



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Assessment/Offsets	The amount the State automatically deducts from Local Aid to cover town-shared expenses. The primary items that make up this amount are charter school and MBTA assessments.
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.
Capital (Includes Debt Service):	The Town's capital improvements program policies call for the allocation of approximately 5% of the general fund revenues to the capital budget. This is exclusive of dedicated funding sources such as enterprise funds, grants, and Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion projects.
Cherry Sheet:	The official notification by the Massachusetts Commissioner of Revenue to municipalities and school districts of estimated state aid to be paid and charges to be assessed over the next fiscal year. As the state budget process unfolds updated local aid proposals are posted. Cherry Sheets are issued once the state budget is enacted by the Legislature and approved by the Governor.
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:	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 DOD/DLS website.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)**

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.

Debt Exclusion: This amount represents the voter-approved amount that is used to pay for the construction of two new elementary schools. The state reimburses the town 65% of debt payment. The debt exclusion in the budget is the net amount (less state reimbursement) that is levy to the taxpayers on an annual basis.

Designated Unreserved Fund Balance: A limitation on the use of all or part of the expendable balance in a governmental fund.

Enterprise Funds: 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 net assets unrestricted generated by the operation of the enterprise rather than closing it out to the general fund at year-end. Presently, Arlington has enterprise funds for Council on Aging Transportation, Recreation, Ed Burns Arena, Water & Sewer, and Youth Services.

Enterprise Fund Debt: Debt service that is funded from Water & Sewer rates.

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.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)**

- 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 must be informed of excess levy capacity and their acknowledgement must be submitted to DOR when setting the tax rate.
- Exempt Debt:** Debt service that is funded through a debt exclusion vote. A debt exclusion is an action taken by a community through a referendum vote to raise the funds necessary to pay debt service costs for a particular project from the property tax levy, but outside the limits under Proposition 2 ½.
- Fiscal Year:** A fiscal year runs July 1 through June 30. For example, fiscal year 2014 runs from July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014.
- 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.
- Free Cash:** A revenue source that results from the calculation, as of July 1, of a community's remaining, unrestricted funds from operations of the previous fiscal year, based on the balance sheet as of June 30. It typically includes actual receipts in excess of revenue estimates and unspent amounts in departmental budget line-items for the year just ending, plus unexpended free cash from the previous year. After the books are closed for the year, potential available funds' balances are submitted to the State for certification. Certification of Free Cash is generally submitted to the Department of Revenue in the fall with final certification in late fall or early winter. It is strongly recommended that free cash be spent on one-time expenditures since free cash itself is a one-time revenue source.
- 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.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)**

- 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.
- GIS (Geographical Information System):** A computerized mapping system and analytical tool that allows a community to access 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 as well as other data.
- 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 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 (excluding property taxes) and fees from all departmental operations retained directly by the town. The primary revenue items that comprise of local receipts are motor vehicle excise, interest income, permits, licensees, fines and State reimbursements.
- Tax Levy Limit:** This amount represents the total amount of tax bills the town sends out each year to taxpayers. The levy is monitored by the state and can increase by 2.5% each year.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)

- Municipal Departments:** Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Human Resources, Comptroller, Treasurer, Postage, Assessors, Information Technology, Legal, Town Clerk, Parking, Planning & Community Development, Public Works, Police, Fire, Support Services, Inspectional Services, Libraries, Health and Human Services, Board of Health, Veterans' Services, Council on Aging, Enterprise Funds (Water/Sewer, Recreation, Ed Burns Arena, Council on Aging Transportation, Youth Services), and other related boards (Board of Registrars, Redevelopment Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals).
- MWRA Debt Shift:** The Town has accepted provisions of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 110 whereby water and sewer debt costs are transferred to the tax levy. Per vote of the Board of Selectmen, the MWRA Debt Shift has been fixed at \$5,593,112 since FY2007.
- New Growth:** New Growth is when a homeowner or investor makes improvements to their existing home, thereby increasing the assessed value and the levy capacity.
- Non-Appropriated Expenses:** Expenses which are contained on the cherry sheet from the state and charged to the Town, the largest of which is the annual MBTA assessment. Other non-appropriated expenses include: parking fine registry surcharge, air pollution control district, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and Charter School Tuition. Overlay reserve is also included in non-appropriated expenses.
- Non-Departmental (Healthcare & Pensions)** The Town's non-departmental liabilities includes health insurance and retirement costs for employees and retirees.
- Non-Exempt Debt:** Debt service that is funded by the General Fund and within the limitations of Proposition 2 ½.
- Overlay Provisions:** This amount is requested and set aside by the Assessor's 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.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)**

- Overlay Reserve:** Unused accumulated amount of overlay for previous years that is not required to be held in a specific overlay account for a given year. Once released by the Board of Assessors, the funds may be used for any municipal purpose.
- Override Stabilization Fund Deposit:** The Override Stabilization Fund was created as a result of the 2005 Proposition 2 1/2 override. The Town makes annual appropriations to the fund until the time in which it is necessary to make withdrawals for the purposes of balancing the general fund budget. As a result of the 2011 override, the Town is projected to make appropriations to the Fund through FY2015.
- 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 payer 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.
- Property Tax:** The property tax levy is the revenue a city or town raises through real and personal property taxes.
- Proposition 2 ½ Override Reserve for Abatements:** 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.
- Reserve Fund:** A fund established by the Annual Town Meeting. It is under the control of the Finance Committee, which may authorize transfers for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures. The fund may be composed of an appropriation of not more than 5% of the tax levy for the preceding year.
- School Department:** The Town's largest departmental budget. Funds appropriated to the school department offset the costs of personnel, operating school department facilities, transportation, and other expenses necessary for providing public education in the district.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)**

- Stabilization Fund:** A general reserve. Money from this fund may be appropriated by two-thirds of Town Meeting.
- Surplus Revenue:** The total amount of cash, accounts receivable, and other current assets that exceed liabilities and reserves.
- Tax Title:** As 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.
- Warrant Articles:** Money must be appropriated in the general fund budget for the purposes of funding spending articles approved by Town Meeting.



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