

Financial Management Principles

PART 1: GENERAL

To protect the town's financial stability, to ensure the availability of adequate financial resources in times of emergency, to capitalize on high bond ratings (and thus low interest rates), it is essential that policies regarding the town's financial management be adopted and adhered to in the preparation and implementation of the town's operating and capital budgets. These policies shall be reviewed no less than annually and may be, but are not required to be, revised as a result.

PART 2: PRINCIPLES

Reserves: Use and Recommended Balances

- The Town shall appropriate reserve funds in accordance with M.G.L. C40 Section 6 for extraordinary and unforeseen expenditures. The reserve amount may not exceed three per cent of the tax levy for the fiscal year. No direct drafts against this fund shall be made, but transfers from the fund may from time-to-time be voted by the Finance Committee and the Town Comptroller shall make such transfers accordingly. The Board of Selectmen, in the case of the Water/Sewer Enterprise Fund vote transfers from the water/sewer reserve fund and the Town Comptroller makes such transfers accordingly.
- Reserves and one-time revenues should be used only for capital or other non-recurring expenses, except as noted below.
- The Town will strive to maintain unappropriated free cash at a minimum of 1% of revenues, and unappropriated free cash should never be less than ½ % of revenues.
- Encumbrances shall be reviewed annually and released as deemed appropriate by the Town Administration.

Stabilization Funds:

- The Town will maintain a diversified series of permanent reserves in the form of stabilization funds. These stabilization funds will consist of six types:
 1. A General Stabilization Fund should be maintained for the purpose of unforeseen and catastrophic emergencies. It should, at a minimum, be at a level equal to 2% of revenues, with the target being 5% of revenues. This fund was adopted in accordance with M.G.L. C40, Section 5B at the Annual Town Meeting in 1961.
 2. An Operational Stabilization Fund should be maintained for the purpose of augmenting operations in case of sustained economic downturn and associated loss of revenues in support of operations. Sustained economic downturn will be any situation whereby State Aid and/or local receipts are significantly reduced from one-year to the next. ("Significantly" being defined as more than 5% of the total for the respective revenue category.) The target amount of money in the Operational Stabilization Fund should be sufficient to sustain operations through a three-year period of economic downturn. This shall be equivalent to 10% of State Aid Revenues and 5% of Estimated Receipts cumulative for a three-year period. This fund was adopted in accordance with M.G.L. C40, Section 5B at the 2011 Spring Annual Town Meeting.
 3. A Capital Stabilization Fund should be maintained for the purpose of funding any capital related project, or pieces of capital equipment, or debt-service payment related thereto. It shall be funded primarily through local option taxes though other funding sources as may be available from time to time are not precluded. This fund was adopted in accordance with M.G.L. C40, Section 5B at the 2010 Fall Annual Town Meeting.
 4. An Inflow & Infiltration Stabilization Fund should be maintained for the purpose of funding repairs to and replacement of sewer lines to reduce inflow and infiltration into the Town's sewer system. It can also be used to pay debt service related to this purpose. Sewer connection fees will be the primary source of funding although other funding sources as may be available from time to time are not precluded. This fund was adopted in accordance with M.G.L. C40, Section 5B at the 2014 Spring Annual Town Meeting.
 5. A One-to-One Technology Stabilization Fund should be maintained for the purpose of funding the one-to-one technology program for Natick High School Students. This fund was adopted in accordance with M.G.L. C40, Section 5B at the 2014 Spring Annual Town Meeting.
 6. A FAR Bonus Stabilization Fund should be maintained for the purpose of the creation of additional open space and public parks. More specifically, FAR Bonus monies are to be used for "Open Space Public

Benefit Amenities” which are defined as either parks or excess pervious landscaping available for the active or passive recreation, or leisure use, by the public. This fund was adopted in accordance with M. G.L. C40, Section 5B at the 2015 Fall Annual Town Meeting.

- Stabilization Funds should be enhanced whenever possible in order to meet and/or maintain the desired target levels.

