raises questions about what will happen to plans for about \$150 million in upgrades to the city's police and fire stations.

For several years, city officials have studied the need for new police and fire stations in the Northland and the need to renovate or replace facilities throughout the inner city.

An early wish list of \$600 million in projects has been whittled to about \$150 million. City planners had talked about trying to put a bond issue and tax-increase proposal up for a vote this year.

But Councilman Jim Rowland wasn't enthusiastic about asking taxpayers for more money. "I want to fund police and fire capital

**BUDGET: Spending splits KC council**

Continued from B-1

needs, but we ought to do it within the existing budget," he said.

Council members Paul Danaher, Evert Asjes and Alvin Brooks also expressed reservations about seeking any tax increases this year.

City Budget Director Larry Platised estimated it would cost about \$14 million to \$15 million annually to pay the debt service on a \$150 million bond issue.

Some council members were skeptical the city could find the money in the existing budget. "It sounds great to say, 'Find the

money in the budget,'" Councilman Ed Ford said, noting that no council member was identifying those millions of dollars were.

City Manager Bob Collins said his staff would prepare a memorandum outlining the implications of paying for the police and fire stations in the existing budget.

The discussion included a lively debate on how Kansas City could limit spending.

Councilwoman Becky Nace warned her colleagues that they would have to be disciplined about financing essential services

that only government can provide. Nace said she hears from too many metro area agencies that consider Kansas City a "Santa Claus," without seeking funding from other metro area cities.

"Santa Claus to you... But government has a moral obligation to do what's right," Councilman Troy Nash responded, saying, Kansas City should help pay for day-care services, homeless shelters and domestic violence prevention.

Danaher noted that the \$943 million proposed budget is up from \$650 million when he was first elected in 1995. He expressed

frustration that the city already has spent about \$2 million on efficiency consultants and has budgeted \$1.2 million more next year, but has yet to see any savings from those efforts.

"When can we expect the budgeted savings along with the line of what was promised?" Danaher asked.

Collins said he expected those savings to appear in the 2002-2003 budget.

The council will get the official budget proposal Feb. 8 and must adopt it by the end of March. It goes into effect May 1.

See BUDGET, B-2