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AMESBURY CITY CLERK

**CITY OF AMESBURY
IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND SIXTEEN**

SPONSORED BY: Councilor Steven J. Stanganelli BILL No.2016-

**A Resolution to Adopt a Financial Benchmarking Tool for Better
Communication of Budget Operations to Citizens and Community
Stakeholders**

Summary: To improve the communication of complex municipal financial data to citizens and stakeholders through the use of turnkey financial infographics and benchmarking tools that may be used in concert with the City's current websites

Be it resolved by the Municipal Council assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

The Municipal Council is dedicated to clearly communicating the City's mission and budget operations to all citizens and stakeholders;

Citizens and stakeholders are more likely to trust that which they understand;

Having a clear view of budget trends, anomalies, revenue sources and uses may help citizens and stakeholders better understand financial decisions and help municipal leaders make more informed decisions about the use of taxpayer funds which may help in budgeting and policy-making decisions.

Therefore, we authorize the City Council President and Mayor to adopt the infographic tools provided by ClearGov through its ClearGov Basic program at no cost to the city to explore how this tool may be utilized or expanded to better communicate with internal and external stakeholders.

Background and Reference

Financial data can be complex and confusing. Using visual aids such as infographic tools provides an opportunity to allow users to better understand trends.

Governments work best when there is trust established with stakeholders. Oftentimes, taxpayers and municipal leaders do not have a frame of reference when reviewing complex financial data. Reducing confusion and streamlining the communication of budget information helps to foster trust and a deeper understanding of how taxpayer funds are being used.

This resolution is intended to provide an entry way that may guide future decisions on what kind of data tools may be best utilized to achieve this communication function.

The Basic offering by this particular vendor is free to users. It includes three main modules that will visually enhance the City's present website and may be utilized in its social media pages.

The three modules that are included are:

- Financial Overview
- Summary level of revenues and expenditures
- Demographic snapshot

With zero cost and no long-term commitment, this option provides the City with an opportunity to 'test-drive' the platform to determine if additional modules or other vendor offerings make sense. And this will allow time to properly vet options and plan ahead for budgeting for this or a similar tool during the next budget process.

Reference sources:

<http://www.cleargov.com/massachusetts/essex/city/amesbury/2014>

<http://www.cleargov.com/>