

City of Freeport

Financial Management Policies

The City of Freeport considers its goals, objectives and financial policy statements to be important integral parts of the budgetary process. The purpose of these policies is to safeguard the fiscal stability required to achieve the City's objectives and ensure long-term financial health.

Objectives:

- A. To guide City Council and management policy decisions that have significant fiscal impact.
- B. To employ balanced revenue policies that provides adequate funding for services and service levels.
- C. To maintain appropriate financial capacity for present and future needs.
- D. To maintain sufficient reserves so as to maintain service levels during periods of economic downturn.
- E. To promote sound financial management by providing accurate and timely information on the City's financial condition.
- F. To protect the City's credit rating and provide for adequate resources to meet the provisions of the City's debt obligations on all municipal debt.
- G. To ensure the legal use of financial resources through an effective system of internal controls.
- H. To promote cooperation and coordination with other governments and the private sector in financing.

Specifically, this policy framework mandates the pursuit of the following fiscal objectives:

I. Revenues

Design, maintain and administer a revenue system that will assure a reliable, equitable, diversified and sufficient revenue stream to support desired City services.

II. Expenditures

Identify priority services, establish and define appropriate service levels and administer the expenditure of available resources to assure fiscal stability and the effective and efficient delivery of services.

III. Fund Balance/Working Capital/ Net Assets

Maintain the fund balance, working capital and net assets of the various operating funds at levels sufficient to protect the City's credit worthiness as well as its financial position from emergencies.

IV. Capital Expenditures and Improvements

Annually review and monitor the condition of the City's capital equipment and infrastructure, setting priorities for its replacement and renovation based on needs, funding alternatives and availability of resources.

- V. Debt**
Establish guidelines for debt financing that will provide needed capital equipment and infrastructure improvements while minimizing the impact of debt payments on current and future revenues.
- VI. Investments**
Invest the City's operating cash to ensure its safety, provide for necessary liquidity and optimize yield.
- VII. Intergovernmental Relations**
Coordinate efforts with other governmental agencies to achieve common policy objectives, share the cost of providing governmental services on an equitable basis and support appropriate favorable legislation at the state and federal level.
- VIII. Grants**
Aggressively investigate, pursue and effectively administer federal, state and foundation grants-in-aid, which address the City's current priorities and policy objectives.
- IX. Economic Development**
Initiate, encourage and participate in economic development efforts to create job opportunities and strengthen the local economy and tax base.
- X. Fiscal Monitoring**
Prepare and present reports for the current and multi-year periods that analyze, evaluate and forecast the City's financial performance and economic condition.
- XI. Accounting, Auditing and Financial Reporting**
Comply with prevailing federal, state and local statutes and regulations. Conform to generally accepted accounting principles as promulgated by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).
- XII. Operating Budget**
Develop and maintain a balance budget that presents a clear understanding of the goals of the City Council.

I. REVENUES

The City shall use the following guidelines to design, maintain and administer a revenue system that will assure a reliable, equitable, diversified and sufficient revenue stream to support desired City services.

A. Balance and Diversification in Revenue Sources

The City shall strive to maintain a balanced and diversified revenue system to protect the City from fluctuations in any one source due to changes in economic conditions that adversely impact that source.

B. User Fees

For services that benefit specific users, where possible the City shall establish and collect fees to recover the cost of those services. Where feasible and desirable, the City shall seek to recover full direct and indirect costs. City staff shall review user fees on a regular basis to calculate their full cost recovery levels, to compare them to the current fee structure and to recommend adjustments where necessary to facilitate City Council's policy decision regarding the level of support to be provided.

C. Property Tax Revenues/Tax Rate

The City shall strive to reduce its reliance on property tax revenues by revenue diversification, implementation of user fees and economic development. The City shall also strive to minimize tax rate increases.

D. Enterprise Funds User Fees

Enterprise funds user fees shall be set at levels enough to cover operating expenditures, meet debt obligations, provide additional funding for capital improvements and provide adequate levels of working capital and debt coverage. The City shall seek to eliminate all forms of subsidization to enterprise funds from the General Fund and seek to reduce general fund support to enterprise funds.

E. Administrative Services Charges

The City shall prepare a cost allocation plan annually to determine the administrative services charges due to the General Fund from enterprise funds for overhead and staff support. Where appropriate, the enterprise funds shall pay the General Fund for direct services rendered.

F. Revenue Estimates for Budgeting

To maintain a stable level of service, the City shall use a conservative, objective and analytical approach when preparing revenue estimates for current and multi-year periods. The process shall include analysis of probable economic changes and their impacts on revenues, historical collection rates and trends in revenues.

