

Budget Policies

Section



BUDGET POLICIES, FINANCIAL STRUCTURE AND BUDGET PROCESS

1. BUDGET POLICIES

The overall goal of the City of Hartford's strategic plan is to establish and maintain effective management of the City's financial resources. The following section outlines the policies used to guide the preparation and management of the City's annual budget. This section contains a summary of policies pertaining to the operating budget, capital budget, expenditures, revenues, financial accounting, cash management/investment and debt.

As part of the annual operating budget process, the City of Hartford will appropriate a General Fund Budget and a Capital Budget.

Operating Budget Policies

Preparation of the City's operating budget is guided by the following policies:

- The General Fund Budget (1001) is adopted by the Court of Common Council and must be balanced each year. Revenues from all sources must equal the sum of budgeted expenditures.
- The City of Hartford maintains a reasonable level of unassigned fund balance to help mitigate any unforeseen expenditures or revenue shortfalls as well as ensuring that adequate cash flow is available to meet the cost of operations. This also contributes to the City maintaining a favorable bond rating.
- Requests for expenditure allocations are considered in conjunction with measurable performance criteria. Expenditures are approved or rejected on the basis of planned levels of performance.
- General Fund revenues and expenditures are projected on a five-year financial forecast.

Capital Improvement Fund Policies

Preparation of the City's capital budget is guided by the following policies:

- A five-year program for infrastructure capital improvements is prepared annually. The plan identifies anticipated funding sources.
- Capital projects are financed through the issuance of bonds, grants, contributions and appropriations from the General Fund, Capital Project Fund and State and Federal revenues.
- The City will coordinate the development of the Capital Improvement Fund budget with the development of the operating budget.
- The City will preserve its assets at a level adequate to protect the capital investment and minimize future maintenance and replacement costs.
- The City will establish the appropriate mix of debt and other financing sources in the funding of capital projects.

Revenue Policies

The City's revenue programs are administered by the Finance Department according to principles that balance the City's need for revenue to maintain current operations of the City and the community's ability to provide the necessary financial resources. The revenue policies that guide the City are outlined below:

- The City will maintain a broad revenue base; that is, diversified revenue sources will be established and maintained in order to distribute the revenue responsibility equitably and protect the City from short-term fluctuations in any one revenue source.
- In order to fulfill funding needs without excessive dependence on property taxes, the City will attempt to enlarge the revenue base by seeking new revenue sources. Efforts will be made to work individually, as well as with statewide groups, to encourage the State of Connecticut to adopt legislation that will enhance local government revenues.
- The City will implement user fees in all areas where feasible and productive, as well as, set fees at levels related to the costs of providing the services. User fees will be reviewed annually as part of the budget process and will be adjusted accordingly to maintain or move incrementally closer to full coverage.
- As deemed appropriate, the City will establish self-supporting enterprise funds where anticipated revenues will offset or exceed projected expenses.
- The City will maintain effective collection systems and implement aggressive enforcement strategies in order to maximize revenues from available sources.

Financial Accounting Policies

In developing and evaluating the City's accounting system, consideration is given to the effective implementation of financial accounting policies, specifically, the adequacy of internal controls. Internal accounting controls are designed to provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance regarding the safeguarding of assets against loss from unauthorized use or disposition, as well as, the reliability of financial records for preparing financial statements and maintenance of accountability for assets.

The Finance Department is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of annual financial statements of the governmental and business type activities, the discretely presented component unit, and each major fund of the City. These financial statements are audited annually by an external accounting firm and conducted in conformance with generally accepted audit standards in the United States of America to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free of material misstatement whether due to fraud or error.

As a recipient of federal and state assistance, the City is also responsible for ensuring that an adequate internal control structure is in place to secure compliance with applicable laws and regulations related to those programs. This internal control structure is subject to periodic evaluation by the internal audit staff as well as by management.

The City also maintains budgetary controls to ensure compliance with legal mandates. The Finance Department, in conjunction with the Office of Management and Budget, monitors expenses and revenues and prepares financial reports for the Mayor and Court of Common Council.

