FINANCIAL POLICY
Revised May 2, 2017
Council Policy # 69

OVERVIEW

This document establishes policies of overall financial management, budget development, and fiscal administration for the City of Sebastopol. Included herein are statements and principles designed to guide the City in maintaining its financial stability and delivering high-quality services to the public.

Formally adopted financial policies assist elected officials and city staff in the development of fiscal management practices, save time and provide structure for financial decisions, promote public confidence, enhance transparency and provide continuity over time. These policies will be updated periodically, but are designed with a long-term perspective and provide the basic framework and road map for addressing a wide variety of financial and economic conditions that the City will encounter. A fiscal policy supports long-term planning and enhances the City's effectiveness in implementing long-term strategies to deliver efficient services to the public.

This document provides a structured, central repository for a variety of fiscal policies which are organized into the following categories

- General Financial Principles
- Annual Operating Budget Policy
- Capital Improvement Program
- Revenues
- Expenditures
- Cash Management
- Debt Management
- Fund Balances
- Financial Reporting
- Review and Update

GENERAL FINANCIAL PRINCIPAL

It is the overall policy of the City of Sebastopol to build upon a sound conceptual framework to:

- Manage its financial resources in a responsible and prudent manner.
- Provide financial information in a relevant, thorough and timely manner, and in a format that effectively communicates financial status to the Council, citizens and City employees.
- Establish and maintain prudent fund balance levels.
- Maintain financial reporting in compliance with current governmental accounting standards.
- Promote and implement a relevant and strong system of internal financial controls to manage significant risks and monitor the reliability and integrity of financial and operating reporting.
- Promote constructive and proactive financial decision making that includes, and is responsive to, citizens input and guidance.
- Integrate long-term operating and capital resources planning into the annual budget process.
- Allow for uncertainties and maintain a posture of financial flexibility.
- Develop programs in a manner that supports the City's long-term ability to cover costs and provide the level and quality of service required by its citizens.
- Manage debt responsibly.
- Establish and implement investment policies in accordance with the City code and State law.

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET POLICY

- An annual operating budget will be adopted by the City Council no later than June 30th of each fiscal year. The budget will include appropriations that provide expenditure authority to public officials responsible for operating their respective departments to fulfill obligations to provide public services as delegated by the City Council.
- Funds may not be expended for a new fiscal year until the budget for that fiscal year has been adopted by the City Council.
- The City Council appointed Budget Subcommittee will develop and present a draft operating budget for consideration by the full City Council and Public. The operating budget will be presented to the City Council for review and adoption.
- Total projected expenditures shall not exceed total estimated revenues. Should this occur, City Council may approve a planned use of accumulated fund balances in prior years for inclusion in the budget.
- The City should maintain a multi-year financial forecast that is updated as part of the annual budget development process.
- One-time revenue sources are not to be relied upon to fund on-going operations.

Controlling and Adjusting the Annual Budget:

- The City structures and controls its budget by use of the following funds:
    - The general fund is the primary operating fund of the City. It accounts for the receipt of property tax, general sales tax, and other general revenues available to finance city operations. The general fund accounts for revenues and expenditures that do not fit the criteria to be accounted for in other funds with external restrictions imposed by their respective financing sources.
    - Special funds account for resources externally restricted for use by their respective funding sources, such as grant programs financed by the State and Federal governments.
    - Enterprise funds account for water and wastewater systems, may be used for fee-based programs if the intention is to recoup almost all City costs through fees or other user charges.
    - Internal Service funds account for centralized service costs (such as technology and vehicle services made available to all operating departments). Charges from the internal service funds appear as an expenditures in the user department, and as revenue in the central service department.
- The City's budget is controlled at the fund level by the City Council.
    - The City Council, as representatives of the public, is the sole authority for creating or increasing expenditure appropriations within a fund. The City Council is also the exclusive authority for approving changes in revenue estimates with funds.
- Department Heads will be held directly responsible and accountable for their budgets as originally adopted by the City Council or as thereafter revised in accordance with this policy. The level of expenditure control for departments is the department level.
- Departments that operate programs among different funds are limited to the appropriation levels within any one fund. This policy also describes the level of authority needed to amend the adopted budget.

Transfers and revisions to the adopted budget:

The City Council approves:

1. All increases in appropriations within a department or fund.
2. All transfers of appropriations between funds.
3. All decreases in appropriations, with the exception that the City Manager may direct Department Heads to suspend expenditures pending Council consideration of decreases in appropriations needed to respond to fiscal emergency.

The City Manager approves:

1. Transfers of appropriations between expenditure line items within departments, projects and

program budgets, up to $100,000.

