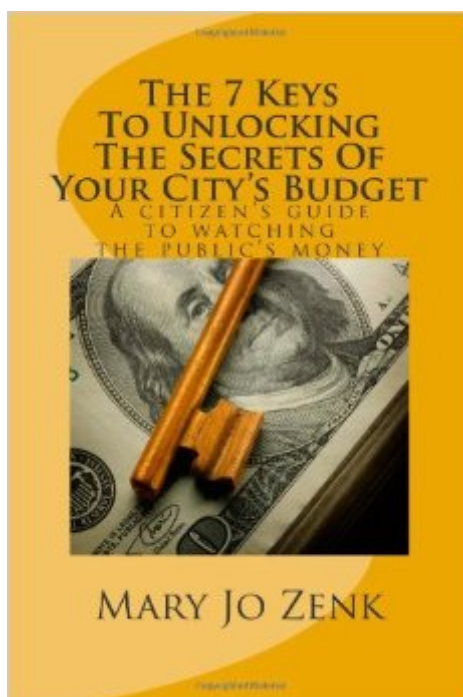


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# The 7 Keys To Unlocking The Secrets Of Your City's Budget



## Synopsis

Do you want to know what your local government is up to? Would you like to know how your city or town is spending the taxpayers' money? As a concerned citizen, you have the right to know how your tax dollars are being spent. You want to understand why the city cuts programs that benefit the community, like after-school activities, while at the same time they are building a parking garage. Your city or town's budget document identifies what money the council approved for specific services, such as public safety. The budget document may be available on the city's website, making it easy to access. However, most city budget documents are very complicated, with pages filled with tables of numbers and terms few residents understand. If you can't understand the city's budget, how will you know if your tax dollars are being well used? How can you hold your elected officials accountable? This book is intended to guide you through the hundreds of pages of numbers and jargon that makes up most municipal budget documents. It will help you to focus on the most important information in your city's budget. The book includes an extensive glossary of terms used in government finance and budgeting. This easy to read guide is written for neighborhood taxpayers and community leaders, who want to be more effectively involved in their city or town. It is an excellent resource for newly elected city or town council members and appointed committee volunteers, eager to get a handle on the inner workings of government finance before having to cast critical budget votes. This 7 Keys book is also perfectly suited to the academic setting such as a public administration class or a community workshop on local government. The book includes creative hands-on projects intended to give the reader a solid working knowledge of the city budget.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Love this book. It was short, but all the information was explained in a comprehensive and easy format. The summaries at the end of each chapter were extremely helpful. I like the homework given as well that told you to go look for certain things in your own city's budget, that portion helped understand my city budget because I could refer to examples given in the book. My only gripe is that the book is very short. I also wish it expounded in more depth of managing budgets.

The financial status of city governments around the world is of great importance to all citizens who live in them. However, city budgets are complicated for the typical person to understand. This little book gives a well organized, hands on approach to gathering information about your city. It would be great for a club that wants to study the local government, gather the key information and compare it to other cities. It would also serve well for a workshop on city government, or a beginning class on the topic of city budgets. The book is organized around gathering and organizing information and data about your city. Chapters cover: understanding city hall, how to tackle the budget document, understanding the general fund, determining where the money comes from, where the money goes, personal costs of your city's operation, and ways to get involved. The book would be perfect for a class in civics that requires a paper assignment to analyze the city's current budget document. There are even outlines included for such a paper or presentation. Thus this little book would work well for a high school class (due to it's straight forward and clear style) or a university class (due to it's assignment layouts at the end).

I will be the first to admit that number crunching is not for me, nor do I enjoy doing it. But after reading this book I can say that after many years of trying to figure it all out, I was finally able to see through the mud. This book is super simple to follow and read along while trying to figure out a city's umpteenth page budget report. I loved the simplicity of it and how the basics were covered; she told me exactly what I should be looking for and why I was doing it. I believe Mary Jo hit the nail right on the head with these 7 principles and I am greatly appreciative that after many years, I can finally say, honestly, "it makes sense."

As a former student of Mary Jo Zenk at California State University Monterey Bay/Leon and Sylvia Panetta Institute in Master of Public Policy coursework, I can attest to the thoroughness and clarity

of this book's instructional format. Those who wonder how local jurisdictions fund and function, and how to become involved in local government priorities, should pick up a copy of *The 7 Keys to Unlocking the Secrets of Your City's Budget*.

Zenk makes it easy to get interested in where our money is going.

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