

B. Glossary of Terms

Abatement:	A complete or partial cancellation of a tax levy imposed by a governmental unit. Administered by the local board of assessors.
Accounting System:	A system of financial recordkeeping which records, classifies and reports information on the financial status and operation of an organization.
Accrual Basis:	The basis of accounting under which transactions are recognized when they occur, regardless of the timing of related cash flows.
Adopted Budget:	The resulting budget that has been approved by the City Council.
Advance Refunding Bonds:	Bonds issued to refund an outstanding bond issue prior to the date on which the outstanding bonds become due or callable. Proceeds of the advance refunding bonds are deposited in escrow with a fiduciary, invested in U.S. Treasury Bonds or other authorized securities, and used to redeem the underlying bonds at maturity or call date and to pay interest on the bonds being refunded or the advance refunding bonds.
Annual Budget:	An estimate of expenditures for specific purposes during the fiscal year (July 1 - June 30) and the proposed means (estimated revenues) for financing those activities.
Appropriation:	An authorization by the City Council to make obligations and payments from the treasury for a specific purpose.
Arbitrage:	Investing funds borrowed at a lower interest cost in investments providing a higher rate of return.
Assessed Valuation:	A valuation set upon real or personal property by the City board of assessors as a basis for levying taxes.
Assessment/Offsets: Cherry Sheet:	The amount that the State automatically deducts from local aid to cover city-shared expenses. The amount, if over \$500,000, is contained on a separate sheet within the budget report. The primary items that make up this amount are charter school and MBTA assessments.
Audit:	A study of the City's accounting system to ensure that financial records are accurate and in compliance with all legal requirements for handling of public funds, including state law and city charter.

Balanced Budget:	A budget in which receipts are greater than (or equal to) expenditures. A requirement for all Massachusetts cities and towns. A balanced budget is a basic budgetary constraint intended to ensure that a government does not spend beyond its means and its use of resources for operating purposes does not exceed available resources over a defined budget period.
Basis of Accounting:	Basis of accounting refers to when revenues and expenditures or expenses are recognized in accounts and reported on financial statements. Basis of accounting relates to the timing of the measurements made, regardless of the measurement focus applied.
Betterments (Special Assessments):	Whenever part of a community benefits from a public improvement, or betterment (e.g., water, sewer, sidewalks etc.), special property taxes may be assessed to the property owners of that area to reimburse the governmental entity for all, or part, of the costs it incurred in completing the project. Each property parcel receiving the benefit is assessed a proportionate share of the cost which may be paid in full, or apportioned over a period of 20 years. In this case, one year's apportionment along with one year's committed interest computed from October 1 to October 1 is added to the tax bill until the betterment has been paid.
Bond:	A written promise to pay a specified sum of money, called the face value (par value) or principal amount, at a specified date or dates in the future, called maturity date(s), together with periodic interest at a specified rate. The difference between a note and a bond is that the latter runs for a longer period of time.
Bond Anticipation Note (BAN):	Short term debt instrument used to generate cash for initial project costs and with the expectation that the debt will be replaced later by permanent bonding. Typically issued for a term of less than one year, BANs may be re-issued for up to five years, provided principal repayment begins after two years (MGL Ch. 44 §17). Principal payments on school related BANs may be deferred up to seven years (increased in 2002 from five years) if the community has an approved project on the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) priority list. BANs are full faith and credit obligations.
Bonds Authorized and Unissued:	Bonds that a government has been authorized to sell but has not sold. Issuance at this point is only contingent upon action by the treasurer.
Bond Counsel:	An attorney or law firm engaged to review and submit an opinion on the legal aspects of a municipal bond or note issue.

