

CITY OF MEQUON

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The City of Mequon has adopted by resolution, the following financial policy statements of this document in order to help guide the City's financial management practices and to support the City's efforts to continually work towards meeting the objectives set forth in its mission statement.

The City of Mequon's overall mission is the provision of quality public services and adoption of thoughtful policies that serve to enhance and maintain the unique quality of life of our community.

Through the judicious use of community resources, the City is committed to managing growth, efficiently using tax dollars and making wise investments in our future. Our success depends on our ability to offer quality and value to our taxpayers with the highest standards of accountability, responsiveness, economy and integrity.

These financial policies, and the processes that support them, are further intended to summarize the major goals and objectives which make up the financial framework under which the City operates. These practices are also governed by the applicable Federal and State laws, rules, and regulations, the generally accepted accounting principles and practices as promulgated by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), and by the continuing guidance of the City of Mequon Common Council.

The process overview components of this document have been prepared by staff to provide an outline describing the general processes which are currently being used to help facilitate meeting the broader goals and objectives of the policy statements, and to help ensure that the financial resources of the City are managed in manner consistent with those expectations. They are intended to highlight the significant components of the processes used to achieve these goals and are not intended to be an all inclusive listing of the duties required of staff at the discretion of the City Council.

These policies will be reviewed annually in order to determine if any additional policies may be necessary to fill identified policy gaps, or if any updates are required due to changes in the City's practices. Any recommended changes will be presented to the City Council for their consideration and approval during the budget cycle.

POLICY STATEMENT 1 - BUDGETING

The City Council shall adopt a balanced budget, and authorize the required appropriations, prior to the beginning of each fiscal year. Appropriations are made on a fund level basis.

Process overview:

Budgets requests are prepared by department heads with the assistance of staff under the direction of the City Administrator. The City's budget is prepared for the fiscal year beginning January 1 and ending December 31. The budget is a total financial management plan for city operations.

Prior to September 15th of each year, the City Administrator shall submit a proposed budget for the following fiscal year to the City Council for consideration.

The City Council evaluates and amends the proposed budget at their discretion and then adopts a final balanced budget prior to the beginning of the fiscal year. A balanced budget requires that the proposed budget expenditures shall not exceed the estimated revenues and any applied fund balances.

POLICY STATEMENT 2 - AMENDING THE BUDGET

At the City Council's discretion, it may choose to amend the budget due to unforeseen and changing circumstances. In accordance with Wisconsin Statute Section 65.90(5)(a), amendments to budgeted appropriations must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the City Council.

Process overview:

The City Administrator will be responsible for maintaining a budgetary control system to ensure adherence to the City's adopted budget. Revenue and expenditure projections will also be reviewed by staff, under the direction of the City Administrator, on a quarterly basis.

If such a time occurs that the City Administrator believes that there will be a significant variation of more than 5% of the projected revenues or expenditures from the adopted budgeted amounts, the City Administrator shall inform the City Council so that they may consider whether it is necessary to amend the budget or take any other corrective measures.

Any net surpluses or deficits that may occur as a result of these budget variations will be applied to the appropriate fund balances at the close of the fiscal year.

POLICY STATEMENT 3 - RESERVE REQUIREMENTS

In order for the City to be able to respond to unforeseen situations, as well as to positively impact the investment credit rating of the City, the City will strive to maintain an undesignated General fund balance of not less than ten (10) percent of the current General fund operating budget.

Process overview:

Changes in fund balances occur primarily in one of two ways, either through net surpluses or deficits in the annual operating budgets, or through planned use of the fund balance as part of the annual budgeting process.

To provide the City Council with the information necessary to be able to determine if the General fund balance will be at the targeted level, the City Administrator will present information to the City Council on the current fund balances as a part of the annual budgeting process. Included in this presentation will also be staff's projections on any current year budget surpluses or deficits.

POLICY STATEMENT 4 - REVENUES

The City will seek to maintain a reliable revenue base and will continue to explore ways to diversify its revenue sources, seek full cost recovery for services through user fees when appropriate, and establish cost sharing arrangements with other governmental units in order to try to minimize the reliance on property taxes to support City services.

