

THE ELLINGTON TOWN BUDGET PROCESS EXPLAINED

One of the areas of concern identified by the long-range planning process for the Hall Memorial Library in Ellington was the general lack of understanding by the citizens of the processes of town government. This has been illustrated repeatedly during budget seasons and has come to light once again as the Planning and Zoning Commission work to revise the Town Plan of Conservation and Development and the zoning laws, and the Charter Revision Commission works to revise and update the Town Charter. Citizens are unsure how and when to participate in the process. To help remedy this situation, the Library has elected to become an active partner in the citizens' quest for information about the Town they live in.

Ellington operates under the Town Meeting form of government. This means that the citizens, at a Town Meeting, decide some government issues, including the annual operating budget, Town Charter or other laws with a voice vote or a show of hands. If the vote is close, the Town Meeting Moderator could ask voters to stand. Originally, all issues that concerned the general good of the community, even elections, were decided at a Town Meeting, but that has gradually changed. In recent years, the actual voting to approve the annual town budget has frequently been done at a referendum, using the voting machines. A referendum lasts the whole day, allowing people to fit their participation into their schedule, instead of attending a

meeting at an allotted time. The process that leads to the referendum, however, is still built on a series of public meetings, at which **citizen participation is key.**

Before the public meetings, the departments, boards, and commissions start the budget process by preparing their annual budget requests. Budgets are prepared individually by the Library, the Fire Departments, the Ambulance Corps, the Senior Center, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Human Services Department, the Planning Department, and the Public Works Department. Town Hall Departments, i.e., Selectman's Office, Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, and Finance Office are compiled into the Selectman's budget. The Board of Education prepares the budget request for the school system.

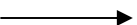
While each entity goes through approximately the same process, at the library the process is as follows: during January, the Library Director and Library Board review the progress of the first six months of the fiscal year, i.e. July through December; plan for increases in utilities, wages, etc.; determine costs for any building repairs; explore new initiatives; consider patron suggestions; take into account the guidelines issued by the Board of Finance, and formulate a budget to support the operation of the Library for the next year. This budget request is then reviewed with the Town Finance Officer before the submittal deadline of mid-February. Once all the department budgets are prepared, reviewed and submitted, they are compiled and distributed to the members of the Board

of Finance. Copies are made available to the public at the Library and the Town Hall.

Budget requests are formally presented to the Board of Finance at three special public meetings during March. These meetings, held in the Town Hall meeting room, provide the opportunity for the department heads, boards, and commissions to individually present and elaborate on their budget requests and for the Board of Finance members to ask questions. **These meetings are open to the public, and citizens may also ask questions and make comments.**

The next step is in April, when the annual Budget Public Hearing is held at the High School. The Board of Finance formally presents the budget proposal to the town's citizens. Reports are made concerning changes in utility costs, insurance, negotiated salary adjustments, major repair or construction projects or other issues that need to be addressed. **This is the crucial time for citizen questions and comments, whether positive or negative,** and it is in the weeks following this Public Hearing, that the Board of Finance works to fine tune the budget proposal, taking into account the comments from the public. Each line item in each budget is studied as they work to balance services and funding. **These meetings are also open to the public.**

Finally, in May, it is time for the Annual Budget Town Meeting. It is presided over by an impartial moderator and run by Roberts Rules of Order. This meeting is the culmination of months of work on the part of Town official, both elected and paid.



Once again the budget proposal is presented to the public. Areas of note are highlighted and questions are addressed. The budget may be voted on at this meeting or the meeting may be adjourned to a referendum for the vote.

While voting in a referendum is the ultimate right of citizens in a democratic community, it is not as useful to the voters or town officials as the exchange of ideas and information that takes place in a public forum.

Take the opportunity to hear the whole story before you vote and to participate in the democratic process we hold so dear.

Copies of the complete budget proposal are available for review at the Town Clerk's Office, the Selectman's Office, the Board of Education Office and the Library. Copies to borrow are also available at the Library.

Copies of the summary are available at the Library, the Town Hall, and on the Town website at:

www.ellington-ct.gov

*Prepared and distributed by the
Hall Memorial Library*

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

FIRST SELECTMAN
Maurice W. Blanchette
860-870-3100

BOARD OF FINANCE
Robert Clements, Chair

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Daniel C. Keune, Chair

LIBRARY BOARD
John Halloran, Chair

TOWN FINANCE OFFICER
Nicholas DiCorleto
860-870-3115

Contact information for Town Departments is available on the Town website:

www.ellington-ct.gov

IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2011	
February 15	Budget requests due to the Finance Officer
March 15, 22 & 29	Budget proposal presented to the Board of Finance
April 1	Budget proposal published
April 12	Public Hearing @ 8 PM @ Ellington High School
April 14 & 19	Board of Finance Budget deliberations sessions
April 29	Final budget proposal published
May 10	Annual Town Budget Meeting @ 8 PM @ EHS
Referendum Vote to be announced, if required.	

Ellington Town Budget Process



2011-2012