

Town of Medfield Financial Policies

Adopted: July 31, 2018

Revised: January 2022

I. Purpose

To provide guidance to Town Departments, Boards, and Town Meeting in establishing annual budgets and long-term financial planning. The goals of the policies are as follows:

- To adopt an approach to financial planning, spending, and taxation that is consistent with the Town's long-term goals and plans.
- To protect against variations in Town revenues outside the control of the Town government and its residents to ensure adequate funding of necessary Town services in times of economic distress.
- To provide stability and minimize variations in the tax, water and sewer rates, and to spread the cost of providing needed services fairly across residents and businesses over time.
- To maintain adequate reserves that can be used in times of emergency to avoid cuts to necessary services and increased tax burdens in times of economic stress for citizens and the Town Government.
- Recognizing the need to invest and preserve the significant investment the Town has made in its capital facilities and will make over the coming years, the Town must adequately fund capital budgets necessary to maintain capital assets that support the provision of municipal services to the Town's residents and businesses.
- To maintain a high bond rating and an affordable level of debt over time.
- In pursuit of the above objectives, to take a long-term approach to budgeting that promotes stability in the tax burden over time, and that minimizes the risk that short-term considerations will disrupt the Town's long-term planning and funding strategies.

II. Capital Expenditures

A. Capital Budget & Capital Building Plan

1. Capital Budget

Consistent with the Town Charter, the Town shall maintain a 5-year Capital Budget updated annually by the Capital Budget Committee after the Annual Town Meeting. The Capital Budget Committee shall submit a proposed Capital Budget to the Board of Selectmen no later than October 15 each year. Upon approval by the Board of Selectmen, the capital budget will be effective until a new capital budget is adopted. The 5-year Capital Budget will be reviewed annually by the Warrant Committee as part of its budget review process for each Town Meeting.

The Capital Budget Committee is responsible for analyzing proposed capital investments and making a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen about which capital assets should be added, repaired, replaced, or updated and when that should be done. Departments should not acquire capital assets outside of the capital budgeting process defined herein, including the introduction of new information systems, unless they are prepared to support the life cycle costs

of that capital asset within their own Department budgets. In submitting the proposed 5-year Capital Budget to the Board of Selectmen, the Capital Budget Committee shall provide a rationale and its priority relative to other requests for each proposed expenditure included within the 5-year Capital Budget.

The 5-year Capital Budget shall include all (1) building repairs, system upgrades, alterations, or improvements with a useful life of more than 5 years, (2) road improvements planned to be funded through Chapter 90 funds; (3) vehicle replacements and old vehicle dispositions; (4) information technology infrastructure; (5) Water & Sewer projects and infrastructure, excluding planned maintenance of existing equipment; and (6) other items with a useful life of more than 5 years or costing more than \$15,000.

The 5-year Capital Budget shall include the projected cost of any items approved for inclusion therein and projected funding source (i.e., tax levy, borrowing, Capital Stabilization Funds, Chapter 90 funds, departmental revolving funds, grant funds). No items shall be included on the 5-year Capital Budget without a projected funding source. All capital items to be purchased shall be included on the 5-year Capital Budget, regardless of funding source.

Items should only be submitted for the 5-year Capital Budget if they are necessary to the provision of services approved by the Annual Town Meeting, and, generally, are considered replacements, repairs, or non-major (i.e., not requiring Permanent Planning and Building Committee review) upgrades of existing capital assets.

Any department that wishes to acquire new capital assets that qualify as items that could be included in the 5-Year Capital Budget, and, that want those new assets to be maintained as part of the capital budget must submit a request before acquiring those assets to formally include them in the list of capital assets supported by the 5-year Capital Budget. Requests for new capital assets should be accompanied by (1) an explanation of the expected carrying costs, replacement costs, and a timetable for replacement; (2) an explanation of which departments or personnel will be involved in maintaining those assets; (3) an explanation of the resources, currently in place within the department, to cover the routine maintenance of those assets; and (4) confirmation of the information provided by the maintaining department, along with acknowledgement of the responsibilities the maintaining department is accepting to care for the capital asset after it is acquired. For example, no department should ask to acquire an additional vehicle as part of its capital budget request without review and approval by the DPW Director. By way of further example, no department should acquire additional information technology programs, hardware, or other assets without review and approval of the Director of Information Technology.

For items to be funded by the general tax levy, the Capital Budget Committee shall recommend a consistent level of levy usage based on the Town's capital needs over the course of the 5-year capital plan in an effort to permit predictable operational budgets.

