

## **BUDGET POLICIES**

### **I. OPERATING BUDGET**

#### **A. OVERALL**

1. The budget is a performance, financing and spending plan incorporating recommendations from Department Directors, adopted by the Mayor, and approved by City Council. It reconciles forecasted revenues with the expenses required to deliver highest priority services and infrastructure.
2. The Finance Department maintains written policies and goals to guide the preparation of performance, financing and spending plans. Adopted and amended budgets will reflect the Council-adopted budget policies and priorities.
3. A comprehensive business plan, the budget provides the following elements: public policies, financial plan, operations guide, and communications device.
4. The City's budget presentation displays the City's service delivery/performance plan in a Council/constituent-friendly format and will use a program-budgeting format to convey the policies for and purposes of City operations. The Finance Department will make available line-item format materials on request.
5. Decision making for capital improvements will be coordinated with the operating budget to prioritize the City's limited resources for operating and maintaining facilities in conjunction with annual service delivery.
6. Under the Mayor's direction, Department Directors have primary responsibility for:  
a) formulating budget proposals in line with Mayor and City Council priority direction, and  
b) implementing those proposals once they are approved.
7. The Biennial budget will be amended by ordinance approximately quarterly, with one between September 1 and December 31 to be in compliance with RCW 35A.34.130.

#### **B. FISCAL INTEGRITY**

1. The City will maintain the fiscal integrity of its operating, debt service, and capital improvement budgets which provide services and maintain certain public facilities, streets and utilities. It is the City Council's intent to maximize the level of public goods and services while minimizing the level of debt.
2. The City Council will adopt a balanced budget for all funds. Balanced budget for operating funds means ongoing operating program costs do not exceed the amount of ongoing revenues to finance those costs. The ongoing revenue will be identified along with new program costs including impact from new capital projects. Any available carryover balance will only be used to offset one-time or non-recurring costs. Balanced budget for non-operating funds means total resources equal to or exceed total uses.
3. Fund balances in excess of the amount required to maintain reserve policy may be used to fund one-time or non-recurring costs.

4. Services and infrastructure funded by restricted revenues shall be only for the projects or purpose for which they were intended.

C. FUND RESERVES

1. All policy-level fund balance requirements are to guard against unexpected, catastrophic circumstances. Council-approved use of fund balance below policy limits will require a budget or budget amendment creating sufficient savings to restore the fund balances within three years.
2. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$9.0 million, or 17 % of operating expenditures, in the General Fund. The purpose is to have an operating cash flow reserve of a minimum of two month's operating expenditures guarding against unexpected revenue shortfalls.
3. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$3.0 million in the Strategic Reserve Fund in order to accommodate unexpected operational changes, legislative impacts, or other economic events affecting the City's operations which could not have been reasonably anticipated at the time the budget was prepared.
4. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$1.125 million in the Parks Reserve Fund for unexpected needs of the City's Parks System.
5. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$0.5 million in the Street Fund for emergency snow and ice removal.
6. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$0.1 million in the Arterial Street Fund for unexpected natural disaster.
7. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance in the Utility Tax Funds of \$2.5 million (\$1.0 million in the Proposition 1 and \$1.5 million in the Utility Tax fund).
8. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of one year's revenue in the Real Estate Excise Tax fund.
9. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance in the Lodging Tax Fund of \$0.2 million.
10. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$1.5 million in the Community Center Fund for emergency capital and equipment needs.
11. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$1.2 million in the Traffic Safety Fund.
12. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance in the Debt Service Fund in the amount of the following year's debt service and be in compliance with all bond ordinances.
13. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance for the future general capital needs for the city buildings or other capital projects in Capital Project Reserve Fund. The Finance Director may transfer excess revenues over expenditures in the General fund to this fund.
14. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$1.5 million for emergency capital needs of the building and equipment in Dumas Bay Centre Fund.

15. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of 13 weeks of budgeted expenses in the Health Insurance Fund.
16. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$0.25 million, or one year's annual unemployment expenses from the prior year, in the Unemployment Insurance Fund.
17. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$0.6 million, or one year's expenses from the prior year, in the Risk Management Fund.
18. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance in the Surface Water Management Fund of 17% of operating expenses from the prior year. Any excess may be transferred to the SWM Capital Project Fund.
19. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$0.5 million in the SWM Capital Project Fund for unexpected catastrophic events or system failures.
20. The City shall maintain adequate fund balance for capital replacement to replace both hardware and software in the Information System Fund.
21. The City shall maintain an adequate fund balance to replace copy and mailing equipment in the Mail and Duplication Fund.
22. The City shall maintain an adequate fund balance to provide for emergency replacement of city vehicles and other capital equipment in the Fleet and Equipment Fund.
23. The City shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$2.0 million for emergency replacement of equipment, roof, and other major upgrades to City Buildings other than Community Center, and Dumas Bay Centre.

