

FORMAL BUDGET AND MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

January 2020



Frequently, communities formalize the budget process by city ordinance, town by-law, or written policy. A budget calendar specifies dates for the completion, distribution or receipt of revenue projections, financial forecast, departmental appropriation guidelines and requests, a capital improvement plan, a working budget, a final budget and so forth. It allows for hearings, reviews and approvals at different levels, and accounts for the time needed to print and distribute the warrant. For a town, the process typically begins in the fall and ends on the date of the annual town meeting. The process in a city usually begins later.

A municipal calendar includes important dates and datelines that extend beyond the budget process. It provides dates for the completion of routine and important responsibilities of the treasurer, collector, accountant and assessors. It can include any other tasks carried out by non-finance related managers, such as an annual inventory of computer equipment, or a schedule for employee performance reviews.

We recommend that a city or town begin by reviewing the sample municipal calendar posted on the DLS website. A meeting of department heads can be the starting point for modifying the master calendar to meet the specific needs and circumstances of the community.

A municipal calendar, however, works hand-in-hand with regular department head and finance officer meetings. This, in turn, suggests that a central management structure exists, particularly in towns, to coordinate activities and guide meetings of finance officers. Leadership can come from a town manager, town administrator, executive secretary, finance director or other town officer assigned the task. Depending on the form of government, a mayor, city manager, chief financial officer or auditor would direct the process. In any case, a set calendar allows workloads to be planned, progress to be monitored and, more importantly, problems to be anticipated and corrected in advance of critical deadlines.