Items not included within the 5-year Capital Budget shall only be funded via the capital budget in the case of an emergency that could not have been anticipated at the time the most recent 5-year Capital Budget was adopted. Items required to maintain capital assets that have not been accepted for support from the capital budget shall not be funded via the capital budget.

2. Capital Building Maintenance Plan

The Town shall maintain a 20-year Capital Building Maintenance Plan ("20-Year Capital Plan") for building-related investments and repairs. The 20-year Capital Plan will assess whether it is preferable to address the issues identified therein by repair or replacement of the building. The plan will include estimates of the total cost of the proposed capital repairs, an estimate of when those costs will be incurred, and prioritize the proposed capital repairs. The 20-year Capital Plan shall be updated every 5 years by the Director of Facilities with the assistance and approval of the Permanent Planning and Building Committee, or at the completion of a building project under the supervision of the Permanent Planning and Building Committee. The Facilities Master Plan maintained by the Permanent Planning and Building Committee pursuant to Chapter 10-20I of the Code of the Town of Medfield shall be incorporated into the 20-year Capital Plan.

Once approved by the Permanent Planning and Building Committee, the 20-year Capital Plan will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee for their approval. This submission will include an analysis by the Permanent Planning and Building Committee of the impact the committee's recommendation will have on the town's long-term debt profile and the resulting projected debt services costs that will entail. While the Director of Facilities and the Permanent Planning and Building Committee will recommend which items should be included in the 20-Year Capital Plan, the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee have final responsibility for defining which items are designated for inclusion in the 20-year Capital Plan and their priority.

It is the intention of this Policy that capital expenditures included in the 20-Year Capital Plan will be paid out of the Municipal Buildings Capital Stabilization Fund designated in Section II(B) below according to the terms of the town's Municipal Buildings Capital Stabilization Fund. No item shall be recommended for funding from the Municipal Buildings Capital Stabilization Fund unless approved for inclusion as part of the 20-year Capital Plan.

B. Municipal Buildings Capital Stabilization Fund

The Municipal Buildings Capital Stabilization Fund (the "Municipal Buildings Stabilization Fund") is authorized to fund capital expenditures related to new construction, capital repairs, and improvements to municipal buildings and their structural and systemic components, as defined in the 2017 Municipal Facilities Evaluation and Capital Plan developed by the Director of Facilities, and thereafter in the 20-year Capital Plan described in Section II(A)(2). It is not the intention of this fund that the full amount be spent in any one year, but that funds accumulate for use according to the 20-year Capital Plan and as specifically appropriated as part of the 5-Year Capital Budget.

At the 2018 Annual Town Meeting, Town Meeting approved the creation of the Municipal Buildings Stabilization Fund, which was subsequently funded by voters with a \$1 million stabilization fund override. Each year thereafter, the Board of Selectmen are responsible for voting to appropriate funds into the Municipal Buildings Stabilization Fund. The stabilization fund override vote grants the Board of Selectmen the authority to increase the appropriation by a

maximum of 2.5 percent per year. While it can be expected that the Board of Selectmen will appropriate the full 2.5 percent increase each year, there may be circumstances where the Board of Selectmen will decide to appropriate less than the full authorized amount for the fund. This situation could apply when:

- A lower annual amount is sufficient to fund the then-current 20-year Capital Plan; or
- An alternative source of funding (debt exclusion, federal or state grant, sale of town land) has been identified to fund all or a portion of the 20-year Capital Plan.

In exercising its discretion over the amount of funds to be appropriated to the Municipal Buildings Stabilization Fund each year, the Board of Selectmen will need to keep in mind that, under the provisions of a Stabilization Fund override, any reduction in funding from the limit authorized by the voters in an override vote results in a permanent reduction in the limit of funding that is authorized going forward from the year the lower amount is appropriated by the Board of Selectmen.

Before voting to approve an amount lower than the full amount of the designated levy limit approved by the voters, the Board of Selectmen will provide notice to, or consult with, the School Committee, Permanent Planning & Building Committee, Capital Budget Committee, and Warrant Committee of its intent to do so and provide those committees the opportunity to be heard before holding a final vote on appropriating a lower amount than that approved by the voters.

An article will be placed on each Annual Town Meeting Warrant to appropriate the funds necessary out of the Municipal Buildings Stabilization Fund, subject to availability, to fund the projects identified in the 20-year Capital Plan and approved for inclusion in the 5-year Capital Budget for that year. (NOTE: Approval for withdrawal of these funds from the Municipal Buildings Stabilization Fund will require 2/3 's approval by the voters at the Town Meeting at which this withdrawal is being requested.)

