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## De Blasio Unveils New York Budget Focused on Savings and Fixes

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Mayor Bill de Blasio unveiled his \$82.2 billion executive budget for New York City on Tuesday with a presentation focused on savings extracted from city agencies, and a few new programs intended to address problems that arose over the past year, from snarled snowplows in Queens to voting woes in the presidential primary last week.

The final budget, like the preliminary proposal set forward by the mayor in January, favored quality-of-life improvements that would be felt by many New Yorkers instead of ambitious policy goals. It included more money to pave roads, the hiring of hundreds of seasonal parks department employees and a \$50 million pool on Staten Island.

Similar to last year, when a budget deal included the hiring of 1,300 police officers, the biggest surprise came via the Police Department: The mayor announced that a fully staffed police precinct would be created in southeastern Queens, the 116th Precinct, paid for with \$70 million in capital funds. It would be the first new precinct in the city since 2013, and bring to 78 the number of precincts citywide. A location for it had yet to be found.

But, as in January, the message Mr. de Blasio sought to deliver on Tuesday was one of fiscal responsibility, cognizant of potential downward economic trends in the city and beyond. Or, as it was described in a summary document: a blueprint for “progressive, honest, responsible government.”

“We’ve tried to be very balanced in our approach, very careful, very cautious,” Mr. de Blasio, a Democrat, said.

The presentation was an opportunity for Mr. de Blasio, dogged in recent weeks by questions about investigations into his campaign fund-raising activities and administration, to stress his command of the intricacies of the city’s agencies and his stewardship of its financial future.

The mayor, sniffing through his remarks, highlighted major investments in the city’s public hospitals, whose finances, a city-commissioned report found, were teetering on the edge “of a financial cliff,” and in shoring up the city’s bridges, as well as a one-time, \$183 credit paid out on the water bills of more than half a million homeowners.

“It is spring, and you have allergies in spring,” Mr. de Blasio said when asked if he had a cold.



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The administration also earmarked money for the city's Board of Elections, which stumbled through the state's presidential primary, and for the Sanitation Department to buy smaller plows to deal with narrow streets in places like Queens, where 170 plow trucks became stuck during a blizzard in January. And Mr. de Blasio said he would spend \$170 million to build a new correctional center for adolescents, which would allow the city to remove the roughly 180 adolescents housed on Rikers Island from the troubled jail complex. A site for that project has not been selected.

He also said that he would immediately move to put parts of the city's third water tunnel into use in Brooklyn and Queens, budgeting \$21 million to disinfect those portions of the tunnel, which he said would be filled with drinkable water as a backup to the existing system.

Officials had previously said the mayor had stripped the funding for that work and decided to delay it; amid criticism, he pledged to accelerate the project.

Over all, the executive budget included an increase of 3.7 percent in city spending compared with the final budget approved last year. The mayor's current proposal must still be negotiated with and approved by the City Council.

One hurdle already cleared since January was the looming cuts in state contributions to the City University of New York and the city's Medicaid costs, proposed by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, a Democrat, but discarded in the final state budget deal.

Mr. de Blasio never invoked the name of the governor, with whom he is locked in a bitter feud. Yet Mr. Cuomo was a recurring presence: The mayor repeatedly criticized the state for not making good on financial commitments or reducing the amount of financial support it gives the city. Mr. de Blasio referred to the state's actions as alarming and a danger to the city.

"God forbid there's bad times," he said at one point. "The state will be absolutely unaccountable to the people of New York City."

Mr. de Blasio highlighted the continued growth of the city's economy but raised concerns about a decline in tax revenues, saying his administration had focused on finding savings at city agencies. The budget includes roughly \$1 billion in savings for the 2017 fiscal year from measures like reducing office space, refinancing debt and, at the Environmental Protection Department, switching to natural gas from diesel.

After the presentation, the City Council speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito, a Democrat, issued a lukewarm statement, praising the buildup of reserve funds but criticizing the funding levels for programs aimed at young people and immigrants, as well as the plan for the city's hospitals. The plan, she said, "to close the Health and Hospitals operating gap is contingent on substantial state and federal cooperation, which has not yet been assured."



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Carol Kellermann, president of the nonpartisan Citizens Budget Commission, said the mayor appeared to be sending mixed messages. "Right now everything is great; we're going to build a swimming pool and animal shelters and a new police precinct," she said. "But, gee, down the road we have to be worried."