D. REVENUES

1. Revenue estimates shall be guided by current economic data, historical trend data, known local activity and consider future inflation. Real growth that occurs will be recognized through budgetary adjustments only after it takes place. In the event that revenues are less than expected, it minimizes the likelihood of severe cutback actions which may be profoundly disruptive to the goal of providing a consistent level of quality services.
2. Investment income earned through the City's pooled cash balances shall be budgeted in accordance with the council-approved investment policy.

E. CONTRACTUAL SERVICES

1. The Finance Department will administer the City's purchasing policies and procedures, per Federal Way Revised Code 2.17.010. Value to taxpayers will be achieved by thoroughly investigating the delivering public services directly with city staff, contracting with private vendors or other government agencies, or entering into partnerships with other agencies or consortia, in accordance with Council Resolution No. 92-103.

**F. MINIMIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS**

1. An appropriate balance will be maintained between resources allocated for direct services to the public and resources allocated to assure sound management, internal controls, and legal compliance.

**G. RETIREMENT**

1. The budget shall provide for adequate funding of the City's retirement system.

**H. MONTHLY REPORT**

1. The budget will be produced so that it can be directly compared to the actual results of the fiscal year and presented in a timely monthly report to the City Council through the FEDRAC committee.
2. All budget amendments, both revenues and expenditures, will be included in the monthly report following adoption of budget amendment ordinance.

**I. MULTI-YEAR ESTIMATES**

1. With each budget, the City will forecast expenditure and revenue projections for the next six years. Projections will include estimated operating costs for capital improvements that are included in the capital budget.
2. This budget data will be presented to elected officials in a form that will facilitate budget decisions, based on a multi-year perspective.

**J. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT**

1. Citizen involvement shall be encouraged in the budget decision making process through public hearings and study sessions.
2. Involvement shall also be facilitated through City boards, task forces and commissions, which shall serve in advisory capacities to the Mayor and City Council.

**K. FEES**

1. Fees shall be phased toward covering 100% of the cost of service delivery, unless such amount prevents an individual from obtaining an essential service. Fees or service charges should not be established to generate money in excess of the cost of providing service.
2. Fees may be less than 100% if other factors (e.g. market forces, competitive position, etc.) need to be recognized.

**L. NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

1. Future funding decisions regarding nonprofit organizations will be based on guidelines, policies and priorities determined by the City Council and availability of financing based on General Fund spending priorities.

**II. CAPITAL BUDGET**

A. FISCAL POLICIES

1. Capital project proposals should include as complete, reliable, and attainable cost estimates as possible. Project cost estimates for the Capital Budget should be based upon a thorough analysis of the project and are expected to be as reliable as the level of detail known about the project. Project cost estimates for the Six-Year City Capital Improvement Plan will vary in reliability depending on whether they are to be undertaken in the first, fifth or sixth year of the Plan.
2. Capital proposals should include a comprehensive resource plan. This plan should include the amount and type of resources required, and the funding and financing strategies to be employed. The specific fund and timing should be outlined. The plan should indicate resources needed to complete any given phase of a project in addition to the total project.
3. All proposals for the expenditure of capital funds shall be formulated and presented to Council within the framework of a general capital budget and, except in exceptional circumstances of an emergency nature, no consideration will be given to the commitment of any capital funds, including reserve funds, in isolation from a general review of all capital budget requirements.
4. Changes in project estimates for the comprehensive resource plan should be fully reported to the City Council for review and approval.
5. Project proposals should indicate the project's impact on the operating budget, including, but not limited to, long-term maintenance costs necessary to support the improvement.
6. At the time of contract award, each project shall include reasonable provision for contingencies:
  - a. The amount set aside for contingencies shall correspond with industry standards and shall not exceed ten (10) percent, or a percentage as otherwise determined by the City Council of the total contract amount.
  - b. Project contingencies may, unless otherwise determined by the City Council, be used only to compensate for unforeseen circumstances requiring additional funds to complete the project within the original project scope and identified needs.
  - c. For budgeting purposes, project contingencies are a reasonable estimating tool. At the time of the contract award, the project's budgeted appropriation, including contingency, will be replaced with a new appropriation equal to the approved project contract contingency developed in the manner described above.
7. The City Administration shall seek ways of ensuring that administrative costs of carrying out the Capital Improvement Plan are kept at appropriate levels.
8. The Annual Capital Budget shall include only those projects which can reasonably be accomplished in the time frame indicated. The detail sheet for each budgeted capital project should include a projected schedule.

9. Capital projects which are not encumbered or completed during the fiscal year will be rebudgeted or carried over to the next fiscal year except as reported to and subsequently approved by the City Council. All re-budgeted capital projects should be so noted in the Adopted Capital Budget. Similarly, multi-year projects with unencumbered or unexpended funds will be carried over to the subsequent year(s).
10. If a proposed project will cause a direct negative impact on other publicly-owned facilities, improvements to the other facilities will be required as part of the new project and become a part of the new project's comprehensive costs.
11. Capital projects will not be budgeted unless there are reasonable expectations that revenues will be available to pay for them.