2. Transfers between operating divisions and program budgets within departments.
3. The City Manager may make budget transfers between departments or programs as long as those changes do not increase overall appropriations within any one given fund. Transfers between funds, overall increases in fund appropriations, and overall increases in project budgets can only be made through City Council action. Transfers between departments should be reported to the City Council as part of the budget amendment process, either at mid-year or at the proposal of a new budget term.

Finance Department:

1. The Finance Department is responsible for providing forms and instructions for requesting appropriation adjustments, and for analyzing and recommending adjustments to the City Manager. The Finance Department will record approved budgets and adjustments into the City's budget system.
2. The Finance Department will ensure that the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) includes a comparison of actual expenditures against the final budget, as amended and adjusted under the authorities of this policy.

- Operating expenditure appropriations not spent during the fiscal year lapse at year-end, except for:
  - Encumbrances or commitments, as in the form of finalized purchase orders made during the fiscal year that have not been completed at year-end.
  - Appropriations for capital improvement projects and ongoing grants with a life-cycle beyond one year.
- Governmental funds use the modified accrual basis of accounting while proprietary and fiduciary fund types are budgeted on a full accrual basis of accounting. The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) presents City's finances on a Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) basis and the City's budget is prepared in conformance with these standards.
- City budget must comply with the annual determination of the City's appropriations limit calculated in accordance with Article XIIB of the Constitution of the State of California and adopt an annual resolution to this effect.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

- The City will develop and maintain a five-year capital improvement program (CIP) to be updated annually in conjunction with the operating budget. The CIP should reflect the current and changing needs of the community as well as enhance of the community's quality of life.
- All projects within the CIP are to be tracked systematically and reported on a quarterly basis. CIP tracking reports should clearly display budget-to-actual performance by project, fund category and project status.
- Capital improvements that specifically benefit a select group of users and/or are fee-for-service based are to be financed through user fees, service charges, special assessments and taxes, or development impact fees.
- Capital improvements that specifically benefit a fee-for-service enterprise operation (such as Water/Sewer) are to be financed through the service fees generated within that operation and fund. Such fees should be supported by periodic updates to the related utility master plan.
- Transfers of resources into the CIP fund will be evaluated on an annual basis dependent upon the existence of available surplus dollars.
- The City should strive to maximize the use of capital grants and State assistance in funding capital improvements before tapping general revenue sources.

REVENUES

- The City will strive to maintain a diversified and stable revenue base to minimize the impact of economic fluctuation.

- The City will seek out, apply for, and effectively administer Federal, State, and other grants that address the City's current operating and capital priorities.
- The City will pursue revenue collection and auditing to assure that funds due to the City are accurately received in a timely manner.
- The City will seek reimbursements for State mandated costs whenever possible.
- The City will adopt user fees with appropriate levels of cost recovery.
- User fee studies should be performed and updated annually to ensure the proper balance of costs and service charges. The City should strive to cover the full cost of providing non-tax and discretionary fee-based service operations except to the extent that City Council approves defined subsidy levels by program area.
- Operating departments are to review public services to identify and determine those appropriate for fee collection. Recommendations for new fees are to be presented to the City Council as fees are annually updated to ensure they reflect all direct and reasonable indirect costs of providing such services.
- Enterprise operations will be self-supporting and shall reimburse the General Fund for any and all materials and services provided on their behalf.

EXPENDITURES

- Expenditures are to be budgeted and controlled so as to not exceed estimated revenues plus the approved and planned use of fund balances accumulated in prior years.
- The City will conduct a mid-year financial status review to determine if projected revenues and expenditures meet target levels. If an operating deficit is projected at year-end, the City should evaluate the need for immediate corrective and/or mitigating actions, including operating or capital expenditure reductions and/or activate the use of established contingency balances. The deferral of essential and scheduled operational expenditures into the following fiscal year or the use of short-term loans and transfers to balance the budget should be avoided.
- The City implements a formal purchasing system, principles, and guidelines to ensure that expenditure levels are kept in check in the course of any fiscal year.

CASH MANAGEMENT

- The Budget Subcommittee will review the City's investment policy periodically and make recommendations to the City Council when appropriate.
- The responsibility of investing City funds rests with the Finance Director who is to exercise due diligence to adhere to the investment policy. The Finance Director will present to the City Council quarterly investment reports presenting a summary of the portfolio status and compliance with the conditions set forth in the investment policy.

