

# FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The County of Albemarle has a responsibility to its taxpayers to account for public funds, to manage its finances wisely, and to allocate its resources efficiently, effectively, and equitably, in order to provide the services desired by the public. The primary objective of establishing Financial Management Policies is to provide a framework wherein sound financial decisions may be made for the long-term betterment and stability of Albemarle County. ~~These financial policies also provide guidelines and goals to guide the short- and long-term financial practices of Albemarle County.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement is redundant with the previous and recommended for removal.*

## POLICY GOALS

A fiscal policy that is adopted, adhered to, and regularly reviewed is recognized as the cornerstone of sound financial management. An effective fiscal policy should:

- Insulate the County from fiscal crises;
- Enhance the County's ability to obtain short-term and long-term financial credit by helping to achieve the highest credit rating and bond rating possible;
- Promote long-term financial stability by establishing clear and consistent guidelines;
- Provide the total financial picture of the County rather than concentrating on single issue areas;
- Provide a link between long-range financial planning and current operations; and
- Provide a framework for measuring the fiscal impact of government services against established fiscal parameters and guidelines.

## OPERATING BUDGET POLICIES

The annual budget will be prepared consistent with requirements established by the Virginia Code, guidelines established by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and in accordance with ~~the principles of priority-based budgeting~~ best practices.

**Explanation of Change:** *This change is to a) recognize Virginia Code requirements in these policies and b) reflect a policy statement "budget best practices" rather than a specific procedure of "principles of priority-based budgeting," the latter of which is one of many budgeting philosophies.*

The budget must be structured so that the Board and the public can understand the relationship between revenues, expenditures and the achievement of service objectives.

The budget will be structurally balanced, where ongoing revenues equal or exceed ongoing expenditures. The goal of the County is to fund all recurring expenditures with ongoing recurring revenues, not one-time revenues. ~~and to use non-recurring revenues for non-recurring expenses.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This change is to a) define a structurally balanced budget based on GFOA guidelines and b) reflect terminology used by the County of "ongoing" and "one-time" rather "recurring" and "non-recurring."*

The County will develop and annually update a long-range five-year Financial Plan. The Financial Plan will include a review of revenue trends and expenditures from the prior years' projections of revenues and expenditures, as well as future costs and the financing of ~~C~~capital ~~i~~improvements Plan, ~~and other projects that are included in the capital budget.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This change is to clarify terminology, as the capital budget is the first year of the Capital Improvements Plan.*

When revenue shortfalls are anticipated in a fiscal year, spending during that fiscal year, must be reduced sufficiently to offset the projected revenue shortfalls.

~~The County will prepare the capital budget in conjunction with the development of the operating budget in order to assure that the estimated costs and future impact of a capital project on the operating budget will be considered prior to its inclusion in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement removed because it is redundant with a statement in the Capital Budget and Asset Policies section.*

The County shares ~~60% of~~ the increase or decrease in available shared ~~local tax~~ revenues among the County Government and Public Schools operating, debt service, and capital budgets with the School Board.

- When developing the budget, the County calculates the increase or decrease in General Fund local tax and State non-categorical aid revenues.
- This amount is adjusted for changes in expenses that reduce available shared revenue: City of Charlottesville revenue sharing, Tax Relief programs, Economic Development Authority tax-related performance agreements, and the designated transfer to the Water Resources Fund.
- The remaining amount is allocated 54% to the Public Schools operating budget; 36% to the County Government operating budget, and 10% for the joint County Government and Public Schools debt service and capital budgets.

