



Debt Policy

I. Authority

The Fort Worth City Council is responsible for legislation, policy formulation, and overall direction setting of the government. This includes the approval of financial policies which establish and direct the operations of the City of Fort Worth. The City Manager and Assistant City Managers are responsible for carrying out the policy directives of the City Council and managing the day-to-day operations of the executive departments, including the Department of Financial Management Services. This policy shall be administered on behalf of the City Manager and the Assistant City Managers by the Chief Financial Officer / Director of Finance.

II. Purpose:

This policy is intended to establish guidelines and principles associated with the management of the City's issuance of debt transactions to finance the acquisition, repair, or construction of capital assets.

III. Scope:

This policy shall apply to all debt issued by the City of Fort Worth and any revenue pledged to debt payments which are under the budgetary and fiscal control of the City Manager and the Mayor and City Council.

IV. Glossary

See definitions related to this policy provided in the appendix.

V. Policy:

A. Use of Debt Financing

Debt financing, to include general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, certificates of obligation, certificates of participation, commercial paper, tax notes, lease/purchase agreements, and other obligations permitted to be issued or incurred under Texas law, shall only be used to purchase capital assets and equipment that cannot be prudently acquired from either current revenues, assigned fund balance, or Net Position, and to fund infrastructure



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improvements and additions. The useful life of the asset or project shall exceed the payout schedule of any debt the City assumes.

B. Assumption of Additional Debt

The City shall not issue more long-term debt than it retires each year without first conducting an objective analysis as to the City's ability to assume and support additional debt service payments. When appropriate, self-supporting revenue bonds shall be considered before general obligation bonds.

To the extent permitted by State law, commercial paper may be utilized and/or issued in the City's tax-supported and revenue-supported bond programs in order to: (1) provide appropriation authority for executing contracts on bond-funded projects; (2) provide interim construction financing; and (3) take advantage of lower interest rates in the short-term market; all of which provide the City with flexibility in timing its entry into the long-term fixed rate market.

C. Affordability Targets

1. General Obligation Bonds

The City shall use an objective analytical approach to determine whether it can afford to issue new general purpose debt (General Obligation bonds, tax notes, public property finance contractual obligations and Certificates of Obligation) beyond what it retires each year. This process shall take into consideration any potential impact to the City's credit ratings, the growth in the City's taxable assessed value, applicable State laws and the targeted debt service tax rate. The process shall also examine the direct costs and benefits of the proposed expenditures. The decision on whether or not to issue new debt shall be based on these costs and benefits, the current conditions of the municipal bond market, and the City's ability to "afford" new debt as determined by the aforementioned standards.



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2. Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds are secured solely by the revenues of an operating fund. As a result, the credit markets look at the type of and history of collections and volatility on revenue securing the payment of debt service on the bonds to determine the level of security necessary for the purchase of the bonds.

Whether revenue bonds can be secured with gross revenues of the operating fund or net revenues (i.e., those revenues remaining after paying costs of operation and maintenance) is often determined by state law. Coverage requirements, and the need for and level of reserve funds to provide additional security in support of revenue bonds, are subject to rating agency review and market standards.

Generally, for the City to issue additional water and sewer revenue bonds, net revenues, as defined in the ordinance authorizing the revenue bonds, shall be a minimum of 125% of the average annual debt service and 110% of the debt service for the year in which requirements are scheduled to be the greatest, but should be at least 150% of the annual debt service for financial planning purposes. Annual adjustments to the City's rate structures will be made as necessary to maintain a minimum 150% coverage factor. Exceptions to these standards must be fully explained and justified.

Generally, for the City to issue additional stormwater revenue bonds, gross revenues, as defined in the ordinance authorizing the revenue bonds, shall be at least of 150% of the maximum annual debt service, however net revenues (after operations and maintenance expenses) should be at least 150% of the annual debt service for financial planning purposes. Annual adjustments to the City's rate structures will be made as necessary to maintain a minimum 150% coverage factor using net revenues.

Revenue bonds that may be issued to finance improvements for other activities (e.g., airports or convention center facilities) will necessitate the consideration of coverage and reserve fund requirements unique to the operating fund, such that the revenue bonds will be creditworthy and marketable.

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3. Certificates of Obligation

Certificates of Obligation may be issued without a public election to finance any public work project or capital improvement, as permitted by State law. However, it is the policy of the City to utilize Certificates of Obligation to finance public improvements only in special circumstances and only after determining the City's ability to assume additional debt based on the standards identified above. Those special circumstances in which Certificates might be issued include, but are not limited to, situations where:

- Cost overruns on a general obligation bond-financed capital improvement have occurred;
- “Emergency” conditions require a capital improvement to be funded rapidly;
- Financial opportunities unexpectedly arise to leverage funds from other entities and reduce the City's capital cost for a community improvement;
- A capital improvement is a revenue-producing facility, but due to the nature of the project or the time it takes for the facility to become operational and produce revenues, the improvement may not generate sufficient revenues throughout the life of the improvement to support the indebtedness secured solely by the revenues to be produced by the improvement;
- It would be more economical to issue Certificates of Obligation rather than issuing revenue bonds; and
- The timing of the construction of a capital improvement and the expense of calling a bond election for a single proposition would, in the opinion of staff and with the approval of the Council, warrant the issuance of Certificates of Obligation to finance the capital improvement.



