

## **Operating Management Policy**

The purpose of the Operating Management Policy is to provide guidance and clarification on how the budget will be structured and developed, how to amend the budget, and specific revenue and expenditure principles to ensure ongoing financial sustainability and operating practices.

### ***Key Budget Features***

**Scope and Length of Budget Period:** The budget shall be based on a fiscal year beginning July 1 through June 30, and revenue and expenditures for all funds shall be adopted annually (excluding funds maintained for financial reporting purposes only).

**Level of Control:** The budget process shall be collaborative with the Finance Office, asking all Departments to provide updated revenue and expenditure amounts for the existing fiscal year as well as projected for the next fiscal year entered directly into an Excel spreadsheet that will be turned into the Finance Office. Budgetary control shall be managed at the Departmental level and a Department cannot spend more than the total budget appropriated for their department; however, line item appropriations shall be established for each cost center (division) within each Department.

**Balanced Budget Definition:** According to the Arizona Revised Statutes, the total of proposed expenditures shall not exceed the total of estimated income and fund balances available. Each fund in the budget must also be in balance; total anticipated revenues plus the necessary portion of fund balance (all resources) must equal total expenditure appropriations for the upcoming fiscal year. Appropriation shall be for a specific fund and balanced based on specific funding sources, therefore savings in one fund shall not be used to cover over-expenditure in another fund.

**Basis of Budgeting:** The City's accounting system is maintained on the same basis as the Adopted Budget. This enables Departmental budgets to be easily monitored via accounting system reports on a monthly basis. The City's financial records, as reported each year in the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), are maintained in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). For comparison purposes, the City's financial statements show fund revenues and expenditures on both a budget basis and a GAAP basis in all funds for which budgets are adopted.

The budgets for general governmental fund types, (i.e., General Fund, Special Revenue, Capital Projects, and Expendable Trust) are prepared on a modified accrual basis, which is a mixture of the cash and accrual basis. This basis is consistent with GAAP except for the following:

- a. Compensated absences are recorded as expenditures when paid (cash basis) as opposed to a liability that is expected to be liquidated from available financial resources as earned and accrued by employees (GAAP basis).
- b. Sales tax and grant revenue are recorded on the basis of cash collected (cash basis) as opposed to the accrual basis (GAAP basis) whereby amounts are recorded to the period the revenue was earned.
- c. Capital outlays for Enterprise funds are recorded as expenses (cash basis) as opposed to fixed assets (GAAP basis).
- d. Principal payments on long-term debt are recorded as expenses (cash basis) as opposed to a reduction of a liability (GAAP basis).
- e. Proceeds from the sale of bonds and utility system development fee revenues are recognized as revenue when received (cash basis) as opposed to a reduction of a liability and an increase in contributed capital (GAAP basis).
- f. No depreciation is budgeted (on a cash basis for any fund) as opposed to depreciation expense recorded in financial statements (GAAP basis).

The budgets for Proprietary fund types such as the City's Enterprise (water, wastewater, gas, solid waste, golf course and airport), Internal Service, Fiduciary, and Permanent Trust funds are budgeted and reported on a full accrual basis of accounting. Under the full accrual basis, expenses are recorded at the time liabilities are incurred, and revenues are recognized when they are obligated to the City (for example, water user fees are recognized as revenue when bills are produced, not when the cash is received). All operating and capital expenditures (except depreciation) are identified in the budgeting process because of the need for appropriation authority.

Long-Term Financial Forecasts: Forecasts will be prepared annually covering a five-year period and considered during budget development.

### ***Budget Principles and Process***

Budget Links to Strategic Plans: The City's annual budget will be developed in accordance with the policies and priorities set forth in the Strategic Plan, the needs of the community, and local, federal and state laws.

Examination of Spending Patterns: The City will seek to maximize the value the public receives through its spending by critically examining existing spending patterns to make sure they continue to provide value, and if not, reallocate to services that do.

### Prioritizing Services:

Department budgetary needs will be submitted to the Finance Office through "Decision Package Requests" and will be weighed taking into account based on available City resources within projected fiscal constraints and prioritized with Council's strategic goals. All requests must be fully justified to show that they will maintain or enhance service delivery or support new programs to achieve strategic goals for the City. Decision Packages will be reviewed and prioritized in conjunction with the City Manager's office and then submitted to Council during the budgetary process.

Additions to Department budgets outside of the annual budget process are discouraged and only approved by the City Manager's office in unique circumstances or by Mayor and Council when required per Arizona Revised Statutes.

Funding Liabilities: The current portion of long-term liabilities (i.e. capital infrastructure, annual costs of maintaining and replacing capital assets, contributions to employee pensions), at a minimum, should be funded in the annual budget so as to maintain the trust of creditors and ensure a manageable payment plan.

