



OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

TOWN OF TEWKSBURY

TOWN HALL

1009 MAIN ST

TEWKSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS 01876

RICHARD A. MONTUORI
TOWN MANAGER

(978) 640-4300
FAX (978) 640-4302

TO: All Departments, Boards, Committees and Commissions
FROM: Richard A. Montuori, Town Manager
DATE: November 1, 2019
RE: FY2021 Budget Message

The following is the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Message for your Department Budgets. As it has been in the past, the goal for the FY21 budget process and budget development is to continue building upon the financial success of previous years. The plan is to develop a budget for FY21 that maintains a high level of service to the Community, but one that can be sustained in future years. The budget will be built utilizing the same fiscal constraint and discipline that has been our financial approach, which has guided us over the past nine years and has allowed us to attain our annual goals and continue to provide outstanding service to the Community.

The largest challenge facing the Town in FY21 and beyond is the unknown in regard to the economy. There are differing views on whether or not there will be a recession in the future. Therefore, I will proceed with great caution as we develop the Operating and Capital Budgets. Even though the overall State finances appear to be doing well, - our approach to FY21 budgeting will not change. As we know, municipal finances can change quickly and most are out of our control. Many times these impacts are during the Fiscal Year and our ability to absorb them and adjust is important. The emphasis in developing the FY21 budget will be to maintain the same level of service to the Community, but have the ability to adjust to any economic downturn that may occur without impacting those services. As we have done in the past, if the economy remains stable and the outlook becomes positive, we will make the necessary adjustments at a Fall Town Meeting or in future budgets.

One major priority in the FY21 Budget will be funding a new DPW/School Facility within the Operating Budget and Capital Budget. Other areas of concern within the FY21 Budget and future budgets will be the Middlesex Retirement Assessment, solid waste and recycling costs, and the positive or negative impact the new Student Opportunity Act will have on Tewksbury. In addition, facility maintenance, equipment replacement, and infrastructure will continue to be important priorities to address in the FY21 budget. As we have done each year, any issues, items, or priorities not addressed during this process, will be revisited in the future for possible funding at Fall Special Town Meeting once we have a better understanding of all finances. In preparing the FY21 budget, we need to understand the long term impact to finances and not be short sighted.

I will again be presenting a balanced budget that utilizes recurring revenues, and only uses one-time non-recurring revenues or the Stabilization Fund to fund one-time expenditures for small and large capital needs. As we have done for the past nine years, we will continue to review and scrutinize water and sewer enterprise fund allocations, revenues, and expenditures. Projections for revenues and expenditures may change during the process, and adjustments will be made.

Each department will be required to present their budget under the following guidelines for both the operating budget and capital budget:

Operating Budget:

The budget format for FY21 will involve the same budget worksheets used for the previous year's operating budgets. The sheets include the same line-items and areas to provide in-depth information as in the previous fiscal year. The Fiscal Year 2021 budgets are in Excel and will be provided electronically. As in the past, the operating budget will be broken down into Salaries, Operating, and Capital Outlay.

Salary Line-Items:

The salary line items shall include current base salaries with the employee's salary and step increase for FY21. All base salaries for FY21 should come from the FY21 wage schedule, which is based on 52.2 weeks. Weekly salaries and hourly wages should be based upon 52.2 weeks. Any additional salary benefits (such as longevity, wage deferral, educational incentive, etc.) must also be included in the relevant columns within the worksheet. When calculating salary changes, include the calculation within the worksheet provided. For example, if an employee is receiving a step increase during the Fiscal Year, provide their information on two separate lines on the worksheet. The first line should be the current salary for a certain number of weeks and the second line should be their salary for the remainder of the Fiscal Year. The detail budget sheets for salaries are to include: each employee's name, anniversary date (date of hire), step, base salary, distinct breakdown of all additional salary benefits and a total salary benefit per employee.

I want to stress that each Department Head is responsible for confirming that grades, steps and salaries for each fiscal year (proposed, current and previous) are correct and included in the worksheet. There will be no additional staffing of departments unless the Department Head can prove that there would be a cost savings by adding such staff or an increase in service that will greatly benefit residents. Any request for additional staffing should not be in the budget request, but instead part of a separate write-up as a priority that you would like to have funded. The information within the write-up should detail the reason and a rationale for the new position(s) and how they will improve service to the residents. Each Department should include funding to fill vacancies. I will review all vacancies on an individual basis with Department Heads and determine if the need exists to fill the opening. Please budget estimated amounts for Terminal Leave and the Sick Leave Incentive Program in account number 5160. If Terminal Leave or Sick Leave Incentive was budgeted in FY20 and is not needed in FY21, then delete the amount from your budget; do not assume it remains as part of your funding. Salary Budgets are to reflect the cost of current personnel and any savings due to retirements or filling vacancies with lower salary personnel does and should not automatically go back into the Department's Budget.