Process overview:

When preparing forecasts for the annual budget, staff will utilize generally accepted forecasting techniques that include the use of historical data, trend analysis, and considers the impact of changing economic conditions on the City's revenue sources. This approach produces revenue estimates that are as reliable as possible and reduces the likelihood of actual revenues falling short of budget estimates during the year.

Staff is also continuously exploring opportunities to take advantage of alternative funding sources and revenue streams to help offset the costs of providing City services and to reduce the City's reliance on property taxes.

The City has developed a fee schedule that determines the appropriate level fees to charge for those city services which are provided to the benefit of only certain individuals. This fee schedule is designed to estimate the level of fees that would needed to be charged by the City in order to cover the cost of the services provided.

The City also uses an internal chargeback system to recover the costs incurred by the General fund for administrative support and other services or materials provided to areas outside of the General fund.

POLICY STATEMENT 5 - CASH MANAGEMENT / INVESTMENTS

The City shall invest its reserve funds in accordance with all applicable State laws and in a manner that minimizes the risk of loss, provides sufficient liquidity to meet the operational needs to the City, and seeks to maximize the investment returns that are available under these conditions

Process overview:

In order to minimize risk, and to be in compliance with State laws regarding the investment of public funds, the City requires that all investments made on behalf of the City shall be made in compliance with section 66.0603 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. The City also consults with and utilizes professional investment management firms to assist with all institutional investments maintained on behalf the City.

The City Treasurer regularly monitors the returns on the investments of the City, and compares them to the returns of alternative investment options, to ensure that the City is realizing an appropriate level of returns on their investments. These investments are also maintained to ensure that the liquidity of these investments is consistent with the anticipated needs of the City. A performance analysis of the city's investments activities will also be prepared and reported to the City Council on a quarterly basis.

Additionally, the City only uses FDIC insured banking institutions for cash deposits, and requires that these institutions provide the City with a 105% collateralization of all funds on deposit in order to further minimize any risks of loss. Cash balances are monitored daily to ensure that sufficient cash funds are available to meet the ongoing operational needs of the City.

POLICY STATEMENT 6 - EXPENDITURES

To obtain the best, full value use of tax dollars as possible, the City will administer the expenditures of the available resources in an efficient and cost effective manner in order provide the taxpayers with the delivery of highest possible level of quality public services with the resources available.

Process overview:

As part of the budget process, the City Council and staff continually evaluate the service needs of the City and methods of providing those services in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

As part of the capital planning process, the City Council and staff work to develop a comprehensive capital plan in order to be able to effectively maintain the City's capital assets and infrastructure, at sufficient levels to meet ongoing service requirements, as well as to minimize future maintenance and replacement costs.

On an ongoing basis, staff also works to minimize the costs of purchasing materials and providing services while still maintaining quality and performance. This is accomplished through the use of competitive bidding for major City contracts and purchases over fifty thousand dollars, obtaining multiple price quotes and estimates for other non routine purchases, and through cooperative arrangements with various other governmental agencies for the procurement or delivery of various goods and services.

POLICY STATEMENT 7 - CAPITAL PLANNING

To assist in facilitating the long term planning for the capital expenditures and resources that will be necessary to meet the future needs the City, the City Council shall review and adopt a comprehensive 5 year capital plan on an annual basis

Process overview:

Prior to the consideration of the annual operating budgets, the City Council will be presented for their review, a capital improvement plan for all pending or proposed capital projects that may be needed within the next 5 years. This plan is called the 5 year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Under the direction of the City Administrator, proposed projects will be submitted by department heads for consideration and inclusion in the 5 year CIP. This plan will include a detailed description of the project, a timeframe of when the project needs to be completed, an estimate of the project cost and useful life, and any information on proposed funding sources other than property tax revenues.

New - Based on this information staff and the City Council can then prioritize the projects and align the funding requirements of the approved projects over the 5 year period to be in general agreement with the amount of capital funding that the City anticipates will be available during each time period.

The approved projects and funding levels for the following year will then be transferred from the CIP to the capital budget for the next fiscal year unless further modified by the City Council as part of the operations budgeting and appropriations process.

