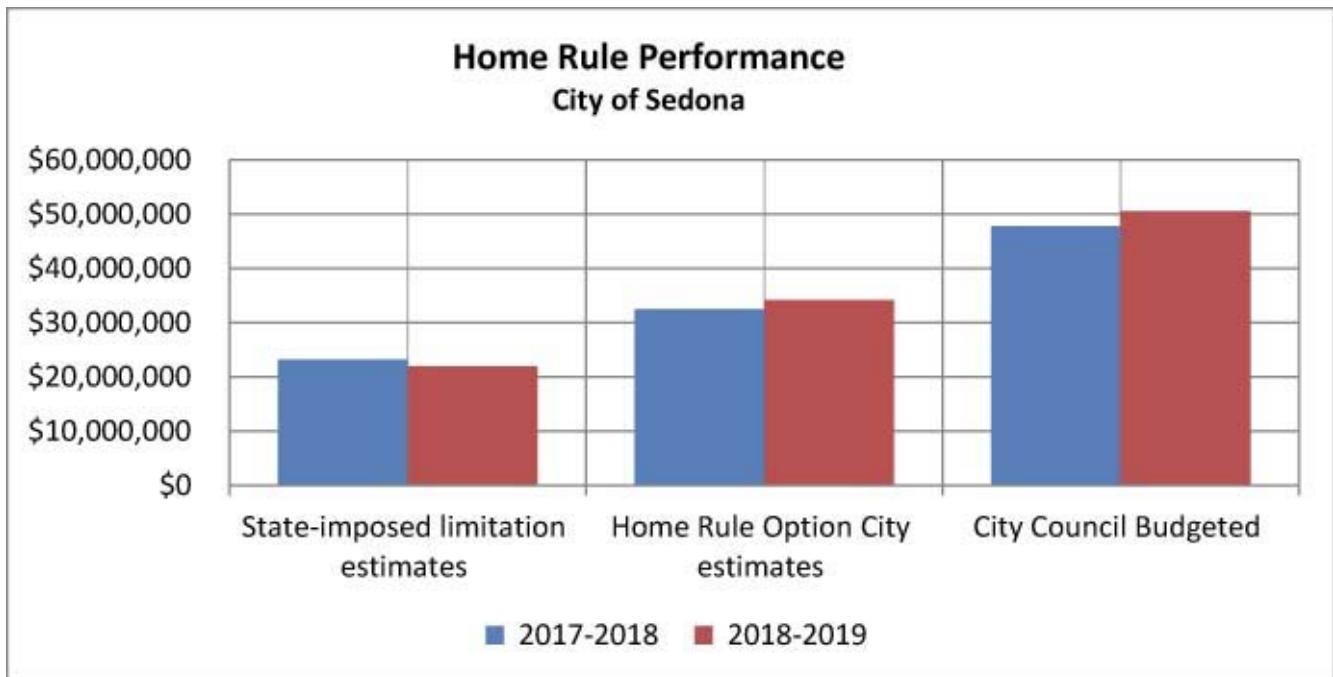


HOME RULE

“Council Talks Home Rule” (SRRN 4/18/18) is the first of many upcoming articles geared to convince us residents to vote for Home Rule. “The second public hearing will be held Tuesday April 24, during which council will vote whether or not to place Home Rule on the ballot.” Yet at the end of the next paragraph “The voters last approved a Home Rule expenditure limitation in August 2014. Under state law Home Rule must be placed on the ballot every four years.” So obviously we are going to be voting on Home Rule this August 28th. Last Friday’s article (SRRN 4/27/18) confirmed this. Why do they pretend this vote may not happen?

“Alternative expenditure limitation” is really a misnomer because there is no limitation. City Council can spend as much as they want. We just vote on guesstimated future budgets as guidelines, to which the Council does not have to adhere. In August 2014 we voted for these estimated budgets. (The first number in the parenthesis is the state limitation; and the second is the actual budget expenditure.) For 2014-15 we voted for \$34.4m (\$25.5m and \$30.19m); for 2015-16 \$34.4m (\$27m and \$34.83m); for 2016-17 \$32.4m (\$23m and \$33.97m); and for 2017-18 \$34.1m (\$21.9m and 47.7m). The charts below show that there are no limits to what the City Council can do. In short voting for Home Rule is like cutting the Council a blank check.





Further into the SRRN article the unnamed source is quoted: “If Home Rule is not passed this would result in the city’s inability to expend revenues collected to support existing levels of operations and city services. The city would be required to reduce or eliminate programs, services and capital projects [around 50 percent] to comply with the state-imposed expenditure limitation.” Of course fear-mongering is to be expected from the City and the SRRN. In any other year 50% would have been a gross exaggeration; but because of this year’s \$47.7m budget, its guesstimate is closer to the truth. More importantly let’s look at the “services” and “programs” that the City provides us residents compared to our neighboring communities. Check out the chart below.

