

Town of Ridgefield, CT
Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Chapter C. Charter

Article X. Finance and Taxation

[1] *Editor's Note: This article was reorganized and amended in its entirety 11-2-2010. See also Notes (4), (6), (7), (11), (12), (13) and (15) at the end of the Charter for prior amendments.*

Section 10-1. Budget.

(a) Preparation of the budget for the coming fiscal year. **[(17)(18)(19)]**

The Board of Finance, in consultation with the Board of Selectpersons and Board of Education, shall prepare annually a Master Budget Schedule that sets forth (1) the budget formats and data, and (2) the key activities and dates for the annual budget cycle. The Master Budget Schedule is due to the First Selectperson, Chair of the Board of Education and Chair of the Board of Finance no later than the first Monday in November of the calendar year preceding the coming fiscal year.

The Board of Finance shall receive from the Board of Selectpersons and the Board of Education their respective proposed operating budgets in accordance with the Master Budget Schedule. The Board of Education shall also submit to the Board of Selectpersons its operating budget in accordance with the Master Budget Schedule to allow sufficient time for review and non-binding recommendation by the Board of Selectpersons to the Board of Finance. The Board of Selectpersons' recommendation shall only be as to the total amount of the proposed Board of Education operating budget.

The Board of Selectpersons is responsible for the capital budget for the Town. All Town agencies, including the Board of Education, shall submit, in accordance with the Master Budget Schedule, their capital requests to the Board of Selectpersons who will submit a consolidated capital budget request to the Board of Finance at the same time they submit their operating budget.

The budgets shall be prepared in such manner as the Board of Finance shall prescribe.

(b) Powers and duties of the Board of Finance in connection with the preparation of the budget for the coming fiscal year.

[(17)(18)(19)]

The Board of Finance shall hold a public hearing on the proposed budgets on or before the last weekday in March. At least 10 days before such hearing, printed copies of the proposed budgets shall be available at the office of the Town Clerk and at such other locations as the Board may prescribe and shall be posted on the Town's website. At least four days prior to said hear-

ing, the proposed budgets shall be published in a newspaper having a general circulation in the Town. Those wishing changes to the budget as proposed by the Board of Selectpersons and the Board of Education shall communicate their views at the public hearing. After the public hearing, the Board of Finance shall meet to consider public comment, budget requests against projected revenues and the overall financial condition of the Town. The Board's objective in these considerations is prudent management of the overall fiscal situation and not how or where specific amounts are budgeted. Therefore, any changes made to the operating budget requests of the Town and the Board of Education by the Board of Finance shall be limited to the budgets as a whole and shall not address specific items. The Board of Finance may eliminate any proposed capital item, reduce any proposed capital item, and, with the concurrence of the Board of Selectpersons, increase any capital item.

(c) Presentation of the budgets at Annual Town and Budget Meeting.
[(18)]

The annual capital and operating budgets of the Board of Education and the Board of Selectpersons as recommended by the Board of Finance shall be brought to the Annual Town and Budget Meeting for discussion only and then sent to referendum. [(19)]

Approval of the budget shall be by machine voting at a referendum as set forth in Section 10-1(d). At least 10 days before such meeting, printed copies of the proposed budgets shall be available at the office of the Town Clerk and elsewhere as the Board of Finance may prescribe and shall be posted on the Town's website. At least four days prior to the meeting, the proposed budgets shall be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the Town.

The Board of Selectpersons may decide to present certain or all capital items of under \$100,000 per item to the Town Meeting for a vote. The meeting shall have the power to delete any such capital item, but it may not increase or add to any line item or establish any additional line item. Said vote shall be binding with reference to those items. All other items on the capital budget shall go to referendum as set forth in Section 10-1(d). [(19)]

(d) Budget referendum. [(19)]

The budget as proposed by the Board of Finance shall be submitted to a budget referendum. The budget referendum shall be held not less than seven nor more than 14 days from the date of the Annual Town and Budget Meeting. The Board of Selectpersons shall set the date and the hours and shall designate the place for the budget referendum.