Capital Planning and Budgeting

- A 5-Year capital plan should be developed and updated annually, per Section 5-7 of the Town’s Charter.
- Funding for capital projects shall be timed to maximize efficiency, cost-effectiveness and return on investment
- A minimum of 6-7% of net general fund revenues (i.e. within-levy) should be set aside annually to fund capital needs, inclusive of cash appropriations and the subject year’s debt budget. Not included in this target are those capital improvements and equipment purchases funded through Debt Exclusions, Enterprise Funds, Intergovernmental Funds, Grants, Mitigation Funds, Chapter 90 Funds, etc. This goal should be revisited regularly to ensure that the Town is investing adequately in its capital needs.
- All capital needs of all Town Departments, including the School Department shall be included within the capital plan.
- Credit rating agency guidelines recommend that a town maintain a general fund debt service payment burden ratio, as a percentage of available revenue or expenditures, between 8% and 12%. The Town shall strive to maintain its burden ratio below 10%. Affordability analysis as determined by this measure will be undertaken prior to General Fund debt being authorized by Town Meeting.

Debt Issuance and Management

- Capital projects should be carefully scheduled and monitored to minimize borrowing costs while optimizing investment opportunities.
- Large capital projects, generally costing over \$1 million and having a useful life of ten years or more, are typically funded with debt to spread the cost out over many years.
- The Town will strive to issue debt on a level principal payment basis in order to reduce the total amount of interest that is paid on the issuance.
- Refinancing existing debt to reduce interest rates and costs will be reviewed annually.
- Projects with balances remaining after project completion shall be reviewed annually and excess balances shall be closed to free cash or appropriated for other projects of similar nature.
- Authorized unissued debt remaining after a capital project has been completed shall be presented to Town Meeting for rescission.

Financial Planning and Forecasting

- Revenue estimates should be realistic, yet conservative, to minimize the potential of shortfalls in the subsequent year’s operating budgets and corresponding impacts on free cash.
- Three year revenue and expenditure forecasts should be reviewed and updated no less than annually.

Cash/Investments Management

- Fees and charges will be reviewed regularly to ensure that – where appropriate – they cover direct and indirect costs associated with the related service and/or that they fulfill a policy objective or other purpose of the Town.
- The Town’s Investment Policy shall be reviewed annually by Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator.
- The Treasurer shall report the cash and investments balances of the Town, as of June 30 each year, to the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator and provide a report of the safety, liquidity, investment earnings and the amount of insurance/collateralization for all funds.

Retirement System Funding

- The Town will use an actuarially accepted method of funding its pension system to achieve a fully-funded position. The Town’s contribution to employee retirement costs will be adjusted annually as necessary to maintain the funding schedule. If the Town reaches its actuarial-required contribution (defined as Town and employee contributions that when expressed as a percent of annual covered payroll are sufficient to accumulate assets to pay benefits when due), the Town may reduce its contribution provided that the amount reduced from the

annual actuarial requirement will only be used to fund other unfunded liabilities (i.e. OPEB liability), for one-time, non-recurring expenses, and/or to enhance the Town's Stabilization Funds in order to provide the ability to increase contributions as may be required by future market conditions.

Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Funding

- The Town will develop an actuarially accepted method of funding its Other Post-Employment Benefits to achieve a fully-funded position. The Town will strive to get its contributions to the level required by such a plan. The Town's contribution to Other Post-Employment Benefit costs will be funded into the OPEB Trust Fund established for this purpose using one-time funds (free cash) or annual appropriation in the future. After funding the Capital Stabilization Fund at the Fall Annual Town Meeting with free cash, in the amount of the local options taxes collected during the previous fiscal year, the Town should appropriate at least 10% of the remaining free cash to the OPEB Trust Fund at the Fall Annual Town Meeting prior to appropriating any other amounts from free cash for any other purpose. If the Town reaches its actuarial-required contribution (defined as Town and employee contributions that when expressed as a percent of annual covered payroll are sufficient to accumulate assets to pay benefits when due), the Town may reduce its contribution provided that the amount reduced from the annual actuarial requirement will only be used to fund other unfunded liabilities, for one-time, non-recurring expenses, and/or to enhance the Town's Stabilization Funds in order to provide the ability to increase contributions as may be required by future market conditions.

*Adopted by the Board of Selectmen, March 2011
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