Town of Georgetown
Government Transparency

Prepared By: The Office of Municipal & School Technology

EOTSS | Executive Office of Technology Services & Security

Georgetown Town Hall[1]

Executive Summary

In the winter of 2017, the Town of Freetown signed a Community Compact Cabinet agreement with the Baker-Polio administration. The Town selected Government Transparency best practice to better provide municipal financial information for constituents.

First settled in 1638 by a small group of Yorkshire families, the Town of Georgetown started out as a plantation with a tract of land between the villages of Newbury and Ipswich.[2] The Town has expanded in size since and was incorporated in 1838. Today, the Town is known by many for its natural amenities, including the Georgetown-Rowley State Forest and the Crane Pond Wildlife Refuge Area and had a population of 8,183, and a median household income of $113,417.[3]

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[1] Magicpiano. Georgetown Town Hall. Wikimedia Commons.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GeorgetownMA_TownHall.jpg
[2] About Our Town. The Town of Georgetown, Massachusetts. https://www.georgetownma.gov/about-our-town
[3] Georgetown town, Essex County, Massachusetts. American Fact Finder. U.S. Census Bureau.
https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

Background and Implementation

Prior to embarking on this project, the Town expressed a number of difficulties associated with efforts around financial transparency. The numbers provided for public consumption were not very "constituent-friendly." While financial professionals were able to make sense of them, they were not easily understood by the public. The Town felt that implementing a web-based financial visualization tool would provide a more meaningful opportunity for residents to learn about how their tax dollars are being spent and engage.,

Leveraging the grant funding, the Town hired ClearGov to deploy a financial transparency platform containing high-level municipal revenue and expenditure information and allowing site visitors drill into more detailed financial data by area. The platform also allows residents to enter the amount of their annual property tax to get a sense of how their contribution is allocated.
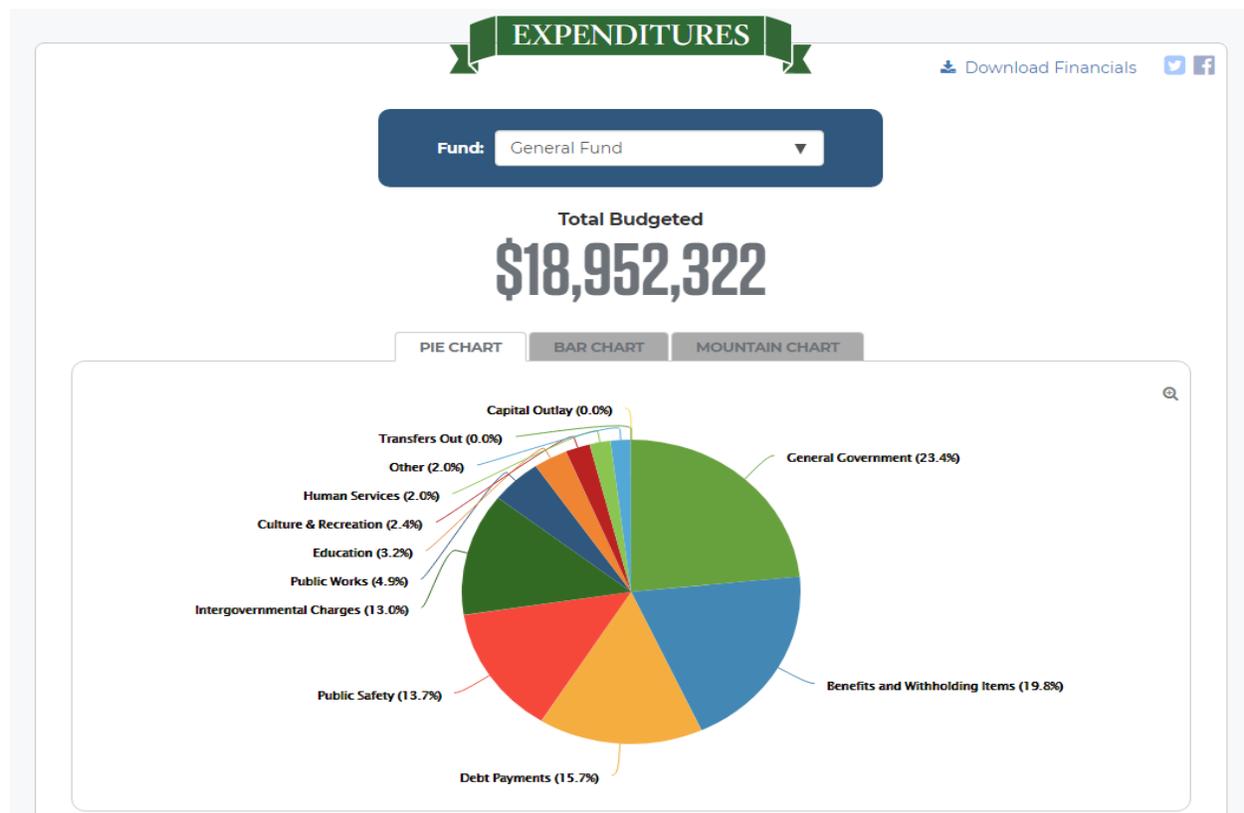
Georgetown's Municipal Expenditure Chart[4]

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[4] Expenditures of the Town of GeorgeTown. ClearGov.
https://www.cleargov.com/massachusetts/essex/town/georgetown/2020/expenditures

Example of Public Safety Contribution of in a given Fiscal Year[5]

Furthermore, the Town also implemented the "Open Checkbook" to disclose monthly municipal spending. Like the image below, the site visitors may browse through the spending records, and transactions can be searched based on dates, vendors, and description.

Open Checkbook for the Town of Georgetown[6]

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[5] Public Safety Contribution of the Town of Georgetown. ClearGov.
https://www.cleargov.com/massachusetts/essex/town/georgetown/2020/expenditures
[6] Open Checkbook for the Town of Georgetown. ClearGov.
https://www.cleargov.com/massachusetts/essex/town/georgetown/checkbook

Conclusion

With this new financial transparency platform in place, and by leveraging the programs available through the Community Compact, the Town of Georgetown was able to achieve the goal of better transparency to the public.