

# Selected Financial Policies

## 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.
- 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

- It is the City's policy that at the beginning of each year, sufficient funds shall be appropriated to the Emergency Subfund so that its balance equals thirty-seven and one-half cents per thousand dollars of assessed value, which is the maximum amount allowed by state law. In November, 2003, the State Supreme Court ruled that the City's practice of having the Light Fund pay for street lighting was unconstitutional and that these costs were the responsibility of the General Fund. The 2004 costs for street lighting are estimated at \$6.2 million. The Council made budget modifications to cover a portion of these costs and addressed the remainder with a temporary loan from the Emergency Subfund. The Mayor and Council agreed to revisit streetlight funding in the first quarter of 2004 in the interest of restoring the Emergency Subfund balance to its maximum allowable amount.
- Tax revenues collected during the closed fiscal year which are in excess of the latest revised estimate of tax revenues for the closed fiscal year shall automatically be deposited to the Revenue Stabilization Account of the Cumulative Reserve Subfund. At no time shall the balance of the Revenue Stabilization Account exceed two and one-half percent of the amount of tax revenues received by the City during the fiscal year prior to the closed fiscal year.

## Other Citywide Policies

- As part of the Adopted budget, the Executive has developed a revenue estimate that is based on the best available economic data and forecasts.
- 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 the State Accountancy Act, no City fund whose purpose is restricted by state or local law shall be used for purposes outside of these restrictions.

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- 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 ninety days. Exceptions to this policy are permitted with prior approval by the City's Director of Finance.