City of Euless
Fiscal Policies
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CITY OF EULESS
FISCAL POLICIES

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CITY OF EULESS
FISCAL POLICIES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose Statement – The City of Euless has an important responsibility to its citizens to carefully account for public funds, to manage municipal finances wisely, and to plan for the adequate funding of services desired by the public.

The overriding goal of the Fiscal Policies is to enable the City to achieve a long-term stable and positive financial condition. The watchwords of the City's fiscal management include integrity, prudent stewardship, planning, accountability, and full disclosure.

The purpose of the Fiscal Policies is to provide guidelines for the Director of Finance in planning and directing the City's day to day financial affairs and in developing recommendations to the City Manager and City Council. The scope of the policies spans accounting, auditing, financial reporting, internal controls, operating and capital budgeting, revenue management, cash management, expenditure control, and debt management.

B. Annual Review of Policies – These policies will be reviewed administratively by the Finance Director and City Manager and will be presented to the City Council for approval of any significant changes.

II. ACCOUNTING, AUDITING, AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

A. Accounting – The Director of Finance is the City's Chief Accountant and is responsible for establishing the chart of accounts and for properly recording financial transactions.

B. Accounts Receivable – This asset account reflects amounts owed to the City from citizens, companies, or other governmental entities. Delinquent accounts will be pursued.

C. External Auditing

1. The City will be audited annually by outside independent accountants (auditors). The auditors must be a CPA firm of national reputation and must demonstrate that they have the breadth and depth of staff to conduct the City's audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and contractual requirements. The auditor's report on the City's financial statements will be completed and submitted to City staff within 120 days of the City's fiscal year end, and the auditor's management letter will be presented to the City staff accordingly. An interim management letter will be issued prior to this date if any materially significant internal control weaknesses are discovered.

2. The Auditors are accountable to the City Council and will have access to direct communication with the City Council if the City staff is unresponsive to auditor recommendations or if the auditors consider such communication necessary to fulfill their legal and professional responsibilities.

3. Auditor Rotation – The City will not require auditor rotation, but will circulate requests for proposal for audit services at least every five years.

D. Internal Auditing – The City recognizes the need for an internal audit function to provide independent, unbiased and objective reviews and assessments of the business activities, operations, financial systems and internal accounting controls of the City and some of its business partners. The reviews and assessments are conducted in order to instill confidence to citizens and stakeholders that resources are responsibly and effectively managed in order to achieve intended results. The City shall devote resources, as available, to conduct operational, financial and performance audits, selected as a result of risk analysis and assessment process. The internal audit function will report directly to the City Manager's Office.

E. External Financial Reporting – The City will prepare and publish a comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). The CAFR will be prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and will be presented annually to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for evaluation and awarding of the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

The CAFR will be published and presented to the City Council within 150 days after the end of the fiscal year. City staffing limitations may preclude such timely reporting. In such case, the Finance Director will inform the City Manager and the City Manager will inform the City Council of the delay and the reasons therefore.

F. Internal Financial Reporting – The Finance Department will prepare internal financial reports sufficient for management to plan, monitor, and control the City's financial affairs. Internal financial reporting objectives are addressed throughout the policies.

III. INTERNAL CONTROLS

A. Objective – To provide management with reasonable assurance that assets are safeguarded against loss from unauthorized use or disposition. At all times the City of Euless shall maintain an environment conducive to good internal controls.

B. Written Procedures – The Finance Director is responsible for developing Citywide written guidelines on accounting, cash handling, and other financial matters which will be approved by the City Manager. The Finance Department will assist Department Managers as needed in tailoring these guidelines into detailed written procedures to fit each department's specific requirements.

C. Department Managers Responsible – Each Department Manager is responsible to ensure that good internal controls are followed throughout his or her department, that all Finance Department guidelines on accounting and internal controls are implemented, and that all independent auditor internal control recommendations are addressed.

IV. OPERATING BUDGET

A. Preparation – The City's "operating budget" is the City's annual financial operating plan. It comprises governmental and proprietary funds, including the General Obligation Debt Service Fund. The budget is prepared by the Finance Director or appointee with the cooperation of all City Departments, and is submitted to the City Manager who makes any necessary changes and transmits the document to the City Council. The operating budget will be submitted to the GFOA annually for evaluation and awarding of the Award for Distinguished Budget Presentation.