If the annual operating budget of the Board of Selectpersons or the Board of Education is rejected, the Board of Finance shall meet and upon due deliberation publish a recommended budget to replace the rejected budget. Such recommended budget shall be considered at a subsequent referendum to be held within three weeks after the failed budget referendum. Subsequent referenda shall be held until a budget is passed, and should a budget not be passed by July 1, the Town shall operate under the budget authorization of the previous fiscal year until a new budget is passed.

(e) Following approval of the budget, the Board of Finance shall, by resolution, fix the tax rate in mills. When the budget is approved, the Board of Finance shall make it available to Town agencies and the public through the office of the Town Clerk.

Section 10-2. Additional appropriations.

- (a) In the event that a Town agency, other than the Board of Education, determines that it requires an additional operating appropriation, the agency shall seek the endorsement of the Board of Selectpersons in writing of the sum needed. Within 15 days thereafter, any endorsed request shall be forwarded by the Board of Selectpersons to the Board of Finance for action. [(17)(19)]

In the event that the Board of Education determines that it requires an additional operating appropriation, it shall request of the Board of Finance in writing the sum needed and the reasons therefor. The Board of Education shall send a copy of any such request to the Board of Selectpersons at the time such request is made to the Board of Finance. [(17)(19)]

In the event any Town Agency, including the Board of Education, requires an additional appropriation for a capital expense, the requesting agency shall seek the endorsement of the Board of Selectpersons in writing of the sum needed. Within 15 days thereafter, any endorsed request shall be forwarded by the Board of Selectpersons to the Board of Finance for action. [(17)(19)]

The Board of Finance shall consider and act upon such requests not more than 15 days after it is in receipt thereof, and shall inform the requesting agency and the Board of Selectpersons in writing of its decision and the reason therefor. [(19)]

The Board of Finance may, in any fiscal year, without approval of the Town Meeting, provide any single requesting Town agency with additional appropriations from general fund unreserved-undesignated fund balance a sum not to exceed \$50,000 cumulative. [(17)]

The Board of Finance may not, without approval of the Town Meeting, provide any additional appropriations from general fund unreserved-undesignated fund balance that will cause the total of additional appropriations to exceed the sum of \$250,000 in aggregate to all requesting Town agencies in any fiscal year. [(17)(19)]

All other additional appropriations requested by Town agencies that are less than \$3,000,000, in accordance with this Charter, shall require approval of the Town Meeting. In the event of a negative referral by the Board of Finance, said matter shall go back to the Board of Selectpersons who shall vote whether to send it to the Town Meeting or remove it from the Town Meeting and submit it to a referendum. All additional appropriations requested by Town agencies that are of \$3,000,000 or more shall, after public hearing, be submitted to referendum without call to Town Meeting. [(19)]

- (b) If a request for an additional appropriation is made by electors of the Town by verified petition pursuant to Section 3-5 of this Charter, both the Board of Selectpersons and the Board of Finance shall hold public hearings and shall vote on the subject of the petition within 45 days of receipt of the verified petition. The public hearings may be held jointly, upon agreement of both Boards. [(19)]

If both the Board of Selectpersons and the Board of Finance approve the petition, the Board of Selectpersons shall call a Special Town Meeting to be held within 45 days of approval by the

Board of Selectpersons. The Special Town Meeting may approve individual requests made by verified petition up to the amount of \$3,000,000. If the amount of the request is equal to or greater than \$3,000,000, the request shall be submitted to referendum.

If either or both Boards vote to deny the petition or fail to act within said forty-five days of receipt of the verified petition, the Board of Selectpersons shall remove the matter from the Town Meeting and submit the matter to referendum. Said referendum shall be held within 45 days of the denial or failure to act by either Board.

(c) Capital Reserve Fund.

The Town maintains a Capital Reserve Fund for capital projects and nonrecurring expenditures in accordance with the General Statutes, any payment into or appropriation from the Capital Reserve Fund shall be made only upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance and approval of the Town Meeting.

