

# Long-Term Financial Policies And Tools

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# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

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This section identifies some of the major policies, long-term financial management tools and planning documents which serve as guidelines for decisions and contribute directly to the outstanding fiscal reputation of the County. Adherence to these policies historically has enabled the County to borrow funds at the lowest possible interest rates available in the municipal debt market.

Fairfax County is proud to have been named "one of the best-managed jurisdictions in America" by *Governing* Magazine and the Government Performance Project (GPP). The GPP conducted a comprehensive study evaluating the management practices of 40 counties across the country and Fairfax County received an overall grade of "A-," one of only two jurisdictions to receive this highest grade.

The keystone to the County's ability to maintain its fiscal integrity is the continuing commitment of the County's Board of Supervisors. This commitment is evidenced by the County Board's adoption in 1975 of *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management*, which remain the policy context in which financial decisions are considered and made. These principles relate primarily to the integration of capital planning, debt planning, cash management, and productivity as a means of ensuring prudent and responsible allocation of the County's resources.

In addition to the *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management*, this section includes an overview of the County's long-term financial policies with a brief description of policies relating to the budget guidelines, reserves, internal financial controls, debt management, risk management, information technology, and investments. Long-term financial management tools and planning documents used by the County are also briefly described.

## Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management

The *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management* adopted by the Board of Supervisors on October 22, 1975, endorsed a set of policies designed to contribute to the County's fiscal management and maintain the County's "triple A" bond rating. The County has maintained its superior rating in large part due to its firm adherence to these policies. The County's exceptional "triple A" bond rating gives its bonds an unusually high level of marketability and results in the County being able to borrow for needed capital improvements at low interest rates, thus realizing significant savings now and in the future for the citizens of Fairfax County.

From time to time the Board of Supervisors has amended the *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management* in order to address changing economic conditions and management practices. Prior to FY 2003, the last amendment to the *Ten Principles* was in August of 1988. Since that time the County has experienced dramatic shifts in the economy and witnessed significant changes to financial tools and the markets. In the last few years interest rates have reached historic lows. There have also been many new opportunities to accomplish major capital improvements through the use of alternative financing while maintaining the County's fiscal integrity as required by the *Ten Principles*. Accomplishments such as Metro station parking garages, construction of Route 28, the opening of commuter rail, and construction of government facilities have all been attained in addition to a robust bond construction program. In the last 10 years the County has approved over \$1.5 billion of new debt at referendum, primarily for Schools; and refunded over \$1.0 billion of debt achieving approximately \$50 million in savings. Implementation of a Master Lease program and judicious use of short-term lease purchases for computer equipment, copier equipment, school buses, and energy efficient equipment have permitted the County and the Schools to maximize available technology while maintaining budgetary efficiency.

In FY 2003, amendments to the *Ten Principles* were necessary to address these changed conditions. The availability of resources, the application of new tools, and the expectations of the marketplace require prudent and responsible management as reflected by the financial policies. Staying current allows the County to continue to maintain its superior position and fiscal integrity.

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

## Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management April 2002

1. **Planning Policy.** The planning system in the County will continue as a dynamic process, which is synchronized with the capital improvement program, capital budget and operating budget. The County's land use plans shall not be allowed to become static. There will continue to be periodic reviews of the plans at least every five years. Small area plans shall not be modified without consideration of contiguous plans. The Capital Improvement Program will be structured to implement plans for new and expanded capital facilities as contained in the County's Comprehensive Plan and other facility plans. The Capital Improvement Program will also include support for periodic reinvestment in aging capital and technology infrastructure sufficient to ensure no loss of service and continued safety of operation.
2. **Annual Budget Plans.** Annual budgets shall continue to show fiscal restraint. Annual budgets will be balanced between projected total funds available and total disbursements including established reserves.
  - a. A managed reserve shall be maintained in the General Fund at a level sufficient to provide for temporary financing of critical unforeseen disbursements of a catastrophic emergency nature. The reserve will be maintained at a level of not less than two percent of total Combined General Fund disbursements in any given fiscal year.
  - b. A Revenue Stabilization Fund (RSF) shall be maintained in addition to the managed reserve at a level sufficient to permit orderly adjustment to changes resulting from curtailment of revenue. The ultimate target level for the RSF will be three percent of total General Fund Disbursements in any given fiscal year. After an initial deposit, this level may be achieved by incremental additions over many years. Use of the RSF should only occur in times of severe economic stress. Accordingly, a withdrawal from the RSF will not be made unless the projected revenues reflect a decrease of more than 1.5 percent from the current year estimate and any such withdrawal may not exceed one half of the RSF fund balance in that year. Until the target level is reached, the Board of Supervisors will allocate to the RSF a minimum of 40 percent of non-recurring balances identified at quarterly reviews.
  - c. Budgetary adjustments which propose to use available general funds identified at quarterly reviews should be minimized to address only critical issues. The use of non-recurring funds should only be directed to capital expenditures to the extent possible.
  - d. The budget shall include funds for cyclic and scheduled replacement or rehabilitation of equipment and other property in order to minimize disruption of budgetary planning from irregularly scheduled monetary demands.
3. **Cash Balances.** It is imperative that positive cash balances exist in the General Fund at the end of each fiscal year. If an operating deficit appears to be forthcoming in the current fiscal year wherein total disbursements will exceed the total funds available, the Board will take appropriate action to balance revenues and expenditures as necessary so as to end each fiscal year with a positive cash balance.
4. **Debt Ratios.** The County's debt ratios shall be maintained at the following levels:
  - a. Net debt as a percentage of estimated market value shall be less than 3 percent.
  - b. Debt service expenditures as a percentage of General Fund disbursements shall not exceed 10 percent. The County will continue to emphasize pay-as-you-go capital financing. Financing capital projects from current revenues is indicative of the County's intent to use purposeful restraint in incurring long-term debt.
  - c. For planning purposes annual bond sales shall be structured such that the County's debt burden shall not exceed the 3 and 10 percent limits. To that end sales of general obligation bonds and general obligation supported debt will be managed so as not to exceed a target of \$200 million per year, or \$1 billion over 5 years, with a technical limit of \$225 million in any given year. Excluded from this cap are refunding bonds, revenue bonds or other non-General Fund supported debt.

