

UNDERSTANDING BUDGET

THE BUDGET PROCESS

The City of Richmond utilizes a biennial financial plan that encompasses a two-year period with the first year being the even numbered year. The annual fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30. While the City Council approves a biennial budget, the adopted appropriation covers only one year of the biennium. The biennial financial plan included in this document is for July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012 (FY 2012) and July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013 (FY 2013).

The policies that govern the City of Richmond budget process are derived from Chapter 6 (Budgets) of the City Charter as amended through 2006 along with the Code of Virginia Chapter 25 – Budgets, Audits and Reports. The Following provides an overview of the City's budget process.

BUDGET FORMULATION

The annual budget process commences in the late summer/early fall, closely following the implementation of the current year's adopted budget, and continues through the final budget adoption in May. The budget calendar is the first step in the development process. It establishes the timelines for the budget formulation process, including dates for submission of focus area initiatives, agency expenditure requests and revenue estimate submissions, budget work sessions, and public hearings that will lead to final adoption of the budget.

The budget process is designed to incorporate a rigorous internal review of each agency's budget and to allocate resources across focus area initiatives and agency programs based on a thorough examination of program alternatives and justifications. Each initiative and program is reviewed by the City's budget staff, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Mayor, and the City Council.

On the date fixed by City Council, the Mayor submits a proposed biennial operating budget, or amendments to the existing, approved biennial plan for the fiscal year commencing July 1 to the City Council. The budget, delineated by fund, includes proposed expenditures and the revenue sources needed to finance them.

Following budget submission by the Mayor and public hearings held by City Council, the budget may be amended by Council within the limitations prescribed in the Charter. The budget is adopted by Council no later than May 31 and becomes effective on July 1.

Appropriations for the General, Public Schools, Internal Service Funds, and Enterprise Funds lapse at fiscal year end, except appropriations that have been encumbered in order to account for certain expenditure commitments. Appropriations for Capital Project Funds and Special Revenue Funds are continued until the completion of the applicable project or grant, even when the project or grant extends beyond the end of the fiscal year.

BALANCED BUDGET REQUIREMENT

For any fund, the total of proposed expenditures shall not exceed the total of estimated revenue plus carried forward fund balance. The same requirement applies to the budget adopted by City Council.

BASIS OF BUDGETING AND ACCOUNTING

A budget is a formal document that enables the City to plan for the future, measure the performance of City services, and help the public to understand where revenues come from and how they are spent on City services. The budget serves many purposes and addresses different needs depending on the “audience,” including City residents, federal and state regulatory authorities, elected officials, other local governments, taxpayers and City staff.

BASIS OF BUDGETING

Budgets are generally adopted on a basis consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and in accordance with legal mandates. Adopted budgets for governmental funds utilize the modified accrual basis of accounting under which revenue and related assets are recorded when measurable and available to finance operations during the year. Fiduciary and proprietary funds use the full accrual basis of accounting which recognizes revenue when earned and expenses when incurred.

Annual operating budgets are adopted for all Governmental Funds except for the Capital Projects Fund in which effective budgetary control is achieved on a project-by-project basis when funding sources become available. Appropriations for the General, Public Schools, Internal Service Funds, and Enterprise Funds lapse at fiscal year end, except appropriations that have been encumbered in order to account for certain expenditure commitments. Appropriations for Capital Project Funds and Special Revenue Funds are continued until the completion of the applicable project or grant, even when the project or grant extends beyond the end of the fiscal year.

BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

The City of Richmond uses either the full accrual or the modified accrual basis of accounting, as appropriate for each fund type or activity, in accordance with GAAP.

In general, under the modified accrual basis of accounting, revenues are considered available only if the monies will be received within 60 days after the end of the accounting period and were due on or before the last day of the accounting period. Expenditures are generally recognized under the modified accrual basis of accounting when the related fund liability is incurred. An exception to this general rule is principal and interest on general long-term debt which is recorded when due.

In applying the full accrual concept to revenues, the legal and contractual requirements of the individual programs are used as guidance. Certain revenue must be expended for a specific purpose and others are virtually unrestricted as to purpose of expenditure.

Under the full accrual basis of accounting, revenues are recorded when earned and expenses are recorded when liabilities are incurred, without regard to receipts or disbursements of cash. Unbilled accounts receivable are accrued when earned in the Enterprise Funds.