C. Capital Stabilization Fund

At the 2021 Annual Town Meeting, Town Meeting approved the creation of the Capital Stabilization Fund. The Capital Stabilization Fund is authorized to fund the expenses of capital projects and the debt service related to capital projects, including equipment, vehicles, repairs to equipment and vehicles, public works improvements, and other non-building capital projects. Items not included within the 5-year Capital Budget shall only be funded from the Capital Stabilization Fund in the case of an emergency that could not have been anticipated at the time the most recent 5-year Capital Budget was adopted.

Each year, the Capital Budget shall be funded by the Capital Stabilization Fund. It is not the intention of this fund that the full amount be spent in any one year, but that funds accumulate for use according to the 5-Year Capital Budget. Over time, the Town shall have a goal of increasing the balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund so that it is sufficient to cover the Town's annual cash outlay for capital. (NOTE: Approval for withdrawal of these funds from the

Capital Stabilization Fund will require 2/3 's approval by the voters at the Town Meeting at which this withdrawal is being requested.)

III. Financial Forecasting and Trend Monitoring

Each year, the Town Administrator shall create a detailed budget forecast, in accordance with the Town Charter. The budget forecast shall include a five-year projection of revenues and expenditures for all operating funds. These forecasts will be used as planning tools in developing the following year's operating budget. The Town Administrator will provide the forecasts to the Board of Selectmen, Warrant Committee, and School Committee for use in their budget decision making.

To ensure the Town's revenues are balanced and capable of supporting desired levels of services, forecasts for property taxes, local receipts, and state aid will be conservatively based on historical trend analyses and will use generally accepted forecasting techniques and appropriate data.

IV. Reserves and Free Cash

A. Reserves

Reserves shall include funds available in Free Cash, other reserve accounts as determined by the Town Accountant, and stabilization funds, but excluding the Municipal Building Stabilization Fund (see below for explanation). The goal of these reserve accounts is to permit the Town to maintain its level of services during an economic downturn and minimize tax increases during times of economic distress. In addition, strong reserve balances can positively impact the Town's credit rating and, consequently, its long-term cost to fund major projects.

The Town shall have a goal of maintaining reserves of 9-12% but no less than 7.5% of its total budgeted annual expenditures. Total Annual Expenditures shall include General Fund expenditures in the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year, but shall exclude expenditures supported by the Enterprise Funds, Revolving Funds, and transfers to other funds. The reserves shall be calculated after Town Meeting approves the new fiscal year budget in order to account for any transfers approved into or out of the reserves by the Town Meeting.

These reserves may be drawn below the minimum level due to extraordinary circumstances, if approved by a vote of the Warrant Committee and Board of Selectmen. In no event shall the reserve accounts (including free cash) be permitted to fall below 2.5% of the Town's total budgeted annual expenditures.

Due to its dedicated source of funding through the stabilization fund override and due to restrictions on the use of funds in the Municipal Buildings Stabilization Fund, transfers into and out of the Municipal Buildings Stabilization Fund shall not be included in the General Fund expenditure calculation identified above, and the Town shall not include the balance in the

Municipal Buildings Stabilization fund as a reserve for the purposes of calculating compliance with the Financial Policy.

In preparing the Annual Warrant Report, the Board of Selectmen will ask the Warrant Committee to determine whether the Warrant Committee's recommended budget and any alternative budget proposed in the Warrant Report are in compliance with the requirements in Section IV of this Policy. The Annual Warrant Report will display the measure of compliance mentioned above to show whether any proposed budget included in the Annual Warrant Report, if adopted by Town Meeting, complies with these financial policies. If the Warrant Committee's budget does not comply with Section IV of this Policy, the Warrant Committee and the Selectmen will include an explanation of why the budget is not compliant and the position of the Warrant Committee and the Selectmen as to why each body believes the Town Meeting should or should not adopt a budget that does not comply. If any alternative budget included in the Warrant Report does not comply with Section IV of this Policy, the proponent of such alternative budget will be invited to include an explanation as to why the Town Meeting should adopt a budget that does not comply, and the Warrant Committee and the Selectmen (if the Selectmen are not the proponent of the alternative budget), will be invited to include statements as to their respective positions on the alternative budget.

Upon certification of the Free Cash by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in or around December, the Board of Selectmen will confirm that the financial policies have been met for the prior fiscal year. That confirmation from the Board of Selectmen will also appear in the Annual Warrant Report in addition to being published on the Town Website. If the Town is not in compliance with the financial policies as of the certification of Free Cash, the Selectmen will include an explanation in the Warrant Report and on the Town Website explaining why, along with what actions, if any, are being taken to bring the budget back into compliance for the upcoming fiscal year.