G. Revenue Collection and Administration

The City shall maintain high collection rates for all revenues by keeping the revenue system as simple as possible to facilitate payment. In addition, since revenue should exceed the cost of producing it, the City shall strive to control administrative costs. The City shall pursue to the full extent allowed by state law all delinquent taxpayers and others overdue in payments to the City.

II. EXPENDITURES

The City shall use the following guidelines to identify necessary services, establish appropriate service levels and administer the expenditure of available resources to assure fiscal stability and the effective and efficient delivery of services.

A. Current Funding Basis

The City shall operate on a current funding basis. Expenditures shall be budgeted and controlled so as not to exceed current revenues plus the planned use of fund balance accumulated through prior year savings.

B. Avoidance of Operating Deficits

The City shall take timely corrective action if at any time during the fiscal year expenditure and revenue re-estimates are such that an operating deficit is projected at year-end.

C. Maintenance of Capital Assets

Within the resources available each fiscal year, the City shall maintain capital assets and infrastructure at a sufficient level to protect the City's investment, to minimize future replacement and maintenance costs and to continue service levels.

D. Purchasing

The City shall make every effort to maximize any discounts offered by creditors/vendors individually or through aggregated cooperative purchasing with other governmental entities. Vendors with balances due the City will have payments due the vendor offset against the amount due the City. The City will follow state law as well as the Purchasing Policies adopted by the City Council concerning the amount of the purchase requiring formal bidding procedures and approval by the City Council. For purchases where competitive bidding is not required, the City shall seek to obtain the most favorable terms and pricing possible. Every effort will be made to include women and minority-owned by business enterprises in the bidding process.

III. FUND BALANCE / WORKING CAPITAL / NET ASSETS

Fund balance measures the net financial resources available to finance expenditures of future periods. The City Council recognizes that good fiscal management comprises the foundational support of the entire City. The City shall use the following guidelines to maintain the fund balance, working capital and net assets of the various operating funds at levels sufficient to protect the City's creditworthiness as well as its financial position from emergencies. In the context of financial reporting, the term fund balance is used to describe the net position of governmental funds calculated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) which separates fund balances into five categories:

A. Categories

Nonspendable Fund Balance is the portion of fund balance that is inherently nonspendable such as assets that will never convert to cash, assets that will not convert to cash soon enough to affect the current period, and resources that must be maintained intact pursuant to legal or contractual requirements.

Restricted Fund Balance is the portion of fund balance that reflects resources that are subject to externally enforceable legal restrictions.

Committed Fund Balance is the portion of fund balance that represents resources whose use is constrained by limitations that the City Council has imposed upon itself and that remain binding unless removed by the same action with which the limitations were imposed.

Assigned Fund Balance is the portion of fund balance that reflects the City Council's intended use of resources.

Unassigned Fund Balance is the portion of fund balance that is not categorized into one of the other categories of fund balance.

The total of the amounts in these last three categories (where the only constraint on spending, if any, is imposed by the government itself) is termed *Unrestricted Fund Balance*.

B. General Policy

Fund Balance should be used only for non-recurring expenditures, major capital purchases, or emergencies that cannot be accommodated through current year savings.

C. Fund Balance Classification

For purposes of fund balance classification, expenditures are to be spent from restricted fund balance first and then unrestricted fund balance. Expenditures incurred in the unrestricted fund balances shall be reduced first from the committed fund balance, then from the assigned fund balance, and lastly from the unassigned fund balance.

D. Committed Fund Balance

Fund Balance of the City must be committed for a specific source by formal action of the City Council. Amendments or modifications to the committed fund balance must also be approved by formal action of the City Council. Committed fund balance does not lapse at year-end. The formal action required to commit fund balance shall be either by resolution or majority vote.

E. General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance

The City shall strive to maintain an undesignated General fund balance equal to 25% of budgeted expenditures for the General Operating Fund. Maintaining the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance at this level provides sufficient working capital and a margin of safety to address local emergencies without borrowing. If the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance drops below 25%, it shall be recovered at a rate of 1% minimally each year. At the end of the current fiscal year, the City anticipates a positive budget variance in the General Fund. After determining the desired fund balance in the General fund, the remainder of the positive budget balance will be transferred to other funds and/or projects as directed by the City Council. The General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance shall be appropriated by the City Council either by resolution or majority vote.

F. Other Operating Funds Unassigned Fund Balance; Enterprise Working Capital

In other operating funds, the City shall strive to maintain a positive unassigned fund balance (working capital) position to provide sufficient reserves for emergencies and revenue shortfalls. In addition, the city will seek to maintain a working capital (current assets minus current liabilities) balance equal to 33% budgeted expenditures for the Water and Sewer Utility Enterprise fund.

IV. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

A. Capital Expenditures and Improvements

The City shall annually review and monitor the condition of the City's capital equipment and infrastructure, setting priorities for its replacement and renovation based on needs, funding alternatives and availability of resources.