In most cases the basis of accounting conforms to how the City prepares its budget. Exceptions are as follows:

- Compensated absences are recorded as earned by employees (GAAP), as opposed to being expended when paid (Budget);
- Principal payments on long-term debt within the Proprietary Funds reduce the amount of debt remaining on a GAAP basis, as opposed to being expended on a Budget basis; and
- Capital outlay within the Proprietary Funds is recorded as assets on a GAAP basis and expended on a Budget basis.

FUND STRUCTURE

The City's governmental functions and accounting system are organized, controlled and operated on a fund basis. A fund is a grouping of related accounts used to maintain control over resources that have been segregated for specific activities or objects. Each fund is considered a separate accounting entity, with operations accounted for in a separate set of self-balancing accounts that are comprised of assets, liabilities, fund equity, revenue, and expenditures or expenses, as appropriate. The City's funds can be divided into three categories: governmental funds, proprietary funds, and fiduciary funds.

GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS

Governmental funds consist of the General Fund, Debt Service Fund, Capital Projects Fund, and Special Revenue Funds. Most governmental functions of the City are financed through these funds. The modified accrual basis of budgeting is used for all governmental funds.

General Fund – The General Fund is the City's primary operating fund. It is used to account for all revenue sources and expenditures which are not required to be accounted for in other funds. Revenues are derived primarily from real estate and personal property taxes as well as other local taxes, federal and state distributions, licenses, permits and fees, fines and forfeitures, and charges for goods and services. (See Glossary of Terms for definition of revenue terms).

Debt Service Fund – The Debt Service Fund accounts for the accumulation of financial resources for the payment of interest and principal on all governmental fund long-term debt, costs related to debt issuance, and other related costs on outstanding bonds and notes.

Capital Projects Fund – The Capital Projects Fund accounts for financial resources to be used for the acquisition, construction or renovation of capital facilities, or other equipment, that ultimately become City fixed assets.

Special Revenue Funds – These funds are used to account for the proceeds of specific revenue sources (other than expendable trusts or major capital projects) that are legally restricted to expenditures for specified purposes. Special revenue funds include, but are not limited to, federal reimbursements, grants, and donations designated for a specific purpose.

PROPRIETARY FUNDS

Proprietary Funds consist of enterprise funds and internal service funds. These funds account for city activities that operate similarly to private sector businesses. Consequently, these funds measure net income, financial position, and changes in financial position. All assets, liabilities, equities, revenue, expenditures, and transfers related to the City's business and quasi-business activities are accounted for through proprietary funds. The full accrual basis of accounting is used for all Proprietary Funds.

Enterprise Funds – These funds are used to account for the operations (a) that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises where the intent of the governing body is that costs (expenses, including depreciation) of providing goods or services to the general public on a continuing basis be financed or recovered primarily through user charges; or (b) where periodic determination of revenue earned, expenses incurred, and/or net income is deemed appropriated for capital maintenance, public policy, management control, accountability, or other purposes. Example: Public Utilities

Internal Service Funds – These funds are used for the financing of goods or services provided by one city department or agency to other departments or agencies, or to other governments, on a cost-reimbursement basis. Example: Fleet Management

FIDUCIARY FUNDS

Fiduciary funds are used to account for assets held by the City in a trustee capacity or as an agent for individuals, private organizations, other governments, and other funds. The City's fiduciary funds include: the City's Retirement System Trust Fund; and Agency Funds which are custodial in nature and do not present results of operations or have a measurement focus.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Financial policies and practices promote financial integrity and are an important priority in the City of Richmond. Improvement of financial policies and practices has been a key initiative within the Well-Managed Government focus area. The following financial policies, practices and guidelines establish the framework for the City's overall fiscal planning and management. These broad policies set forth guidelines against which current budgetary performance can be measured and proposals for future programs can be evaluated. The policies and practices help to protect the fiscal integrity of the City, and ensure that the City is poised for future growth.

BALANCED BUDGET

The City's budgetary policies are based upon guidelines and restrictions established by the State Code, the City Charter and Code, and generally accepted accounting principles for governmental entities. These provisions set forth the City's fiscal year, tax year, public hearing and advertising requirements, and restrictions on taxation. Included in these guidelines and restrictions is the requirement that the City must maintain a balanced budget. The budget is considered balanced if estimated revenues and resources meet planned expenditures.

The City prepares and approves a biennial budget. Annually, the City must adopt and execute a budget for such funds as is required in the guidelines and restrictions discussed above. The budget controls the levy of taxes and the expenditure of money for all City purposes during the ensuing fiscal year.

REVENUE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Multi-year revenue and expenditure forecasts for all City funds will be included as a part of the Adopted Budget. The City will attempt to maintain a stable but diversified revenue base as a means of sheltering it from fluctuations in the economy.

