

Los Angeles News 

Burbank golf course gets aid as city services face cuts

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BURBANK, Calif. (KABC) -- A struggling city-owned golf course is poised to get another taxpayer shot in the arm- even as Burbank's city council looks at more than a half million dollars in cuts to city services.

The city council is expected to cut some \$8.7 million from its budget next week, with cuts at city libraries and the fire department.

But while several city departments will see budgets cuts, one city-owned property is getting a Mulligan.

Burbank's DeBell Golf Club is \$2.1 million in the hole and losing hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. But this week the city council agreed to loan the course \$1 million to help keep it afloat.

"It's one of the jewels of the community," said Burbank Mayor Jess Talamantes. "So we have to help it out. It belongs to us."

The problem is that fewer and fewer people are playing golf these days. Last year, the Burbank course saw its worst turnout ever. And this year the numbers are expected to be down 11 percent.

Golfers at DeBell support the city loan, praising the recently renovated clubhouse and affordable green fees.

"There's a lot of reasons to invest money into the community," said golfer Stan Smith. "It's what is going to be the best return as far as jobs and productivity."

But elsewhere in Burbank, many people are questioning the sensibility of funding golf at the expense of other city services.

"I'm completely dependent on the public library system here, which is second to none in Los Angeles," said library patron Sue Reiner. "I think it would be tragic to cut it back."

"I don't think in these times a golf course should be a priority," said library patron Chelsea Ryan. "I think fire safety and the library, those are all good things."

However Talamantes says when it comes to the golf course the city has few choices; either fund it or scrap it, which he's hoping to avoid.

"I mean, we've got such a great asset up there," said Talamantes. "We close it down; I don't think the majority of the residents want to see that happen."

Talamantes says he's banking on a better economy to turn the golf course and the city around, which would mean when it comes to budgets he could leave the slicing to the golfers.

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