

Financial Notes & Policies

The City of Columbia has a council-manager form of government. All powers of the City are vested in an elective Council, which enacts legislation, adopts budgets, determines policies, and appoints the City Manager.

The City Manager is the chief executive and administrative officer of the City and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of all the City's affairs. The City Manager keeps the Council advised of the financial condition of the City and makes recommendations concerning its future needs.

The fiscal year of the City begins on the first day of October and ends on the last day of September each year. The fiscal year constitutes the budget and accounting year.

REVENUE POLICY

The City will endeavor to maintain a diversified and stable revenue base to minimize the effects of economic fluctuations as well as eliminate an over dependence on any single revenue source.

The City will project and update revenues annually. These revenue forecasts will be presented to the City Council prior to the beginning of the budget process.

Departments submit their revenue estimates for the current year and projected revenue for the next year to the Finance Department.

Revenue trends are to be examined monthly and incorporated into annual revenue forecasts.

Revenue sources are not utilized by the City while legal action is pending.

Monthly reports comparing actual to budgeted revenues will be prepared by the Finance Department and presented to the City Manager.

Cash investments of the City shall be undertaken in a manner that seeks to ensure the preservation of capital in the portfolio.

User fees and rates will be examined annually and adjusted as necessary to cover the costs of providing the services.

The City will follow a policy of collecting, on a timely basis, all fees, charges, taxes, and other revenues properly due the City. The City will follow an aggressive policy of collecting all delinquencies due the City.

BUDGET POLICY

Between 120 and 180 days prior to the adoption of the budget, the City Manager shall prepare and submit to the Council a statement of the policy recommendations for programs and priorities which, in the opinion of the City Manager, will be of benefit to the city.

The City Manager shall submit a budget to Council at least 60 days prior to the beginning of each budget year.

Expenditures proposed in the budget for each department, office, or agency shall be itemized by character, object, function, activity, and fund.

The City Council shall hold public hearings on the budget as submitted, at which all interested persons shall be given an opportunity to be heard.

The City Council shall adopt the budget, by majority vote, no later than the last Monday of the month proceeding the first month of the budget year. If the City Council does not take final action by this date, the budget will be considered effective as it was submitted.

The budget shall be on record in the City Clerk's office and open to public inspection. The budget is also available for viewing and/or printing on the City's website at www.como.gov

The City will annually submit documentation to obtain the Government Finance Officials Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award.

After adoption of the budget, the budget can be amended via ordinance or resolution. The City Manager can submit ordinances and resolutions to the Council to increase expenditures or revenues. When the Council approves the ordinance or resolution, additional appropriations are made in the appropriate department.

At the request of the City Manager, the Council may by resolution, transfer any unencumbered appropriation balance or portion thereof from one office department or agency to another. No transfer shall be made of specified fixed appropriations.

All appropriations shall lapse at the end of the budget year to the extent that they shall not have been expended or lawfully encumbered.

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CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS POLICY

The City develops a five-year program for capital improvements and updates it annually for budgeting purposes. A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) document is prepared which lists all project requests that go beyond the five year budget guideline.

Estimated costs and potential funding sources for each capital improvement project proposal are identified before the document is submitted to the City Council for approval.

The capital improvement program will be included in the Annual Budget. The Annual Budget will implement the first year of the capital improvement program.

FIXED ASSET POLICY

The following fixed asset policy shall be in force commencing with fiscal year 2000. This policy is consistent with Government Financial Officers Association Recommended Practices and should be reviewed periodically and compared to recommended practices of the GFOA or other nationally recognized government finance organization.

Fixed assets should be capitalized only if they have an estimated life of more than one year following the date of acquisition and have a purchase cost of \$5,000 or more. Items which cost less than \$5,000 and/or have a life of one year or less will be expensed upon acquisition.

Purchase cost of a fixed asset includes freight, installation charges, carrying cases, adaptors and other items which are connected to the fixed asset and necessary for its operation or use.

Fixed assets' capitalization threshold should be applied to individual fixed assets rather than to groups of fixed assets.

A small tag with a fixed asset number will be issued by the Finance Department for all items that can be reasonably tagged (physically). Said tag will be affixed to the fixed asset until such time it is declared surplus property and properly disposed through the Purchasing Agent as required by City ordinance.

Departments will notify the Finance Department of any change in location or loss of a fixed asset.

Departments should exercise control over their non-capitalized fixed assets by establishing and maintaining adequate control procedures at the departmental level.

