

READING THE BUDGET

How to read the budget

The budget is formatted in a way that is designed to give readers quick access to specific information, yet completely and professionally display budget data. Descriptive terms have been substituted for jargon but the document also contains a glossary of useful terms. This section is designed to highlight each section of departmental requests that make the heart of the budget and examples are given in key sections.

Departmental Organization Chart

Departments with multiple subsections have been divided into activity centers. Each activity center has a separate focus and budget emphasis. The organization chart graphically depicts the various units that combine to create each department.

Department Responsibilities

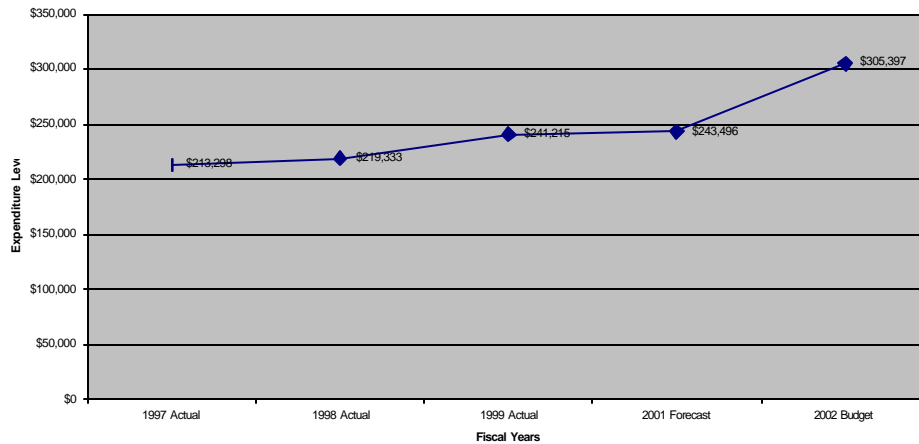
Each departmental section, after the organizational chart, lists the department's function and responsibilities according to the City's charter. Each department within the City values the same vision statement which is listed in the Vision and Goals section of the budget narrative.

Department Goals

Goals of each department are then listed in support of the vision and identify the standard of performance each department uses. Goals and performance measures are evaluated annually. The annual report submission from the prior year lists the core functions of their operation and provides insight into the focus each department follows in organizing its efforts.

Summaries, Graphs & Overviews

Each department section begins with a summary similar to the one shown below which is designed to offer a glance at the history of actual expense in prior years versus the adopted current year budget for each department.



Department Summary Pages

Each department spreadsheet header includes the department or activity center name to help orient readers. The first three digits of the account numbers listed also represent the department or activity center. This account number would match designations of account reports from the City's accounting program. A sample heading follows, and each column heading will be described.

Account Number	Account Name	1997 Actual	1998 Actual	1999 Actual	2000 Actual	2001 Budget	2001 Actual thru 2/28/01	2001 Forecast Department
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Appropriations:

Account Number – This line lists the City-wide account number that corresponds to the account within which funds are designated. In practice, the various accounts are accounting tools used throughout the year to monitor departmental spending within and between accounts.

Account Name – This line contains the descriptive title each account is assigned. Account descriptions are universal so comparisons between departments are made as closely as possible. For example, the Uniforms account in the Police dispatch activity center is similar to the account in the Fire department even though the uniforms purchased are different.

1997 Actual – An actual line records the amount expended from each account during the budget year as recorded by the year end audit. This line is included purely for comparative purposes.

1998 Actual – This line records the departments actual expenditures for each account during fiscal year 1998.

1999 Actual – This line records the departments actual expenditures for each account during fiscal year 1999.

2000 Actual – This line records the departments actual expenditures for each account during fiscal year 2000. For the 2002 budget this represents the prior year allocation which is useful for comparing current allocations.

2001 Budget - The amount approved at the end of the prior year's budget process. This is the amount departments are currently authorized to expend.

2001 Actual thru 2/28/01 – As the 2001 fiscal year is not yet completed when the budget process begins, this column reports actual expenditures through the date listed. This information is useful in projecting actual expenditures for the current budget year.

2001 Forecast – This line records the departments projection of actual expenditures for the fiscal year not yet completed.

2002 Budget – After careful review and consideration of the City Administrator recommendations and the department head requests, the City Council adopts a final budget. This column will form the basis for the next fiscal year budget.

UNDERSTANDING LINE ITEM JUSTIFICATION

The account names provide line item justification as they detail the proposed use of each requested account. Lines briefly detail the general use of accounts in ways that highlight needs and help track use.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

With the recently revised budget format readers are offered a complete view of not only the City budget but also the budgeting process. All key steps in the budgeting process are recorded in the spreadsheets as recommendations and are considered and reviewed at various stages. A careful reading will indicate the thoroughness of the review given to the City budget. However, the budget is also a functional document as departments review listings throughout the year and prepare for future budgets. Therefore the design allows rapid access to vital summary information both for the departmental user and the lay reader not interested in exhaustive comparisons. Finally, the City budget is a living document incorporating changes as the needs of the City of Saco change.