B. Free Cash

Whereas the Town strives to generate certified free cash in an amount equal to three to five percent of its annual expenditures, the Town shall maintain a Free Cash balance of at least 2.5% of the General Fund expenditures, defined in section A, in the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. As much as practicable, the Town will limit its use of Free Cash to funding one-time expenditures (like capital projects, snow and ice deficits, or emergencies) and may appropriate any excess above 2.5 percent of General Fund expenditures to build reserves, offset unfunded liabilities, or offset budgetary impacts from approvals of special town meeting articles to keep the overall budget in line with Proposition 2 ½ limits.

The Town shall not utilize a Free Cash projection unless the projection is approved by a vote of the Warrant Committee and Board of Selectmen and is based on revenues received by the Town at the date of the vote.

C. Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings

The Board of Water and Sewerage shall adopt a written Reserves and Retained Earnings policy for the Water Enterprise Fund and the Sewer Enterprise Fund. At a minimum, the policy shall require that each Enterprise Fund maintain a reserve amount of 20 percent of the Enterprise Fund's total budget. The reserves will be used to provide rate stabilization and to fund capital projects.

D. Overlay

The Town uses the overlay account to offset unrealized revenue resulting from uncollected property taxes, abatements, and exemptions.

At the conclusion of each fiscal year, the Board of Assessors shall submit to the Town Administrator and the Town Accountant an update of the overlay account with data that includes, but is not limited to, the gross balance, potential abatement liabilities, and any transfers to surplus. If the balance exceeds the amount of potential liabilities, the Board of Selectmen may request that the Board of Assessors vote to declare those balances surplus and available for use by the Town to fund one-time expenses, transfer to the Town's stabilization funds or to free cash.

V. OPEB

The Town shall continue to appropriate funds annually to the OPEB trust fund in an amount no less than \$500,000 in the fiscal year after this policy is adopted, with the goal of increasing that contribution 5% annually thereafter. This target is subject to revisions based on changes to applicable accounting guidance and actuarial reports.

VI. Proceeds from the Sale of Town Assets

To the extent permitted by law, the proceeds of any sales of town land or other assets shall be deposited in a reserve, stabilization, trust, or other undesignated fund (or reserve against) the Town's long-term liabilities, or to retire existing debt, or otherwise to reduce long-term, nonrecurring liabilities. Upon Board of Selectmen approval, proceeds of the sale of other Town assets (excluding land), may be used by the department that generates proceeds to offset previously approved capital expenditures or to fund other one-time expenditures.

References and Attachments:

- Town of Medfield – Financial Policies Measure of Compliance
- Massachusetts Division of Local Services: Special Purpose Stabilization Funds
- Medfield 20 Year Municipal Facilities Evaluation and Capital Plan
- Bond Covenants (reviewing with bond counsel)

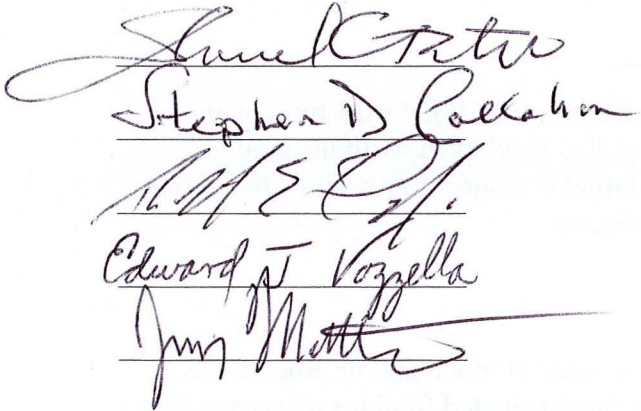
Adopted:

Board of Selectmen:



Three handwritten signatures in blue ink are written over three horizontal lines. The top signature is the most prominent and appears to be 'James J. [unclear]'. The middle and bottom signatures are less legible but appear to be 'James J. [unclear]' and 'James J. [unclear]' respectively.

Warrant Committee:



Five handwritten signatures in black ink are written over five horizontal lines. The first signature is 'James J. [unclear]'. The second is 'Stephen D. [unclear]'. The third is 'M. S. [unclear]'. The fourth is 'Edward J. Vozzella'. The fifth is 'Jim [unclear]'. Below the fifth signature, there are three more horizontal lines that are empty.