

**To:** Budget Committee Members, Select Board, Town Administrator

**From:** Chris Lorio, Budget Committee Chair

**Date:** September 1, 2025

**Subject:** Guiding Questions for Annual Budget Conversations

The following are consolidated questions designed to guide our upcoming conversations about the town's operating budget. The goal is to foster a collaborative and strategic discussion to understand each department's priorities, opportunities, and long-term vision. Your thoughtful responses will be instrumental in building a budget that effectively serves the community now and in the future.

## **Department Mission, Services, and Performance**

1. Please describe your department's core mission and the essential services you provide to the community. Which services are legally mandated versus driven by community priorities?
2. How do you measure service demand, and what are the key trends you're observing, such as seasonal changes or new and growing service needs?
3. What are your key performance indicators for serving the community? How does the department's performance compare to relevant goals or benchmarks?
4. Looking ahead 5-10 years, what is your long-term vision for meeting the community's future needs, and what are the most significant opportunities and challenges on the horizon?
5. How does your department partner with other community organizations, stakeholders, or external funding sources like grants and state aid to enhance services and achieve shared goals?

## **Staffing and Operations**

1. Could you provide an overview of your staffing model? How do you ensure staffing levels and schedules align effectively with service demands?
2. How have your staffing needs evolved over the past five years, and what future staffing do you anticipate needing to maintain or enhance service levels?
3. What are the primary drivers of overtime in your department, and what strategies help manage it effectively while ensuring service continuity?
4. What opportunities exist for increased collaboration or shared services with other town departments or neighboring communities to enhance efficiency and service delivery?

## **Financial and Capital Planning**

1. What are your department's highest-impact priorities that are most critical to achieving your mission in the upcoming budget?
2. To help us understand different budget approaches, could you describe how your services would be affected under a level-funded, level-service, and needs-based budget scenario?
3. What revenue streams does your department currently generate, and are there potential opportunities to enhance these or create new ones to support departmental services?
4. Please provide an overview of your department's key capital assets, such as vehicles and equipment, including their current condition and expected service life.
5. What is your department's long-term capital plan for the next 10 years, and what guidelines do you use to determine when to repair versus replace major assets?

6. In your capital forecast, what are the opportunities for deferring expenditures or exploring alternatives like leasing without significantly impacting core services?
7. To ensure resources align with the highest community priorities, are there services that could be modified or delivered differently to improve overall departmental focus and efficiency?

## **Technology and Innovation**

1. What key technologies does your department use, and how could their capabilities be more fully utilized to add value to your operations?
2. What emerging technologies, including advancements like AI, could enhance your department's efficiency or improve service quality in the future?
3. Beyond staffing, what are the primary drivers of your operating budget, and are there opportunities to optimize spending through strategies like joint purchasing or inventory management?
4. What innovative ideas or strategic initiatives are you most excited about that could shape the future of your department and the services it provides?