



The Town of Barnstable

Comprehensive Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC)
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CFAC Committee:

Chair:

Laura Cronin

Members:

Robert Ciolek
Cynthia Crossman
Ralph Krau
Gregory Plunkett
Lillian Woo
John Schoenherr
Joseph Mladinich

Staff Liaison:

Mark Milne

Councilor Liaison:

John T. Norman

MEETING MINUTES

11.23.15

7:00 PM

School Administration Building Finance Conference Room

CFAC Members Present: Laura Cronin, Robert Ciolek, Gregory Plunkett, John Schoenherr, Cynthia Crossman, and Ralph Krau

CFAC Members Absent: Lillian Woo, Joseph Mladinich,

Councilors Present: None

Staff Present: Mark Milne, Director of Finance, Nathan Empey, Finance/Budget Analyst

1. Call to Order

Laura Cronin called the CFAC meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the School Administration Building Finance Conference Room.

2. Act on Minutes

The following minutes were approved by unanimous vote:

11.09.2015

3. New Business

Mark provided an in-depth presentation on the Town of Barnstable's financial transparency initiative. By using a web-based portal provided by Socrata, the public as well as town employees will have access to town's fiscal budgets and capital improvement program (CIP) financial data.

The website is temporarily in the development stage with limited access to only certain town employees. This will give an opportunity for them to provide feedback as well as incorporate any necessary changes before going public with the final version.

Because the fire districts are not a part of Town of Barnstable operations, these entities are not included in the Open Budget website.

The Open Budget will give department managers another alternative to review their budgets, rather than using the Town of Barnstable's accounting software.

CFAC feedback

- a.) Bob C asked if the website will include CIP actual financial data, and Mark replied Socrata is working on it.
- b.) John asked if the categories were specifically selected, Mark replied Socrata only offers these three categories: Revenues, Expenses and Capital Program.
- c.) Bob asked if the CIP GPS mapping on the website includes road locations, Mark replied the website is limited to one GPS coordinate, so projects with multiple locations are not located on the map.
- d.) Laura asked what the intent of the CIP map is for the public, Mark replied to identify locations of projects. Bob suggested different colors for different fiscal years with CIP map locations.
- e.) Bob commented on political concerns regarding the CIP map reflecting too many projects in one area. Public may question why there are no projects in their location. Mark replied that council is very aware of where CIP funds are being spent.
- f.) John asked if pictures could be added to specific projects in the CIP section of the website. Mark replied it's possible to add pictures for each project.
- g.) Laura suggested removing the decimal place from the financial data.
- h.) John suggested there be a glossary for public viewers to understand the website. Bob also suggested providing a definition page. Mark replied the CIP section is limited to 800 characters for writing sections.
- i.) Cynthia asked if the financial information could be seen over a full year. Mark replied no because the site is setup to compare year-to-date information for all fiscal year comparisons. Mark also noted the current fiscal year would always be a little behind when compared to the previous year because the previous years will include a full month of revenue and expenses. Data being uploaded for the current year is updated weekly from the town's accounting software and you will have to wait until the end of the month to get a year-to-date comparison with the prior years.
- j.) Laura commented there is no clear depiction for the public to know what period the financial data is representing. Mark suggested adding something to the homepage to explain the periods.
- k.) Bob asked is it possible to query what departments have over spent their budgets.
- l.) Laura suggested providing a whole year comparison for previous fiscal years, that's compared to the year-to-date comparison.

- m.) Bob and Gregory asked whom are we doing this for? Most of the public would only care if the town over spent it's budget. There is concern about an influx of inquiries from the public about the data. Mark commented that in addition to the public the site is intended to serve the needs of the town's department managers as well. It gives them an alternative way to review their budget down to the line item. While there may be a lot of inquiries initially it is anticipated to drop off over time as people become more familiar with the site.
- n.) Mark commented on including phases for the various projects that will help identify if the CIP projects are in the study or construction phase.
- o.) Cynthia asked if the Town of Barnstable has purchased this Open Budget portal, and Mark replied we are currently under a monthly subscription.

CFAC noted Mark Milne gave a great presentation on the Socrata Open Budget initiative.

4. Other matters not reasonably anticipated by the chair

Laura Cronin asked if there were potential Comprehensive Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC) candidates for the vacant position. Mark replied, currently no applications on file for the vacant position.

Mark noted Town Council voted at last meeting for a Minimal Residential Factor of 1 with a 20% residential exemption, which is unchanged from the previous fiscal year. There is no significant change in tax rates; the residential single tax rate is up one-cent to \$9.31. This equates to about \$60 annual increase for the median home value in Barnstable.

Marked noted the Town Manager indicated remote participation by law must accommodate all boards/committees, and that participation cannot be selective to boards/committees; therefore, the Town Manager is not inclined to allow CFAC remote participation. There is no one on Cape Cod currently using remote participation. Furthermore, there have been technical difficulties for one community who tried it according to the Town Manager No other boards/committees in the Town of Barnstable have asked for remote participation.

5. Discussion of topics for the next meeting

CFAC will meet with Department of Public Works and Community Services on Dec 14th

6. Adjournment

List of documents handed out

1. 11.09.15 Minutes
2. Comprehensive Financial Advisory Committee Calendar for 2016