B. Balanced Budget – The operating budget will be balanced, with current revenues, exclusive of beginning resources, greater than or equal to current expenditures/expenses.

C. Adoption Process – Pursuant to City Charter Article VII Section 5, a budget will be presented by the City Manager to the City Council, and to the public through the Euless Public Library, by August 1, and after public hearings the City Council shall adopt, with any changes, at least ten days prior to beginning of the new fiscal year by a majority vote.

D. Amendment Process – According to Section 8 of the same article, amendments may be made by ordinance as necessary.

E. Planning – The budget process will be coordinated so as to identify major policy issues for the City Council consideration several months prior to the budget approval date so that proper decision analysis can be made. Periodic financial reports will be prepared to enable the Department Managers to manage their budgets and to enable the Budget Office to monitor and control the budget as authorized by the City Manager. Summary financial reports will be presented to the City Council monthly by the third Friday after the end of each month. Such reports will enable the City Council to understand the big picture budget status. Operating Expenditure Control is addressed in another section of the Policies.

F. Performance Measures and Productivity Indicators – Where appropriate, performance measures and productivity indicators will be developed and used as guidelines and reviewed for efficiency and effectiveness. This information will be included in the annual budgeting process and reported to the City Council at least annually.

V. CAPITAL BUDGET AND PROGRAM

A. Preparation – The City's capital budget will include all capital project funds and all capital resources. The budget will be prepared annually in conjunction with the operating budget. The capital budget will be compiled by the Finance Director with the involvement of all required City departmental project managers. Integration of the fiscal impact of capital improvements on the operating budget will be monitored.

B. Definition –

1. Facilities - include any structures or properties owned by the City, the land upon which the facility is situated for the provision of City services, and the initial furniture, fixtures, equipment and apparatus necessary to put the facility in service. Facilities include, but are not limited to the following: administrative offices, parks, service centers and storage yards, recreation centers, libraries, fire stations, jails and courts, and water and sewer related structures.
2. Infrastructure - Includes permanently installed facilities, generally placed underground or at grade, which form the basis for the provision of City services. Typically included are thoroughfares, bridges, water and sanitary sewer lines, drainage channels, and storm sewers.

C. Control – All capital project expenditures must be appropriated in the capital budget. The Finance Department must certify the availability of such appropriations or the availability of resources so an appropriation can be made before a capital project contract is presented by the City Manager to the City Council for approval.

D. Program Planning – The capital budget will include capital improvements program plans for future years. The planning time frame should normally be at least five years. The replacement and maintenance for capital items should be projected for the next five years. Future maintenance and operations will be fully costed, so that these costs can be considered in the operating budget.

E. Alternate Resources – Where applicable, assessments, impact fees, pro-rata charges, or other user-based fees should be used to fund capital projects which have a primary benefit to specified property owners. Drainage Utility revenues are established to fund small citywide drainage projects. Single large drainage projects may be funded by debt.

F. Debt Financing – Recognizing that debt is usually a more expensive financing method, alternative financing sources will be explored before debt is issued. When debt is issued, it will be used to acquire major assets with expected lives which equal or exceed the average life of the debt issue. The exceptions to this requirement are the traditional costs of marketing and issuing the debt, capitalized labor for design and construction of capital projects, and small component parts which are attached to major equipment purchases.

G. Infrastructure Maintenance – The City recognizes that deferred street maintenance increases future capital costs by an estimated five- to ten-fold. Therefore, a portion of the General Fund budget will be set aside each year to maintain the quality of streets. The amount will be established annually so that repairs will be made amounting to a designated percentage of the value of the streets.

H. Reporting – Periodic financial reports will be prepared to enable the Department Managers to manage their capital budgets and to enable the Finance Department to monitor and control the capital budget as authorized by the City Manager.

VI. REVENUE MANAGEMENT

A. Simplicity – The City will strive to keep the revenue system simple, which will result in a decrease of compliance costs for the taxpayer or service recipient and a corresponding decrease in avoidance to pay. The City will avoid nuisance taxes, fee, or charges as revenue sources.

B. Certainty – An understanding of the revenue source increases the reliability of the revenue system. The City will try to understand its revenue sources, and enact consistent collection policies so that assurances can be provided that the revenue base will materialize according to budgets and plans.