B. Capital Improvements Program

The City shall annually review the Capital Improvements Program (CIP), potential new projects and the current status of the City's infrastructure, replacement and renovation needs, updating the program as appropriate. All projects, ongoing and proposed, shall be prioritized based on an analysis of current needs and resource availability. For every project, all operation, maintenance and replacement expenditures shall be fully at cost. The CIP shall also present the City's long-term borrowing plan, debt payment schedules and other debt outstanding or planned, including general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, Certificates of obligation, lease/purchase agreements and certificates of participation.

C. Replacement of Capital Assets on a Regular Schedule

The Vehicle/Equipment Replacement Fund is the primary source of funds for all of the City's vehicle and equipment purchases, both replacements and additions. The City shall annually prepare a schedule for the replacement of its non-infrastructure capital assets. Within the resources available each fiscal year, the City shall replace these assets according to this schedule. The City desires to fund all vehicle and equipment purchases through donations, auction proceeds, grant proceeds, and budget transfer from General fund.

D. Capital Expenditure Financing

The City recognizes that there are several methods of financing capital requirements: (1) budget the funds from current revenues; (2) take the funds from fund balance/retained earnings as allowed by the Fund Balance Policy; (3) utilize funds from grants and foundations; or (4) borrow money through debt. Debt financing includes general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, Certificates of obligation, lease/purchase agreements and certificates of participation. The City Council will determine the appropriate use of financing for capital expenditures on an as-needed basis and during the budget development process each year.

V. DEBT

When the use of debt financing is determined by the City Council to be appropriate, the City shall use the following guidelines for debt financing which will provide needed capital equipment and infrastructure improvements while minimizing the impact of debt payments on current and future revenues.

A. Use of Debt Financing

Debt financing, including general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, certificates of obligation, certificates of participation and lease/purchase agreements, shall only be used to purchase capital assets. Debt payments should be structured to provide that any capital assets that are funded by the debt have a longer life than the debt associated with those assets.

B. Amortization of Debt

The City shall structure new debt issue payment schedules to utilize the City's declining debt payment schedules to keep tax increases for debt to a minimum. Capital projects that, by their character or size, are outside the normal core service projects will require careful evaluation of financial feasibility.

C. Affordability Targets

The City shall use an objective analytical approach to determine whether it can afford to assume new debt beyond the amount it retires each year. This process shall compare generally accepted standards of affordability to the current values for the City. These standards shall include debt per capita, debt as a percent of taxable value, debt service payments as a percent of current revenues and current expenditures and the level of overlapping net debt of all local taxing jurisdictions. The process shall also examine the direct costs and benefits of the proposed expenditures as determined in the City's annual update of the Capital Improvements Program. The decision on whether or not to assume new debt shall be based on these costs and benefits and on the City's ability to "afford" new debt as determined by the aforementioned standards. The City shall use cities with similar bond ratings for debt ratio benchmarks.

D. Sale Process

The City shall use a competitive bidding process in the sale of debt unless the nature of the issue warrants a negotiated bid.

E. Rating Agencies Presentations

Full disclosure of operations and open lines of communication shall be made to the rating agencies. City staff, with assistance of financial advisors, shall prepare the necessary materials and presentation to the rating agencies.

F. Continuing Disclosure

The City is committed to continuing disclosure of financial and pertinent credit information relevant to the City's outstanding securities.

G. Debt Refunding

City staff and the City's financial advisor shall monitor the municipal bond market for opportunities to obtain interest savings by refunding outstanding debt.

VI. INVESTMENTS

As adopted by the City Council, it is the policy of the City of Freeport that the administration and investment of funds be handled as its highest public trust. The City's available cash shall be invested according to the City's Investment Policy that is adopted by the City Council on an annual basis in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 2256 of the Texas Government Code. The primary objectives, in priority order, of the City's investment activities shall be preservation and safety of principal, liquidity and yield. The earnings from investment will be used in a manner that best serves the public trust and interest of the City of Freeport.

The investment policy applies to all financial assets of the City of Freeport. These funds are accounted for in the City's comprehensive annual financial report and include the General, Special Revenue, Debt Service, Capital Projects, and Proprietary Funds. All cash of the various funds (excluding bond funds) are combined into the pooled cash fund for efficiency and maximum investment opportunity. Interest revenue derived from the pooled cash fund is allocated to the participating funds (annually) based on the relative cash balance of each fund. Bond funds are invested in separate investment pool accounts. Maintaining these funds in separate accounts simplifies the calculation necessary for the reporting of arbitrage earnings. All funds in the pooled cash fund are to be administered in accordance with this policy.

The City's depository account requires two authorized signatures to sign all checks to ensure the safety of funds.

