



2023-2024

# Citizens' Guide to the Budget Process



Dear Preston Residents:

As we enter yet another budget season, our goal to provide current services and plan for the future while maintaining a responsible approach to financial decisions is what will guide the Board of Education and Selectmen through this process.

We invite the public to join in the budget process. Detailed budgets are being built and the Board of Education committee level and at the Board of Selectmen department level. Those meetings are currently being held. The meetings are open to the public and we invite you to participate in this development early.

As this process moves forward there will be Board of Finance budget workshops in March. Key budget dates have been set as follows:

★ **Budget Public Hearing** ★

Thursday, April 27, 2023

★ **Budget Town Meeting** ★

Thursday, May 11, 2023

★ **Budget Referendum** ★

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Please check the school district and town websites for budget workshop dates, meeting locations and any changes to the calendar. We look forward to seeing you and providing you with information on the budget proposals!



## The Budget Process



- 1) **Develop** (December-early March):
  - ⇒ The school departments submit budget requests to the Superintendent and the town department submit budget requests to the First Selectperson.
  - ⇒ The Superintendent review the requests with the Board of Education Finance Committee, the First Selectperson review the requests with the Board of Selectmen.
  - ⇒ Both the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen hold budget workshops to review, deliberate and approve a proposed budget.
- 2) **Review** (March-April):
  - ⇒ The Boards of Education and Selectmen present their budgets to the Board of Finance.
  - ⇒ The Board of Finance holds budget workshops and a Public Hearing to gather citizen input.
  - ⇒ The Board of Finance deliberates and recommends a proposed budget to Public Hearing.
- 3) **Adoption** (May):
  - ⇒ Town Budget Meeting held on proposed budget.
  - ⇒ Budget Referendum.
  - ⇒ Board of Finance adopts approved budget and establishes the mill rate.
- 4) **Monitor:** The Boards of Education, Finance and Selectmen monitor the approved budgets throughout the fiscal year.



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## UNDERSTANDING THE BUDGET

The annual budget process refers to the proposed plan of expenditures and revenues for a given fiscal year, starting each July 1st and ending the following June 30th, for the town's main operating fund which is also known as the General Fund.

The town budget is broken down into two categories:

Revenue (Income)	Expenditures (Spending)
◆ Property taxes	◆ Education
◆ Investment income	◆ Public Safety
◆ Licenses, fees and permits	◆ Public Works
◆ Federal grants	◆ Recreation
◆ State and local grants	◆ Administration
	◆ Finance
	◆ Health and Social Services
	◆ Land Use
	◆ Boards and Commissions
	◆ Debt Service

The General Fund budget process requires the involvement of many stakeholders in order to develop a responsible budget that provides essential services without imposing excessive costs.

Once complete, the annual budget serves as a policy document that prioritizes the quality and level of services that the town will provide. Likewise, it is a financial plan that authorizes how resources are spent.

The budget process benefits from public input. All meetings and hearings are open to the public and citizens are encouraged to attend.



## The Town's 'Household' Budget

Your Household	→	The Town
Income	→	Revenue
Expense, spending	→	Expenditures
Taxes	→	Mandates, required services
Savings account	→	Fund balance, contingency
Utilities, food, gas	→	Utilities, gas, salaries, benefits
Maintenance projects	→	Capital projects
Phone, cable, internet	→	Technology, replacement equipment
Mortgage, rent, loans	→	Debt Service, bonds

## SIGN UP FOR CITIZEN ALERTS

If we can't reach you, we can't alert you!

<https://www.preston-ct.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=645>

We will provide alerts for important budget activities to those who are signed up.