C. Equity – The revenue system of the City will strive to maintain equity in its structure. That is, the City will seek to minimize or eliminate all forms of subsidization between entities, funds, services, utilities, and customers. However, it is recognized that public policy decisions may lead to subsidies in certain circumstances, e.g., homestead tax exemption.

D. Administration – The benefits of a revenue will exceed the cost of producing the revenue. The cost of collection will be reviewed annually for cost effectiveness as a part of the indirect cost, cost of services analysis. Where appropriate, the City will use the administrative processes of State or Federal collection agencies in order to reduce administrative costs.

E. Revenue Adequacy – The City will require that there be a balance in the revenue system. That is, the revenue base will have the characteristic of fairness and neutrality as it applies to cost of service, willingness to pay, and ability to pay.

F. Cost/Benefit of Abatement – The City will use due caution in the analysis of any tax, fee, or water and wastewater incentives that are used to encourage development. Ideally, a cost/benefit (fiscal impact) analysis will be performed as a part of such review.

G. Diversification and Stability – In order to protect the government from fluctuations in a revenue source due to fluctuations in the economy, and variations in weather (in the case of water and wastewater), a diversified revenue system will be maintained which has a stable source of income.

H. Nonrecurring Revenues – One-time revenues will not be used for ongoing operations. Nonrecurring revenues will be used only for nonrecurring expenditures. Care will be taken not to use these revenues for budget balancing purposes.

I. Property Tax Revenues –

1. Process. Property shall be assessed at 100% of the fair market value as appraised by Tarrant Appraisal District. Reappraisal and reassessment shall be done regularly as required by State law. A 97% collection rate will serve as a goal for tax collections, with a delinquency rate of 3% or less. All delinquent taxes will be aggressively pursued, with delinquents greater than 150 days being turned over to an attorney and a penalty assessed to compensate the attorney as allowed by State law, and in accordance with the attorney's contract. Annual performance criteria will be developed for the attorney.

2. Reduce Reliance on Property Tax. The City will try to reduce reliance on property tax by seeking additional revenue sources and attempting to expand and diversify the City tax base.

J. Exemptions – In order to maintain stability of funds for the City, it is the Council's intentions for the exemptions presently allowed by the City to be continued with no allowance for additional exemptions. Tax abatements should be used selectively and only when a good chance exists of economic return exceeding the loss.

K. User-Based Fees – For services associated with a user fee or charge, the direct and indirect costs of that service will be offset by a fee where possible. There will be an annual review of fees and charges to ensure that fees provide adequate coverage of costs of services.

L. Property Tax Distribution – The percentage of the tax rate allocated to the General Fund is the percent equal to the Maintenance and Operations portion of the total tax rate. The allocation of the tax rate for debt purposes is the percent equal to the Interest and Sinking portion of the total tax rate. Debt service should not exceed 40% except for extraordinary and temporary reasons.

M. Proprietary – Proprietary funds will pay the General Fund for direct services rendered. Additionally, the Water and Wastewater Fund will pay a franchise fee of 5% of gross receipts. This is to compensate the General Fund for the lost revenue that would be payable from a privately owned utility.

N. Franchise Agreements – The City will monitor the status of existing financial agreements and take necessary actions to negotiate new agreements as they near expiration or as they need revisions to best serve the citizens of Euless.

O. General and Administrative Charges – A method will be maintained whereby the General Fund may impose a charge to the proprietary funds for general and administrative services (indirect costs) performed on the enterprise funds' behalf.

P. Utility Rates – The City will review and adopt utility rates that will generate revenues required to fully cover operating expenditures, meet the legal restrictions of all applicable bond covenants, and provide for an adequate level of working capital needs. This policy does not preclude drawing down cash balance to finance current operations. However, it is best that any extra cash balance be used instead to finance capital projects.

Q. Interest Income – Interest earned from investment of available moneys, whether pooled or not, will be distributed to the funds in accordance with the operating and capital budgets which, wherever

possible, will be in accordance with the equity balance of the fund from which moneys were provided to be invested.

R. Revenue Monitoring – Revenues actually received will be regularly compared to budgeted revenues and variances will be investigated. This process will be summarized in the appropriate budget report.

VII. EXPENDITURE CONTROL

A. Appropriations – The level of budgetary control is the department level in the General Fund and Water and Sewer Fund, and the fund level in all other funds. When budget adjustments between funds are necessary, these must be approved by the City Council. Budget appropriation amendments at lower levels of control shall be made in accordance with the applicable administrative procedures through the finance office.

