



## Town of Sudbury Board of Selectmen Budget and Financial Management Policies

### Introduction

The Town of Sudbury has an important responsibility to carefully account for public funds, to manage municipal finances wisely, and to plan and provide for the adequate funding of services desired by the public and as required by laws, rules, or regulations, including the provision and maintenance of public facilities and improvements. The budget and financial goals and policies set forth by the Board of Selectmen in this document are intended to establish guidelines for the continued financial strength and stability of the Town of Sudbury.

### Goals

Goals are broad, fairly timeless statements of the financial position the Town seeks to attain. The financial goals for the Town of Sudbury are:

- To provide full value to the residents and business owners of Sudbury for each tax dollar by delivering quality services efficiently and on a cost-effective basis.
- To preserve our quality of life by providing and maintaining adequate financial resources necessary to sustain a sufficient level of municipal services, and to respond to changes in the economy, the priorities of governmental and non-governmental organizations, and other changes that may affect our financial well-being.
- To maintain our top level AAA credit rating
- To guide Town decision makers on management and policy decisions which have significant fiscal importance.
- To set forth operating principles that minimizes the cost of government and financial risk.
- To employ balanced and fair revenue policies that provides adequate funding for desired programs.
- To maintain appropriate financial capacity for present and future needs.
- To promote sound financial management by providing accurate and timely information on the Town's financial condition.
- To ensure the legal use of financial resources through an effective system of internal controls.

To achieve these goals, the Board of Selectmen adopt the following policies.

## **Operating Budget Policy**

Sound financial practice and the desire to maintain a strong credit rating dictate that our budgets be balanced, constantly monitored, and responsive to changes in service demands. With these concepts in mind, the Town of Sudbury has adopted the following budget policy statements:

- On or before December 20 of each year, the Town Manager will submit to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee a proposed budget plan for Town Operating Departments.
- On or before December 20 of each year, the Sudbury Public School Committee will submit to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee a proposed budget plan for the Sudbury Public Schools.
- On or before December 20 of each year, the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School Committee will submit to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee a proposed budget plan for the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School.
- On or before December 20 of each year, the Minuteman Regional Vocational-Technical High School Committee will submit to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee a proposed budget plan for the Minuteman Regional Vocational-Technical High School.
- On or before December 31 of each year, the Town Manager will prepare a comprehensive budget for the Town of Sudbury, covering all major cost centers, all spending plans and all anticipated revenues. This comprehensive budget will be submitted to the Finance Committee and to the Board of Selectmen.
- The annual operating budgets will be appropriated on a balanced basis, where operating revenues (estimated revenues) are used to fund operating expenditures/expenses (appropriations).
  - Operating revenues include property taxes, motor vehicle excises, charges for services, interest earnings, license and permit fees, fines and forfeitures, regularly recurring governmental aid, and transfers in from other funds established for operating purposes.
  - Operating expenditures/expenses include salaries and wages, employee benefits, equipment and improvements, depreciation (proprietary funds only), materials, supplies, and contractual costs. The Town of Sudbury traditionally votes to issue all debt exempt for the limits of Proposition of 2 ½, and thus debt service is not considered an operating expenditure.
- Nothing in this policy shall prohibit the use of operating revenues for capital expenditures/expenses
- The Town will avoid relying on Free Cash to fund on-going operating expenses.
- To the extent possible, one-time revenues that are not required by law or agreement to be expended for a particular purpose will only be used for capital purposes, augmenting of Town reserves or emergency expenditures/expense.
- The Town Manager will annually estimate the costs of the Town's obligations for providing benefits for Town and Sudbury Public School employees as part of the preparation of the annual operating budget.
- The operating budget will not be subsidized by the Stabilization Fund.

## **Revenue Policy**

Revenues determine the capacity of the Town to provide services. To ensure that revenues for the Town are balanced and capable of supporting desired levels of services, the Town of Sudbury has adopted the following revenue policy statements:

- The Town Manager and Finance Director are responsible for estimating revenues for the upcoming fiscal year. They will consult with other officials of the town as well as state officials and others with knowledge of state and local finance.



