

“Radiating positivity, creating connectivity”

# CEBU BUSINESS WEEK

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## SMORGASBORD

# CEBU CITY MAY REDUCE 2021 BUDGET BY P2 BILLION

By: **ELIAS O. BAQUERO**

THE Cebu City Government may reduce the P10.4 billion 2020 annual budget to as low as about P8 billion for the 2021 budget because of the economic recession caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councilor Raymond Alvin Garcia, the majority floor leader of the Cebu City Council, said that in response to the order of Mayor Edgardo C. Labela, he called a meeting with the department heads and asked them what areas don't need immediate expenses so they could reserve that as savings.

“We were able to identify about P500 million worth of savings out of the P10.4 budget for 2020. We are now on the process of doing our 2021 annual budget for Cebu City Government and we think of decreasing it to as low as P8 billion,” Garcia said.

He could not yet determine if the City Government and the City Council can still give financial assistance to all 80 barangays for 2021. The City Government has allocated in its 2020

annual budget the amount of P1, P2 and P3 million per barangay, depending on area, population, and income.

He said the P500 million allocation for the modernization of traffic lights was partly included in the 2020 annual budget and partly in a supplemental budget.

The traffic system in Cebu City was installed more than two decades ago, during the time of Mayor Alvin Garcia, Raymond's father. But other cities like Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu have already modernized their traffic system and Cebu City has been left behind.

“If we think that this P500 million is still not enough for our traffic modernization, then we will put more for the 2021 annual budget.

We will listen to the recommendation from our city planning office and the City Council will determine how much it will approve in the 2021 annual budget,” Garcia added.

He said the modern traffic system was already started this year and the plan of the project has already been complete. The public bidding of the first phase was already conducted, and hopefully by next year, sophisticated new traffic lights and traffic system can be seen.

“All of this traffic system

will lead to a command center of which we will include in the 2021 annual budget. All the Smart system will have a new connectivity using the internet in the mainline. All the wirings will connect to the command center that will control the central traffic system and include the disaster-related equipment. This is an all-in-one command center not only for traffic but also disaster operation,” Garcia said.

He said there are about 80 to 90 intersections throughout Cebu City and

they are hopeful that once the modern traffic system will start, they will put the traffic system in all intersections with a state-of-the-art CCTV where the cameras can zoom and record all movements.

“That is our first stage implementation

by the first quarter of 2021. In the Local Government Units (LGUs) in some parts of the country with sophisticated Cable Circuit Television (CCTV), there is a lot of help in solving vehicular accidents, traffic violations, and criminalities,” Garcia said.

The modern traffic will also coincide with the operation of a P10-billion Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) which the Department of Transportation (DOTr) targeted with partial operability by the end of 2021.

Vice Mayor Michael “Mike” Rama said that he approved the BRT as a mass transportation from South Road Properties (SRP) to Barangay Talamban passing Natalio Bacalso Avenue, Osmeña Boulevard, and Escario Street.

Councilor Jerry Guardo, the chairman of the Committee on Infrastructure, said that while the project will be funded by a foreign loan which has been downloaded to the Cebu City Government, what has been spent already is the Philippine counterpart fund.



CEBU CITY COUNCILOR RAYMOND ALVIN GARCIA