~~Available shared local tax revenues are additional or reduced tax revenues that can be used for County and School operations after subtracting any increases and adding any decreases in debt service, capital improvement program funding, City of Charlottesville revenue sharing, tax revenues that are dedicated to specific expenditures, tax relief for the elderly and disabled, tax refunds, Economic Development-related performance agreements, and any shared reserves for contingencies. This guideline may be reviewed annually with Board of Supervisors approval.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This change is discussed in Attachment B.*

The operating budget preparation process is conducted to allow decisions to be made regarding anticipated resource levels and expenditure requirements for the levels and types of services to be provided in the upcoming fiscal year. ~~The following budget procedures will ensure the orderly and equitable appropriation of those resources:~~

~~The General Government operating budget requests are initiated at the department level within target guidelines set by the County Executive. Priorities of resource allocation of divisions within a department are managed at the department level. In formulating budget requests, priority will be given to maintaining~~

~~the current level of services to the extent possible. New services will be funded through the identification of new resources or the reallocation of existing resources.~~

~~Proposed program expansions above existing service levels must be submitted as a budget initiative requiring detailed justification. Every proposed program expansion will be scrutinized based on its relationship to the health, safety and welfare of the community, among other factors, and will include analysis of long-term fiscal impacts.~~

~~Proposed new programs must also be submitted as budget initiatives requiring detailed justification. New programs will be evaluated on the same basis as program expansions, to include analysis of long-term fiscal impacts.~~

~~Performance measurement and productivity indicators will be integrated into the budget process as appropriate.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *The above statements are defined in the current policies as "procedures" and recommended for removal from this document, which is oriented towards "policies."*

The General County Government operating budget is approved and appropriated by the County Board of Supervisors. Each year the County Board of Supervisor's' annual resolution of appropriations dictates the level of appropriation authority for all funds. Total expenditures cannot exceed total appropriations of any department within the General Fund. The annual resolution of appropriations will also establish how the budget may be amended. Changes to the approved operating budget during the fiscal year can be accomplished in any of the following ways:

- ~~• Transfers between divisions and non-salary line-item expenditures within General Government departments are approved by the heads of the departments.~~
- ~~• Transfers between expenditure accounts in different departments are approved by the Board of Supervisors or, if specifically delegated by the Board of Supervisors, by the County Executive~~
- ~~• Encumbered funds for active operational purchase orders will be carried forward into the next fiscal year subject to the approval of the Board of Supervisors.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This change is to a) update terminology for "County Government," and b) establish that the annual resolution of appropriations approved by the Board of Supervisors sets procedures for amending the budget rather than these Financial Management Policies.*

The Board of Supervisors appropriates Public Schools Division funding in accordance with Virginia Code § 22.1-115.

**Explanation of Change:** *This change is to update terminology for "Public Schools."*

The Board of Supervisors will adopt and appropriate the ~~operating~~ budget in accordance with Virginia Code requirements and the Board of Supervisors' annual budget calendar, no later than May 5, or at the first regular Board of Supervisor's meeting in May, and will appropriate the budget no later than the first Board meeting in June.

**Explanation of Change:** This change is to a) clarify terminology, b) recognize Virginia Code requirements, and c) establish that the budget calendar approved annually by the Board of Supervisors sets the timeline for adopting and appropriating the budget rather than these Financial Management Policies.

The County will annually seek the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award.

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is to add a best practice to these policies.

## CAPITAL BUDGET AND ASSET POLICIES

The County will approve a one-year capital budget, ~~which is the first year of in accordance with~~ the Capital Improvement Program. ~~All unspent and unencumbered appropriations allocated for capital projects shall be re-appropriated for completion of the projects if needed and as deemed appropriate.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is to a) clarify the relationship of the capital budget and Capital Improvements Program and b) remove a statement that is established either by the annual resolution of appropriations approved by the Board of Supervisors or more "procedure" than "policy" statements.

County Government will collaborate with the Public Schools and Planning Commission regarding the development and coordination of the capital budget and Capital Improvements Program. The processes and procedures related to this collaboration, whether joint Board meetings, designated committees, or other activities will be determined as part of the annual budget calendar or as otherwise directed by the Board of Supervisors.

~~The Board of Supervisors will obtain feedback from the Capital Advisory Committee. The Board of Supervisors will also obtain feedback from the Planning Commission for the multi-year Capital Improvement Program consistent with identified needs in the adopted Comprehensive Plan and any Capital Facilities plans.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This revised statement is to a) highlight the collaboration with the Public Schools and Planning Commission regarding the capital budget and Capital Improvements Program and b) provide flexibility so that the determination of what that collaboration looks like in a given year is determined in the annual budget calendar or other Board of Supervisors direction rather than these policies.

