

TACOMA SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL POLICIES

This is a summary of some of the City's key financial policies. The City's financial policies are intended to guide the City in meeting both its immediate and long-term objectives. These policies recognize that:

- The City is accountable to its citizens for the use of public dollars.
- Structurally balanced budgets are critical for the City to maintain its fiscal integrity.
- All activities supported by the City must function within the limits of its financial resources.
- These policies are applied over periods of time extending well beyond the current budget period.

BUDGET AND CONTINGENCY POLICIES

To maintain financial stability, a budget showing that revenues and other financing resources meet or exceed expenditures will be prepared and adopted by the City Council. A fiscally sound budget will include the following:

- An adopted budget that will fund recurring operating expenditures with recurring operating revenues.
- The Contingency Fund may be funded at the beginning of each biennium in an amount not to exceed \$3 million. The 2019-2020 Adopted Biennial Budget includes a contingency fund appropriation of \$500,000.
- General Fund revenue and expenditure forecasts will include two biennia beyond the adopted budget period to create a six-year forecast. The projection will provide insight into whether the current mix and level of resources are likely to continue to be sufficient to cover current service levels and to provide for long-term strategic planning.
- The City-operated utilities should show positive net operating results.

RESERVE POLICIES

GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

The principle reasons for building and maintaining reserves are:

- Financial best practices and fiscal prudence dictates that the City should have a reasonable amount of resources in reserve to address unanticipated declines in revenue.
- Large unexpected one-time expenditures/expenses are more easily funded from reserves.
- Reserves help mitigate the effects of an economic downturn or other unanticipated events on revenue growth. A weak economy will slow revenue growth relative to expenditures/expenses.
- Reasonable cash reserves are needed to maintain favorable credit ratings.

GENERAL FUND

- Reserves should be maintained between 10% and 20% of projected annual expenditures. Ideally the City should have total reserves equal to at least 15% of projected annual expenditures. Any proposed use of the reserves will require super-majority (majority plus one of voting members) approval by the City Council.
- The first 5% to 10% of reserves shall only be available to fund one-time emergencies, unanticipated expenditure requirements, or to offset unanticipated revenue fluctuations occurring within a fiscal year.
- The next 10% to 15% of reserves is a counter cyclical reserve. This portion of the reserve is to either maintain General Fund current service level programs or transition expenditure growth to match slower revenue growth during the first 12-18 months of a recession.

UTILITY WORKING CASH BALANCES

City-owned utilities will maintain working cash balances in the following amounts:

UTILITY	MINIMUM WORKING CASH BALANCES EQUAL TO:
Tacoma Power	90-days of budgeted expenditures
Tacoma Water	60-days of budgeted expenditures
Tacoma Rail	60-days of budgeted expenditures
Tacoma Wastewater	60-days of budgeted expenditures
Tacoma Surface Water	60-days of budgeted expenditures
Tacoma Solid Waste	60-days of budgeted expenditures

REVENUE POLICIES

Service demands require that an adequate revenue stream be maintained. A diversified and stable revenue structure will be maintained to shelter the City from fluctuations in any single revenue source. City funds will be prudently invested to provide for safety of the principal amounts invested, sufficient liquidity to meet cash flow needs, and finally to provide interest earnings. The following will serve as guidelines for maintaining the City's revenue stream:

- The City will seek to avoid dependence on temporary or unstable revenues to fund basic municipal services.
- The City will work to ensure that it receives its fair share of available state and federal revenues.
- The City will actively protect current revenues received from State and Federal sources.
- The City will actively oppose state and federal legislation that will mandate costs to the City of Tacoma without providing a revenue source to offset those mandated costs.
- The City will diligently collect due revenues and ensure compliance with revenue regulations.
- User fees to the extent appropriate for the character of the service and its user should recover full costs, including all direct costs, capital costs, department overhead, and citywide overhead.
- The City will seek opportunities to generate revenues by providing services to other local jurisdictions and will ensure the City is fully compensated for the actual cost of service provision.

