



Follow-Up Written Public Comment – 2026-2027 Proposed Budget – Jonathan Portela (Council File 26-0600)

1 message

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To: "Clerk.CPS@lacity.org" <Clerk.CPS@lacity.org>

Mon, Apr 27, 2026 at 6:32 PM

Dear City Clerk,

My name is Jonathan Michael Portela. I submitted an initial written comment for the April 24 budget hearing, and I am writing now to provide a more detailed, follow-up statement for the Budget and Finance Committee's continued review of the 2026-2027 Proposed Budget (Council File 26-0600). Please ensure this is entered into the official record for the April 28 hearing and all subsequent deliberations.

I want to begin by once again recognizing the difficult work LAPD officers and all city employees perform every day. My comments are not a critique of any individual. They come from a desire to help the city's financial decisions match its stated goals, and to make sure every public dollar can be seen and understood by the people who provide it.

The proposed budget says it increases funding for oversight, transparency, and accountability. I believe that is a sincere goal. The following requests are offered in that same spirit—to help turn a promise into something the public can actually see.

1. Make Surveillance Spending Visible

I read the full 479-page budget. The terms *Fusus*, *Flock Safety*, *Palantir Gotham*, *LAHSA*, *Outreach Grid*, *TrackTik*, and *surveillance* do not appear a single time. Yet the city funds a layered network of these same technologies. When spending is invisible, trust erodes. I ask the committee to direct the Information Technology Agency to publish a simple, searchable, line-item list of all surveillance technology contracts—along with their annual costs and stated purposes—before this budget is finalized.

2. Diagnose the Liability Crisis at Its Root

Last year, the city budgeted *87millionforliabilityclaimsandpaidout* 287 million—228% over budget. The LAPD alone accounted for \$152 million. Liability costs have grown over 500% in twenty years. Treating this as an unavoidable expense is like writing a check without asking why the house keeps burning down. I ask the committee to direct a public, root-cause analysis of LAPD liability payouts—identifying the most common claim types and recommending specific prevention measures. Fixing the cause is cheaper than paying the claims.

3. Track Capital Improvement Dollars That Vanish

In a recent fiscal year, the city spent only 19% of its allocated capital improvement funds—*25millionoutof* 131 million. That means \$106 million that was promised for street repairs, lighting, and basic infrastructure never left the bank. These are silent cuts that hit neighborhoods hardest when they lose safe sidewalks and working lights at bus stops. I ask the committee to require a quarterly public report on all capital project spending, with clear explanations any time allocated funds go unspent.

4. Restore Community-Based Problem-Solving Programs

The budget mentions maintaining unarmed crisis response teams, which is good. But it does not show any new investment in neighborhood-level problem-solving—the kind of community intervention and

conflict-resolution work that likely took deep cuts during the prior year's across-the-board reductions. I ask the committee to request a brief public report identifying which community-based problem-solving programs were reduced or eliminated in the last two fiscal years, and to include a dedicated line item to restore those with proven effectiveness.

5. Protect Public Access to the Budget Process

On Friday, April 24, I came to City Hall to attend the first budget hearing but was unable to enter the chamber. I respectfully ask the committee to ensure all future hearings are fully accessible, with clear signage, adequate seating, and staff available to assist members of the public who wish to participate. Public access is not a courtesy—it is the foundation of the transparency this budget claims to fund.

Thank you for your time and your service. I look forward to attending a hearing in person very soon.

Respectfully,
Jonathan Michael Portela
Date: April 27, 2026