The County will coordinate the development of the capital budget with the development of the operating budget so that future operating costs, including annual debt service associated with new capital projects, will be projected and included in operating budget forecasts.

~~Emphasis will continue to be placed upon a viable level of "pay-as-you-go" capital construction to fulfill needs in a Board-approved Capital Improvements Program.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is redundant with next statement in this section.

The County believes in funding an appropriate portion of its capital improvements on a cash basis to provide budgetary flexibility, to support those capital expenses not eligible for debt financing, and to reflect useful life considerations. ~~The County's goal is that the budgeted net transfer to Capital after debt~~

~~service would be 3% of General Fund Revenues. The appropriate level and funding goal of ongoing and one-time cash provided to the capital budget in a fiscal year will be determined in the context of the budget processes.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This revised statement is to a) ensure the intent is met in the County's planning for cash and debt financing, and b) provide flexibility to the Board of Supervisors in the context of the budget process in the event that the appropriate cash target is less than, equal to, or more than 3% of General Fund revenues and not necessitate a policy change.*

Financing plans for the five-year capital program will be developed based upon a five-year forecast of revenues and expenditures.

The County maintains a capital ~~facilities~~-assets inventory and estimates remaining useful life and replacement costs.

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement is to clarify that it applies to all capital assets, not just facilities.*

~~Upon completion of any capital project, remaining appropriated funds in that project will be returned to an unassigned capital project fund. Any transfer of remaining funds from one appropriation category to another must be approved by the Board of Supervisors, or if authorized by the Board of Supervisors, by the County Executive.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement is recommended for removal because it is more of a "procedure" than a "policy." The annual resolution of appropriations approved by the Board of Supervisors sets forth how the budget may be amended.*

~~The County collaborates with the School Board regarding the development and coordination of the County's Capital Improvement Program. Collaboration includes the following: a) planning for required capital improvements; b) debt ratio targets; and c) debt issuance schedules.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement on Public Schools collaboration is moved to the second statement in this section. The references to debt ratio targets is not included because they are established in the Debt Policies section. The reference to debt issuance schedules is not included because it is part of the County Government's cash flow analysis referenced in the Investment Policies section.*

The County will maintain a system for maintenance, replacement, and enhancement of the County Government's and Public Schools' Division's physical plant. This system will protect the County's capital investment and minimize future maintenance and replacement costs:

- The operating budget will provide for minor and preventive maintenance;
- Within the Capital Improvement Program, the County will maintain a capital plant and equipment maintenance/replacement schedule, which will provide a five-year estimate of the funds necessary to provide for the structural, site, major mechanical/electrical rehabilitation or replacement of the County Government's and Public School's' plant ~~requiring a total expenditure of \$20,000 or more per project with a useful life of five years or more.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement a) updates terminology and b) removes a phrase that is more of a "procedure" than a "policy" statement that may need to be routinely updated by the Department of Finance and Budget based on financial best practices without necessitating a change in the policy statement.

- ~~The County's goal is to maintain a proper ratio of equity to loan funding, as recommended by the County's Financial Advisor, for the maintenance/repair and replacement capital improvements that are financed. The County's desire is to fund the majority of capital maintenance expenses that have an estimated useful life of less than seven years with current revenue.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is removed because it is redundant with the previous statement in this section: "The County believes in funding an appropriate portion of its capital improvements on a cash basis to provide budgetary flexibility, to support those capital expenses not eligible for debt financing, and to reflect useful life considerations."

## DEBT POLICIES

The County will not fund current operations from the proceeds of borrowed funds.

~~To the extent feasible, any year that the debt service payment falls below its current level, those savings may be used to fund one-time capital needs.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is removed because it is more of a "procedure" than a "policy." The use of any savings in debt service would be considered through the County's Five-Year Financial Plan and annual budget processes.