Bond Issue:	Generally, the sale of a certain number of bonds at one time by a governmental unit.
Budget (Operating):	A plan of financial operation embodying an estimate of proposed expenditures for a given period and the proposed means of financing them.
Budget Basis of Accounting:	The City's General Fund budget is prepared on a basis other than generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). The actual results of operations are presented on a "budget (cash) basis" to provide a meaningful comparison of actual results with the budget. See Basis of Accounting and Budgeting on page 300 in Appendix C.
Budget Calendar:	The schedule of key dates or milestones which a government follows in the preparation and adoption of the budget.
Budget Message:	A general discussion of the submitted budget presented in writing by the City Manager as part of the budget document.
Capital Budget:	A plan of proposed outlays for acquiring long-term assets and the means of financing those acquisitions during the current fiscal period.
Capital Expenditures:	Expenditures which result in the acquisition of or addition to fixed assets.
Capital Improvements Program:	A comprehensive schedule for planning a community's capital expenditures. It coordinates community planning, fiscal capacity and physical development. While all of a community's needs should be identified in the program, there should also be a set of criteria that prioritizes expenditures. A capital program is a plan for capital expenditures that extends four years beyond the capital budget and is updated yearly.
Cash Basis of Accounting:	Revenues are recorded when cash is received and expenses are recognized when cash is paid out.
Chapter 70 School Aid Cherry Sheet:	Chapter 70 refers to the school funding formula created under the Education Reform Act of 1993 by which State aid is distributed through the Cherry Sheet to help establish educational equity among municipal and regional school districts.
Chapter 90 Highway Funds Cherry Sheet:	State funds derived from periodic transportation bond authorizations and apportioned to communities for highway projects based on a formula under the provision of MGL Ch. 90 §34. The Chapter 90 formula

comprises three variables: local road mileage (58.33%) as certified by the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), local employment level (20.83%) derived from the Department of Employment and Training (DET), and population estimates (20.83%) from the US Census Bureau. Local highway projects are approved in advance. Later, on the submission of certified expenditure reports to MHD, communities receive cost reimbursement to the limit of the grant. See DOR/DLS website.

Collective Bargaining:	The process of negotiating workers' wages, hours, benefits, working conditions, etc., between employer and some of all of its employees, who are represented by a recognized labor union.
Community Preservation Fund:	A special revenue fund established pursuant to MGL Ch. 44B to receive all monies collected to support a community preservation program, including but not limited to, tax surcharge receipts, proceeds from borrowings, funds received from the Commonwealth, and proceeds from the sale of certain real estate.
Debt Authorization:	Formal approval to incur debt by municipal officials, in accordance with procedures stated in M.G.L. Ch. 44, specifically sections 2, 3, 4 and 6-15.
Debt Burden:	The level of debt of an issuer, usually as compared to a measure of value (debt as a percentage of assessed value, debt per capita, etc.). Sometimes debt burden is used in referring to debt service costs as a percentage of the annual budget.
Debt Exclusion:	This amount represents the voter-approved amount that is used to pay for capital projects, often with a designated reimbursement from the state. The debt exclusion in the budget is the net amount (less state reimbursement) that is levy to the taxpayers on an annual basis.
Debt Limits:	The general debt limit of a city consists of the normal debt limit, which is 5% of the valuation of taxable property and a double debt limit, which is 10% of that valuation. Cities and towns may authorize debt up to the normal limit without state approval, while debt up to the double debt limit requires state approval. It should be noted that there are certain categories of debt which are exempt from these limits.
Debt Service:	Payment of interest and repayment of principal to holders of a government's debt instruments.
Deficit:	The excess of budget expenditures over receipts.