Budget Process: The budget will be developed following a detailed calendar to ensure timely preparation and execution, provide opportunities for citizen participation at different points, follow State law and City Code, and be summarized within a budget document to clearly communicate policy decisions.

### ***Budget Control System***

Base Budget Method: Department's base budget will be utilized for the starting point of determining ongoing Operations and Maintenance (O&M) appropriation. Departments shall be allocated the prior year's base budget to support all ongoing operations but each line item will be reviewed annually collaboratively with the Finance Office to determine if prior year funding should be reduced or transferred to another line item. Departments may also request supplemental funding through a decision package. Requests approved in the Adopted Budget shall be incorporated into Department's base budgets.

Personnel Services Budgeting: All personnel costs are funded outside of the base budgets, and any personnel savings accumulated remain in their original fund. The Budget Division develops all personnel services budgets based on full funding of all approved positions. If revenues are available during the budget process, positions may be added to maintain or enhance service levels after City Manager review and City Council approval. Additions outside of the budget process are discouraged and only approved by the City Manager's Office in unique circumstances. Overspending of overtime and temporary budgets must be

funded from base budgets if not directly related to a vacancy.

**Budget Resolution Transfer Authority:** The Adopted Budget Resolution for each fiscal year gives authority to the City Manager or his/her designee regarding transfers in line within their departments. The City Manager is authorized to make transfers from the General Fund “operating contingency” to departments in all funds. The central General Fund Contingency reserve in the non-departmental account can only be transferred to departments or other funds by Council approval.

**Budget Expenditure Limitation:** State Expenditure Limitation options, the level at which expenditures cannot legally exceed the appropriated amount, will be reviewed and implemented as required by State statute to ensure the best approach for the City. The City of Benson currently falls under the Home Rule Option. Under the Home Rule Option, the expenditure limitation is free from any ties to the State imposed expenditure limitation if the majority of the qualified electors vote in favor of this alternative. On November 8, 2016, the City of Benson voters approved to continue under Home Rule for four years. Benson adopts its expenditure limitation along with the annual budget. The maximum legal expenditure limit is the total of all departmental appropriations in the final budget adopted by the City Council. The City's next Home Rule election will be in November 2020.

### ***Budget Amendments***

In accordance with the City's Alternative Expenditure Limitation, total expenditures may not exceed the final appropriation once the budget is adopted. The City can amend the total appropriation for an individual fund; however, if one fund's total appropriation is increased, another fund must be decreased by an equal amount by Council action.

Amendments moving budget appropriation between departments may be processed at any time during the fiscal year upon written request by the City Manager to the City Council per Arizona Revised Statutes. Organizational changes resulting in appropriation shifts between departments should be timed for the start of a new budget year, whenever possible.

### ***Revenue and Expenditure Principles***

One-time expenses will be funded from one-time balances/revenues and ongoing expenses will be funded by ongoing revenues

Fund balances are non-recurring revenues and will be appropriately used for one-time expenditures or budgeted as contingency fund appropriations.

**Revenues:** The City strives to ensure diversification and stabilization of its revenue base.

Revenue projections will be based on historical trends by developing base lines for ongoing types of revenues versus one-time.

Projections used to balance revenues to expenditures will be prepared for a five period and updated annually to ensure financial sustainability.

Conservative but realistic revenue projections will be prepared to assess the limits of budget appropriation using trend analysis and current data to minimize estimating too high, which could result in mid-fiscal year budget cuts.

User fees and charges will be periodically analyzed and updated to ensure that revenues are covering expenditures.

Utility rate consultant studies will be performed at a minimum every four years, and internal rate analyses will be completed every year for Water, Wastewater, Solid Waste and Gas funds based on ten-year projections completed by the Finance Director and the City's Financial Consultant. Reviews will ensure fees are adequate to fund operations, debt service, bond covenants and reserves. Additionally, periodic reviews of the rate design and cost of service between customer classes will be completed.

Expenditures: The City will commit to a level of expenditures sufficient to ensure the ongoing health, safety, and welfare of citizens.

Departments are encouraged to periodically review operations for efficiencies and reallocate existing expenditure appropriation before requesting new funding.

Personnel expenditures, the largest operating cost, will be appropriated based on full funding of all approved positions. Vacant positions will either be budgeted at bottom of range or within the range if more experience is required for the position.

Employee benefits expenditures (i.e. pensions, health, worker's compensation) will be appropriated at levels to ensure adequate funding to remain current and maintain appropriate reserves if self-insured.

Compensation packages will be reviewed periodically to ensure they are sufficient to attract and retain quality employees.