

TOWN OF MANSFIELD & MANSFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION



Citizen's Budget Guide—2015 Edition

BUDGET PROCESS

Each year the Town prepares an operating budget and capital improvement program. The Town budgets for its anticipated program revenues and expenditures needed to provide services such as Pre K-12 education, fire and police protection, snow plowing, and a public library. Per state law, the Town operates on a July 1—June 30 fiscal year. Most of the key dates in the budget process occur in late winter and early spring. Electors and citizens are encouraged to actively participate in the budget process by attending budget workshops, public information sessions and hearings, and voting at the annual town meeting.

GENERAL FUND

What is the General Fund?

The General Fund provides for general purpose government services. In other words, the General Fund finances the regular day-to-day operations of the Town.

What types of activities does the General Fund provide for?

Examples of what the General Fund provides for are services such as education, public safety, streets maintenance, library services, senior services and general administration.

Where does the money for the General Fund come from?

The money that funds the General Fund comes from a wide variety of sources. The primary sources of revenue are local property taxes and related items (62%) and state revenue, such as support for education and payment in lieu of taxes (36%). Other sources include inspection fees, fines, grants, licenses, permits and other revenue (2%). For Mansfield, the Governor's proposed budget includes a decrease in payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) monies of \$373,347 and a total decrease of state revenue of \$838,879. Key municipal leaders provided testimony regarding the impact of such a decrease in revenue to Mansfield. This lost revenue is equivalent to

0.8 mills, or a 2.9% tax increase.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TAX CALCULATION

What is a mill rate?

The mill rate is used to calculate the amount of taxes a property owner pays to the Town. The Town of Mansfield established a mill rate of 27.95 mills for Fiscal Year 2014/2015. Under the proposed Fiscal Year 2015/2016 budget the mill rate would be 30.07 mills. One mill produces one dollar for each \$1,000 of property value. In other words, under the proposed budget, a property owner would pay \$30.07 in property taxes for every \$1,000 of "assessed" value.

How are my taxes calculated?

In Connecticut, your property taxes are calculated based on 70% of your home's current market value, or its "assessed" value. For example, the median single family home price in Mansfield is \$222,860. The assessed value of a \$222,860 home is \$156,000. Your tax bill is calculated as follows:

$$\text{(Assessed Value x Mill Rate)} / 1000 = \text{Amount Due in Taxes}$$

Where Does the Money Go?

General Fund Expenditures by Service Area FY 2015/2016 Proposed Operating Budget

Mansfield Board of Education	\$22,047,750
Region 19 Contribution	\$10,188,150
Public Safety	\$ 3,639,250
Government Operations (inc. energy)	\$ 2,430,760
Public Works	\$ 2,261,700
Community Services	\$ 1,609,370
Community Development	\$ 619,800
Other/Town-Wide (benefits, capital etc.)	\$ 6,035,470
TOTAL:	\$48,832,250

Using the example of a home valued at the median single family home price in Mansfield, a typical single family homeowner would pay as follows next fiscal year:

$$(\$156,000 \times 30.07) / 1000 = \$4,691$$

Property taxes are often perceived as a regressive means of taxation. Due to statutory limitations, the Town has a nearly impossible task of diversifying its revenue base in such a way that would create a more progressive tax structure.

STORRS CENTER IMPACT ON PROPERTY TAXES

How are my taxes impacted by Storrs Center?

The Storrs Center development is generating revenue for the General Fund. Storrs Center revenues exceed Storrs Center related expenditures, providing a net gain in “new growth” tax revenue for the Town of \$1,103,370. Without Storrs Center tax revenue, the proposed mill rate would be 32.55 mills, an increase of 16.4%. With Storrs Center tax revenue, the proposed mill rate is 30.07 mills, an increase of 7.6%; this is a difference (savings) of 2.48 mills. Tax revenue generated from the Storrs Center development lessens the burden on residential taxpayers to fund municipal services. Mansfield’s share of the Downtown Partnership operating budget and the Transportation Center are funded with Storrs Center tax revenue.