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL REPORTING POLICIES

- The City will maintain its accounting records in accordance with state and federal law and regulations. Budgetary reporting will be in accordance with Washington state budget laws and regulations. The City will annually report its financial condition and results of operations in accordance with state regulations and generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).
- As an additional, independent confirmation of the quality of the City's financial reporting, the City will annually seek to obtain the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement in Excellence for Financial Reporting for the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The CAFR will be presented in a manner designed to clearly communicate to citizens the financial affairs of the City. In addition to the citywide CAFR, each utility with outstanding bonded indebtedness shall prepare a separate, audited Component Unit Financial Report (CUFR).
- Reports outlining the status of revenues and expenditures shall be done monthly and will be distributed to the City Council, City Manager, Director of Public Utilities, department directors, and any interested parties.

AUDIT POLICIES

The City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) will be audited annually by the Washington State Auditor's Office as required by State law.

In addition to the annual audit of the CAFR, each utility fund with outstanding revenue bonds will receive a separate audit of their Component Unit Financial Report (CUFR) from an audit firm with expertise in their industry.

The City will also contract for other external audits when deemed necessary for the City's operations. Audit advisory, oversight, and liaison functions are the responsibility of the Government Performance and Finance Committee. The Committee will be supported in these functions by an Audit Advisory Board consisting of the four members of the Government Performance and Finance Committee, two members appointed from the Public Utilities Board, and one citizen member.

DEBT POLICIES

The City of Tacoma has adopted the following Debt Policies which are intended to apply to all forms of long-term debt including voted bonds, non-voted bonds, revenue bonds, interfund loans, and conduit debt. The intent of the City Council is that the City shall manage its long-term debt in a manner designed to utilize its credit to optimize City services while balancing overall debt levels and annual debt service obligations. The City recognizes that prudent use of its credit can both facilitate construction of essential capital improvements and serve as a method for sharing the costs of those improvements between current and future beneficiaries.

GENERAL POLICIES

Debt Not to be Used for Operating Expenses: When considered necessary, long-term debt may be used to provide for capital acquisitions and construction. Long-term debt will not be used to fund operating expenses except in extraordinary circumstances as authorized by the City Council. This policy recognizes that some City staff costs such as project engineers are integral to the capital projects and are reasonably chargeable to bond fund proceeds.

Term of Debt: Long-term debt will be structured in a manner so that the life of the debt does not exceed the expected useful life of the asset being funded by the debt. To the maximum extent possible, the City will fund its capital needs on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Method of Sale of Bonds and Notes: It is the City's policy to sell debt through a competitive sale unless there are clearly expressed reasons for selling debt through a negotiated process. This policy does recognize that a negotiated sale may be in the City's best interests when refunding an existing bond issue or when unusual conditions exist that may make it difficult for the marketplace to reasonably evaluate the risks of the bonds being sold. Whenever a negotiated method of sale is being recommended to the City Council, the justification and rationale for not using a competitive sale must be clearly explained.

Refunding Bonds: As a general rule, existing bonds will not be refunded through the issuance of refunding bonds unless the refunding plan will achieve a net present value savings of at least 5%. As an exception to this general rule, bonds may be refunded to obtain more favorable covenants when it is clearly in the City's interests to do so.

GENERAL OBLIGATION AND NON-UTILITY DEBT

Legal Limitation of Indebtedness: The City will utilize general obligation (GO or "Voted") and Limited Tax General Obligation (LTGO or "non-voted") debt authority prudently. The Finance Department will annually calculate the City's Constitutional Limit of Indebtedness and monitor the City's outstanding debt to avoid exceeding the constitutional limits.

Reserve of Debt Authority: At a minimum, the City will maintain at least 10% of its legal limit of Non-Voted General Purpose Indebtedness (LTGO) as a reserve for emergencies.