An appropriation or transfer of unexpended capital project balances and payment into or appropriation from the Capital Reserve Fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures, requiring Town Meeting approval in accordance with this Charter, may be decreased by a Town Meeting, but may not be increased. A Town Meeting may make no such appropriation or transfer of funds not recommended by the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance shall make a recommendation within five days of receipt of a request from the Board of Selectpersons for a recommendation. **[(19)]**

- (d) Appropriations or transfers of unexpended capital project balances shall be determined by the Board of Selectpersons in consultation with the Board of Finance. In accordance with the General Statutes, such funds may be used for payment of debt servicing, payment of approved capital projects, payment into the general fund, or payment into the Capital Reserve Fund per Section **10-2** (c).

[(18)^[1](19)]

*[1] Editor's Note: This amendment also redesignated former Subsections (d) and (e) as Subsections **(e)** and **(f)**, respectively.*

- (e) The provisions of this section shall not be a limitation on the power of the Town Meeting to make appropriations to be met from the authorization of bonds, notes or other obligations for appropriations in accordance with the General Statutes and this Charter.
- (f) Transfers of funds between Town agencies or departments (except the Board of Education) require approval of the Board of Finance upon the request of the Board of Selectpersons. Transfers within a department's budget (except the Board of Education) require approval from the Selectpersons only. The Board of Education is authorized to approve all transfers within its budget, but shall provide a summary report of transfer activity to the Board of Finance at the end of each fiscal year. **[(19)]**

Section 10-3. Expenditures and accounting.

The fiscal year of the Town shall begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the following calendar year.

The system of accounts used by Town agencies shall be that prescribed by the General Statutes, as supplemented by regulations of the Board of Finance.

The regulations of the Board of Finance shall also approve the form and procedures for orders to be

drawn on the Treasurer by the Board of Selectpersons. **[(19)]**

All Town agencies shall comply with the regulations of the Board of Finance required by this section. Such regulations shall be adopted and may be amended by vote of the Board of Finance and shall not be inconsistent with this Charter and the General Statutes. **[(19)]**^[1]

No purchase shall be made by any department or Town agency, other than the Board of Education, except through the First Selectperson, and such purchases shall be made under such rules and regulations as may be established by the Board of Selectpersons with the approval of the Board of Finance. The Board of Education shall establish appropriate rules and regulations for such purchases. **[(19)]**

Town agencies shall not involve the Town in obligations to spend money for any purpose in excess of the amount appropriated therefor.

The Board of Finance may have access at all reasonable times to the records and books of account of the Town agencies.

Every appropriation, except an appropriation for a capital expenditure, shall lapse at the close of the fiscal year to the extent that it has not been expended or encumbered. An appropriation for a capital expenditure shall continue in force until the purpose for which it was made has been accomplished or abandoned; the purpose of any such appropriation shall be deemed abandoned if, at the end of the third succeeding fiscal year, there has been no disbursement from or encumbrance of the appropriation.

[1] *Editor's Note: Language regarding year-end summary report submissions (see note 17) was deleted 11-7-2023.*

Section 10-4. Bonds and notes.

The authorization of bonds and notes (except notes in anticipation of taxes to be paid within the fiscal year in which issued) shall be governed by Section **3-10** of this Charter.

Section 10-5. Powers and duties of the Board of Finance in connection with the development of long-range financial planning.

[(19)]

The Board of Finance may initiate joint meetings with the Board of Selectpersons and the Board of Education for the purpose of discussions on long-range financial planning.

The Board of Finance may require all Town agencies dependent on the Town budget for any portion of their income to submit estimates for future spending. Such estimates shall be for the proposed budget plus two years and shall be the best estimates of the present Town agency. Said estimates shall be submitted as the Board of Finance shall dictate as a part of the preliminary budget. Any requests for budgetary information shall be made through the office of the First Selectperson or the Superintendent of Schools.