Storrs Center Revenue: A Snapshot

Estimated Revenue	\$2,351,470
<i>Less Abatement</i>	<i>(728,000)</i>
Net Taxes	\$ 1,623,470
<i>Less Operating Costs</i>	<i>(291,450)</i>
<i>Less Transfer to Reserve Account</i>	<i>(228,640)</i>
Net Tax Relief for General Fund	\$ 1,103,380

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

I need help paying my taxes. Where do I go for help?

Mansfield offers some property tax abatement programs. Taxpayers that may be eligible for property tax relief include veterans, seniors, disabled persons, and farm owners. Information about tax abatement programs in Mansfield, including eligibility requirements can be obtained by contacting our Assessor’s Office at 860-429-3311, our Human Services De-

BUDGET VIEWING LOCATIONS

**Mansfield Public Library
Mansfield Community Center
Mansfield Senior Center
Mansfield Town Clerk’s Office
www.mansfieldct.gov**

Proposed budgets are now available and may be viewed during normal business hours at noted public locations.

partment at 860-429-3315 or on the web at www.mansfieldct.gov.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

What’s a capital improvement project?

It is construction, renovation or physical improvements, or equipment costing more than \$5,000.

What’s a capital improvement plan?

Annually, the Town prepares and revises a five year plan for all capital projects. The plan accounts for anticipated revenues and expenditures that will be used to fund capital projects.

Where does the revenue come from to fund capital projects?

A variety of revenue sources are used such as monies from the General Fund, grants, and bond issues.

What’s the Capital and Nonrecurring (CNR) Fund?

The CNR Fund is primarily used for conducting transfers to other funds. It has typically been used to fund capital projects and one time expenditures.

What are some examples of our current capital projects?

Examples of some upcoming capital projects include transportation improvements, street resurfacing, purchase of replacement fire apparatus, and software upgrades.

DEBT MANAGEMENT

Just like citizens often borrow money for large purchases such as homes and vehicles, so do towns. Towns often borrow money for large purchases with useful lives exceeding 15 years. Money is usually borrowed by issuing bonds. Mansfield has, for example, issued bonds to pay for renovations to the Public Library and to the elementary and middle

schools.

Mansfield’s debt is significantly less than its legally allowable limits for debt. In fact, Mansfield has one of the lowest debt per capita rates in the state; in 2013, Mansfield ranked 161 out of 169 towns at \$336 per person (source: CT Office of Policy and Management, Municipal Indicators).

What is debt service?

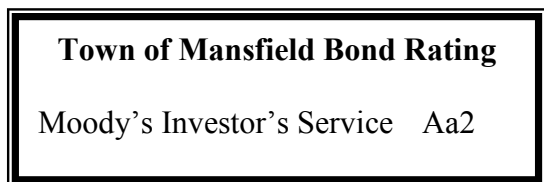
Debt service provides for the payment of debt related expenses.

Why is it in the Town’s interest to have a favorable bond rating?

Better bond ratings mean that the Town’s bonds are considered to be a good investment. Good bond ratings are also evidence that the Town is financially healthy. A bond rating is the primary factor in determining the interest rate that the Town needs to pay on debt. The better the bond rating, the more likely it becomes that the Town will pay lower interest rates on debt.

Does the Town have a favorable bond rating?

Both Standard and Poor’s and Moody’s have given Mansfield very favorable bond ratings.



FUND BALANCE

What is a fund balance?

A fund balance is the excess of revenues over expenditures for a fund. A fund balance protects the Town against catastrophic revenue losses and major emergency expenditures. Examples include severe economic downturns and extreme weather conditions such as hurricanes and other natural disasters.

How much needs to be in the General Fund balance for the Town to be considered financially healthy?

A healthy fund balance contributes to the Town’s favorable bond ratings. Bond rating agencies advise that the General Fund reserve be kept to at least 10 to 15% of the total general fund revenues. Additionally, Mansfield has a fund balance policy goal of maintaining the unrestricted fund balance at 17% of

the general fund operating budget. It is estimated that on June 30, 2015 fund balance will be at 8.1% of the operating budget. Policy makers and leaders are working to improve the fund balance but loss in state aid will prevent any contribution to the proposed 2015/16 budget. If state aid is restored, a portion would be directed to the fund balance.