B. Central Control – Significant salary and capital budgetary savings in any department will be centrally controlled and may not be spent by the department without specific City Manager authorization.

C. Purchasing – All purchases shall be in accordance with the City's purchasing policies. Purchases and any contracts exceeding the limit established by state law will conform to a formal bidding process as outlined. Recommendations on purchases and contracts that are subject to the bidding process will be made to the City Council for their approval.

D. Prompt Payment – All invoices will be paid within 30 days of receipt in accordance with the prompt payment requirements of State law. Procedures will be used to take advantage of all purchase discounts where considered cost effective. However, payments will also be reasonably delayed in order to maximize the City's investable cash, where such delay does not violate the agreed upon payment terms.

E. Equipment Financing – Equipment may be financed when the unit purchase price is $20,000 or more and the useful life is at least four years with City Council approval.

VIII. ASSET MANAGEMENT

A. Investments – The City's investment practices will be conducted in accordance with the City Council approved Investment Policies. Utilized objectives: safety, liquidity, and yield.

B. Cash Management – The City's cash flow will be managed to maximize the cash available to invest.

C. Investment Performance – At the end of each fiscal year a report on investment performance will be provided by the Finance Director to the City Manager for presentation to the City Council.

D. Fixed Assets and Inventory – These assets will be reasonably safeguarded, property accounted for, and prudently insured.

IX. FINANCIAL CONDITION AND RESERVES

A. No Operating Deficits – Current expenditures will be paid with current revenues. Deferrals, short-term loans, or one-time sources will be avoided as budget balancing techniques. Reserves will be used only for emergencies or nonrecurring expenditures, except when balances can be reduced because their levels exceed guideline minimums.

B. Operating Reserves – The General Fund resources balance combined with the Emergency Reserve Fund should be between 30 to 60 days in working capital and never fall to 8.3% of the General Fund expenditures budget. This percentage is the equivalent of 30 days' expenditures. The Enterprise Fund working capital should be maintained at the 12% (45 to 75 days) level. An additional cash test will be required for the Water and Wastewater Fund to ensure the City's ability to operate, exclusive of accounts receivable.

C. Risk Management Program – The City will aggressively pursue every opportunity to provide for the public's and City employees' safety and to manage its risks. All reasonable options will be investigated to finance losses. Such options may include risk transfer, insurance, and risk retention. Where risk is retained, reserves will be established based on actuarial determinations. Such reserves will not be used for any purpose other than for financing losses.

D. Compensated Absences – The City will establish a separate reserve within its operating funds to pay for accrued vacation leave. Accrued vacation leave can normally be paid by allowing a vacated position to remain open for several weeks. This reserve will be established based upon a schedule of estimated retirements which will be developed in conjunction with the operating budget.

E. Equipment Replacement – The City shall maintain an Equipment Replacement Fund for major rolling stock. Funds will be transferred based on a depreciated calculation of each piece of equipment.

F. Health Claims – The City shall maintain a fund for health claims for all employees. Adequate reserves shall be maintained as determined actuarially. All reasonable cost containments will be reviewed to keep the cost to the City and the employees minimal.

X. DEBT MANAGEMENT

A. Short-Term Debt – Short-term debt may be issued for interim financing, short economic life assets, or funding operational cash flow deficits or anticipated revenues. If utilized, tax anticipation notes (TAN's) will be retired annually, and bond anticipation notes (BAN's) will be retired within six months of completion of the project. Any short-term debt outstanding at year end will not exceed 5% (including TAN's, but excluding BAN's) of net operating revenues.

B. Long-Term Debt – The City may issue long-term debt when it is deemed that capital improvements should not be financed from current revenues, reserves, or short-term borrowings. Long-Term debt will not be used for operating purposes, and the life of the bonds will not exceed the useful life of the projects financed.

C. Self-Supporting Debt – When appropriate, self-supporting revenues will pay debt service in lieu of tax revenues.

D. Rating – Full disclosure of operations will be made to the bond rating agencies. The City staff, with the assistance of fiscal advisors or bond counsel, will prepare the necessary materials for and presentation to the rating agencies.