Department:	A principal, functional and administrative entity created by statute and/or the Mayor to carry out specified public services.
Designated Unreserved Fund Balance:	A limitation on the use of all or part of the expendable balance in a governmental fund.
Encumbrance:	Obligations in the form of purchase orders and contracts which are chargeable to an appropriation and are reserved. They cease to be encumbrances when paid or when an actual liability is set up.
Enterprise Fund:	An Enterprise fund, authorized by MGL Ch. 44 §53F ½, is a separate accounting and financial reporting mechanism for municipal services for which a fee is charged in exchange for goods or services. It allows a community to demonstrate to the public the portion of total costs of a service that is recovered through user charges and the portion that is subsidized by the tax levy, if any. With an Enterprise fund, all costs of service delivery—direct, indirect, and capital costs—are identified. This allows the community to recover total service costs through user fees if it chooses. Enterprise accounting also enables communities to reserve the “surplus” or unrestricted net assets generated by the operation of the enterprise rather than closing it out to the general fund at year-end. Services that may be treated as enterprises include, but are not limited to, water, sewer, harbormaster. See DOR <u>IGR 08-101</u> .
Equalized Valuations (EQVs):	The determination of an estimate of the full and fair cash (FFCV) of all property in the Commonwealth as of a certain taxable date. EQVs have historically been used as a variable in distributing some State aid accounts and for determining county assessments and other costs. The Commissioner of Revenue, in accordance with MGL Ch. 58 §10C, is charged with the responsibility of biannually determining an equalized valuation for each city and town in the Commonwealth.
Excess Levy Capacity:	The difference between the levy limit and the amount of real and personal property taxes actually levied in a given year. Annually, the Board of Selectmen or City Council must be informed of excess levy capacity and their acknowledgement must be submitted to DOR when setting the tax rate.
Fiscal Year:	The twelve month financial period used by all Massachusetts municipalities, which begins July 1 and ends June 30 of the following calendar year. The fiscal year is identified by the year in which it ends.

Foundation Budget:	The spending target imposed by the Education Reform Act of 1993 for each school district as the level necessary to provide adequate education for all students.
Full and Fair Market Valuation:	The requirement, by State law, that all real and personal property be assessed at 100% of market value for taxation purposes. "Proposition 2½" laws set the City's tax levy limit at 2½% of the full market (assessed) value of all taxable property.
Fund:	A set of interrelated accounts which record assets and liabilities related to a specific purpose. Also a sum of money available for specified purposes.
Fund Accounting:	Governmental accounting systems should be organized and operated on a fund basis. A fund is defined as a fiscal and accounting entity with a self-balancing set of accounts recording cash and other financial resources, together with all related liabilities and residual equities or balances, and changes therein, which are segregated for the purpose of carrying on specific activities or attaining certain objectives in accordance with special regulations, restrictions or limitations.
Fund Balance:	The excess of assets of a fund over its liabilities and reserves.
GASB 34:	A major pronouncement of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board that establishes new criteria on the form and content of governmental financial statements. GASB 34 requires a report on overall financial health, not just on individual funds. It requires more complete information on the cost of delivering services and value estimates on public infrastructure assets, such as bridges, roads, sewers, etc. It also requires the presentation of a narrative statement analyzing the government's financial performance, trends and prospects for the future.
GASB 45:	This is another Governmental Accounting Standards Board major pronouncement that each public entity account for and report other post-employment benefits (See OPEB) in its accounting statements. Through actuarial analysis, municipalities must identify the true costs of the OPEB earned by employees over their estimated years of actual service.
General Fund:	The major municipality-owned fund, which is created with City receipts and which is charged with expenditures payable from such revenues.

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP):	A set of uniform accounting and financial reporting rules and procedures that define accepted accounting practice.
General Obligation Bonds:	Bonds issued by a municipality which are backed by the full faith and credit of its taxing authority.
GIS (Geographical Information System):	A computerized mapping system and analytical tool that allows a community to raise information on a parcel, area or community wide basis. It also allows parcels to be identified and sorted on the basis of certain specified criteria. The system can integrate assessors' property data, water and sewer line networks, wetlands, floodplains and as well as other data.
Governmental Funds:	Funds generally used to account for tax-supported activities. There are five different types of governmental funds: the general fund, special revenue funds, debt service funds, capital projects funds and permanent funds.
Grant:	A contribution of assets by one governmental unit or other organization to another. Typically, these contributions are made to local governments from the state and federal government. Grants are usually made for specific purposes.
Harbor/Marine:	The amount of money estimated to be collected from harbor usage fees and boat excise tax. The rate is set annually to recover all costs associated with running the harbor and to plan for future improvements. This revenue completely funds the Harbormaster budget as well as debt associated with dredging the harbor.
Home Rule Petition:	In general, a city or town in the Commonwealth can exercise a power or function through the approval of its legislative body (City Council) and its voters. They can exercise any power through the adoption of an ordinance, by-law or charter that the State legislature has the authority to delegate. In the strongest exercise of Home Rule rights, communities can enact charters (through a charter commission process), without State approval, in order to organize local government in a way that best meet the needs of their citizens. However, there are significant limitations. Despite Home Rule, some local actions require approval of the State legislature (example: removal of the Fire Chief from Civil Service).