DEBT MANAGEMENT

- The City should plan the use of debt in a manner that sustains financing payments at manageable levels.
- The City will seek to maintain a high credit rating through sound financial practices as a basis for minimizing borrowing costs.
- The City will make every effort to use pay-as-you-go financing for capital improvement projects. Debt financing for a project can be used if the overall project cost exceeds anticipated available resources and/or if the cost of financing is favorable as compared to the use of City investment holdings over the financing term.
- The City will monitor all forms of debt annually in conjunction with the budget preparation process and report concerns and remedies, if necessary, to City Council. The City will diligently monitor its compliance with bond covenants.

- The City will not issue long-term debt to finance current operations. Debt financing should only be used for long-term capital improvement projects with a useful life exceeding the term of the financing and for which the project revenues or specific identified revenue sources are sufficient to service the long-term debt.
- The City will use a lease-purchase method of financing for equipment if the lease rates are more favorable than the City's expected overall investment rate of return.
- The City will not incur general obligation indebtedness for public improvements which exceed in aggregate 15% of the assessed value of all real and personal property of the City as specified in the California Government Code Section 43605.

FUND BALANCES

Governmental Fund Type Definitions

Governmental fund types include the general fund, special revenue funds, capital projects funds, debt service funds and permanent funds. GASB has clarified the definitions of these funds as follows:

General Fund

The General Fund should be used to account for and report all financial resources not accounted for and reported in another fund.

Special Revenue Funds

Special revenue funds are used to account for and report the proceeds of specific revenue sources that are restricted or committed to expenditure for specified purposes other than debt service or capital projects. The restricted or committed proceeds of specific revenue sources should be expected to continue to comprise a substantial portion of the inflows reported in the fund. Other resources (investment earnings and transfers from other funds, for example) also may be reported in the fund if those resources are restricted, committed, or assigned to the specified purpose of the fund. Governments should discontinue reporting a special revenue fund, and instead report the fund's remaining resources in the general fund, if the government no longer expects that a substantial portion of the inflows will derive from restricted or committed revenue sources.

Capital Projects Funds

Capital projects funds are used to account for and report financial resources that are restricted, committed or assigned to expenditure for capital outlays, including the acquisition or construction of capital facilities and other capital assets. Capital projects funds exclude those types of capital-related outflows financed by proprietary funds or for assets that will be held in trust for individuals, private organizations or other governments.

Debt Service Funds

Debt service funds are used to account for and report financial resources that are restricted, committed or assigned to expenditure for principal and interest, even if it is being accumulated for future years' payments. Debt service funds should be used to report resources if legally mandated.

Permanent Funds

Permanent funds should be used to account for and report resources that are restricted to the extent that only earnings, and not principal, may be used for purposes that support the reporting government's programs. Permanent funds do not include private-purpose trust funds, which should be used to report situations in which the government is required to use the principal or earnings for the benefit of individuals, private organizations, or other governments.

Fund Balance Classifications

Fund balance is defined as the difference between assets and liabilities. Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement (GASB) No. 54 classified fund balances into the following categories:

Non-spendable: This is a portion of fund balance not available for appropriations by its nature or external restriction. Examples are inventories and donations that require intact principal values.

Spendable: Restricted: The restricted portion of fund balance is subject to externally enforceable legal restrictions. Examples are Gas Tax revenues and grant proceeds.
Committed: The committed portion of fund balance is constrained by the limitations imposed through formal City Council action. Only formal City Council action can remove or modify a previously committed amount.

Assigned: The Assigned portion of fund balance is established for intended use by either the City Council or its designee, such as the City Manager. No formal City Council action is needed to remove the intended use. GAAP required reserves, such as the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) reserve, belong to this category. The Fiscal Policy and State Revenue Stabilization policy balances belong to this category.

Unassigned: The Unassigned portion of fund balance is that remaining after the non-spendable, the restricted, the committed, and the assigned fund balances are identified and recorded.

The City of Sebastopol will use GASB's definitions of fund balance for the annual financial reports (audits) and for all other financial reporting. For all financial planning purposes, the term Budgetary Fund Balance will be used and will include any portion of the fund balance that is available for appropriation. Portions of the fund balance not available for appropriation will be identified as follows.

The City shall strive to use the most restricted fund balances prior to utilizing those that are less restricted. The following order of use reflects this guideline:

a. Non-spendable (if funds become spendable)
b. Restricted
c. Committed
d. Assigned
e. Unassigned

<u>Fund Balance Policy Levels</u>

Purpose
The City of Sebastopol (City) has enacted the Fund Balance policies in an effort to ensure financial security through the maintenance of a healthy fund contingency balance that guides the creation, maintenance, and use of resources for financial stabilization purposes. The City's primary objective is to maintain a prudent level of financial resources to protect against reducing service levels or raising taxes and fees due to temporary revenue shortfalls or unpredicted one-time expenditures. The City also seeks to maintain the highest possible credit ratings which are dependent, in part, on the City's maintenance of a healthy fund balance.