E. Water and Wastewater Bond Coverage Ratios – The City has both revenue bonds and other indebtedness of the Water and Wastewater Fund. The City will maintain two coverage ratios: 1.50 for revenue bonds "technical average" and 1.25 for all indebtedness "practical coverage". The City will issue new debt for an Enterprise only after an "additional bonds" test has been applied to the issuance. This test determines that revenues are sufficient to defray the additional debt service burden that will be created by the new issuance.

F. Federal Requirements – The City will maintain procedures to comply with arbitrage rebate and other Federal requirements as necessary. In attempt to exempt the City from arbitrage rebate requirements, the City will attempt to issue bonds in increments not to exceed $5,000,000 per calendar year.

G. Debt Service Reserves – The Debt Service Fund should not have reserves or balances in excess of one month of principal and interest plus 15% of the principal outstanding of unrefunded debt issued prior to September 1, 1986. This maximum is dictated by Federal law and does not include the amounts accrued for the next debt service payment.

The policy above does not preclude the debt service reserves normally established to market revenue bonds. The City's policy and bond ordinance requirement are to maintain these debt service reserves at the level of the average annual debt service.

H. Debt Burden – The Debt Burden should be within the norm of comparable cities. Specifically, maintenance of capacity not to exceed the median per capita and per assessed valuation will be monitored.

I. Debt Structuring – The City will issue bonds with an average life of twenty (20) years or less in order to reduce net interest cost and maintain future flexibility by paying off debt earlier. The issuance should contribute to an overall curve that is relatively flat.

J. Competitive vs. Negotiated Bidding – The City will analyze on a per issue and market basis the desire to utilize competitive versus negotiated sale of bonds. In either instance, the fiscal staff will present to management and council advantages and disadvantages of the process.

K. Bidding Parameters – The notice of sale will be carefully constructed so as to ensure the best possible bid for the City, in light of the existing market conditions and other prevailing factors. Parameters to be examined include:

- Limits between lowest and highest coupons
- Coupon requirements relative to the yield curve
- Method of underwriter compensation, discount or premium coupons
- Use of True Interest Cost (TIC) vs. Net interest Cost (NIC)
- Use of bond insurance
- Deep discount bonds
- Variable rate bonds
- Call provisions

L. Bond Issuance Advisory Fees and Costs – The City will be actively involved in the selection of all financial advisors, underwriters, paying agents, and bond counsel. The City shall evaluate the merits of rotating professional advisors and consultants as well as the kinds of services and fee structures available from independent financial advisors, investment banking firms, and commercial banks. The City will carefully itemize and scrutinize all costs associated with the issuance of bonds.

M. Refunding Debt – The City shall continually review outstanding obligations and may initiate refinancing when the potential for present value savings calculate to approximately five percent (5%) or gross savings exceed $100,000.

N. Maximum Debt Levels – The water and wastewater bond maximum shall be within Bond Coverage Ratios as stated in this policy. The City will strive to keep the portion of the City's ad valorem tax rate for interest and sinking (debt service) that is tax supported debt (excluding self-supporting debt) below forty percent (40%) of the total adopted City ad valorem tax rate. The State of Texas limits the total City ad valorem tax rate to $2.50 per $100 valuation.

O. Fixed Rate Debt – To maintain a predictable debt service schedule, the City may give preference to debt that carries a fixed interest rate.

P. Variable Rate Debt - Variable rate debt is debt that bears interest at a floating rate established at specific intervals. The City strives not to exceed thirty percent (30%) of the City's total outstanding debt in variable rate debt and may consider using variable rate debt in circumstances where assets and liabilities match, for interim financing, where interest rates are above historic averages, if diversification of debt is desired, or there is a variable revenue stream.

XI. STAFFING AND TRAINING

A. Adequate Staffing – Staffing levels will be adequate for the fiscal functions of the City to function effectively. Overtime shall be used only to address temporary or seasonal demands that require excessive hours. Workload shedding alternatives as well as technology will be explored before adding staff.

B. Training – The City will support the continuing education efforts of all financial staff including the investment in time and materials for maintaining a current perspective concerning financial issues. Staff will be held accountable for communicating, teaching, and sharing with other staff members all information and training materials acquired from seminars, conferences, and related education efforts.

C. Awards, Credentials – The City will support efforts and involvements which result in meeting standards and receiving exemplary recitations on behalf of any of the City's fiscal policies, practices, processes, products, or personnel. Further, the Finance Director will try to obtain and/or maintain designation of Certified Government Finance Officer as awarded by the GFOA of Texas.