

Selected Financial Policies

Through a series of Resolutions and Ordinances, the City has adopted a number of financial policies that are designed to protect the City's financial interests and provide a framework and guidelines for the City's financial practices. For additional information about these policies, please refer to the City of Seattle website: http://www.seattle.gov/financedepartment/financial_policies.htm.

Debt Policies

- The City of Seattle seeks to maintain the highest possible credit ratings for all categories of short- and long-term General Obligation debt that can be achieved without compromising delivery of basic City services and achievement of adopted City policy objectives.
- The City will reserve \$100 million of legal limited tax (councilmanic) general obligation debt capacity, or 12% of the total legal limit, whichever is larger, for emergencies. The 12% reserve is now significantly greater than \$100 million.
- Except in emergencies, net debt service paid from the General Subfund will not exceed 9% of the total General Fund budget. In the long run, the City will seek to keep net debt service at 7% or less of the General Fund budget.

General Fund Fund Balance and Reserve Policies

- At the beginning of each year, sufficient funds shall be appropriated to the Emergency Subfund so that its balance equals 37.5 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value, which is the maximum amount allowed by state law.
- Annual contributions of 0.50% of forecasted tax revenues are automatically made to the Revenue Stabilization Account of the Cumulative Reserve Subfund (commonly referred to as the "Rainy Day Fund").¹ In addition, 50% of any unanticipated excess General Subfund fund balance at year's end is automatically contributed to the Rainy Day Fund. These automatic contributions are temporarily suspended when the forecasted nominal tax growth rate is negative or when the total value of the Rainy Day Fund exceeds 5% of total tax revenues. In addition to the automatic contributions, the City may also make contributions to the Rainy Day Fund via ordinance. Expenditures from the Rainy Day Fund require the approval of a majority of the members of the Seattle City Council and must be informed by the evaluation of out-year financial projections.

Other Citywide Policies

- As part of the Mayor's budget proposal, the Executive develops a revenue estimate that is based on the best available economic data and forecasts.

¹ The 0.50% contribution is lowered to 0.25% of forecasted tax revenues for 2012 and any year immediately following the suspension of contributions as a result of negative nominal tax revenue growth.

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- The City intends to adopt rates, fees, and cost allocation charges no more often than biennially. The rate, fee, or allocation charge structures may include changes to take effect at specified dates during or beyond the biennium. Other changes may still be needed in the case of emergencies or other unanticipated events.
- In general, the City will strive to pay for general government current operating expenditures with current revenues, but may use fund balance or other resources to meet these expenditures. Revenues and expenditures will be monitored throughout the year.
- In compliance with State law, no City fund whose purpose is restricted by state or local law shall be used for purposes outside of these restrictions.
- Working capital for the General Fund and operating funds should be maintained at sufficient levels so that timing lags between revenues and expenditures are normally covered without any fund incurring negative cash balances for greater than 90 days. Exceptions to this policy are permitted with prior approval by the City Council.