COVID-19 Takes Toll on Unified Government Budget

The COVID-19 pandemic will cost the Unified Government more than $23-million in revenues in 2020 and an estimated $18-million in 2021.

The revenue shortfalls are largely caused by the sharp drop in sales and gasoline tax collections when the economy shutdown for several months as businesses closed and people were under stay at home orders.

UG officials are cutting nearly $22-million from the 2020 budget by reducing services, deferring expenses and borrowing from “rainy day” funds. But even those actions still leave a $2.5-million shortfall in 2020 and an estimated $5.6-milion shortfall in 2021.

To help fill that remaining budget hole, County Administrator Doug Bach is implementing a mandatory 10-day furlough program for most Unified Government employees.

“While I was trying to avoid impacts on employees by reducing spending in many areas, it has become clear that part of our financial solution will come at the expense of employee salaries,” Bach wrote in a memo to employees.

“This decision does not come lightly. We are going to move quickly so that employees can take advantage of the federal unemployment benefits that add an additional $600 to the State weekly unemployment payment.”

Because that additional federal benefit runs out at the end July, employees are encouraged to take the 10 furlough days during the next six weeks. Under the plan, employees will work three days a week and take two furlough days a week. Police Officers, Sheriff’s Deputies, Firefighters/EMS, and Public Safety Dispatchers are exempted from the mandatory furlough program.