- Revenue forecasts for local receipts and state aid shall be conservative, using generally accepted forecasting techniques and appropriate data. Revenue deficits will be avoided at all costs. To avoid any potential for such a deficit, estimates for local receipts will generally not exceed 100% of the prior year's actual collections.
- The Town Manager and Finance Director will project revenues for the next three years as part of the three year financial forecast.
- Each year and whenever appropriate, existing revenues will be re-examined and possible new sources of revenues will be explored to ensure that we are maximizing our revenue potential.
- Legally restricted revenues will be avoided when they adversely affect the short or long-term financial health of our government.
- The Town will strive to be informed and aware of all grants and other aid that may be available to us. All potential grants and other aid shall be carefully examined for matching requirements (both dollar and level-of-effort) and restrictive covenants, to ensure that our participation in such grants will be beneficial and cost-effective.
- Each year and whenever appropriate, intergovernmental revenues will be reviewed to determine their short and long-term stability, to minimize the impact of any adverse changes. Intergovernmental revenues shall be used as legally prescribed or otherwise set forth by policy.
- A balance will be sought in the revenue structure between elastic and inelastic revenues, to minimize any adverse effects caused by inflationary or economic changes.
- One-time revenues will be used for capital improvements, additions to reserves or as legally restricted to a specific purpose.
- The Town will carefully and routinely monitor all amounts due the Town. An aggressive policy of collection will be followed for all receivables, including property taxes. A target of 98% property tax collection rate by fiscal year end will be achieved.
- Recreational user charges and fees will be set to recover approximately 100% of total direct costs generated by revolving fund recreation programs.
- Enterprise fund (Solid Waste and Atkinson Pool) user charges and fees will be set to recover all direct and associated with the activities of these funds as well as the indirect costs for the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund.

### **Expenditure/Expense Policy**

Expenditure/expenses are a rough measure of a local government's service output. While many expenditures/expenses can be easily controlled, emergencies, unfunded mandates, and unanticipated service demands may strain our ability to maintain a balanced budget. To ensure the proper control of expenditures/expenses and provide for a quick and effective response to adverse financial situations, the Town of Sudbury has adopted the following expenditure/expense policy statements:

- Expenditures/expenses and purchase commitments will be made in a form and process that is legal, appropriate, funded, authorized and sufficiently documented.
- Expenditures/expenses and purchase commitments will be recorded in an accurate and timely fashion.
- The review and approval process for all vouchers shall be followed at all times. Properly completed claims must be prepared and submitted to the accounting department by the department responsible for originating the claim. A "properly completed claim" must include, but is not limited to, the vendor's name and address, date of claim, explanation, and accounts to be charged, department authorization signature and sufficient documentation. "Sufficient documentation" means that a person unfamiliar

with the transaction could understand what was ordered, when, by whom, from what vendor, at what price, when the goods or services were delivered, who accepted delivery, and who authorized payment.

- The balances in appropriation accounts will be monitored regularly to ensure that the total of expenditures/expenses and purchase commitments in any account do not exceed the authorized budget for that account.
- Requests for competitive bids, proposals, formal and informal quotes, and other methods of seeking and encouraging vendor competition will be obtained as required by law and as otherwise established by the Town Manager or Town Counsel.
- Arrangements will be encouraged with other governments, private individuals, and firms, to contract out or cooperatively deliver services, in a manner that reduces cost and/or improves efficiency and effectiveness while maintaining service quality.
- The full direct and indirect costs will be calculated for any service provided for a fee or charge, or where there is a potential for the reimbursement of such costs.
- All appropriations shall lapse at the close of the fiscal year to the extent that they shall not have been expended or encumbered.

### **Reserves and Risk Management Policy**

A municipality's fiscal policies should include a plan for maintaining reserves. Operating reserves (or fund balance) are a prudent fiscal management tool and an important credit factor in the analysis of financial flexibility. The Town of Sudbury will maintain a level of reserves that protect the Town from emergency conditions that require financial flexibility, contribute to sufficient liquidity to pay all Town expenses without short-term borrowing, and contribute to the high credit rating that the Town currently holds from Standard & Poor's (AAA). To provide for adequate levels of reserves to protect the Town's financial condition over the long-term, the Town of Sudbury has adopted the following financial reserves policy statements.

#### **A. Risk Management**

- The Town will maintain an effective risk management program that provides adequate coverage, minimizes losses, and reduces costs.
- The Town will annually work with the Town's insurance carrier to update all listings of Town owned assets and the value of such covered assets.
- As the Town is self-insured for several of the benefits programs it offers, the Town will maintain adequate reserves for its Workers Compensation, Unemployment Compensation, and Health Insurance Programs, as follows:
  - Workers Compensation Fund, at the beginning of each fiscal year, at least 110 % of the average annual claims for the prior three years
  - For the Unemployment Compensation Fund, at the beginning of each fiscal year, at least 110% of the average annual claims for the prior three years
  - For the Health Insurance Fund, at the beginning of each fiscal year, at least 150% of the estimated run-out claims for each insurance plan that is self-insured.

#### **B. Stabilization Fund**

- The Town of Sudbury shall maintain a Stabilization Fund to provide the reserves that are required to protect the financial condition of the Town.
- The Town will work toward the goal of maintaining in the Stabilization Fund an amount equal to five percent (5%) of the total projected general fund operating revenues for the next previous fiscal year.
- Interest earned on Stabilization Fund balances will be retained in the Stabilization Fund.