POLICY STATEMENT 8 - LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

To assist the City Council in developing strategies to achieve the long-term financial goals of the City, the City Council shall evaluate on an annual basis, a 5 year financial plan forecasting the financial resources that will be required to support the future operations of the City.

Process overview:

Each year, as part of the budgeting process, staff shall prepare a 5 year financial forecast of the projected revenues and expenditures needed to support the planned future operations of the City.

This forecast will include all known and planned activities included in the Capital Improvement Plan, as well as forecasts for future debt costs, operating costs, and non-property tax revenue estimates. To balance the budget forecasts, the property taxes needed to balance the budget, given the other projected costs and expected revenues, will then be estimated and entered into the forecast.

POLICY STATEMENT 9 - DEBT MANAGEMENT

The City shall only issue bond debt when needed to facilitate meeting the long term capital needs of the City, and not to fund current operations. The issuance of bond debt shall be made under the guidance of an experienced financial consulting firm, and shall not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the statutory debt limits for the City.

Process overview:

Staff maintains an ongoing relationship with a financial consulting firm to assist and advise the City on all of the City's bond debt issues. They will advise the City on matters related to the structuring and issuance of municipal debt, manage the execution of these transactions, and work with the City and bond ratings agencies to try to obtain the best possible credit rating for the City in order to help keep debt costs low.

Staff also regularly monitors the outstanding balance of the debt issued by the City to ensure that the amount of debt outstanding is within the allowable legal limits. The City's debt limit is restricted by Wisconsin State Statutes to no more than 5% of the equalized property value of all taxable property within the jurisdiction.

POLICY STATEMENT 10 - ACCOUNTING, AUDITING, & FINANCIAL REPORTING

The City's accounting and financial reporting systems will be maintained in conformance with the applicable Federal and State laws, rules, and regulations, and the generally accepted accounting principles and practices as promulgated by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB).

Process overview:

On an ongoing basis, staff works to keep apprised of any pending or proposed changes in the accounting standards or other legal requirements that may impact the financial operations or other reporting requirements of the City.

Compliance with these standards is reviewed by undergoing an annual independent financial audit of the City's accounting records, internal controls, and financial statements. The audit also facilitates the issuance of an official Comprehensive Annual Financial Report including an audit opinion, and a management letter presented to the City Council detailing their findings and any recommendations for improvement.

FINANCIAL POLICIES - APPENDIX A

General Budget Calendar	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monitor current year budget / actual revenues and expenditures												
Review prior year budget results												
External audit of prior year financials												
Final Financial reports issued												
Prepare annual update to 5 year capital improvement plan												
Budget requests prepared by department heads												
Review and refine budget requests with City Administrator												
Present preliminary budget to Finance and Personnel committee												
Present budget to the City Council for consideration and adoption												

Supplementary budgeting information:

The City budget includes the six major funds for which appropriations may be made, the General fund, Capital fund, Debt Service fund, Sewer fund, Water Utility fund, and the Library fund. Each of these funds contains their own self balancing set of accounts to in order to separate and track expenditures for these areas. Some of the details of these funds and their purposes are as follows:

THE GENERAL FUND

Included in the General Fund are the annual operating costs of the city. Tax appropriations and other revenue sources for the General Fund are presented for the city as a whole, separately from expenditures, and are not intended to be associated with specific operating departments.

Expenditures for the city are presented by operating departments, which can be organized into five functional areas; General Government, Public Safety, Public Works, Community Enrichment, and Community Development.

The General Government group includes the following city departments: Common Council, Mayor, City Administrator, City Clerk, Elections, Information Systems, Finance, City Assessor, Human Resources, and Legal Services.

The Public Safety group includes the following city departments: Police, Fire, Communications, Police Reserve, Ambulance, Building Inspections, and Health Administration.

The Public Works group includes the following city departments: Engineering, Highway, Building Maintenance, Vehicle Maintenance, and Recycling.

The Community Enrichment group includes the following city departments: Swimming Pool, and Park Maintenance and Development.