Preservation of Credit Rating: The City will carefully consider the future fiscal impacts of incurring additional long-term debt and will recognize the implicit, additional future costs of any debt issuance that adversely impacts the City's credit rating.

Use of Revenue Debt Whenever Possible: The City recognizes that its ability to pledge its taxing authority as security for debt is a limited resource that should be preserved whenever possible. Therefore, whenever the improvement being financed with debt is expected to produce off-setting revenues that can be used to secure all or part of the debt in lieu of a pledge of the City's taxing authority, that revenue should be used to secure the debt to the maximum practical extent to minimize usage of the City's limited voted and non-voted debt capacity. For example, in financing a parking structure expected to produce net revenues for the parking system, revenue bonds secured by parking system revenues should be used to the maximum practical extent to finance the improvement.

Internally Financed Debt: In accordance with the City's Investment Policy, the City can invest in its own bonds and notes to a maximum of 5% of the City's investment portfolio. State law also permits the City to make inter-fund loans when it is prudent to do so.

UTILITY DEBT

Each rate-based utility will adopt a capital financing policy which allocates capital financing needs between debt and pay-as-you-go use of current revenues. When it is determined that issuance of debt is needed for capital construction, debt will be secured solely by a pledge of rate revenues and will not utilize any general pledge of the City's taxing authority except in extraordinary circumstances approved by the City Council.

CONDUIT DEBT

The City can permit itself to be used as a conduit for debt secured by others where such an arrangement is required by law or regulation and where the City is not, in any way, contingently liable for the repayment of debt. The chief example of conduit debt is Local Improvement District (LID) debt where the City sells bonds on behalf of property owners benefited by the LID. LID bonds are repaid solely by special property tax assessments on benefited properties. For another example, the City serves as a conduit for Economic Development Bonds issued by the Economic Development Board in support of private development as authorized by State laws and repaid solely by those businesses.

INSURANCE POLICIES

- The City shall maintain a Self-insurance Program Claim Fund, Unemployment Compensation Self-Insurance Fund, Self-Insured Workers' Compensation Fund, and Public Utilities Self-Insurance Fund.
- There will be sufficient premiums paid annually by the insured City departments to cover all of the actuarially estimated current claims, plus eliminate any prior claims, fund deficiencies as scheduled by the actuary, and build up individual departments' reserve accounts to the actuarially recommended levels.
- Any transfer, appropriation, or expenditure of funds deposited in the Self-insurance Program Claim Fund for any purpose other than those set forth in Ordinance No. 20909 shall require unanimous approval of the City Council.
- The City will periodically review the insurance market to determine whether to self-insure or purchase commercial insurance.

UTILITY FUND RATE PROJECTION POLICIES

- Utility rate studies shall be conducted at least every five years to update assumptions and ensure the long-term solvency and viability of the City's utilities.
- Utility rates shall be reviewed at least biennially and necessary adjustments shall be made to reflect inflation, construction needs, and to avoid major rate increases.
- Rates should be adequate to ensure reliable, competitive-priced services for customers. Net revenues in excess of both legal requirements and minimum working cash balances should be used to minimize future rate increases, fund approved capital projects, retire high cost debt, and augment fund reserves established to reduce ratepayer risk.

CAPITAL BUDGET POLICIES

The major sources of funding for the capital budget are revenues, grants, and debt. Financing planned capital replacement costs are an ongoing challenge. It involves evaluating capital assets, estimating their expected useful lives, projecting replacement costs, examining financing options, determining bonding levels, estimating user fees/tax levies, and evaluating the impact on property owners/stakeholders.

Estimating future needs well in advance helps the City develop practical strategies for meeting future demands. Preparing for the challenges of infrastructure replacement or enhancements demands a long-term view of replacement needs in an effort to:

- Ensure that the City's infrastructure is improved to meet the community's expectations and that there is no further growth in aggregate dollar amount of deferred maintenance.
- Moderate changes in tax levies and user fees.
- Manage debt levels.
- Predict and carefully plan for future debt issuance.
- Provide stable revenues.
- Limit the use of special assessments to finance replacement costs.

