



Citizen's Guide to the Windsor Town Budget

In Windsor, the method we use to determine our town budget is an open process. Every adult citizen who is registered to vote – property owners and those who rent - is welcome to participate in determining the town budget.

This is where your involvement is really important because your vote really does count. What you think makes a difference, right here in your home town. Please take the time to vote on your town's budget.

This guide provides basic information about the budget process and, while understanding the process may not change how you feel about taxes, it can help you take part in the ongoing conversation about taxes and the services they pay for.



Budget Workshops for Windsor Residents



Wednesday, February 27, 2019: 6:30 PM	Town Hall	Informational Budget Meeting for Windsor residents presented by Town Manager Peter Souza
Thursday, March 28, 2019: 6:30 PM	Town Hall	Informational Budget Meeting for Windsor residents presented by Town Manager Peter Souza
The following Community Budget Forums are being sponsored by Windsor CT Votes and the Windsor League of Women Voters. Town Manager Peter Souza and Superintendent Craig Cooke will provide the latest budget information and answer questions from residents.		
April 25, 2019: 10:00 AM	L.P. Wilson Community Center/Senior Center	Community Budget Forum
Wednesday, May 1, 2019: 6:30 PM	Poquonock School	Community Budget Forum
Thursday, May 9, 2019: 6:30 PM	Community Center at 330 Windsor Avenue	Community Budget Forum

Get involved with the process

As you can see, creating a budget that maintains important services, provides a good education for our children and doesn't raise taxes to unacceptably high levels is not an easy thing to do and it simply can't be done without citizen input. The town manager and the town council want to know what you think as they prepare our town budget.

You don't need a background in accounting or a degree in public policy. You do need to have enough interest in Windsor's future to come out and voice your concerns, needs and opinions.

You can do that in a number of ways. First, you can attend any town council meeting and make yourself heard. If you aren't comfortable with speaking before a group, you can send a note or email the town manager or any member of the town council outlining your ideas and concerns. What's most important is to be heard.

Windsor Town Council

c/o Windsor Town Hall
275 Broad Street
Windsor, CT 06095
towncouncil@townofwindsorct.com

Peter Souza, Town Manager

Windsor Town Hall
275 Broad Street
Windsor, CT 06095
townmanager@townofwindsorct.com
860-285-1800

Every comment and communication is appreciated and will be considered.

Remember, everyone has a stake in this process. If you don't pay real estate taxes because you rent, your landlord does pay taxes and that will eventually affect you. If you don't have children in the Windsor School system, you should still have an interest in the quality of our schools because good schools are part of the foundation of every successful community and have a positive affect on the value of your home.

How our town budget works

Beginning in December each year, town employees begin to review programs and services to estimate how much it will cost to operate the town in the 12 months beginning July 1. That money comes from property taxes, federal and state grants and from town agencies that collect fees.

At the same time, the town makes an estimate of how much it will have to spend to maintain and/or enhance the services that residents and businesses expect.

Also during this period, the board of education and the Windsor school's administrative staff estimate how much it will cost to operate the schools and school-related services for the next year.

The town manager then takes the estimate of the income the town expects along with the estimates of spending from the town staff and the board of education and presents them to the town council. This is called the Town Manager's Proposed Budget and it is really just a starting point.

Next, the town council examines the budget and conducts budget hearings with all town departments throughout the month of April to discuss and suggest changes. When the town council approves the final budget, it is put up for a vote at what is called an Adjourned Town Meeting Referendum, more commonly known as the "budget referendum."

The voters in Windsor are then asked to approve – or disapprove - the budget. If voters don't approve the budget, town staff and the Board of Education, through the Town Manager, modify and resubmit their proposals to the Town Council and then once again, to the voters. Only after the voters have approved the budget can it become the income and spending plan for the town.


The budget is about choices

In making budget choices, the town council has to face certain realities. There are many new services that we would all like the town to provide but that we simply can't afford. In fact, we may not be able to afford some things that we have enjoyed in the past.

There are certain expenses that must be included in the budget at some level. For instance, we must have police services and schools. This is a question of the level of service delivery that our residents have a right to expect.

If we choose to reduce what we are willing to pay for these and other essential services too far, our town will change in ways that none of us want.

