

**From:** JA <[janelleallbritton@gmail.com](mailto:janelleallbritton@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 15, 2025 11:00 PM  
**To:** Browne, Danielle <[DBrowne@mountvernonny.gov](mailto:DBrowne@mountvernonny.gov)>; Bonilla, Nicole <[NBonilla@mountvernonny.gov](mailto:NBonilla@mountvernonny.gov)>  
**Subject:** Wednesday, December 16, 2025

You don't often get email from [janelleallbritton@gmail.com](mailto:janelleallbritton@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)  
President Browne and Clerk Bonilla et al,

It is so disappointing to see how this city on all levels in all branches is (mis)managed. All of us here see all of you.

Today I have been informed that:

In another blow to transparency, the City Council, in an unprecedented move, will not be reading into the record any written comments that residents submit for tomorrow night's public hearing. This means that to be heard, one must physically attend the hearing, or tune in on Zoom, and limit your comments to a paltry 4 minutes.

Before, I believed that the gross "mismanagement" was because of:

- cronyism,
- nepotism,
- incompetence,
- lack of experience,
- lack of education,
- masterful trickery,
- masking of utter stupidity,
- manifestation of democracy gone terribly wrong when those who win elections are clearly unfit for the roles,

Now I believe it is more likely deliberate sabotage, part of a master plan.

The "negligence" I have personally witnessed that could easily be judged as surpassing a criminal level of negligence, even malfeasance, is stunning. Deliberate sabotage might be difficult to prove, but it sure looks like it to me.

You haven't even tried to master the art of siphoning resources from your own community (including the "Friends and Family Network" that got you elected), but doing it in a sustainable way.

You know, the way a vampire leaves its source with just enough blood to recover from the loss, make more, and feed the vampire in the future.

Otherwise known as “sustainability,” a feature that is baked in to any viable program or process.

But you are like Thelma and Louise, hitting the gas pedal and holding hands as you take flight without wings.

We are here tonight to make sure that you finally hit bottom and this reign of municipal mismanagement terror ends, and that you are held fully accountable. That you don't take us or this city over the cliff with you.

This might be your last chance to plead ignorance. We won't be willing to let you get away with it later, that you didn't know how upset people were or why. That you didn't understand.

Whether you understand or not, you have not been taking action to fix the mess you are a part of.

You make the mess worse tonight by blocking the ability for written comments to be read into the record.

We see you. It isn't too late to do the right thing. Just do it. But I am not hopeful at all that you will.

Janelle Allbritton, MPH  
Mount Vernon Resident



## MEMORANDUM

To: President and Members of the City Council

From: Vince Ferrandino, AICP

Re: Comment on the Proposed 2026 City Budget

Date: December 16, 2025

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President and Members of the City Council

I had many concerns regarding the previous draft budget. With this amended budget, I still have concerns, but will limit my comments to two this evening:

- (1) Out of Town Conference Attendance
- (2) Department of Planning Budget

### 1) Out of Town Conference Attendance

For the last two years I have railed to the City Council about out of control out of town conference attendance -- often with no program agendas attached to requests -- to such faraway places as Las Vegas, Atlanta, Miami and Washington D.C., to name a few -- all in the name of "training". Cumulatively, this has amounted to about **\$100,000** each year across all departmental lines, including the Mayor's office and City Council, among the worst offenders. This year alone, as of last month, more than **\$90,000** will already have been spent on faraway "junkets", with no written reports on what may have been learned on these sojourns. Further, hundreds of person days have been spent out of the office -- time better spent addressing the City's myriad problems. This year, another **\$100,000** has been allocated to these junkets. Many training modules are now available on line, so there is no need to travel thousands of miles, at taxpayer expense, to "learn". **I ask that this out of town travel number be reduced to a bare minimum, or eliminated altogether, as we are in austere times.**

## 2) Department of Planning Budget

The proposed Planning Department budget is unchanged at **\$1,970,029**, including **\$1,343,529** in salaries for twelve (12) personnel, plus other grant funded positions, some of which are not housed within the department. That amounts to **\$112,000** per staff person, ranging from **\$150,000** for the commissioner, to **\$77,731** for budget specialist, not including benefits (at about 32% of salary) which are now paid 100% by the City. Of these twelve (12) personnel, nine (9) are paid salaries in excess of six (6) figures including the commissioner, two deputy commissioners, an assistant commissioner, GIS administrator, research & grants administrator, grants & partnership compliance officer, budget specialist 3, and director of economic development & empowerment housed in the IDA (currently unfilled). Further, of the top four (4) administrators in this department, only one lives in Mount Vernon, taking the money they make here and spending it elsewhere (Rye, the Bronx, Queens and New Jersey for example) when they leave the office every day at 5 PM.

**I ask what are we getting from this department for our taxpayer money?** A recent survey by the Charter Commission rated them “less than 15% effective”, one of the lowest among City departments. The much bally-hooed comprehensive plan, just adopted by the City Council with very little meaningful public input, employed six (6) **out of town consulting firms to the tune of \$600,000 plus thousands in legal fees**, to prepare it. And now, in this proposed budget, there is another **\$600,000 (plus untold legal fees)** to hire yet another bevy of consulting firms to prepare the zoning that should have been part of the adopted comprehensive plan. The comptroller actually estimates that this amount could be increased to **\$750,000**, depending on how bids come in for this work. This is patently absurd, when you have **six (6) planners** in the department who could do most, if not all of this work, while putting in their 35 hours a week in the office.