VII. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The City shall coordinate efforts with other governmental agencies to achieve common policy objectives, share the cost of providing government services on an equitable basis and support appropriate favorable legislation at the state and federal levels.

A. Interlocal Cooperation in Delivering Services

In order to promote the effective and efficient delivery of services, the City shall work with other local jurisdictions to share on an equitable basis the costs of services, to share facilities and to develop joint programs to improve service to its citizens.

B. Legislative Program

The City shall cooperate with other jurisdictions to actively oppose any state or federal regulation or proposal that erodes municipal authority, attempts to remove local control over city issues, services or programs, or mandates additional City programs or services and does not provide the funding for implementation.

VIII. GRANTS

The City shall seek, apply for, obtain and effectively administer federal, state and foundation grants-in-aid that address the City's current and future priorities and policy objectives.

A. Grant Guidelines

The City shall seek, apply for and obtain those grants that are consistent with priority needs and objectives identified by Council.

B. Direct and Indirect Costs

The City shall recover indirect costs to the maximum amount allowed by the funding source. The City may waive or reduce direct and indirect costs if doing so will significantly increase the effectiveness of the grant.

C. Grant Review

The City shall review all grant submittals for their cash or in-kind match requirements, their potential impact on the operating budget and the extent to which they meet the City's policy objectives. If there are cash match requirements, the source of funding shall be identified and approved prior to application. An annual report on the status of grant programs shall also be prepared.

D. Grant Program Termination

The City shall terminate grant-funded programs and associated positions as directed by the City Council when grant funds are no longer available unless alternate funding is identified.

E. GRANT PAYMENT PROCEDURES

Once grant funds are received and invoice approval acknowledged by signature on the original invoice, a demand check is entered into the system by the Finance Director's office, then printed and disbursed by the Finance Director. Both the City Manager and Finance Director signatures appear on the approved checks. Checks are then disbursed to the appropriate vendors. The Finance Director is responsible for ensuring that checks are signed and disbursed within five (5) days for the Texas Department of Agriculture and three (3) calendar days for the Texas General Land Office of receiving grant funds.

IX. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City shall initiate, encourage and participate in economic development efforts to create job opportunities and strengthen the local economy and tax base.

A. Commitment to Expansion and Diversification

The City shall encourage and participate in economic development efforts to expand Freeport's economy and tax base, to increase local employment and to invest when there is a defined specific long-term return. These efforts shall focus not only on new areas but also on established sections of Freeport where redevelopment can generate additional jobs and other economic benefits.

B. Tax Abatements

The City shall follow the Guidelines for Tax Abatement adopted by the City Council to encourage commercial and/or industrial growth and development throughout Freeport. The City shall balance the long-term benefits of tax abatements with the short-term loss of tax revenues prior to the granting of the abatement. Factors considered in evaluating proposed abatements for development include the location of the project, its size, the number of temporary and permanent jobs created, the costs and benefits for the City and the impact on Freeport's economy and other factors specified in the City's Guidelines for Tax Abatement as well as applicable state laws.

C. Increase Non-Residential Share of Tax Base

The City's economic development program shall seek to expand the non-residential share of the tax base to decrease the tax burden on residential property owners.

D. Coordinate Efforts with Other Jurisdictions

The City's economic development program shall encourage close cooperation with other local jurisdictions to promote the economic well being of the area.

E. Use of Other Incentives

The City shall use enterprise zones as allowed by law and shall seek new sources to encourage business expansion. The City shall also coordinate with state and federal agencies on offering any incentive programs they may provide for potential economic expansion.

X. FISCAL MONITORING

Reports shall be prepared and presented on a regular basis to analyze, evaluate and forecast the City's financial performance and economic condition for the current year and for multi-years.

A. **Financial Status and Performance Reports**

Quarterly reports shall be prepared comparing expenditures and revenues to current budget for fiscal year-to-date, and to prior year actual fiscal year-to-date. Balance sheets and budget highlight notes are also provided. Timely information including comparisons of expenditures to budgeted amounts shall be provided to all department heads and directors on a monthly basis.

B. **Five-Year Forecast of Revenues and Expenditures**

A five-year forecast of revenues and expenditures, including a discussion of major trends affecting the City's financial position, shall be prepared. The forecast shall examine critical issues facing the City, economic conditions and the outlook for the upcoming budget year.

XI. ACCOUNTING, AUDITING AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

The City shall comply with prevailing local, state and federal regulations. The City will maintain accounting practices that conform to generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) as set forth by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), the authoritative standard setting body for units of local government, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). The City Council shall select an independent firm of certified public accountants to perform an annual audit of all operations. The City may participate in the Government Finance Officers Association's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting program.

XIII. OPERATING BUDGET

The City shall establish an operating budget that links revenues and expenditures to the goals of the City Council. The City shall strive to participate in the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award program.