

Gorham Fiscal Stability Committee

Operating Guidelines

Updated May 9, 2024

Purpose

To understand the existing financial landscape for the Town of Gorham and the Gorham School Department. To evaluate the future financial landscape, and to use this knowledge to make recommendations for how to maintain sustainable taxes while continuing to manage the present and future growth of our community over the next 5-10 years.

Deliverables

- Development of a series of recommendations to the Town Council and School Committee for how to reduce costs (or mitigate continued cost increases).
- Development of a series of recommendations to the Town Council and School Committee for how to increase revenues that will offset direct taxpayer expenses at both the municipal and school levels.
- Development of a series of recommendations to the Town Council and School Committee for how to improve communications between various stakeholder groups within the community of Gorham to aid in understanding current and future financial limitations moving forward.

Nature of Our Work

Unlike more traditional processes where parties tend to come to the table aiming to get their way and decisions are made by counting votes, we have in mind a more collaborative process where all parties try hard to understand each other's perspectives and try to find solutions that work for all concerned. This approach is supported by high quality neutral facilitation where all perspectives are shared and considered but where no one dominates. It's also supported by honesty and open-mindedness among participants and a willingness to compromise.

Member Expectations

- Attend every meeting
- Research and reading between meetings
- Honor the purpose, process, and the guidelines

Schedule of Meetings

The following dates are planned with the expectation that all will be in attendance. All meetings will be from 6:00pm to 7:30pm in-person at Town Hall. Members are welcome to bring dinner to the meetings

May 20, 2024	October 28, 2024	February 10, 2025
June 10, 2024	November 21, 2024	March 10, 2025
August 26, 2024	December 12, 2024	
September 23, 2024	January 16, 2025	

Guidelines

1. Focused on our purpose

All our work will support achieving our stated purpose

2. Meetings led by neutral Facilitator

The facilitator serves the group as a whole and treats all members as equals

3. Decisions by consensus with votes when needed

This means:

- A. We work hard to understand the situation and each other
- B. We try to understand all perspectives and accommodate concerns
- C. We look for agreement and try to be flexible
- D. Calls for consensus have three options
 - Support
 - Stand aside to allow to proceed
 - Block for the good of the group
- E. If the facilitator determines that consensus cannot be reached within a reasonable time, a vote will be called and the majority of those present will decide.
- F. All decisions of the group will be recorded on the spot in writing

4. Agendas decided by the Facilitator with input

Committee members encouraged to email comments to the Facilitator after each meeting about the next meeting agenda and future agendas

5. Meetings in person

To foster unity and shared understanding, all meetings will be in person. No proxies are allowed.

6. Meetings open to the public

Members of the public are welcome to attend but discussion will be limited to members of the committee. On special occasions the Committee may invite comments from experts and/or the public.

7. Public comment via email

- A. Any member of the public may email the Committee at anytime via FiscalSustainabilityCommitteeWebform@gorham.me.us. There is also a webform available at the public website, for submission of comments. All public comments received by email or webform shall be distributed to all members of the Committee and the Facilitator.
- B. All comments will be acknowledged but questions will not be answered.
- C. Comments should be respectful and helpful.

8. Notes provided by the Facilitator

Highlight notes of each meeting with basic information, themes, and conclusions will be prepared and provided by the Facilitator.

9. Committee Email

For all email related to the work of the committee, start the Subject line with GFSC. Any member of the Committee may email the entire committee by sending an email to FiscalSustainabilityCommittee@gorham.me.us

10. Committee Workspace

Presentation materials, documents, and other Committee resources will be posted at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0AFAvMTFh-JEnUk9PVA>. This folder is available to all Committee members.

11. All documents publicly available

Via the Town's website, all agendas, notes, and other meeting materials will be available to the public. Agendas will be posted on Thursday the week before any scheduled meeting.

12. Meeting Guidelines

- A. Neutral facilitation
The facilitator will run the meetings including calling on people and calling for consensus and for votes.
- B. Room for all views

The facilitator will deliberately seek comments from ALL committee members.

C. Written themes and conclusions as we go

The facilitator will make notes on the screen for reactions and approval.

D. Respect for all, always

Personal attacks and criticism are not tolerated. We might comment on positions, but not the performance of people in positions.

E. Model behavior

Let's model how to do this. People are watching how we honor and blend our different views.