In general, sharp changes in tax levies and user fees are unacceptable to citizens, business owners, and elected officials. In order to provide stability the City will:

- Develop a six-year capital planning and financing system for use in preparing a multi-year capital plan for adoption by the City Council as required by the Growth Management Act of Washington State.
- Assign the responsibility for coordinating and preparing the City's Capital Facilities Program to the Office of Management & Budget.
- Consider long-term borrowing as an appropriate method of financing large capital projects that benefit more than one generation of users.

APPROPRIATING THE CAPITAL BUDGET

Unlike the operating budget, which sets appropriation levels for the two years of the upcoming biennium, the capital budget establishes multiyear or long-term appropriation authority. Budgetary control, the level at which expenditures cannot legally exceed the appropriated amount, is exercised at the fund level. The capital budget approved by City Council establishes the appropriation or spending authority for the duration of all projects residing in each capital fund. Amounts approved will not lapse and will remain until expended for the intended purpose or unencumbered by a future ordinance.

Capital project and grant appropriations lapse when the project or grant activity is completed. For open projects, any unspent appropriations at biennium end will not lapse and will be carried over to the next biennium without further Council action.

Amendments to a capital fund budget may be initiated for any the following reasons:

- To appropriate new projects as approved by the City Council.
- To appropriate additional expenses as a result of new funds or use of reserves.
- To transfer funds between projects that have a similar purpose.

The Office of Management & Budget shall perform an annual review of all capital projects and provide status updates to the City Council. The review will include capital budget amendments including adjustments based on savings or needing increases in appropriation.

SUMMARY OF INVESTMENT POLICY

The City Charter creates a Finance Committee composed of the Mayor, Finance Director, and the City Treasurer. The Finance Committee is charged with overseeing the City's investments and has adopted Investment Policies to guide the City Treasurer in investing City funds. The following is a brief summary of those policies:

- The City will strive to maximize the return on its investments with the primary objective of preserving capital in accordance with the City's ordinances and prudent investment practices including diversification requirements.
- Disbursement, collection, and deposit of funds will be managed to ensure needed cash availability.

BUDGETARY BASIS

- The City budgets on a modified accrual basis. Property taxes, sales taxes, business and occupation taxes, and other taxpayer-assessed revenues due for the current year are considered measurable and available and, therefore, as revenues, even though a portion of the taxes may be collected in the subsequent year. Licenses, fines, penalties, and miscellaneous revenues are recorded as revenues when they are received in cash since this is when they can be accurately measured. Investment earnings are accrued as earned.
- Expenditures are considered a liability when they are incurred. Interest on long-term debt, judgments and claims, workers' compensation, and compensated absences are considered a liability when they are paid.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVENUE POLICIES

- Other governments influence many service costs of the City, either because of service overlaps or mandates imposed by the federal, state, or county governments. The City should take advantage of opportunities to enhance services through intergovernmental cooperation, shared revenues, or grants.
- For planning purposes, all grants will be treated in the same manner as other temporary and uncertain resources and will not be used to fund ongoing, basic service needs.
- Appropriate City staff, including Finance, City Attorney's Office, and sponsoring department will review agreements to ensure compliance with state, federal, and City regulations.
- The City will budget expenditures for grant-funded programs only after receipts of grant award or letter of commitment and only for the amount of the grant award. City overhead or indirect costs for grant-funded programs may be included in all grant proposals, where permitted.
- The City will aggressively oppose state or federal actions that mandate expenditures that result in the reallocation of local resources, without local control (i.e., unfunded mandates). The City will pursue intergovernmental funding to support the incremental cost of those mandates.

Note: The Debt and Financial Policies of the Public Utility are contained in public utility board policy numbers 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 and will be incorporated into the rate policies during the next revisions. The Environmental Services Department financial policies are contained in resolution 35288 and were adopted in September of 2001.