ACCOUNTING POLICY

An independent financial audit shall be made of all accounts of the City government at least annually and more frequently if deemed necessary by the City Council.

The General Fund, Special Revenue, Debt Service, General Capital Projects, and Expendable Trust Funds will be accounted for under the modified accrual basis of accounting.

Enterprise Funds, Internal Service Funds, and Non-Expendable Trust Funds will be accounted for under the accrual basis of accounting.

Full disclosure will be provided in the financial statements and bond representations.

The City will annually submit documentation to obtain the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from GFOA.

The Annual Financial Report will be prepared in accordance with revised GASB standards.

PURCHASING POLICY

The Purchasing Division shall have responsibility for and authority to contract for, purchase, store and distribute all supplies, materials and equipment required for the operation and maintenance of offices, departments or agencies of the City.

It shall be the policy of the City to encourage competitive business practices through public bidding or requests for proposals wherever possible and feasible.

In evaluating bids and awarding contracts, the head of the Purchasing Division is authorized to give preference to recycled and environmentally preferable products according to prescribed guidelines.

DEBT POLICY

The City may issue general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, special obligation bonds, and short-term notes and leases.

The City may issue refunding bonds for the purpose of refunding, extending or unifying the whole or any part of its valid outstanding revenue bonds.

The City will limit long-term debt to only those capital projects that cannot be financed from current revenue or other available sources.

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When the City finances capital projects by issuing bonds, it will repay the bonds within a period not to exceed the expected useful life of the projects.

The City's policy shall be to manage its budget and financial affairs in such a way so as to ensure continued investment grade bond ratings.

No bonds shall be issued without the assent of the requisite number of qualified electors of the City voting thereon.

RESERVE/FUND BALANCE POLICY

The City calculates an unreserved, undesignated fund balance equal to 20% of expenditures for the adopted general fund budget. These funds will be used to avoid cash flow interruptions, generate investment income, reduce need for short-term borrowing and assist in maintaining what is considered an investment grade bond rating capacity.

Self-Insurance Reserves shall be maintained at a level to protect the City against incurred and reported losses as well as those incurred but not reported and future losses within the retention.

A contingency reserve account will be appropriated annually in the General Fund to provide for unanticipated expenditures of a nonrecurring nature and/or to meet unexpected increases in costs.

At the direction of the Council and the oversight of the City Manager, the General Fund portion of the budget is to be balanced except where Council approves the use of excess reserves.

All other funds will follow a 20% guideline for fund balance reserve as well. These funds will be used to avoid cash flow interruptions, generate investment income, reduce need for short-term borrowing and assist in maintaining what is considered an investment grade bond rating capacity.

ENTERPRISE FUND POLICY

Enterprise funds will be used to account for the acquisition, operation, and maintenance of City facilities and services which are intended to be entirely or predominately self-supporting from user charges or for which periodic net income measurement is desirable.

The Water and Electric department will pay into the General Fund of the City annually an amount substantially equivalent to that sum which would be paid in taxes if the water and electric utilities were privately owned.

Enterprise funds are required to establish rates that generate revenues sufficient to cover the cost of operations including debt expense and capital needs. In accordance with the City Charter, operating costs must include any intragovernmental charges. Rate calculations also take into consideration any approved subsidies from General Government Funds.

INTERNAL SERVICE FUND POLICY

Internal service funds will be used to account for the provision of goods and services by one department of the City to the other departments.

Internal service funds are to be self-supporting from user charges to the respective user departments.

Internal service funds are to only recover the complete cost of operations without producing any significant amount of profit in excess of the fund's requirement. In computing revenue requirements for rate setting purposes, the rate base should include such items as debt expense, interest expense, operating expense, prorated reserves (for lease/purchase arrangements) and depreciation expense or estimated capital outlay, either of which are usually financed 100% internally through rates.

If a large fund balance has occurred in excess of reasonable revenue requirements, rates should be adjusted in the next fiscal year based on a four-year average of net income/loss. This allows the City to maintain appropriate levels of retained earnings without large swings in the rates charged out to departments in any given year.

BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

Governmental Funds use the modified accrual basis of accounting. Internal Service Fund and Enterprise Fund revenues and expenses are recognized on the accrual basis. Under this method of accounting, revenues are recognized in the accounting period in which they are earned, and expenses are recognized in the period incurred.

BASIS OF BUDGETING

The City's budget is prepared on a modified accrual basis, which is the same as the Basis of Accounting for all funds except Enterprise Funds and Internal Service Funds.