The County's debt offering documents will provide full and complete public disclosure of financial condition and operating results and other pertinent credit information in compliance with municipal finance industry standards for similar issues.

Recognizing the importance of long-term financial obligations, including total tax-supported debt, lease, and financing payments, to its overall financial condition, the County will set target debt ratios, which will be calculated annually and published as part of the budget and bond issuance processes included in the annual review of fiscal trends:

- Total long-term obligations, as defined above, as a percentage of the estimated market value of taxable property should not exceed 2%; and
- The ratio of debt service expenditures to General Fund and School Fund revenues, less General Fund transfers to the School Fund, should not exceed 10%

**Explanation of Change:** This change update to reflect current terminology and clarify definitions.

The County intends to maintain a 10-year payout ratio at or above 60% at the end of each adopted five-year CIP for tax-supported debt and lease payments. When the County finances capital improvements or other projects through bonds or capital leases, it will repay the debt within a period not to exceed the expected useful life of the projects.

The County will not entertain the use of derivatives as a method of financing debt unless and until such time as the Board of Supervisors adopts a specific derivatives-related policy.

## REVENUE POLICIES

Re-assessment of real property will be made every year and will be performed in accordance with Generally Accepted Appraisal Practices and guidelines established by the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO).

The County will maintain sound appraisal procedures to keep property values current. The County's goal is to achieve a 100% median assessment to sales ratio using valid sales from the calendar year prior to the tax year in question. This percentage varies from the Virginia State ratio study analysis that uses sales within the year after the assessment is determined. an annual assessment to sales ratio of at least 95% under current real estate market conditions, when the January 1st assessment is compared to sales in the succeeding calendar year.

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement clarifies the basis and performance goal for the sales ratio.*

The County will maintain a diversified and stable revenue structure to shelter it from short-term fluctuations in any one ~~revenue~~ year. To the extent possible, the County shall attempt to decrease its dependency on real estate taxes to finance the County's operating budget.

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement a) removes the word "revenue" to clarify terminology and b) adds a similar statement from later in this section.*

The County will project its annual revenues and generate its five-year forecasts by using an objective, analytical process that is consistent with Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) best practices.

The County will monitor all taxes to ensure that they are equitably administered and that collections are timely and accurate.

The County will follow an aggressive policy of collecting tax revenues. The annual level of collected current property taxes should be at least 96%, unless caused by conditions beyond the County's control.

~~To the extent possible, the County shall attempt to decrease its dependency on real estate taxes to finance the County's operating budget.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement is combined with a similar statement earlier in this section.*

The County will, where possible, institute user fees and charges for specialized County programs and services based on benefits, and/or privileges granted by the County or based on the cost of a particular service. Rates will be established to recover operational as well as capital or debt service costs and considering the equitable access to services with a goal to review user fee charges at least every three years.

**Explanation of Change:** *This phrase is added in place of the following statement and is written as a goal rather than a requirement.*

~~The County will regularly (at least every three (3) years) review user fee charges and related expenditures to determine if pre-established recovery goals are being met~~

**Explanation of Change:** See previous comment.

~~The County will identify all inter-governmental aid funding possibilities. However, before applying for or accepting either state or federal funding, the County will assess the merits of the program as if it were to be funded with local dollars. No grant will be accepted that will incur management and reporting costs greater than the grant and the County will work with Grantees to fully offset administrative costs when possible.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is moved to the Grants Policies section.

Local tax dollars will not be used to make up for losses of inter-governmental aid without first reviewing the program and its merits as a budgetary increment.

~~The County will attempt to recover all allowable costs—direct and indirect—associated with the administration and implementation of programs funded through inter-governmental aid. In the case of state and federally mandated programs, the County will attempt to obtain full funding for the service from the governmental entity requiring that the service be provided.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is moved to the Grants Policies section.

## **PROCUREMENT POLICIES**

~~The County will adhere to the procurement policies articulated in the County's Purchasing Manual which is informed by the Virginia Public Procurement Act.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This section was added to reference other established County policies.