The Community Development group includes the city's department of Community Development.

Additionally, each departments expenditures are also further divided into the following five main categories; Salaries, Fringe Benefits, Materials & Supplies, Purchased Services, and Equipment.

Appropriations in the general fund lapse at year end to the fund balance unless specifically authorized by the City Council to be otherwise transferred.

THE CAPITAL PROJECT FUND

The Capital Project Fund section of the budget lists the specific capital projects that resources are being allocated to in the upcoming fiscal year, and the amount of funds allocated to each project.

Capital assets are generally defined as assets that have an initial cost of more than \$5,000 and having an estimated useful life in excess of one year following the date of acquisition. Expenditures that do not meet these requirements will be funded out of the departmental operating budgets in the general fund.

Appropriations in the Capital Projects Fund are placed directly into non-lapsing sinking fund accounts for each project in order to facilitate the appropriate tracking of expenditures and the ability to buildup sufficient funds over a multi-year period to fund major capital expenditures.

The City's use of sinking funds for large capital expenditures is also a means of reducing the variability of appropriations needed to fund these expenditures in any one fiscal period. This approach is used by the City for most major vehicle or other equipment replacement needs.

The balances in these accounts are for specific projects approved by the Common Council and are carried forward until either the project has been completed or, with the approval of the Common Council, the balances are transferred to meet other needs.

THE DEBT SERVICE FUND

The Debt Service fund is used to account for the payments of principle, interest and other servicing costs for the long-term debt of the city.

The City uses General Obligation debt only to finance the cost of major capital assets or projects and not for the normal annual operating expenditures of the government. The final maturity of bonds and notes should generally not exceed 20 years or the expected useful life of the underlying project for which they were issued.

The City's debt limit is restricted by Wisconsin State Statutes to no more than 5% of the equalized property value of all taxable property within the jurisdiction.

THE SEWER UTILITY FUND

The Sewer Utility fund is an enterprise fund established to account for the operations of the City's sewer utility. Enterprise funds are used for major governmental activities which function as separate business type units.

The operations budget of the sewer utility is funded entirely by user fees. The City has, however, made a decision to make appropriations for the Sewer utility to pay for both the annual capital charges from the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD); and also the ongoing debt service payments which resulted from the settlement of the litigation between the City of Mequon and the MMSD in the late 1990's. This decision is based on the premises that since these charges are based upon property valuations, so should the fees / taxes used to pay for them.

THE WATER UTILITY FUND

The Water Utility fund is an enterprise fund established for the operations of the City's water utility. Enterprise funds are used for major governmental activities which function as separate business type units. The operations budget of the water utility is funded entirely by user fees.

THE LIBRARY FUND

The Library fund has been established to account for the operations of the Mequon / Thiensville Library. Appropriations to this fund are based upon the State of Wisconsin's legally prescribed minimum funding requirements of continuing Library operations necessary in order for Mequon residents to avoid being subject to a County Federated Library Tax..

Basis of Budgeting

The basis of budgeting refers to the point in time at which revenues and expenditures are recognized in the accounts and reported in the financial statements. The basis of budgeting for all funds, except for the sewer and water funds, is the modified accrual basis. The sewer and water fund budgets use an accrual method of accounting. These are the same methods used in the City's audited financial statements.

Under the accrual basis of accounting, all revenues are recognized in the period in which they were earned and all expenditures are recognized in the period they were incurred.

Under the modified accrual basis of accounting, revenues are recorded when susceptible to accrual, i.e., both measurable and available. Available means collectable within the current period or soon enough thereafter to be used to pay the liabilities of the current period.

Property taxes are recorded in the year levied as receivable and deferred revenues. They are recognized as revenues in the succeeding year when the services financed by the levy are being provided. Intergovernmental aids and grants are recognized as revenues in the period the related expenditures are incurred, if applicable, or when the City is entitled to the aids.

Special assessments are recorded as revenues when collected. Any annual installments due in future years are reflected as receivables and deferred revenues. Other general revenues such as fines, fees, and permits are recognized when the underlying transaction has occurred and the payment is expected to be received under the available criteria described above.