There are other "fixed" costs in the town's budget that continue to rise, and that the town is obligated to absorb. High on the list are fuel costs, the MDC's fees for sewer service, utilities, salaries that are mandated by collective bargaining agreements, and health insurance costs for town and school employees.



Your Household	The Town
Mortgage or rent	Debt service
Taxes	Mandates, required services
Utilities, food, gas	Utilities, gas, salaries, benefits
Savings account	Fund balance, reserves
Maintenance projects	Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
Phone, Cable, Internet	Technology, replacement equipment
"Nice-to-have" items	Enhanced services/programs

The budget is about fiscal responsibility and looking ahead

The reality is that the choices we make as to how much income we can expect and how much we can spend this year, have an affect on future years as well. If, for instance, we elected to reduce the size of our public works department to the point where we could no longer maintain one or more of our parks or town buildings, we would be placing the extra cost of reclaiming those facilities on some future year's budget.

The reverse is also true. If we include a new service of some kind in our budget now, we could be obligating ourselves as a community to continue it in future years.

The taxes we pay on real estate, automobiles and other personal property have a long-term influence on our town. We must be aware of our residents' ability and willingness to pay for services. If our tax rate is perceived as being too high, residents living on fixed incomes will move away and those shopping for new homes will avoid us. Businesses, that now pay approximately 40% of all town taxes, may relocate to areas that are cheaper. The vitality and diversity that make our town such a good place to live would quickly disappear.

Like any household or business, we have to be careful about what we borrow. We must repay money that we, as a community, made a decision to borrow in the past. The money used to renovate Windsor High School and the Windsor Public Library are good examples of this.

Also like any family, we need to maintain a savings account. For the town, that's called our Fund Balance and it represents revenues that we have collected over the years but did not spend. It is tempting to dip into those savings to cover our ongoing expenses but that may not be fiscally responsible because the size of our Fund Balance is closely watched by the financial community and various government agencies. If our Fund Balance gets too low, our credit rating will be affected and it may cost us more to borrow in the future.

Our challenge then, is to figure out just how much, if anything, we can spend on each service the town provides.

After the town manager presents his budget to the town council in late March, the council will begin evening meetings with various town departments. The public is always welcome at these meetings, which are televised on WGTV, Channel 96. Once the town council votes on a final budget, it sets the date of the referendum.

The town's website, townofwindsorct.com is also a great resource for learning more about the budget. You can view a videocast of budget meetings live or view archived meetings and stay updated on meeting schedules to keep pace with the process.

Seniors and Veterans – You may be eligible for reduced taxes. A Guide to Tax Reductions and Benefits Available to Qualified Windsor Residents is a pamphlet that describes a variety of exemptions and benefits available to people meeting the income and/or age guidelines as determined by State of Connecticut regulations. To get your copy or learn more, visit townofwindsorct.com or call the Town Assessor's office at 860-285-1816.

Winter parking rules.

They're designed to keep everyone safe this winter.

November 15 to April 15: No parking on Windsor streets between 1:00 AM and 6:00 AM. No parking on any street during a snow or ice storm that has been in progress for one hour or more. Also, don't leave your vehicle on the street in such a position that it impedes snowplowing operations or the free flow of traffic.

When the snow arrives this year, remember to keep outside exits, walks and stairs free of snow and ice. Don't forget there is a town ordinance that requires all property owners to clear snow from the sidewalk (and fire hydrants if there is one on your property) within 12 hours after a storm.

It's all common sense but it's also the law.

Everyone – January

January 1: Looking for more help with your technology? **Book-A-Librarian!** Make an appointment to meet with a staff member for one hour to get help with downloading ebooks or audiobooks to ereaders or other devices; basic computer skills; how to set up an email or social media account; or to learn more about Ancestry, Reference USA and more library services. To get your free one hour appointment call 860-285-1922.

January 2: Are you doing business in Windsor? Are you looking for a common sense approach to growing your business? Then, the **Windsor Business to Business Connection** is for you! Join us today at Bart's Beanery, 55 Palisado Avenue from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM for coffee and a great way to meet other local business owners and support a local business. The meetings will offer opportunities for sharing information about your business, as well as referrals and testimonials. Please bring your business cards! Free. 860-688-5165.