~~Contractual consolidated banking services will be reviewed regularly and procured in accordance with the Virginia Public Procurement Act.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is moved from the Investment Policies section.

## **INVESTMENT POLICIES**

The County will invest County revenue in accordance with the County's Investment Policy Document, which is overseen by a staff investment committee, to maximize the rate of return while maintaining a low level of risk. The County will invest in conformance with the Virginia Security for Public Deposits Act and all other applicable laws and regulations.

The County will conduct an analysis of cash flow needs at least on an annual basis. Disbursements, collections, and deposits of all funds will be scheduled to ensure maximum cash availability and investment potential.

The Chief Financial Officer shall maintain a system of internal controls for investments, which shall be documented in writing and subject to review by the County's independent auditor.

~~Contractual consolidated banking services will be reviewed regularly and procured in accordance with the Virginia Public Procurement Act.~~

**Explanation of Change:** This statement is moved to the Procurement Policies section.



## ACCOUNTING, AUDITING, AND FINANCIAL REPORTING POLICIES

The County will establish and maintain a high standard of internal controls and accounting practices in conformance with the Uniform Financial Reporting Manual of Virginia and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for governmental entities as promulgated by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

~~Regular quarterly financial statements and annual financial reports will present a summary of financial activity by governmental funds.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement is removed because it is redundant with the final statement in this section, "The County will provide the Board of Supervisors with quarterly General Fund and School Fund financial reports."*

An independent firm of certified public accountants will perform an annual financial and compliance audit according to generally accepted auditing standards; Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States; and Specifications for Audit of Counties, Cities and Towns issued by the Auditor of Public Accounts of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The County will hold a request for proposal process for audit services every five-years.

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement is to add a best practice to these policies.*

The County will maintain an audit committee comprised of the County Executive, or designee, the Superintendent of Schools, or designee, the Chief Financial Officer, two Board of Supervisors members and one School Board member. The committee's responsibility will be to review the financial statements and results of the independent audit and to communicate those results to the Board of Supervisors.

The County will annually seek the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

The County will provide the Board of Supervisors with quarterly General Fund and School Fund financial reports. ~~to include budget-to-actual comparisons for the current year, a report of transfers authorized by the County Executive, grant activity, and updated revenue and expenditure projections in the third quarterly report.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This removes "procedures" from this document, which is oriented towards "policies." Under the new statement, the Board may direct staff to modify the contents of the quarterly reports at any time without necessitating a change in this policy statement.*

## FUND BALANCE OR RESERVE POLICIES

The fund balance is built over years from savings to provide the County with working capital to enable it to finance unforeseen emergencies without borrowing. The County will maintain a fund balance for cash liquidity purposes that will provide sufficient cash flow to minimize the possibility of short-term tax anticipation borrowing.

At the close of each fiscal year, the unassigned General Fund's fund balance, plus the committed fund balance available for fiscal cash liquidity purposes, should be equal to no less than 10% of the County's

total operating revenues, which includes the General Fund plus the School Fund, less the General Fund transfer to the School Fund.

**Explanation of Change:** *This is to clarify the current calculation, not change it. As a best practice, this calculation is net of the General Fund transfer to the School Fund.*

The County does not intend, as a common practice, to use General Fund equity (unassigned fund balance) to finance current operations. If circumstances require the use of the unassigned fund balance that causes the balance to fall to a point below the 10% target level, the County will develop a plan during the annual budget adoption process to replenish the unrestricted fund balance to the 10% target level over a period of not more than three (3) years, as quickly as reasonably possible.

