

San Francisco Hosts Online Budget Town Hall

News Staff | May 1, 2014



To engage the public and solicit feedback, San Francisco held an online budget town hall where Mayor Ed Lee discussed the city's \$7.9 billion annual budget and its projected budget deficits, expected to total \$66.7 million for the city's 2014-15 fiscal year and \$133.4 million in 2015-16.

The [virtual discussion](#) took place on YouTube with resident commentary coming from Twitter, through email and YouTube comment posts. As a moderator, Barbara Taylor, the San Francisco City Hall bureau chief for KCBS Radio, said it was the third iteration of the online event for Lee, who wanted to use it as springboard for community engagement.

The [virtual discussion](#) took place on YouTube with resident commentary coming from Twitter, through email and YouTube comment posts. As a moderator, Barbara Taylor, the San Francisco City Hall bureau chief for KCBS Radio, said it was the third iteration of the online event for Lee, who wanted to use it as springboard for community engagement.

As a "city of technology innovation and social media," Taylor said that the online platform was designed to engage the public in live conversation about spending priorities.

The discussion lasted just more than an hour, and was back and forth between Lee, Taylor, the city's Budget Director Kate Howard and Board of Supervisors Budget Chair Mark Farrell.

Questions were brief and frank as residents chimed in about San Francisco's more visible spending challenges, topics ranging from homelessness, parking and transit problems, to spending accountability.

A major challenge expressed by the mayor and fellow staff was a need to balance the budget against revenues. In the next four years, the mayor said revenues are forecast to grow by 7 percent and expenditures to grow by 14 percent, a problem he hoped would be handled when the city balances its two-year budget by July 31.

Notwithstanding the complexities and challenges, Lee and his staff fielded questions and expressed an optimism as the city innovates and works toward deficit-free budget in future years.

"We're confident that we can get a budget that can reflect the needs of the city," Lee said. "For me, I want to make sure that we continue those good fiscal disciplines that have kept us as a strong city."

He highlighted San Francisco's credit rating, long-term budget planning and increased reserves as a few of the city's fiscal accolades.

<http://www.govtech.com/gov-experience/San-Francisco-Hosts-Online-Budget-Town-Hall.html>