

Pre-meeting Topics for Budget Committee Discussions

We are sometimes asked whether the budget committee can be called together for “preliminary” discussions prior to their first “official” meeting under ORS 294.426 at which the budget message is delivered and for which notice must be published.

Following is a list of the types or topics of discussion that can be conducted prior to that first official meeting:

- Training on the budget committee process, calendar, expectations for committee members, etc.
- Committee members’ preferences for ground rules, rules of order, conduct of meetings, voting / reaching consensus, fact finding process, etc.
- Orientation on the organization and its various departments, programs, staffing, etc., and on the activities or services provided by each.
- Orientation on the budget document, the fund structure and the types of activities or programs and expenditures made from each fund in the budget.
- General discussion of vision and goals, spending priorities, or philosophy on how to allocate scarce resources or make trade-off decisions as to which programs get funded and which don’t.
- General economic projections by the finance officer of possible changes in resources or requirements expected next year.
- Any and all discussion of the current year budget or prior year budgets, including what, in general, might be done differently next year.

What cannot be discussed before the formally “noticed” meeting?

ORS 294.426(6): “The budget committee may not deliberate on the budget document as a body before the first meeting.” So, we recommend that you do not talk about:

- Specific estimates or appropriation amounts associated with any fund or line item, resource or requirement.
- The question of whether to fund specific programs or expenditures.
- The question of whether to impose any tax levy, or the amount of any levy.