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement revises the timing for replenishment, which is intended to provide flexibility and at the same time state the urgency of replenishing the unassigned fund balance. Language is also consistent with proposed added language for the Budget Stabilization Reserve.*

In addition to maintaining the 10% target level as described above, at the close of each fiscal year, a target amount equal to ~~12%~~ 2% of the County's General Fund total operating revenues, which includes the General Fund plus the School Fund, less the General Fund transfer to the School Fund, shall be reserved as an unassigned Budget Stabilization Reserve. The Budget Stabilization Reserve is intended to be among the strategies available in a difficult budget year or unanticipated situation. This reserve may be used from time to time as necessary to meet unanticipated one-time emergencies and unanticipated expenditures required to pay ~~operating~~ costs necessary to maintain the quality or level of current services or to smooth/offset revenue fluctuations occurring within a fiscal year. The Budget Stabilization Reserve is not meant to be an ongoing source of funding for the operating budget and balances utilized should be replenished as quickly as reasonably possible.

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement a) proposes increasing the Budget stabilization Reserve from 1% to 2%, which is to help ensure the organization's and community's financial foundation and resilience, b) clarifies the calculation to be consistent with the calculation for the unassigned fund balance target, c) adds language to clarify the intent of the reserve, and d) removes the word "operating," as it could also be used for capital costs.*

~~The County should contribute to Capital Reserve periodically to provide flexibility in meeting debt service and capital requirements and to mitigate tax rate increases related to future capital projects.~~

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement is combined with the following statement.*

The Board of Supervisors may appropriate funds in excess of the unassigned 10% General Fund's fund balance policy level and the ~~4%~~ Budget Stabilization Reserve to the Capital Improvement Program in support of "pay-as-you-go" funding; or for other one-time uses. Appropriations to the Capital Improvement Program are intended to provide flexibility in meeting debt service and capital requirements and to mitigate tax rate increases related to future capital projects

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement a) includes typographical updates b) incorporates the prior statement as part of this one and updates terminology.*

At the close of each fiscal year before the County's audit is complete, all non-appropriated School Operating Fund's fund balance will be transferred into the General Fund-School Reserve Fund. The Board of Supervisors will maintain in the General Fund-School Reserve Fund an amount not greater than 2% of the current year's ~~Public Schools Division~~ adopted operating ~~budget~~ revenues. These funds will be available for ~~Public Schools Division~~ purposes subject to appropriation by the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors will transfer any funds in excess of that 2% to the CIP on an annual basis unless otherwise determined by the Board of Supervisors.

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement updates terminology for "Public Schools" and includes other typographical updates.*

The County will also establish targeted fund balances for other County funds, such as the Health ~~Care~~ Fund and the Children's Services Act Fund (CSA), to meet cash flow needs and to address unexpected expenditure or revenue shortfalls.

**Explanation of Change:** *Typographical update.*

## GRANTS POLICIES

The County shall seek to obtain grants that are consistent with County priorities.

The County will review and update the Grants Administrative Policy on a regular basis, and departments shall follow the procedures contained therein. The purpose of the Grants Administrative Policy is to ensure the efficient administration, operation, and financial management of grant programs, including related systems, internal controls, sub-recipient monitoring, communications, reporting, and auditing.

**Explanation of Change:** *This change is to provide clarity on the contents of the Grants Administrative Policy based on guidelines from GFOA.*

~~The County will identify all inter-governmental aid funding possibilities. However, b~~Before applying for or accepting either state or federal funding, the County will assess the merits of the program as if it were to be funded with local dollars. No grant will be accepted that will incur management and reporting costs greater than the grant and the County will work with Grantees to fully offset administrative costs when possible.

**Explanation of Change:** *This change is to a) clarify grants should be consistent with County priorities as noted in the first statement in this section, rather than all grants, and b) move a statement from the Revenue Policies to here.*

The County will attempt to recover all allowable costs – direct and indirect – associated with the administration and implementation of programs funded through inter-governmental aid. In the case of state and federally mandated programs, the County will attempt to obtain full funding for the service from the governmental entity requiring that the service be provided.

**Explanation of Change:** *This statement is moved from the Revenue Policies to here.*

*Policies Adopted: October 5, 1994 Amended: October 11, 2000; August 1, 2012; March 13, 2013; September 6, 2017, November 1, 2017, ~~and~~ January 6, 2021, and September 7, 2022.*