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4. Tax Notes

Tax notes may be issued without a public election to finance the construction, acquisition, and expenses associated with placing a capital asset into service. Under State law, the issuance of tax notes must be approved as to legality by the State Attorney General, and must mature no later than the seventh anniversary of the date that the Attorney General approves the tax notes. Tax notes will be issued considering the useful life of the capital asset to be financed, and consideration of the economies that the City may achieve through the issuance of obligations with a shorter term of maturity than that typically associated with a bond amortization structure (see D. Debt Structure, below). The issuance of tax notes may be substituted for the issuance of Certificates of Obligations; however, the same principles apply.

D. Debt Structure

General obligation bonds, certificates of obligation, and tax notes may be structured with level principal or level debt service, with a preference towards level principal. Revenue bonds will typically be structured with level debt service. With respect to the issuance of revenue bonds for a stand-alone or self-supporting project, the term of the debt and debt service structure shall be consistent with the useful life of the project and the revenue-generating capability of the project.

There shall be no debt structures, which include increasing debt service levels in subsequent years, with the exception of the first and second year of a payment schedule. Revenue bonds may have an amortization exempt from this provision; however, they should be structured to provide uniform coverage levels across the life of the bonds. There shall be no "balloon" bond repayment schedules, which consist of low annual payments and one large payment of the balance due at the end of the term. There shall always be at least interest paid in the first fiscal year after a bond sale and principal starting generally no later than the second fiscal year after the bond issue. In the case of a revenue generating project, principal repayment should begin no later than the first full year after the project has been placed in service. Normally, there shall be no capitalized interest included in the debt structure unless there are no historical reserves upon which to draw.



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E. Call Provisions

Call provisions for bond issues shall be made as short as possible consistent with the lowest interest cost to the City. When possible, all bonds shall be callable within ten years and without any call premium.

F. Sale Process

The City shall use a competitive bidding process in the sale of debt unless the nature of the issue or market conditions warrant a negotiated sale. The City shall attempt to award the bonds based on a true interest cost (TIC) basis. However, the City may award bonds based on a net interest cost (NIC) basis when the NIC basis can satisfactorily determine the lowest and best bid.

G. Timing of Sales

The City may use the cash received through the issuance of notes pursuant to, or the appropriation authority that may be available in accordance with the commercial paper programs, to begin capital projects approved under those programs. The City may also use reimbursement resolutions and its own cash to initiate certain projects. Consideration should be given to any lost interest earnings on the City's cash compared to the anticipated interest expense associated with the issuance of obligations by the City. This process will improve the City's ability to time its entry into the long-term fixed rate market and to manage its debt issuances and debt payments in order to minimize the impact on tax rates and utility rates.

H. Underwriting Syndicates

When a negotiated sale is deemed in the best interest of the City, underwriters shall be selected from a procurement process designed to yield the most qualified and experienced firms for the transaction, performed in line with the City's administrative regulations (procurement of goods and services). City staff will recommend the structure of underwriting syndicates, which will be effective for the type and amount of debt being issued. The City will consider its M/WBE goals in structuring syndicates.



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I. Rating Agencies Presentations

Full disclosure of operations and open lines of communication shall be made to the rating agencies. City staff shall prepare the necessary materials and presentation to the rating agencies. Credit ratings will be sought from one or more of the nationally recognized municipal bond rating agencies, currently Moody's Investors Service, S&P Global Ratings, Fitch Ratings, and Kroll Bond Rating Agency.

J. Continuing Disclosure

The City is committed to providing continuing disclosure of financial and pertinent credit information relevant to the City's outstanding securities and will abide by the provisions of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Rule 15c2-12 concerning primary and secondary market disclosure. City staff will undertake to update financial and pertinent credit information within six months of the end of the City's fiscal year and at such other times as may be indicated by material changes in the City's financial situation.

K. Debt Refunding

City staff shall monitor the municipal bond market for opportunities to obtain interest savings by refunding outstanding debt. As a general rule, the net present value savings of a particular refunding should exceed 3.0% of the par amount of the refunded maturities. A current refunding may be undertaken with net present value savings less than 3.0%, especially if another bond is being issued concurrently.

L. Interest Earnings

Interest earnings received on the investment of bond proceeds shall be used to assist in paying the interest due on bonds issued, to the extent permitted by law.

M. Lease/Purchase Agreements

Over the lifetime of a lease, the total cost to the City will generally be higher than purchasing the asset outright. As a result, the use of lease/purchase agreements and certificates of participation in the



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acquisition of vehicles, equipment, and other capital assets shall generally be avoided, particularly if smaller quantities of the capital asset(s) can be purchased on a "pay-as-you-go" basis.

N. Proposals from Investment Bankers

The City welcomes ideas and suggestions from investment bankers and will seek to gain information and knowledge from those firms which submit unique and innovative ideas.