General Fund
The City's fiscal goal is to maintain annual expenditure increases at a sustainable growth rate, and to limit expenditures to anticipated revenue in order to maintain a balanced budget. The Council's directed target is to maintain an unassigned fund balance within the range of not less than 15% of annual operating expenditures for the fiscal year with a multi-year goal of achieving a 20% unassigned fund balance level for the reasons noted below. This level of coverage includes General Fund balance amounts specifically assigned for a specific purpose as discussed and defined further below:

- To provide funding to cover approximately two (2) months of operating expenses with the goal of achieving three months coverage in the long term.
- To provide the liquidity to respond to contingent liabilities.

- To adhere to Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommendation that a minimum General Fund unassigned fund balance to be maintained of no less than either two (2) months of regular operating revenues or expenditures.

Buildings, Facilities & Infrastructure Reserve
Building, facilities and infrastructure replacement reserve should be established and maintained to provide for the timely replacement of City's owned fixed assets. The balance is hereby defined as assigned by the City Council to allow the City to maintain an infrastructure reserve with a target balance equivalent to the projected annual cost of the first year Capital Improvement Plan funding expenditures.

Equipment, Technology and Vehicle Replacement Reserve
The balance is hereby defined as assigned by the City Council to allow the City to set aside an appropriate amount of money to properly fund equipment, technology and vehicle replacement. The City shall set aside funding annually in this reserve based on the vehicle and equipment replacement schedule.

CalPERS Retirement & Other Post-Employment Benefits Reserve
The City conducted an actuarial study to comply with GASB Statement No. 45, Accounting and Financial Reporting by Employers for Post-Employment Benefits and to determine the City's obligation for the other post-employment benefits (OPEB). The study concluded that the City should set aside annual funding for this obligation and the City should maintain internal funding of OPEB obligations for this purpose. Additionally, the City will conduct an actuarial update every two to three years to maintain the current status of this valuation.

Unassigned Operating Reserve
These balances are hereby defined as unassigned by the City Council to allow the City to weather unpredicted cyclical and rapid downturns in the economy. These funds would be available for use in such conditions to mitigate negative economic fiscal impacts or State takeaways and can be activated within any one budget cycle through Council action. An economic downturn would entail a projected and/or sudden drop in core revenues (major tax and service revenue loss) of equal to or greater than 10% (including the impact of inflation) and/or a change in economic parameters (such as interest rates, debt service rates, pension and health rates) that cause a material change in expenditures of 10% or more, or the occurrence of a local natural disaster or unexpected financial claim requiring the immediate use of cash balances.

Water and Sewer Fund Balances
The City should maintain the balances in the Water Sewer Fund at a level sufficient to accommodate operating and capital needs. This reserve is recommended at 25% of annual expenditures, including estimated capital improvements. Multi-year fee studies for this fund should be updated periodically as a basis for defining the revenue sources necessary to maintain system infrastructure and required services levels. As a result of the periodic fee or master plan studies, adjustments to user charges may be necessary to maintain recommended fund balance levels.

Workers' Compensation and Liability Insurance Funding
Periodic actuarial studies of self-insured workers' compensation and general liabilities will be conducted to ensure that proper levels of liabilities are accrued for claims and that rates charged to operating departments are appropriate.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

- The City's accounting and financial reports are to be maintained in conformance with GAAP.
- An annual financial audit will be performed by an independent public accounting firm familiar with municipal government activities. The independent auditor will issue an audit opinion to be included in the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). Additionally, the auditor will present the CAFR

and discuss audit findings to the City Council. The City encourages the rotation of audit service providers every 5 year cycle.

- The City is encouraged to submit the Annual CAFR to State and/or National Government Finance Professional organizations (Government Finance Officers' Association's Certification of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting - California Society of Municipal Finance Officers CAFR Award) for independent review and evaluation.
- Internal financial status reports are to be issued on a periodic and timely basis – no less than quarterly and be made readily available on the City website.
- The City is to record the depreciation of equipment, buildings and facilities, and infrastructure as follows and in line with internally established capitalization guidelines:

Capitalization Thresholds

Land purchases at any value
Equipment - $5,000
Buildings and facility improvements - $25,000
Infrastructure - $100,000

Depreciation

Depreciation will be recorded on a straight-line basis over the following estimated useful lives:

Equipment	3 - 10 years
Site Improvements other than buildings	30 - 50 years
Buildings	50 years
Infrastructure	30 - 100 years

REVIEW AND UPDATE

This financial policy will be reviewed periodically and updated, if necessary, to reflect any changing requirements.