



News About Town

A Message From Our Town Manager

Hello,

Thank you for checking out this month’s newsletter. This issue of News About Town spotlights a topic that – believe it or not – plays a role in the life of every Gray resident: the fiscal year 2024 budget.



Nate Rudy, Town Manager

The process for planning a municipal budget is extensive. It takes months of discussions and presentations from various Town staff and the Town Council to craft a budget. After all that work, the final budget is voted on by Gray residents in June every year.

All budget-related meetings with the Town Council and other government entities are open to the public. By watching these meetings, you can see how each Town department plans on spending your tax dollars, and how the Town Council responds to each request. It’s my goal, as well as the goals of Town staff and the Town Council, to keep our budget as fiscally responsible as possible while striving to serve the growing needs of Gray residents and Town government.

I encourage you to read this newsletter to learn about the budget process, and to visit our website for information about every budget-related meeting. Finally, I hope you come to the polls in June to make your voice heard.

Thanks,
Nate

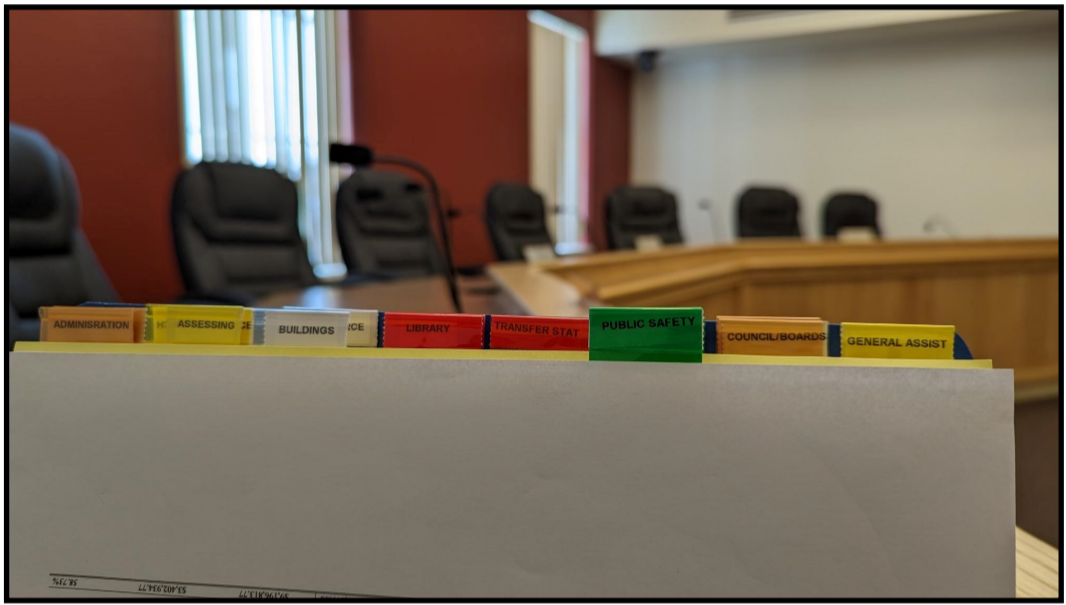


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Town Government Shaping FY2024 Budget, Residents to Vote in June



The Gray Town Council carefully weighs budget requests from each Town department as they shape the FY2024 budget.

February to April of every year is an auspicious time for Town Government when Town staff and the Town Council discuss various financial requests from Town departments and distill them into a thoughtful, measured budget for Gray residents to consider for approval. This year, the budget for fiscal year 2024 (which goes from June 2023 to July 2024) is currently on the table, and you can watch the entire process and submit your own budget feedback to your elected officials.

Our website has a [page](#) that describes the Town of Gray’s budget agenda, and which topics are discussed at each workshop meeting. There are a variety of subjects brought before the Town Council by Town departments during these workshops, including stipends, staffing proposals and reorganizations, technology requests, capital improvement plans, committee updates, and more.

Continued on next page.

Upcoming Events

March 16, 23, 27

4:00 p.m.: Gray Town Council Budget Workshops —24 Main Street and Zoom

Wednesdays + Fridays

10:30 a.m.: Kids Story Time — Gray Public Library

March 9

7 p.m.: Planning Board Meeting—24 Main Street and Zoom

March 22

7 p.m.: Zoning Board of Appeals—24 Main Street



Town Government Shaping FY2024 Budget, Residents to Vote in June (Continued)

“The Council views presenting a budget to the residents on Election Day as one of the most critical jobs assigned to the body,” says Town Council Chair Sandy Carder. “We’re proud that Gray has one of the most transparent and accessible budget processes.”

By having such a robust budget workshop schedule, the Town Council can view all requests and determine if they should be addressed in the current budget cycle, or in future years. Keeping the MILL rate – the amount of tax payable per dollar of the assessed value of a property – as stable as possible is the Council’s goal. Too high a municipal budget in any particular year can have a negative effect on the MILL rate; school district budgets and county budgets, which the Town Council does not control, can have an impact on Gray’s MILL rate, too. Through careful planning and controlled spending, the Town Council has kept Gray’s property tax rate nearly flat in the last four years.

Much thought goes into how to craft a responsible budget. It’s common practice for a municipal government to use bond funding for major capital projects, and lease-purchase funding to finance vehicle purchases for public works equipment and public safety apparatus. Using these financial tools spreads out the cost of purchase and ownership and flattens spikes in Gray’s year-to-year expense budgeting.