While revenue and expenditures are monitored continually, a report is compiled quarterly that depicts current year trends, receipts and explains any unanticipated revenue variances.

Fund Balance – The City does not intend to use General Fund equity (Rainy Day/Unassigned Fund Balance) to finance current operations. The City's General Fund equity balance has been built over the years to provide the City with sufficient working capital to enable it to finance unforeseen emergencies without borrowing. To conserve General Fund equity and to avoid reliance on this balance, the City will not finance operations from the General Fund equity balance.

Status: *The City has not used General Fund equity to finance current operations.*

Revenue or Tax Anticipation Notes – The City does not intend to issue revenue or tax anticipation notes to fund government operations. The City intends to manage cash in a fashion that will prevent any borrowing to meet working capital needs. Short-term borrowing for this purpose was eliminated with the advent of twice-per-year real estate billing in January 2011.

Status: *No revenue or tax anticipation notes have been issued to fund government operations.*

Bond Anticipation Notes – The City does not intend to issue Bond Anticipation Notes (BANS) for a period of longer than two years. If the City issues a bond anticipation note for a capital project, the BAN will be converted to a long-term bond or redeemed at its expiration.

Status: *No Bond Anticipation Notes have been issued for periods longer than two years.*

Fees and Charges – All fees established by the City of Richmond for licenses, permits, fines, services, applications and other miscellaneous charges shall be set out to recover all or a portion of the City's expense in providing the attendant service.

Status: *The City has established fees that recover all or a portion of the City's expense.*

Restricted Revenue – Restricted revenue (such as Comprehensive Services Act funds, Asset Forfeiture funds, or Reserve Fund for Permanent Public Improvements (RFPPI)) will only be used for the purpose intended and in a fiscally responsible manner.

Status: *Categorical or restricted revenue is only used for the explicit purpose for which it is received or for which it was implemented.*

Revenue Collection – The City will strive to achieve an overall real property tax collection rate of 95.5 percent and a personal property tax collection rate of 87.1 percent. In addition, the City is enhancing its delinquent tax collections.

Status: *The City has implemented procedures and processes to collect tax revenue to achieve these tax collection rates. In FY 2010, the City collected 95.0 percent of real estate and 85.1 percent of personal property tax – the highest collection rates in four years.*

Structurally Balanced Budget – The City will strive to achieve a structurally balanced budget in which one-time revenue and/or one-time expenditure savings will be used for non-recurring or one-time expenditures.

Status: *The budget is structurally balanced. One-time revenues are matched with one-time expenditures.*

OPERATING BUDGET POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Unassigned (Undesignated) Fund Balance – The City will maintain a Rainy Day/Unassigned fund balance equal to at least seven percent (7%) of the budgeted General Fund expenditures. The purpose of this fund balance is to help mitigate current and future risks and to provide for temporary funding in the event that the City experiences an unusual, unanticipated and otherwise insurmountable hardship.

Status: *The undesignated fund balance, as of June 30, 2010, was 9.4 percent of budgeted general fund expenditures. With the implementation of GASB 54, the Rainy Day/Unassigned fund balance at June 30, 2010 would be restated to 8.3 percent.*

Revenue Stabilization Fund – The City will strive to build and maintain a revenue stabilization fund, totaling at least ten million dollars (\$10 million), for the purpose of mitigating current and future risks of unforeseen economic events, such as significant reductions in local and/or state revenue collections, or to respond immediately to significant one-time events, such as a blizzard or hurricane.

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Status: *The revenue stabilization reserve fund was initially established in September 2010 with a beginning balance of \$2 million. No appropriations from the fund have been made.*

Reserve	Purpose	Goal	FY 2012 Projected
Rainy Day/Unassigned (undesignated) General Fund Balance	Practices of a well managed government recommend the accumulation of unassigned fund to mitigate current and future risks and to prove for temporary funding of unforeseen emergency or catastrophic needs.	Post GASB 54 implementation, a Rainy Day/Unassigned fund balance of 8.0% will be maintained	\$52,400,000
Revenue Stabilization Reserve Fund	Reserve to abate the impact of short-term economic downturns, or other economic events, on the overall budget. This fund is intended to be used as needed.		\$2,000,000

Structurally Balanced – The City will strive to match current General Fund revenue with current expenditures so that ongoing operating costs are supported by ongoing, stable revenue.