Cash Management/Investment Policies

- **Scope of Policy** - The City's cash management/investment policy covers all City funds except pension funds which are guided by a separate policy adopted by the Pension Commission. Under the City Charter, investment of all City funds, including the pension fund, is the responsibility of the City Treasurer.
- **Policy Objectives** - The primary policy objective is the preservation and safety of principal. Secondary objectives include adequate liquidity to provide cash as needed and rate of return on investments.
- **Allowable Investments** - It is the policy of the City, consistent with state and federal statutes, to limit short-term investments to:
 - United States Treasury Bills, Notes and Bonds
 - Certificates of Deposit
 - State of Connecticut Treasurer's Short-term Investment Fund (STIF)
- **Risk Controls** - To ensure liquidity and reduce market risks, investments have maturity dates at or prior to the time cash is projected to be required to meet disbursement needs.
- **Collateralization** - Collateralization is used to secure Certificates of Deposits and to secure Demand Deposits.

Debt Policies

The following policies on the use of long and short-term debt represent the City's long-standing practice in the field of municipal finance. They are included in the annual Capital Budget and are reinforced by the City Charter and Code:

- General Obligation Bonds are typically issued to finance traditional public improvements.
- Revenue bonds may be used within statutory parameters only to finance those special projects or programs which directly support the City's long-term economic development or for services that are clearly self-supporting and revenue generating.
- The City's overall debt structure, including overlapping debt, should fall well within statutory limits and should decrease as rapidly as is financially feasible.
- Short-term debt may be used to provide interim cash flow, to facilitate the timing of bond sales, to avoid locking in high long-term interest rates during period of market turmoil or to partially finance projects whose final cost is uncertain. It is not to be used to defer the operating budget impact of bonded debt service or to speculate with market rates.
- In planning and structuring each bond sale, balanced consideration should be given to each of the following objectives:
 - a) Providing cash in advance to meet project expenses;
 - b) Spreading debt service increases evenly to minimize the impact on the General Fund;

- c) Minimizing net borrowing costs; and
 - d) Minimizing the impact of debt service payments on annual cash flow.
- Whenever possible, capital costs should be financed by means other than borrowing. In addition to seeking funding from local, state and federal or other sources, the City should also consider utilizing pay-as-you-go methods such as regular contributions from the general fund, build-up of a reserve fund, down payments from operating funds and inclusion of smaller projects in the General Fund.
 - Full disclosure of all material information concerning the City's financial position will be made to the public. Official statements prepared for each bond sale will be prepared in accordance with mandated guidelines and the annual financial report will continue to conform to the highest national standards, to state statutes, and to generally accepted accounting principles and reporting practices.
 - Debt should be evaluated annually to determine the potential benefit of future interest cost savings by refinancing bond issues.

2. FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

The City's accounting system is organized and operated on the basis of funds, each of which is a separate accounting entity. Each fund is accounted for with a set of self-balancing accounts comprised of assets, liabilities, deferred inflows/outflows, fund balance, revenues and expenditures or expenses, as appropriate, other financings sources/uses or non-operating income, as appropriate. Resources are allocated to the individual funds upon the approval of the Court of Common Council for specific purposes. The funds are grouped into three broad categories (Governmental, Proprietary, and Fiduciary), and are classified into 11 types. The fund types are designated as major or non-major funds. The types of funds that the City utilizes are as follows:

Governmental Funds

- **General Fund** - The General Fund is the primary operating fund of the City. It is used to account for all the financial transactions and resources, except those that are required to be accounted for in a separate fund.
- **Special Revenue Funds** - Special Revenue Funds are used to account for revenues restricted or committed to expenditures for specific purposes including:
 - **Miscellaneous Grants Fund** - The fund is comprised of intergovernmental and private grants. This fund includes grants received from the Federal Government, the State of Connecticut, and various non-governmental resources. Also included is the Section 8 Housing Program, which provides housing assistance payments under four grants received from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
 - **Health Grants Fund** - This fund is comprised of intergovernmental and private grants to support healthcare initiatives. The fund is administered by the City's Health Department for community health and clinic services.
 - **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Fund** - The entitlement grant is received from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This Federally funded grant is used for housing and community development activities under

the Community Development Act of 1974. It serves the low and moderate-income residents of Hartford.

