

BUDGET PREPARATION PROCESS

The preparation of the City of Muscatine's budget involves the interaction of City departments, boards and commissions, City Council, and the general public. This process begins with City Council goal setting and the distribution of materials to departments and is completed with City Council certification of a budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

The City's budgetary process began nine months prior to July 1st, the beginning of the City's fiscal year. The City Council, held a special meeting on October 8 to discuss their overall goals and objectives for the operation of the City. These goals and objectives were officially adopted on October 20. Department directors incorporated funding in their department budgets or in related capital project funds to achieve these goals and objectives.

Boards and commissions consisting of individuals from the community also assisted City staff during the budget process and made recommendations to the City Council regarding various services and activities of the City of Muscatine. There are three boards and seventeen advisory commissions consisting of over ninety individuals that serve the City in this capacity.

In early November, the budget manual and appropriate worksheets were distributed to department heads and boards and commissions. The budget manual provided general information and gave specific directions on the budget process. The City's procedures included completion by each department of various forms which were described in detail in the manual. The City of Muscatine's budgetary process is on the City's computer system and this system was used to generate the historical data forwarded to the departments. The department's responsibilities included the review of the historical data in respect to services to be provided to the citizens of Muscatine by the department. Personnel and wage information was provided by the Finance Department. The department head reviewed the information to determine what level of appropriation would be required to provide the current level of services. Any additional service levels proposed to be provided to the general public at the request of departments, the City Administrator, or City Council, were developed separately and independently from the status quo budget. The additional service level requests were reviewed in-depth during the budgetary process, and if appropriate, added to the department's request.

Additionally, while analyzing expenditure requirements in order to support current service levels, each department was also requested to establish goals and objectives for the upcoming fiscal year. These goals and objectives related to the service levels currently provided by the individual department or activity. A status report on the current year's goals and objectives was also required by the City Administrator and these reports were also forwarded to the City Council as attachments to the proposed budget. In addition to the funding requests to continue current service levels, the budget material included a form to indicate where each department would reduce their budget, if necessary, by 1%, 3%, or 5%. These percentage reductions were in the non-capital outlay or non-debt line items. This allowed departments to prioritize their services in the event that funding reductions would need to be made.

Additionally, the City Administrator, at the initial budget meeting of the City Council, described the overall taxing mechanism for the City of Muscatine in addition to potential revenue sources. The presentation included a brief overview of proposed financing of capital improvement projects and corresponding debt service requirements. This meeting provided the citizens of Muscatine with knowledge on how the City of Muscatine's services are provided through appropriations and funded by available revenue sources. All agendas for the budget meetings were distributed to the local media and the City received news coverage of the budget meetings from the local newspaper and radio station.

Department requests for appropriations were submitted to the Finance Department for initial review prior to December 7th. The departments had consulted with the appropriate boards and commissions in developing their budget requests. The department heads met with the City Administrator and Finance Director during the remainder of December and the first part of January regarding the proposed budgets. The City Administrator discussed with the respective department head the goals and objectives of each department prior to analysis of expenditure levels. Concurrently, the Finance Department prepared revenue estimates from input from the respective departments. Each department was required to submit revenue estimates for their activities. The Finance Department estimated general revenues such as those from the State and Federal government, and lastly determined the City of Muscatine's taxing ability. A preliminary budget was discussed with the City Administrator. This preliminary budget reflected the budget requests as submitted by the departments and as adjusted by the City Administrator in addition to revenue projections for the City.

Additional departmental discussions were required due to funding sources not meeting expenditure requests. These meetings occurred during the month of January. Additional service level requests were also considered at that time in addition to consideration of possible areas of reductions. The City Council has established a certain level of working balance for the City, and consequently that balance needed to be maintained and expenditures funded from available revenue sources.

The City Administrator presented to the City Council a proposed budget on January 26. The City Council received a packet of information which included the budget message from the City Administrator, various schedules dealing with taxation and property valuations, in addition to the proposed revenue and expenditure summary and detail schedules. Copies of the initial proposed budget as presented to the City Council were available at the City Clerk's office, the public library, and the City's website for citizen review.

The summary information for each department included a history of financial data in addition to a revised estimate for the current year and the proposed budget for fiscal year 2012/2013. Additionally, a brief description of the activity was presented which included any other related information for the department. Any changes from the current year to the proposed year were also noted. Also included were the goals and objectives and performance measures for each department.

The month of February was primarily devoted to discussions with the City Council. The City Administrator and Finance Director reviewed each activity budget with the City Council. Appropriate board or commission members were invited to attend as well as the respective department representatives. Members of the boards and commissions were given the opportunity to relate to the City Council their concerns and requests. Furthermore, discussions occurred in regard to the availability of Federal and State grants and the financing of capital improvement projects. A section in the notebook provided to the City Council addressed debt service requirements and the utilization of Federal and State funds. As mentioned previously, the City Council received a status report on the goals and objectives for each department for the current year in addition to the goals and objectives for the forthcoming year. These sessions, as in the case of the goals and objective sessions of the City Council, were open to the general public.

After the general budget meetings, the City Council met to discuss the City's services and items of concern for the operation of the City. This discussion included the balancing of requests and potential revenue sources. The City Council identified items that they had previously discussed which were to be considered as additions or deletions to the proposed budget. The City Council then had the task of weighing certain services or activities within the organization in light of available resources. After the City Council had agreed upon a proposed level of services and corresponding appropriation level, the Council set the required public hearing for the budget. Notice of the hearing was made in the local newspaper and a summary of proposed expenditure and revenue levels was included in that publication. According to State law, the tax rate and the total expenditures cannot be increased after publication of the public hearing notice. During the public

hearing, citizens were given the opportunity to voice their objections or support of the proposed budget as presented. After the public hearing, the City Council considered any comments made and acted upon the approval of the budget.

The City Council officially approved the budget on March 1, 2012 and authorized the City Clerk by resolution to certify the budget to the County Auditor by March 15, which is the State filing deadline. After certification, the budget was reviewed by staff and detailed information changed in light of City Council discussions. The budget was subsequently printed and made available for distribution. The budget document then becomes a guide for the City Council and departments during the year for achieving the goals and objectives, and providing programs and services as described in the budget.

BUDGET AMENDMENT PROCESS

The State Code of Iowa provides that "A city budget as finally adopted for the following fiscal year, becomes effective July 1st, and constitutes the city appropriation for each program and purpose specified therein until amended as provided in this section. A city budget for the current fiscal year may be amended for any of the following purposes:

1. To permit the appropriation and expenditure of unexpended, unencumbered cash balances on hand at the end of the preceding fiscal year which had not been anticipated in the budget.
2. To permit the appropriation and expenditures of amounts anticipated to be available from sources other than property taxation, and which had not been anticipated in the budget.
3. To permit transfers from the Debt Service Fund, the Capital Improvements Reserves Fund, the Emergency Fund, or other funds established by state law to any other city fund unless specifically prohibited by state law.
4. To permit transfers between programs within the General Fund. The budget amendment must be prepared and adopted in the same manner as the original budget, ..."

Consequently, according to state requirements, a public hearing is required for each amendment of the current year's budget. The information supplied to the City Council and general public includes the public hearing notice and a detailed listing of proposed amendments by department. Each proposed amendment is described as to its purpose or need. A budget amendment is to be completed by May 31st of each year in order to allow time for a potential hearing to be held. The decisions from protest hearings need to be rendered before June 30, the end of the fiscal year. Any amendment of the budget after May 31st, which would be appealed, and likewise without adequate time for a hearing and decision before June 30, is considered void.