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Each year the voters in Mansfield have an opportunity to vote to approve or reject the Town Council’s proposed budget for the Town. The Mansfield Board of Education budget is also included in the proposed budget presented to the electors.

When is the Town Meeting held?

The Town Meeting will be held on May 12, 2015 at 7:00pm at the Mansfield Middle School Auditorium. For the Town Meeting, the Town’s Human Services Office makes childcare, hearing impairment, and transportation accommodations (elderly and disabled) for citizens upon request. **Persons with childcare, transportation, or sign language interpretation requests should contact the Human Services Office at 860-429-3315 by May 5, 2015.**

Who may vote at the Town Meeting?

Any person who is registered to vote and any citizen of the United States over the age of 18 who owns property (motor vehicle or land) in Mansfield valued at \$1,000 or more may vote at the Town meeting. Citizens can register to vote by contacting the Registrars of Voters, Andrea Epling and Bev Miela at 860-429-3368.

How do I vote on the budget at the Town Meeting?

Electors have the ability to vote to accept, increase or decrease program expenditures. General Fund programs are defined as cost centers within functions of government i.e. Mansfield Board of Education, Library, Road Services, Senior Services. Capital Fund programs are defined by the major functions of government i.e. General Government, Public Safety, Public Works, Facilities Management and Community Services. Capital & Nonrecurring Fund programs are defined by the recipient of the fund transfer i.e. debt service fund, property revaluation fund. Mansfield utilizes program based budgeting so programs are clearly presented in the materials for the Town Meeting.

MANSFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET PROCESS

Mansfield Board of Education (MBOE) provides for education of Mansfield students in grades PreK-8. MBOE has its own elected board of officials. In the fall, the Superintendent begins to prepare his proposed budget to the Board. The Superintendent's budget is submitted to the Board in January. After a series of meetings in the winter, the Board adopts a proposed budget that is then submitted to the Town Council for its consideration. Council has the ability to increase or decrease the MBOE budget as a whole; it cannot be increased or decreased by program or line item. The MBOE budget is then submitted with Council's proposed budget to the electors at the annual Town Meeting. Voters have the legal ability to approve, increase or decrease the MBOE budget as a whole.

REGION 19 BUDGET PROCESS

Regional School District 19 provides for education of Mansfield-Ashford-Willington students in grades 9-12. As a regional school district, Region 19 is a separate entity from the Town of Mansfield, with its own elected board of officials. Consequently, the Region's budget process and adopted budget are outside of the Town's legal control. The Superintendent submits his proposed budget to the Region Board during the winter. After a series of budget workshops, the Region 19 Board adopts a proposed budget that is then submitted to the voters of its three member towns. Registered voters in Mansfield-Ashford-Willington have an opportunity to vote on the Region's budget at a referendum held on May 5, 2015. Once the voters have approved a budget for the Region, Mansfield then has a legal obligation to appropriate funds for its proportionate share of the Region's budget. By state law, Mansfield's proportionate share is determined by the number of Mansfield students enrolled in classes at the Region.

BUDGET DATES TO REMEMBER

<i>Budget Workshops</i>	Through April 23, 2015	<i>Region 19 Budget Referendum</i>	May 5, 2015 6:00am - 8:00pm
<i>Council Adoption of Budget</i>	Anticipated for week of April 27, 2015	<i>Annual Town Meeting</i>	May 12, 2015, 7:00pm Mansfield Middle School
<i>Public Information Session #2</i>	May 6, 2015, 7:00pm Council Chambers		

Dates & times subject to revision. Check www.mansfieldct.gov for updates & other meeting information.



Opportunities to Let Your Voice be Heard

Public Comment, Town Council Meetings, 7:30pm,
2nd & 4th Mondays of Every Month, Council Chambers,
4 South Eagleville Road

Comments can be submitted in writing to Council members:

Via email at **TownCouncil@mansfieldct.org**

Hard copy in c/o of the Town Manager's Office, 4 South Eagleville Road, Mansfield, CT 06268