January 2: How does this thing work? Let our Geeks show you how! **Bring Your Gadgets to the Geeks** at the Windsor Public Library every Wednesday evening. We will take questions on devices and gadgets of all sizes and functions. No appointment necessary. The Geeks will be available on the Mezzanine from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM weekly, and their advice is free. 860-285-1918.

January 2: The **Windsor Inland, Wetlands, and Watercourses Commission** will meet tonight from 7:00 PM until adjournment in the Council Chambers at Town Hall. Free. 860-285-1987.

January 3: The Wow! Art After School Program at the Windsor Art Center station studios will be every Thursday from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM until February 7. Arts & crafts each week like collage, painting, mask making, buttonmaking, puppetry, coloring and still life drawing. Ages 6 and up. \$75.00. 860-716-9089.

January 3: Hwa Yu Tai Chi is a low impact, complete movement education system and a unique long term health program deeply rooted in self-defense. Tai Chi emphasizes core development, improved balance, and reduced stress. The program is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays every month from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the L.P. Wilson Community Center in the Ballet Room. \$50.00. 860-798-0628.

January 3: The Wilson Branch Library's **Adult Crafters Group** meets each Thursday from 11:00 AM to noon. If you are working on a craft and would like to work on it in the company of like-minded individuals, stop by and join the group. All ages are welcome, but this event is intended for adults. Free. 860-247-8960.

January 3: The **Kiwanis Club** of Windsor meets tonight and every Thursday from 6:30 to 8:00 PM at Jim's Restaurant on Poquonock Avenue. 860-683-0653 or windsorkiwanis.org for more information.

January 3: The Windsor **Democratic Town Committee** will meet tonight from 7:00 PM until adjournment in the Council Chambers at Town Hall. Free. 860-285-1958.

January 4: Get basic computer help or learn how to use your new tablet or phone at the Wilson Branch Library's **One-on-One Computer Help** each Friday from noon to 2:00 PM. Participants sign up for half hour sessions and get assistance during that time. Sign up for a session every week to improve your technical skills and build your confidence. All ages are welcome, but this event is intended for adults. Free. 860-247-8960.

January 5: Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing at Northwest Park through snow-laden forests and fields. Snow conditions permitting, a 6-inch base is required. Cross-country skis and snowshoe rentals are available on weekends only, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Children and adult sizes are available. Rental fee: \$10.00 (resident), \$15.00 (non-resident). Call 860-285-1886 for conditions.

January 5: Come out to the **Northwest Park Coffeehouse** from 7:30 PM to 10:00 PM to enjoy a night of music at the park with Bus 13. This group is known for its heartland folk rock and alt-country style. The band has thrived on their original indie roots and has released three studio albums. \$16.00. 860-285-1886.

January 7: The **Young Artist's After School Program** will be held at the Windsor Art Center station studios every Monday from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM until April 1. A focused way for young artists to practice the foundations of art: still life drawing, painting, portraiture, and sculpture. Ages 12 and up. \$165.00. 860-716-9089.

January 7: John F. Kennedy School PTO Meeting will be held at John F. Kennedy School from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Free. 860-687-2060.

January 7: Cardio Mix is a program designed to target major muscle groups and effective weight training. It meets at the L.P. Wilson Community Center from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM each Monday and Wednesday through February 20. No class on January 21 or February 18. \$84.00. 860-285-1990.

January 7: Ditch the land and jump into the water with **Water Fitness** and use water's natural resistance. We will bend, lift, and work our way to a strong body. The impact is low and suited to all abilities. Meets Mondays and Wednesdays from 7:30 PM to 8:30 PM through February 20 at the Windsor High School indoor pool. There is no class on January 21 or February 18. \$90.00. 860-285-1990.

January 7: Clover Winter Strings Concert will be held at Clover Street School from 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM. Free. 860-687-2050.

January 7: The Windsor **Commission on Aging and Persons with Disabilities** will meet tonight from 7:00 PM until adjournment in the L.P. Wilson Senior Center cafe. Free. 860-285-1881.

2019 is a Revaluation Year

Revaluation, which is required in every Connecticut town every five years, is the process of determining the Fair Market Value for all properties in Windsor. Fair Market Value is what you could expect to receive if you sold your home on October 1, 2018 in its present condition.

Learn more about Revaluation on page 9 or visit townofwindsorct.com

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