I ask that the **\$600,000, which amounts to more than 30% of this \$1.97 million dollar budget, be eliminated from this budget**, with existing staff doing the bulk of this work. Further, I would urge the Council and Board of Estimate & Contract to take a hard look at what is being accomplished with these personnel and seek to eliminate one or two positions that appear to be redundant, for example the two (2) research & grants people and two (2) deputy commissioners, saving over **\$500,000** here alone. I would also like to see the job descriptions for these people to ascertain where any overlap in responsibilities may exist.

As the comptroller opined at his Town Hall meeting last month, the City is experiencing severe fiscal stress. This requires cuts where necessary, and elimination of funding for work that can be done in house, as I have noted above.

In eliminating out of town travel and planning consulting, legal fees & staffing alone, more than **\$1.5 million** can be saved

Please do the right thing for this department and others. **Cut this bloated budget!**

Thank you.

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## Written Statement for the Record

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**From** S Darden <shezdarden@gmail.com>  
**Date** Tue 12/16/2025 7:21 PM  
**To** cityclerk <cityclerk@mountvernonny.gov>

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December 16, 2025

### **Re: 2026 Proposed Annual Estimate Submitted to the City Clerk, City of Mount Vernon**

I submit this statement for inclusion in the official record regarding the **2026 Proposed Annual Estimate**.

After reviewing the proposed budget, it is my reasonable belief that this document reflects a continued failure of leadership by the Mayor, the Comptroller, and the City Council. While the City's fiscal challenges predate the current administration, its financial condition has materially worsened under it, and this Council has failed to exercise the oversight responsibilities required by the City Charter.

Budgets reveal priorities. This budget demonstrates an apparent refusal to make hard but necessary choices, particularly at the top of the organizational structure.

### **Lack of Austerity and Failure to Cut Overhead**

If Mount Vernon were being governed as a city in fiscal crisis, the following actions would have been taken and reflected in this budget:

- Immediate elimination of **unnecessary salaried, non-union administrative positions**, particularly roles that duplicate work already performed by unionized staff or external vendors
- Reduction of **executive-level staffing**, political appointees, and "special assistant" or advisory positions that expand during administrations but are rarely eliminated
- Significant cuts to **outside consultants**, crisis managers, and external advisors retained to remediate preventable management failures
- A freeze or sharp reduction in **discretionary spending**, including travel, conferences, nonessential training, and public relations-related expenses
- A meaningful effort to rein in **legal expenditures**, especially given the City's persistent exposure to lawsuits, settlements, and avoidable litigation

None of these measures is meaningfully reflected in the proposed budget. Instead, overhead is preserved, and the burden is shifted to taxpayers.

This is not a shared sacrifice. It is selective protection.

## **Hidden and Understated Costs**

The proposed budget also fails to confront known and foreseeable costs, including: adequately

- The expense associated with reconciling the unexplained **\$400,000 loss** under the Comptroller's oversight
- Ongoing and future **lawsuits, settlements, and legal fees**, many of which arise from management failures rather than unavoidable risk
- Consultant and outside counsel costs incurred to manage crises that should never have occurred.

These are not speculative expenses. They are predictable, recurring, and material. Minimizing or obscuring them undermines the credibility of the budget.

This Council has previously approved budgets in which funds were shifted or temporarily withheld, only to later justify **self-approved salary increases** that were not supported by performance or outcomes. That history makes the lack of transparency in this budget particularly troubling.

## **Cronyism, Favoritism, and Lack of Oversight**

Public trust is further eroded when allegations of favoritism and cronyism are not addressed. There are persistent and widely discussed concerns within the community that politically connected individuals receive preferential treatment not available to ordinary residents.

In particular, there are rumors that an individual connected to the Comptroller's office, who also holds a leadership role in the NAACP, received a property tax reduction substantially below what comparable homeowners were required to pay. I am not asserting guilt. However, the Council's failure to publicly investigate or dispel such allegations contributes to the appearance of protection and unequal enforcement.

Silence in the face of credible allegations damages public confidence and reinforces perceptions of corruption.

## **Judicial and Property Implications**

The budget's reliance on increased tax enforcement coincides with concerns regarding the administration of justice. Danielle Browne is expected to assume judicial office despite having no meaningful courtroom experience or demonstrated record of independence.

This raises serious concerns about how foreclosure, eviction, and property seizure cases will be handled. Accelerated processing of such cases, under the banner of "economic recovery," risks facilitating large-scale displacement of long-term residents and the transfer of property at depressed values.

The foreseeable result is a pipeline: foreclosure, consolidation, and transfer of land to private developers, including those who appear frequently in campaign finance disclosures. This observation reflects observable patterns, not allegations of intent.

### **Council Oversight Failure**

Under the City Charter, the Council is obligated to serve as a check on executive power. In approving this budget without demanding genuine austerity, transparency, or reform, the Council has failed in that duty.

The residents of Mount Vernon are being asked to accept higher taxes, weaker services, and greater instability while those in positions of power avoid meaningful sacrifice.

This statement is submitted to ensure that the record reflects that these concerns were raised, specific alternatives were identified, and the risks inherent in the 2026 Proposed Annual Estimate were clearly articulated.

Respectfully submitted.

Shez Darden