- **Home Program Fund** - This grant fund is received from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The fund was established under the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990. The purpose of the Home Program is to expand the supply of decent, affordable housing for low-income families.
- **Debt Service Fund** - The Debt Service Fund is used to account for the payment of principal and interest on the City's general long-term debt.
- **Capital Projects Funds** - Capital Projects Funds are used to account for the planning, acquisition and construction improvements of major capital facilities, except for those accounted for in proprietary fund types
 - **Technology and Vehicle Replacement Funds** - These funds have been established to fund the replacement of the City's vehicle fleet, as it ages, and the City's technology leases.

Proprietary Funds

- **Enterprise Funds** - An Enterprise Fund is used to account for the operations of the Hartford Parking Authority as well as the City golf courses, which are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises where costs are financed or recovered primarily through user charges.
- **Internal Service Fund** - Internal Service Funds account for the financing of goods or services provided by one department to other departments or agencies for the City on a cost reimbursement basis. The City's reported Self Insurance Funds include Employee Health Benefits, Worker's Compensation, and Liability and Property Damage, as well as account for the centralized operations of the Metro Hartford Information Services.

Fiduciary Funds

- **Pension Trust Funds (MERF)** - These funds are derived from employee and employer pension contributions and earnings on investments. These funds account for defined benefit plans which are funded and valued according to standards set by the Pension Commission.
- **Trust and Agency Funds** - These funds account for resources and situations for which the City is acting as a collecting/disbursing agent or as a trustee. These include Expendable Trusts, Non-expendable Trusts, Pension Trusts and Agency Funds.

Basis of Accounting

The City's financial records for the Governmental Funds are maintained on a modified accrual basis, which records revenues in the accounting period in which they become available and measurable. Expenditures are recognized in the accounting period in which the fund liability is incurred, except for general long-term debt which is recognized when due. Unencumbered appropriations in the General Fund lapse at the year-end (but not in the Capital Projects Funds), and outstanding encumbrances are recorded as assigned fund balance, thereby providing authority to complete these transactions.

The full accrual basis of accounting is used for the Proprietary and Fiduciary Funds. Their revenues, including investment earnings, are recognized when earned and their expenses are recognized when incurred.

The Finance Department maintains centralized budgetary control of disbursements and encumbrances against appropriations, by major program of activity and by principal object of expenditure. The Board of Education is controlled only as to total appropriations.

Measurement Focus

The Measurement Focus determines what transactions are recognized in the funds, in contrast to the basis of accounting, which determines when transactions are recognized in the Funds. The Governmental Funds use the current financial resources measurement focus. Under the current financial resources measurement focus, the emphasis is on increases and decreases in spendable resources in the reporting period. Long-term assets and liabilities are not recorded in Governmental Funds.

Funds Using Flow of Current Financial Resources	Funds Using Flow of Economic Resources
General	Enterprise
Special Revenue	Internal Service
Capital	Pension
Debt Service	Investment Trust
Permanent	Private Purpose
	Agency

The economic resource measurement focus measures both current and long-term assets and liabilities and is the measurement focus of commercial businesses. A statement of net position prepared on the economic resource focus reports the balances in fixed assets and liabilities. The accrual basis of accounting is utilized in these situations and has revenue recognized when it is earned and expected to be realized and recognizes expenses when related goods or services are used up.

Basis of Budgeting

The City of Hartford does not distinguish between Basis of Budgeting and Basis of Accounting in most cases. The principles set forth as the Basis of Accounting are strictly observed in the budgeting process. A fund's Basis of Budgeting and Basis of Accounting determine when a transaction or event is recognized within a fund's operating statement. For example, the General Fund Revenue Budget references financial resources when they are measurable and available. Expenses are budgeted when they are expected to be incurred.

Funds and Their Basis of Budgeting & Accounting

Modified Accrual	Full Accrual
General	Enterprise
Special Revenue	Internal Service
Capital	Pension
Debt Service	Investment Trust
Permanent	Private Purpose
	Agency

3. BUDGET PROCESS

The City of Hartford's fiscal year begins July 1st and ends June 30th.

