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Take responsibility

DID YOU EVER NOTICE that when things go bad the people most responsible for the particular demise are the first to propose that "we not cast blame" or that "pointing fingers won't solve anything"? Such appears to be the case in the city of Richmond.

Mayor Irma Anderson advanced such a suggestion Thursday during a public hearing called to discuss the "revelation" that the city's budget is more than \$35 million in the red.

She said that the council members had only recently learned the full extent of the problem. So, naturally, we would want to avoid casting any blame on them.

Wrong. Exactly what is needed here is blame, accountability and consequence.

It is the primary responsibility of city government to protect the people and their tax money. No job is more important. If the council truly wasn't informed of this disaster, then the city's top administrators should be fired for gross incompetence and dereliction of duty.

If on the other hand — as we suspect — city officials merely stuck their collective heads in the sand, then the voters should consider that when deciding the fate of five out of nine members this November.

The council simply must take responsibility for this mess. So far, however, we are underwhelmed with its response. Upon learning of its dire circumstance, the city's knee-jerk response was to — what else? — spend more money. It hired a law firm experienced in bankruptcy and financial restructuring, and it hired an expensive public relations consultant to tell it how and when to speak.

One question: If the city has hired people to handle the money and even more people to talk about it, why do we need the elected officials?