“Gray is fortunate to have seen an improvement in our bond rating this year, to Aa1 from Aa2,” says Town Manager Nate Rudy. “The FY2024 initial budget request proposes a bond debt level of 8.8 percent of the total expenses, comfortably within the regular debt range of 5-15 percent used by municipal governments around the U.S.”

Two of Gray’s six current bonds will mature in 2024, which creates an opportunity for the Council to consider future uses of bonds and other financial tools to make necessary investments in Town infrastructure while maintaining a stable MILL rate for property owners.

Near the end of the budget agenda, residents will have the opportunity to make their thoughts known at the Town Council meeting on April 4, 2023. Finally, Gray residents will vote on the Town budget.

“We encourage everyone to get out to the polls in June to vote,” says Carder. “It represents not only how Gray will function in the next year, but also the months-long efforts of dozens of dedicated public servants who want to see Gray grow and thrive.”



Nomination Papers Now Available for Town Councilor, MSAD Board of Directors, Water District

Are you or someone you know interested in pursuing public office in the Town of Gray? Nomination papers are available, beginning Tuesday, February 28, 2023, for the following offices:

- **Gray Town Councilor:** Two 3-year terms to expire June 2026.
- **MSAD 15 Board of Directors:** Two 3-year terms to expire June 2026, one remainder of a 3-year term to expire June 2025.
- **Water District Trustee:** One 5-year term to expire June 2028.



Interested in public service? Consider serving your town!

Interested Gray residents may obtain nomination papers at the Gray Town Office during regular business hours. All nomination paperwork must be received by the Town Clerk no later than Friday, April 14, 2023, at 12 p.m. For more information, please call the Town Office at 657-3339.

Gray Wild Blueberry Festival Accepting Applications for Booth Space Ahead of August Event

Starting in March, the Gray Wild Blueberry Festival Committee is accepting applications for booth space as they prepare for the 7th annual Gray Wild Blueberry Festival "*Celebrating Community & Connections*" on Saturday, August 12, 2023. Applications are open to food trucks, artisans, and crafters with Maine-made goods and products, and Gray-New Gloucester school and community groups.

The committee would like to thank the financial and in-kind support of local businesses that make the fun-filled festival possible each year. The committee expects the festival to draw more than 3,000 attendees from in and out of Maine this year.

For more information, or to receive an application, email blueberryfestival@graymaine.org. You can Like and Follow the festival on [Facebook](#), and check out their new dedicated [website](#).



Gray is Looking for Committee Members

Serve your town by volunteering for these committees!

- **Blueberry Festival Committee**: Celebrates and promotes local businesses, community and school organizations, and the Pennell Complex.
- **Community Economic Development Committee**: Promotes community and cultural connections in Gray and supports established businesses.
- **Community Television Advisory Committee**: Makes recommendations regarding broadcast options for Gray, and recommends improvements to public, educational, and governmental programming.
- **Dry Mills School House Committee**: Preserves the rich history of the Dry Mills School House.
- **Open Space Committee**: Makes recommendations to the Town Council to help secure access to land/corridors through acquisitions, easements, land swaps, and other forms of agreements.
- **Planning Board**: Reviews and approves subdivision plans, site plans, conditional uses, and Shoreland Zoning applications in accordance with State Statutes and Town Ordinances.
- **Resiliency Committee**: Promotes climate action planning and influences the path our community will take toward climate resilience, energy efficiency, waste management and renewable energy.
- **Zoning Board of Appeals Committee**: Hears and decides administrative appeals where it is alleged there is an error in any order, requirement, decision, or determination by the Code Enforcement Officer.
- **MSAD15 School Board**: Shapes the functioning of the Gray-New Gloucester school system.
- **Recreation Committee**: Advises and recommends to the Town Council on recreational and public parks matters, such as: programs, policies, development, and leisure time activities.



Mary volunteers on the Recreation Committee, and leads a walking group she started.

"Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."

- Sue Premo, Volunteer Coordinator, Green Bay, WI

To apply to any of these committees, go to graymaine.org/volunteer.



The Town of Gray is Hiring!

We hire great people from a variety of backgrounds to do the town's important work. If you are looking for a career opportunity, check out our [Employment page](#) to see if there's an opening that's right for you! We are currently hiring for Town Clerk, Fire-fighters, and Snow Plow Divers, just to name a few.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

- There are certain roads in Gray that have weight limits as the spring thaw takes its toll. View the road list on our [website](#).
- Habitat for Humanity of Greater Portland is looking for families to own new homes in Standish. Future homeowners must make no more than 65% of the area median income and demonstrate a need for affordable housing, an ability to pay a low interest mortgage, and a willingness to partner with Habitat. Download an application or request a mailed copy online at habitatportlandme.org/apply. Completed applications due by noon on April 5, 2023.
- The second half of your tax bill is due on April 3, 2023. You can view and pay your bill on our [website](#) or by visiting the Clerk's Office in the Gray Town Office located at 24 Main Street in Gray.
- Throughout March, the Gray Fire Rescue Association will receive \$1 from every \$2.50 Community Bag sold at the Hannaford on 130 Shaker Rd. in Gray.
- You can now keep track of which kinds of calls, and how many, Gray Fire and Rescue responds to by reviewing reports [published on our website](#). New information will be added as it becomes available.

If you have an idea for a newsletter submission, please fill out this [form](#).

Questions can be directed to:
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