	<u>Sedona</u>	<u>Cottonwood</u>	<u>Flagstaff</u>	<u>Prescott</u>	<u>Precott Valley</u>
Population	10,397	11,990	71,459	42,513	43,132
Police	X	X	X	X	X
Fire		X	X	X	
Water		X	X	X	X
Wastewater	X	X	X	X	X
Cemetery		X	X		
Airport		X	X	X	
Garbage / Trash			X	X	
Gas					
Golf					

Electric				
Library	X		X	X
Recycling		X	X	
Reclaimed Water		X		
Water Hauling		X		

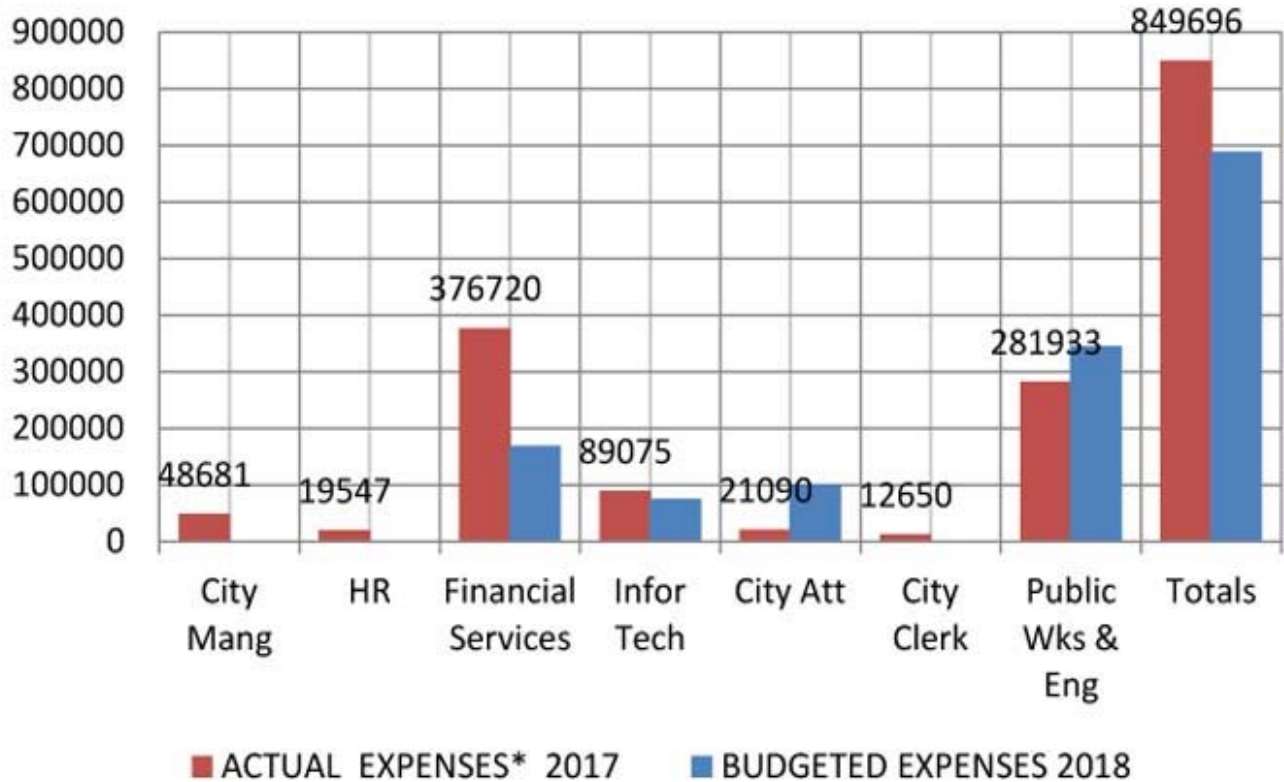
As you can see, the City provides us only two: Police and Wastewater. Actually I only consider it one. The City funds and oversees the Police Department; and I commend the SPD for doing a great job serving and protecting our community. But I believe the SPD is getting a little overzealous when it wants to spend money on SOCSO classroom surveillance. This also seems like a blurring of budgets and financial responsibilities between the City and the SOCSO. As for the “programs” the City provides, seven of the eight on its website were related to the Police Department. In general they were ways to become informed by and inform the SPD. I interpreted these programs as ways we could help the Police police ourselves. I requested the Parks and Recreation Department to email me about their programs, but I never got a response. In general their programs are mostly geared to kids, even though the average age of us residents is 57.

I’m befuddled every time I think of the Wastewater System (WWS) as a “service,” especially when it only “serves” 60% of us residents whose fees finance its operations and more than that. Especially when the City classifies the WWS as an “enterprise fund,” which we “enterprisingly fund” as it shrinks its once-promised subsidies to nothing. Also you have to wonder who is serving whom when you consider this: “While the annualized visitor population represents 55% of the total annualized population, the visitors contribute less than 25% of the funding for operations of the wastewater system. Even considering all funding sources in total, the annualized visitor population only contributes 40%.” (quote from the Proposed 2017-18 Budget).

Furthermore the City is playing a shell game with its finances by using the WW fund to subsidize various departments of our city government. They justify these appropriations as “charges” to the WWS for the work these departments supposedly do for the WWS. Check out the chart below, and you will see that the City diverts nearly a million dollars – which could be used to lower our fees, improve our infrastructure and/or pay down our debt. So in reality the WWS is NOT a “service;” rather its fees are a disguised property tax.

Wastewater Dollars

WW ratepayers payments TO City-Departments
2017 Actual - 2018 Budget



For more information about Home Rule I encourage you to check out

<http://www.seдонacity.com/Home-Rule-Information.htm> and or

<http://www.secodacity.com/Understanding%20Homerule.htm>.

However you choose to do it, I encourage you to educate yourself about Home Rule, so you can make an informed decision, when you vote on August 28. For those of you who will be out of town, please get an absentee ballot or try to vote early by contacting the Yavapai or Coconino Election Commission. But please VOTE!