**B. DEBT POLICIES**

1. Short-term lines of credit, tax or Revenue Anticipation Notes may be used only when the City's ability to implement approved programs and projects is seriously hampered by temporary cash flow shortages. No long-term debt will be used to finance ongoing operational costs.
2. The Finance Director shall identify alternative sources of funding and shall examine the availability of those sources in order to minimize the level of debt.
3. When possible, the City shall use special assessment, revenue, or other self-supporting bonds instead of general obligation debt.
4. Long term general obligation debt will be incurred based upon the ability of the City to incorporate into a balanced budget. This debt shall be limited to those capital improvements that cannot be financed from existing revenues and with an effort to match repayment of debt by those who benefit from the assets financed. The project should also be integrated with the City's long term financial plan and City Improvement Plan.
5. The maturity date for any debt will not exceed the reasonable expected useful life of the project so financed.
6. Fifty percent (50%) of the principal of any long term indebtedness should be retired over 10 years.
7. Current year revenues shall be set aside to pay for the subsequent year's debt service payments to protect bondholders from revenue volatility.
8. The Finance Director shall encourage and maintain good relations with financial and bond rating agencies, and will follow a policy of full and open disclosure on every financial report and bond prospectus.
9. No bond proceeds will be budgeted without accompanying debt service budgeted concurrently.

**C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) POLICIES**

1. Transparency in the Capital Improvement Program is a priority.

- a. The Capital Improvement Plan shall be provided to the City Council in a timely manner to allow time for the Council members to review the proposal with constituents before it is considered for adoption.
  - b. Council study sessions on the Capital Improvement Plan shall be open to the public and advertised sufficiently in advance of the meetings to allow for the attendance of interested citizens.
  - c. Prior to the adoption of the Capital Improvement Plan, the City Council shall hold noticed public hearings to provide opportunities for citizens to express their opinions on the proposed plan.
  - d. The City Planning Commission shall review the proposed City Improvement Plan and provide its comments on the Plan's contents before the Council considers the Plan for adoption.
2. All projects included in the Capital Improvement Plan shall be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. The goals and policies for services, facilities, and transportation should be followed in the development of the City Improvement Plan. The Comprehensive Plan service level goals should be called out in the City Improvement Plan.
  3. Capital projects shall be financed to the greatest extent possible through user fees and benefit districts when direct benefit to users results from construction of the project. Refer to Debt Policies for further detail.
  4. Projects that involve intergovernmental cooperation in planning and funding should be established by an agreement that sets forth the basic responsibilities of the parties involved.
  5. The Council will annually review and establish criteria against which capital proposals should be measured. Included among the factors which will be considered for priority-ranking are the following:
    - a. Projects which have a positive impact on the operating budget (reduced expenditures, increased revenues);
    - b. Projects which are programmed in the Six-Year Operating Budget Forecast;
    - c. Projects which can be completed or significantly advanced during the Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan;
    - d. Projects which can be realistically accomplished during the year they are scheduled;
    - e. Projects which implement previous Council-adopted reports and strategies.

**CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING PROJECT INCLUSION/PRIORITY (IN PRIORITY ORDER)**

1. Projects which are required by statute or by an existing agreement with another agency.
2. Projects which are essential to public health or safety.
3. Projects which are required to perpetually replace or maintain existing infrastructure.
4. Projects which are urgently needed by some other criteria than public health or safety, e.g. environmental or public service.
5. Projects which have exhibited a high degree of public support.
6. Projects which are grant funded and whose maintenance and replacement can be reasonably assured in long-term budgeting.
7. Projects which, if not acted upon now, would result in the irrevocable loss of an opportunity, or other major alternative actions would have to be initiated.
8. Projects which would preserve an existing capital facility, avoiding significantly greater expenses in the future (e.g. continuation of a ten-year cycle street maintenance program).
9. Projects which would result in significant savings to operating costs.
10. Projects which would fulfill a City commitment (evidenced by previous inclusion in the annual CIP and community support) to provide minimal facilities in areas which are deficient according to adopted standards.
11. Projects which would provide significant benefits to the local economy and tax base.
12. Purchase of land for future projects at favorable prices prior to adjacent development.
13. Purchase of land for future City projects (land banking).
14. Projects which would provide new facilities which have minimal or no operating costs or which have operating costs but have been designated as exceptions to the operating cost policy by previous City Council actions.
15. Projects which would be constructed in conjunction with another agency with the other agency providing for the operating costs.
16. Projects which would generate sufficient revenue to be essentially self-supporting in their operation.
17. Projects which would make an existing facility more efficient or increase its use with minimal or no operating cost increase.
18. Projects which would fulfill City commitment (evidenced by previous inclusion in the annual CIP and community support) to provide greater than minimal facilities.
19. Projects which are grant funded but would require increased operating costs in the General Fund, including reserve for eventual replacement.
20. Projects which are not grant funded and would require increased operating costs in the General Fund, and have not been designated as exceptions to the operating cost policy by previous City Council actions.