- Withdrawals from the Stabilization Fund will only be used for sudden and unexpected events such as a loss of a revenue source after Annual Town Meeting has approved the operating budget for the next fiscal year. Withdrawals from the Stabilization Fund will only be made by a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting, only if the balances exceed the 5% target and will not draw the balance below that point.

### **Capital Budgeting and Planning Policy**

Capital assets include land, improvements to land, buildings, building improvements, vehicles, machinery, equipment, works of art and historical treasures, infrastructure, construction in progress and all other tangible and intangible assets that are used in operations and have initial useful lives extending beyond a single reporting period. Infrastructure assets are long-lived capital assets that normally are stationary in nature and can be preserved for a significantly greater number of years than most capital assets. Examples of infrastructure assets owned by the Town of Sudbury include roads, bridges, tunnels, dams and drainage systems.

The Town of Sudbury has a capital planning and budget bylaw and process that require the following:

- On or before November 15 of each year, the Town Manager will submit a capital program to the Capital Improvement Planning Committee. The proposed program will detail each capital project, the estimated cost, description and funding source.
- The Town will update and readopt annually a five-year capital improvement plan ("CIP"), including the upcoming annual capital improvement budget ("CIB") and a four year projection of capital needs and expenditures which details the estimated cost, description and anticipated funding sources for capital projects.
- The first year of the five year CIP will be the basis of formal fiscal year appropriation request during the annual budget process.
- Per the Town's capital bylaw, the Capital Improvement Budget and Plan will generally address those capital assets with a value of more than \$10,000 and a useful life of over five (5) years.
- The Town will emphasize preventive maintenance as a cost-effective approach to infrastructure maintenance. Exhausted capital goods will be replaced as necessary.
- The capital improvements plan should be tied to the Town's master facilities study to ensure that the capital items requested meet the future growth needs for the Town.

### **Debt Management Policy**

Debt is an effective way to finance capital improvements or to even out short-term revenue flows. Properly managed debt preserves our credit rating, provides flexibility in current and future operating budgets, and provides us with long-term assets that maintain or improve our quality of life. To provide for the appropriate issuance and responsible use of debt, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Sudbury have adopted the following debt management policies.

- Long-term debt will be issued only for objects or purposes authorized by state law under Chapter 44, section 7 and 8.
- Short-term debt may be issued to finance current operating expenditures only in the event of extreme financial emergency.
- Debt maturity will not exceed the lesser of: the useful life (as established by the Town Treasurer-Collector), or the period of probable usefulness (as defined in Massachusetts State Local Finance Law), of the object or purpose so financed, whichever is shorter.
- Debt limits established by law and policy will be calculated by the Town's Finance Director and Treasurer-Collector at least once each year and whenever otherwise requested or appropriate.

- The Town will maintain good communications with bond rating agencies, bond counsel, banks, financial advisors and others involved in debt issuance and management.
- The Town's annual Town Report, Town Manager's Budget Request and annual town meeting warrant will give comprehensive summaries of the debt obligations of the Town.
- The Town will attempt to maintain a long-term debt schedule so that at least 50 percent of outstanding principal will be paid within ten years.
- The Town will attempt to vote all significant debt questions (over \$500,000) exempt from the limits of Proposition 2 1/2.

### **Protection of Credit Rating Policy**

Maintenance of the highest level credit rating possible is important to the continued financial health of Sudbury as it reduces the costs of issuing debt. Credit rating firms consider management practices to be very important factors. There are several management practices that can inadvertently jeopardize the financial health of a local government. To be proactive in assuring the Town of Sudbury does not engage in these practices, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Sudbury has adopted the following credit rating protection policies.

- The Town will not rely on reserves to sustain operating deficits. Use of such reserves will be limited to helping the Town deal with short-term or emerging financial stress, but then the Town will either reduce spending to within the limits of recurring revenues, or seek approval for additional revenues from the voters of the Town.
- The Town will not defer current costs to a future date. This includes costs such as pension costs or benefits costs. From time to time the State offers municipalities the option of deferring payments to their pension system, or other costs, as a short term way of balancing a fiscal year's budget. However, it is the intention of the Town of Sudbury not to rely on these options.
- The Town will analyze the full-life costs of multi-year decisions. For example, acquiring or construction of new buildings will be conducted with an assessment of the operating costs of the building. Lease agreements will be conducted with an assessment of future budgets and the ability to make annual payments. Labor agreements will be negotiated with an analysis of the full costs associated with the terms of the agreement.
- The Town will follow the policies as outlined in this policy statement.