Status: *Estimated general fund revenue for the biennium matches estimated general fund operating expenditures. Fund balances have not been used to support ongoing operations.*

Revenue and Expenditure Projections – The City will strive to prepare a five-year forecast annually in order to improve financial planning and decisions, and to assist in the preparation of the biennial budget or the biennial budget amendment.

Status: *The five-year forecast was first utilized during FY 2010. This practice was continued in FY 2011.*

Budgetary Surplus – The City will adopt a budget in which ongoing operating costs are supported by ongoing, stable revenue. The revenue and expenditure projections utilized in adopting the annual financial plan are estimates that will be strictly monitored. The Commonwealth of Virginia sets the benchmark goal of projected budget variance at 2 percent. It is the goal of the City to meet the Commonwealth’s benchmark.

Status: *Expenditure and revenue projections are developed and reviewed quarterly. Any necessary adjustments are brought before the City Council throughout the year.*

CAPITAL BUDGET POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Capital Improvement Program Preparation – The City will prepare a five-year capital improvement program in accordance with Section 6.19 of the Richmond City Charter. In addition to the guidance set forth by the City charter, the City uses several guiding principles and best practices to develop and manage the Capital Improvement Program. These principles are utilized to promote capital infrastructure that support the City’s vision and priorities by establishing a five-year capital implementation program.

Status: *Each year the City prepares and the City Council adopts a five-year Capital Improvement Program. The FY 2012 five-year program incorporates the goals and initiatives set forth in the City’s Focus Areas.*

Pay-As-You-Go Capital Improvement Funding – The City will strive to fund a portion of capital improvements with sources of financing that do not increase the City’s debt liability.

Status: *The City currently utilizes grants, state and federal funds, and cash, amongst other sources, to fund the capital budget. The FY 2012 adopted capital budget includes a direct cash contribution from the General Fund totaling \$5.4 million. An additional planned cash contribution is included in FY 2013.*

Debt Policies – It is the policy of the City that General Fund supported debt will be limited by any one of the following:

Debt Policy	Limitation	Status
Debt service, as a percent of the general fund budget, will not exceed 10 percent	10%	Met
Per capita General Fund supported debt general obligation debt, as a percent of per capita income, will not exceed 7 percent	7%	Met
General obligation debt, as a percent of the value of taxable real estate, will not exceed 7.5 percent (this Policy will be 5.0 percent beginning in FY 2012)	7.5%	Met

In addition to the policies listed above, debt will also be limited by the following:

- To the extent the limitations above are not exceeded, General Obligation debt may be used for enterprise fund capital projects in lieu of revenue bonds within the additional limitations that: coverage must be maintained, and provisions of capitalized interest will be met as though the bond held parity with outstanding revenue bonds; and
- The City will issue general fund supported debt with an average life that is consistent with the useful life of the project with a maximum maturity of 30 years.

Status: *The City’s adopted and planned capital improvement program is in compliance with all measures limiting the City’s General Fund supported debt.*

In line with best practices and benchmarks set by Triple-A rated counties and cities, the City continues to evaluate existing debt policies, presenting revisions when and where appropriate

and as need dictates. The following outlines the revisions included in the FY 2012 – FY 2016 Adopted Plan.

First, the City's Rainy Day/Unassigned fund balance is incorporated into the calculation of the ten percent debt capacity. Other localities use a broader budget definition – general government – to calculate their debt capacity, not just their general fund. Next, the current 7.5 percent total taxable real estate value measure will be reduced to 5 percent while the 7 percent per capita measure will remain unchanged. Lastly, the City will utilize a combination of 30-year, 25-year, and 20-year general obligation bonds to finance its CIP.

The proposed debt utilized in funding the FY 2012 – FY 2016 Capital Improvement Program is within each of the limitations described above.

CASH MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT POLICES AND PRACTICES

Cash Management and Investment – The City will invest public funds in a manner that places safety of the principal of the City's public investment as the highest priority. Secondary to safety is the maintenance of liquidity of the investment and optimization of the rate of return. Funds invested by the City are investment in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Investment of Public Funds Act, Chapter 45, Title 2.2, Sections 2.2-4500 through 2.2-4518 and the Virginia Security for Public Deposits Act, Chapter 44, Title 2.2, Sections 2.2-4400 through 2.2-4411.

Status: *The City is in compliance with all aspects of the cash management and investment policy.*

INTER-FUND POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Inter-Fund Transfers and Reimbursements - The General Fund will be reimbursed annually by the Enterprise and Internal Service Funds for general and administrative services provided, such as self-insurance, accounting, personnel, and administration.

Status: *The City's balanced General Fund budget includes the payment to and from funds in compliance with the practice described above.*