Hotel/Motel Excise:	Allows a community to assess a tax on short-term room occupancy at hotels, motels and lodging houses, as well as convention centers in selected cities.
Interest:	Compensation paid or to be paid for the use of money, including interest payable at periodic intervals or as a discount at the time a loan is made.
Interfund Transactions:	Payments from one administrative budget fund to another or from one trust fund to another, which results in the recording of a receipt and an expenditure.
Intrafund Transactions:	Financial transactions between activities within the same fund. An example would be a budget transfer.
License and Permit Fees:	The charges related to regulatory activities and privileges granted by government in connection with regulations.
Levy Ceiling:	A levy ceiling is one of two types of levy (tax) restrictions imposed by MGL Ch. 59 §21C (Proposition 2 ½). It states that, in any year, the personal property taxes imposed may not exceed 2 ½ percent of the total full and fair cash value of all taxable property. Property taxes levied may exceed this limit only if the community passes a capital exclusion, a debt exclusion, or a special exclusion (See Levy Limit).
Levy Limit:	A levy limit is one of tow types of levy (tax) restrictions imposed by MGL Ch. 59 §21C (Proposition 2 ½). It states that the real and personal property taxes imposed by a city or town may only grow each year by up to 2 ½ percent of the prior year's levy limit, plus new growth and any overrides or exclusions. The levy limit can exceed the levy ceiling only if the community passes a capital expenditure exclusion, debt exclusion, or special exclusion (See Levy Ceiling).
Local Receipts:	This amount represents the amount of local taxes and fees from all departmental operations retained directly by the city. The primary revenue items that comprise of local receipts are motor vehicle excise, interest income, permits, licenses, fines and State reimbursements.
Massachusetts Water Pollution Abatement Trust (MWPAT):	A statewide revolving fund that commenced operations in 1990 to address necessary environmental actions outlined in the Federal Clean Water Act. This fund revolves by the MWPAT issuing large pooled bond issues for various environmental construction projects and then loaning these funds to communities, with subsidies from the state reducing the debt service payments for these communities.

Meals Excise:	Local excise option, allowing communities to assess a sales tax on sales of restaurant meals originating in the city by a vendor.
Modified Accrual Basis:	The accrual basis of accounting adapted to the governmental fund type, wherein only current assets and current liabilities are generally reported on fund balance sheets and the fund operating statements present financial flow information (revenues and expenditures). Revenues are recognized when they become both measurable and available to finance expenditures in the current period. Expenditures are recognized when the related fund liability is incurred, except for a few specific exceptions. All governmental funds and expendable trust funds are accounted for using the modified accrual basis of accounting.
New Growth:	It can also increase by “New Growth” which is when a homeowner or investor makes improvements to their existing home, thereby increasing the assessed value and the levy capacity.
Overlay Provisions:	This amount is requested and set aside by the Assessor to cover any property abatements. Each year any remaining amount(s) may at the discretion of the Assessor’s be used as a source of revenue.
Payment in Lieu of Taxes:	An agreement between a municipality and an entity not subject to taxation, such as charitable or educational organizations, in which the entity agrees to make a voluntary payment to the municipality. By law, a city or town must make such a payment to any other community in which it owns land used for public purposes.
Proposition 2 ½:	A State law enacted in 1980, Proposition 2 ½ regulates local property tax administration and limits the amount of revenue a city or town may raise from local property taxes each year to fund municipal operations.
Purchase Order:	A document issued to authorize a vendor or vendors to deliver specified merchandise or render a specified service for a stated or estimated price. Outstanding purchase orders are called encumbrances.
Rating Agencies:	This term usually refers to Moody’s Investors Service, Standard and Poor’s Corporation and Fitch Ratings. These are the three major agencies that issue credit ratings on municipal bonds.
Refunding Bonds:	The retirement of an existing bond issue through the sale of a new bond issue. When interest rates have fallen, issuers may want to exercise the call feature of a bond and replace it with another debt instrument paying a lower interest rate.

