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Hahn signs \$5.3 billion city budget
Mayor touts cooperation

By Rick Orlov, Staff Writer

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With police cars, a bomb-sniffing dog and representatives from neighborhood councils standing with him, Mayor James Hahn on Thursday signed into law a \$5.3 billion budget for the coming year.

Hahn, whose spending plan was approved this year without the acrimony of past years, said he had decided against vetoing any of the \$30 million in changes approved by the City Council.

"This was a process where we worked with the neighborhood councils and we worked with the City Council to develop a budget that reflected their priorities," Hahn said during ceremonies in front of Parker Center where he signed the seven-inch-thick document.

"I am proud of the budget I am signing because it funds those services that we all agree are important."

Hahn said he was proud the spending plan was balanced without increasing any general taxes even as the city faced a \$300 million shortfall because of state actions taking local revenue.

City Council President Alex Padilla agreed with Hahn and urged voters to support a measure on the November ballot that will protect local revenues.

"It is important to send a message to Sacramento that we want to keep local taxes for local services," Padilla said.

The budget proposed by Hahn and adopted by the council calls for only modest increases in the city police and fire departments in the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Thirty new police officers will be hired along with 24 firefighters. Ambulances will also be provided at each fire station for the first time in city history.

Hahn also touted the budget providing funding for the opening and staffing of the new North Valley Police Station in Mission Hills. It is scheduled to open by the end of this year.

In addition, it doubles to 435 miles the streets that will be resurfaced this year, provides funding for staff and materials at city libraries as well as full funding of the \$100 million affordable housing trust fund.

To balance the budget, however, Hahn increased the amount of money transferred from the Department of Water and Power by \$60 million to a total of \$239 million and also eliminated nearly 300 jobs on the city payroll. Also, the city will be continuing a general hiring freeze for most jobs.

Hahn credited the work of neighborhood councils in developing the budget.

"We went to them and heard their priorities," Hahn said. "Then we went to work to fund those. When we ran out of money, that was the end of it."

Richard Gallegos of the Pacoima Neighborhood Council said he welcomed the involvement.

"We felt we had a real say in what the city is doing," Gallegos said. "We had a sense they were listening to us."

Hahn said he will continue their involvement in the coming year to also include evaluating the performance of general managers.

Denny Schneider of the Westchester Neighborhood Council praised the mayor for including his group in the deliberations, but added he remains concerned over Hahn's proposal to modernize Los Angeles International Airport.

"We appreciate him coming to us on the budget; now we'll see if he'll listen to us on the airport," Schneider said. "We are not convinced it makes sense to put all the airport development in one spot."