Operating Line-Items:

The operating portion of the budget will be broken down into line-items similar to your previous fiscal year's budgets, which are the basic operating costs for your department. Include a detailed description under each line item justifying the expense. Operating Budgets should be level service which means the amount presented to Town Meeting in May 2019 and adjusted at October 2019 Special Town Meeting with any necessary and justifiable increase to the line-item to maintain the current level of service. Level Service does not mean increase your operating budget for new items or new requests. If any adjustments are made, I will make them after reviewing budgets with Department Heads. If a line item is not funded sufficiently and you believe the lack of funding is impacting service to the residents, please make a notation within the specific line-item description and narrative and indicate the amount needed. The intent of this information is to bring attention to the issue, but it must be a funding concern that directly relates to a service provided to the Community. If there is a decrease in any operating line item do not assume that savings goes into another operating line-item within the budget; the savings amount should be removed. Finally, I am stressing this year that each Department Head provide as much detail in a narrative as possible for each line and breakdown the cost of each request. For example, show the cost of both gas and electric separately in the Utilities line item, not just one number for all utilities.

Capital Outlay:

The line item Capital Outlay will be for items as defined in the General By-Law 2.20.035 and it reads as follows:

For budget purposes, "capital outlay" is defined as moveable property, of a relatively permanent nature having a normal life expectancy of more than three years or having a purchase cost of \$10,000.00 per item or more and including items such as furniture, office equipment, rolling stock including items purchased on a leasing or lease-purchase basis. Items purchased on a leasing or a lease-purchased basis is subject to annual appropriation. (Art. 23, STM 2001)

In addition to this definition, there will be a threshold of \$35,000 on items budgeted in the Capital Outlay Account. Also, I may move items requested in this line-item to be funded in another manner such as a separate warrant article. The only exception to this guideline will be police cruisers and their funding will be reviewed during the budget process. For FY21, requests for Department Capital Outlay accounts should be built up from zero-based and must have a detail description and justification. Do not assume because this account was funded at a certain level in the FY20 Budget that the line-item automatically receives the same funding in FY21. Any reductions in this area from the previous fiscal year should not be added back into this line-item or to your Department's overall budget. Each year this line-item is scrutinized and justified as if the previous year had no appropriation.

Department Narratives:

Departments are required to provide a cover narrative describing your department and the services provided. Please keep the narrative to no more than two pages and limit financial information since that should be in the budget worksheets. Those Departments with vehicles must provide a list of each with the year, mileage, purpose and maintenance plan if one exists. The narrative and vehicle list should be provided electronically when your budget is submitted. Those departments that have statistics regarding the service they provide residents please include those in a separate sheet from the budget narrative.

As part of the narrative, Department Heads should provide three priorities that you would fund if budgets were increased beyond level service. You should provide a brief description and justification of the priority and an estimated cost. If a priority assists in achieving the overall Town priorities outlined in this message, please explain how. If a Department is requesting additional staffing, they should follow the guidelines stated above under the salary section and that request will be one of the three priorities. Once again, there is no guarantee that these priorities will be funded, and in some cases, certain Department's priorities may be funded and others may not. Funding, if available, will be limited and not all priorities can be addressed, if any. Priorities or any new funding initiatives or any increases beyond level service should **not** be listed within your budget document.

Department Heads must review their budgets to ensure all columns and rows add correctly. **Do not** change or add/alter formulas unless you are ensuring the columns or rows add properly. **Do not** work or change the cover sheet to your budget. This is mostly formulas and there is no need for any edits to this page except for the section regarding the number of employees. If a new line item is needed, please contact me and I will adjust the document to reflect the change. Since the sheets have formulas, do not add one on your own and do not add any new worksheets to the budget workbook.

Capital Budget:

Capital Budget requests shall be submitted on the updated form developed for FY2021. Capital Budget requests are for one-time expenses including public works projects, vehicles, and extraordinary repairs of \$35,000 and greater. Each department is to provide requests for FY2021 as well as for Capital requests through the year FY2025. All requests are to be prioritized in each fiscal year, and the number of requests should be structured to allow them to be realistically carried out and completed on a timely basis.

All operating and capital budget requests are due **November 15, 2019**, and are to be completed on these sheets and in this format. There will be no exceptions. Budgets and related documents are to be submitted to me electronically. The deadline for budget submission is a hard deadline so please work to meet it, if not sooner. I plan to start meeting on Department Budgets November 19 and to have all Department meetings complete well before Christmas.

Finally, please be prepared to make budget adjustments, if the economic forecasts change. It is important to note that my goal will be to only make reductions to the operating budget based upon the Town's financial outlook and standard budgetary review. I would also emphasize that I may need to alter the guidelines for a specific reason or item within a department. All budget decisions are final pending Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee review. The budget process will follow the standard procedure, which includes my review, my recommendation to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee, and the Finance Committee's review and recommendation to Town Meeting.