The annual budget is an estimated fiscal plan, which presents the programs and services to be provided to the community. The budget also provides presentations of governmental policy, especially the implementation of policy changes. The Mayor's Strategic Plan, in particular, identifies the City's major goals and objectives and the intended means of achieving them.

- By the third Monday in April, the Mayor must submit to the City Council (Council) a recommended operating budget for the fiscal year commencing the following July 1st. The operating budget includes proposed expenditures and the means of financing them.
- Through direction of the Mayor and the Council, open meetings and public hearings are held to obtain residents' and taxpayers' comments on the recommended budget.
- The Council modifies the budget by resolution (except revenues, debt service, and pension requirements), and then submits the budget as amended to the Mayor for certification.
- The Mayor may approve, reduce, and/or disapprove the Council's budget modifications (resolutions) within 48 hours.
- Upon action by the Mayor, Council has until May 31 to adopt the budget, the Appropriation Ordinance, the Tax Levy Ordinance, the Capital Improvement Plan Ordinance and any other ordinances that may relate to adopting the budget. If it fails to adopt the budget by that date, the budget as adopted in the preceding fiscal year, as adjusted by the amount necessary to meet the funding requirement of the Pension Commission and legally and contractually required increases, as certified by the Finance Director, shall be deemed to be the budget of the City for the ensuing fiscal year and expenditures shall be made in accordance therewith. The Council shall thereupon adopt the appropriation ordinance and the ordinance making a tax levy in accordance with the budget adopted. (Hartford Municipal Code Part 1, Charter of the City of Hartford, CT, Chapter X, Section 5)

Amending the Budget

After the budget has been adopted and the new fiscal year begins, an appropriation may be amended. The Mayor may, at any time, transfer any unencumbered balance or portion thereof, from one classification of expenditures to another within the same department. This is done through the Budget Adjustment process.

- **Budget Adjustment** - In order to move available funds from one account group to another within a department, the head of a department must complete a Budget Adjustment request form. This Budget Adjustment request must be reviewed and recommended by the Director of Management and Budget and then must be approved by the Finance Director who ensures that funds are available. The Mayor has final approval of all expenditure Budget Adjustment requests.
- **Budget Transfers** - At the request of the Mayor, the Council may transfer by resolution any unencumbered appropriation balance or portion thereof from one (1) department, office or agency to another, except that no funds may be transferred from the funds appropriated to the Board of Education.

Supplemental Appropriations - Supplemental appropriations are made on the recommendation of the Mayor upon certification by the Director of Finance that there exists an available general fund cash surplus to meet this appropriation.

**BUDGET PREPARATION CALENDAR
For Fiscal Year 2016**

DATE*	DAY	ACTION
July 1, 2015	Wednesday	Fiscal Year 2016 begins.
October 26, 2015	Monday	Capital Improvement Program Budget guidelines distributed.
November 22, 2015	Friday	Departments submit their Fiscal Years 2016-2020 Capital Improvement Program project proposals.
December 31, 2015	Thursday	Department Heads submit revenue estimates to the Finance Department.
February 16, 2016	Tuesday	Elected and Appointed Officials and Department Heads submit final budget requests to Management and Budget.
March 10, 2016 March 26, 2016	Thursday Saturday	The Mayor and Department Heads hold budget hearings on City Department's budget requests.
April 12, 2016	Tuesday	Board of Education holds public hearing on Fiscal Year 2017 Submitted Budget.
April 18, 2016	Monday	Mayor submits the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2017 Recommended Budget to the Court of Common Council through the Town & City Clerk.
April 27, 2016	Wednesday	Court of Common Council holds public hearings on the Mayor's Recommended Budget no less than seven days and no more than ten days after submission.
May 9, 2016	Monday	Council recesses their regular meeting to reconvene at a time to be determined.
May 12, 2016	Thursday	Council reconvenes to begin budget deliberations.
May 21, 2016	Saturday	The last day for Council to amend the Mayor's Budget for submission back to the Mayor.
May 31, 2016	Tuesday	Last day for the Court of Common Council to adopt the Budget, Appropriation Ordinance and Tax Levy Ordinance. Otherwise the Budget as certified by the Mayor shall be deemed to be the Adopted Budget.
June 30, 2016	Thursday	End of Fiscal Year 2016.

***All dates are subject to change**