Registered Bonds:	Bonds registered on the books of the issuer as to ownership; the transfer of ownership must also be recorded on the books of the issuer. Recent changes in federal tax laws mandate that all municipal bonds be registered if their tax exempt status is to be retained.
Reserve for Appropriation Accounts:	The City Council has authority to establish Reserve for Appropriation accounts where departments routinely accept fees. These accounts are established for a particular purpose and are capped at a certain level. Access to funds in these accounts must be authorized by the City Council.
Revaluation:	A reasonable and realistic program to achieve the fair cash valuation of property, in order to ensure that each taxpayer in the community pays his or her share of the cost of local government in proportion to the value of their property.
Revenue:	Additions to the City's financial assets (such as taxes and grants) which do not in themselves increase the City's liabilities or cancel out a previous expenditure. Revenue may also be created by cancelling liabilities, provided there is no corresponding decrease in assets or increase in other liabilities.
Revolving Fund:	A fund established to finance a continuing cycle of operations in which receipts are available for expenditure without further action by the City Council.
Stabilization Fund:	A general reserve. Money from this fund may be appropriated by a majority vote of the City Council.
State Revolving Fund:	Allows a community to raise revenues from a specific service and use those revenues without appropriation to support the service. For departmental revolving funds, MGL Ch. 44 §53E ½ stipulates that each fund must be re-authorized each year at annual town meeting or by city council action, and that a limit on the total amount that may be spent from each fund must be established at that time. The aggregate of all revolving funds may not exceed ten percent of the amount raised by taxation by the city or town in the most recent fiscal year, and no more than one percent of the amount raised by taxation may be administered by a single fund. Wages or salaries for full-time employees may be paid from the revolving fund only if the fund is also charged for all associated fringe benefits.

Supplemental Budget: Appropriations made by the City Council, after an initial appropriation, to cover expenditures beyond original estimates.

Tax Anticipation Notes: Notes issued in anticipation of taxes, which are usually retired from taxes collected.

Tax Rate: The amount of tax levy stated per \$1,000 in value of the tax base. Prior to a 1978 amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution, a single tax rate applied to all of the taxable real and personal property in a city or town. The 1978 amendment allowed the legislature to create three classes of taxable property: 1) residential real property, 2) open space land, and 3) all other (commercial, industrial and personal) property, each of which may be taxed at a different rate. Within limits, cities and towns are given the option of determining the share of the levy to be borne by the different classes of property. The share borne by residential real property must be at least 65% of the full rate. The share of commercial, industrial and personal property must not exceed 175% of the full rate. Property may not be classified until the state department of revenue has certified that all property has been assessed at its full value.

Tax Title: A collection procedure that secures a city or a towns lien on real property and protects the municipality's right to payment of overdue property taxes. Otherwise, the lien expires if five years elapse from the January 1 assessment date and the property has been transferred to another owner. If amounts remain outstanding on the property after issuing a demand for overdue property taxes and after publishing a notice of tax taking, the collector may take the property for the city of town. After properly recording the instrument of taking, the collector transfers responsibility for collecting overdue amounts to the Treasurer. After six months, the Treasurer may initiate foreclosure proceedings.

Unit Cost: The cost required to produce a specific product or unit of service. For example, the cost of providing 100 cubic feet of water or the cost to sweep one mile of street.

Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA): The components of local aid including additional assistance and lottery aid, which were combined into this one category, UGGA, in FY10.

Valuation (100%): Requirement that the assessed valuation must be the same as the market value for all properties.