



Haverhill

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Mayor's Budget Proposes New 311 Constituent Services Center

Tuesday night, Mayor Fiorentini will introduce his FY 17 budget. The total budget is \$178,271,274, which is an increase of \$2.7 million, a 1.5% increase. Overall spending is up by 1.5%, a lower increase than in previous years. Mayor Fiorentini stated:

“Holding the line on spending was key to being able to balance this budget, maintain our high bond rating, and have adequate reserves for a rainy day. This budget has the lowest increase in spending in the past 6 years. As a result, we are, for the third year in a row, able to tax below the limits allowed by Proposition 2 and half.”

The biggest increase in spending is in education spending which is up by 5%, an increase of \$3.5 million. Mayor Fiorentini stated: “Education remains our top priority and remains the largest and most important area of the budget.”

The major new item in the budget is to add a 311 constituent services center. The budget adds money for a 311 constituent service center to provide streamlined and improved customer service in the city. In a 311 center, a constituent will be able to call one number, 311, to access any service in city hall. Trained 311 operators will be able to assist residents with most problems, and transfer them to other departments in the event they cannot assist.

Mayor Fiorentini stated: “Think of 311 as similar to 911. Everyone knows that if you have an emergency you call 911. In a 311 program, you have one number to call if you need city services.

311 is a nationwide program that started in Baltimore Maryland in the 1990's. Most large American cities now have 311 constituent service centers. Boston implemented theirs last year and there are today 311 call centers in five (5) Massachusetts cities: Boston, Malden, Newton, Somerville and Springfield.

Mayor Fiorentini stated that a constituent services center will greatly improve constituent services in the city.

“A 311 constituent services center will make customer service better and more convenient for the many residents of our city. Instead of having to look up the number for a particular department, a constituent need only know one number, 311, to get the services they need. 311 is the constituent services version of 911. By now, everyone knows that if there is an emergency they call 911. In a city with a 311 program, constituents need know only one number to call for any service from the city whether it is filling a pothole, or checking an abandoned building, getting a birth certificate, or just getting the hours to city hall.”



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“A 311 center has an added benefit of allowing our overworked city departments to be able to better concentrate on their core functions. Right now, many of the offices are overburdened answering calls meant for the Registry of Motor Vehicles, and transferring calls that were meant for another department. A 311 center allows for trained customer service representatives to handle all calls. “Serving our customers is why we are in existence as a city. A 311 center will make it easier and better.”

Mayor Fiorentini stated that if the 311 center is approved in the budget he hoped to have it up and running by January 1, 2017.

