



NEWS RELEASE

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Beaufort launches new online finance tool for improved transparency and understanding

The City of Beaufort this week launched a new financial data platform powered by OpenGov.com that provides residents and city leaders with unprecedented access to the city's budget information.

Beaufort is the first municipality in South Carolina to offer the OpenGov system to the public.

The powerful visualization software transforms volumes of raw data into charts and graphs, enabling better analysis and understanding of the city's budget, said Finance Director Kathy Todd.

The OpenGov platform displays three years of government spending and revenue detail in a user-friendly portal access at www.beaufortsc.opengov.com. Residents and staff can drill down into the current year budget and compare to previous years through interactive graphs that easily explain revenue and expenses by fund, department and type.

"To us, our budget isn't terribly complicated, but if you aren't familiar with our process it can be confusing. This new tool will help everyone better understand where the City of Beaufort spends its money, how recent years compare, and how department budgets change over time," Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling said.

For instance, on the OpenGov chart that shows City of Beaufort revenues, users can click on "Licenses and Permits" in the pie chart. That will take them to a new chart showing a breakdown of dollars received from business licenses, building permits and other fees. By clicking on specific areas of the charts, users can drill down to find more detailed and specific information.

Users also can create their own charts to compare items of interest in the City of Beaufort budget, Todd said.

“This is a powerful tool for us in the City of Beaufort Finance Department, but it’s also an amazing resource for our residents and anyone else interested in our finances,” Todd said. “I want people to go to the site and try it out. You can’t break it, and practicing will help you find what you are looking for or trying to understand.”

Beyond sharing information with the public, governments also use OpenGov internally to create custom reports, manage operations to budget, and keep administrators and legislators informed.

“Beaufort is leading the way in financial transparency and access,” says Zachary Bookman, CEO and co-founder of OpenGov.com. “By transforming their data into meaningful, actionable information on the OpenGov platform, the city has a powerful opportunity to engage residents and bring people and data together to make more informed decisions.”

Over 250 governments across 36 states leverage the rapidly expanding OpenGov network. In total, these governments represent more than 34 million citizens and approximately \$88 billion in annual spending, according to OpenGov.

Tips to use the financial transparency tool:

- Go to the City of Beaufort website at www.cityofbeaufort.org and click on Financial Transparency in the **What’s New** or **Finance Department** section. There, you’ll find sample charts, frequently asked questions that link to charts, and tips on how to use the OpenGov tool
- The portal allows exploration of budget and historical finances in a simple graphical user interface. The main view includes a chart or graph, a legend and various controls to view expenses by departments and specific funds.
- To focus on specific data – such as a fund, department, expense type, or any combination -- look to the left and use the menu on the side panel. These selectors allow the user to specify exactly what breakdown the graph or table should represent. Selection of "Filtered By" components allows the ability to turn on or turn off selected filters for that category -- funds, departments, expense type.
- There are five different types of visual representations of the data -- an area graph, an area graph by percentage, a line graph, a pie chart, and a table. The view may be changed at any time by simply selecting the different type of representation. The data will automatically convert. These functions are on the top right of the screen.
- Data may be downloaded and saved into a .csv spreadsheet or a .png image.
- The data may be shared, in any view, on a social network or by email.

OpenGov is a financial data platform that advances the way state and local governments do business. By transforming the way budget data is accessed, visualized, and analyzed, OpenGov enables government administrators to make smarter, data-driven decisions and empowers the public with meaningful information about their government’s finances.

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