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

## Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management April 2002

- d. For purposes of this principle, debt of the General Fund incurred subject to annual appropriation shall be treated on a par with general obligation debt and included in the calculation of debt ratio limits. Excluded from the cap are leases secured by equipment, operating leases, and capital leases with no net impact to the General Fund.
- e. For purposes of this principle, payments for equipment or other business property, except real estate, purchased through long-term lease-purchase payment plans secured by the equipment will be considered to be operating expenses of the County. Annual General Fund payments for such leases shall not exceed 3 percent of annual General Fund disbursements, net of the School transfer. Annual equipment lease-purchase payments by the Schools and other governmental entities of the County should not exceed 3 percent of their respective disbursements.
5. **Cash Management.** The County's cash management policies shall reflect a primary focus of ensuring the safety of public assets while maintaining needed liquidity and achieving a favorable return on investment. These policies have been certified by external professional review as fully conforming to the recognized best practices in the industry. As an essential element of a sound and professional financial management process, the policies and practices of this system shall receive the continued support of all County agencies and component units.
6. **Internal Controls.** A comprehensive system of financial internal controls shall be maintained in order to protect the County's assets and sustain the integrity of the County's financial systems. Managers at all levels shall be responsible for implementing sound controls and for regularly monitoring and measuring their effectiveness.
7. **Performance Measurement.** To ensure Fairfax County remains a high performing organization all efforts shall be made to improve the productivity of the County's programs and its employees through performance measurement. The County is committed to continuous improvement of productivity and service through analysis and measurement of actual performance objectives and customer feedback.
8. **Reducing Duplication.** A continuing effort shall be made to reduce duplicative functions within the County government and its autonomous and semi-autonomous agencies, particularly those that receive appropriations from the General Fund. To that end, business process redesign and reorganization will be encouraged whenever increased efficiency or effectiveness can be demonstrated.
9. **Underlying Debt and Moral Obligations.** The proliferation of debt related to but not directly supported by the County's General Fund shall be closely monitored and controlled to the extent possible, including revenue bonds of agencies supported by the General Fund, the use of the County's moral obligation and underlying debt.
  - a. A moral obligation exists when the Board of Supervisors has made a commitment to support the debt of another jurisdiction to prevent a potential default, and the County is not otherwise responsible or obligated to pay the annual debt service. The County's moral obligation will be authorized only under the most controlled circumstances and secured by extremely tight covenants to protect the credit of the County. The County's moral obligation shall only be used to enhance the credit worthiness of an agency of the County or regional partnership for an essential project, and only after the most stringent safeguards have been employed to reduce the risk and protect the financial integrity of the County.
  - b. Underlying debt includes tax supported debt issued by towns or districts in the County, which debt is not an obligation of the County, but nevertheless adds to the debt burden of the taxpayers within those jurisdictions in the County. The issuance of underlying debt, insofar as it is under the control of the Board of Supervisors, will be carefully analyzed for fiscal soundness, the additional burden placed on taxpayers and the potential risk to the General Fund for any explicit or implicit moral obligation.
10. **Diversified Economy.** Fairfax County must continue to diversity its economic base by encouraging commercial and, in particular, industrial employment and associated revenues. Such business and industry must be in accord with the plans and ordinances of the County.

## LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

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Through the application of the *Ten Principles*, careful fiscal planning and sound financial management, Fairfax County has achieved a "triple A" bond rating from the three leading rating agencies. The County has held a Aaa rating from Moody's Investors Service since 1975, a AAA rating from Standard and Poor's Corporation since 1978, and a AAA rating from Fitch Investors Services since 1997. Fairfax County is one of only 23 counties in the country with "triple A" bond ratings from all three rating agencies.

Only a handful of jurisdictions, including Fairfax County, have received a "triple A" bond rating from Moody's Investors Service, Standard and Poor's Corporation, and Fitch Investors Services:

- only 23 of the nation's 3,107 counties
- only 9 of the nation's 50 states
- only 17 of the nation's 22,529 cities

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

## LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES

The following is a description of the primary financial policies that are used to manage the County's resources and contribute to its outstanding fiscal condition. Each year during budget adoption, the Board of Supervisors reaffirms and approves budget guidelines for the next budget year. These guidelines then serve as a future budget development tool.

### Budget Guidelines

**On April 21, 2003, the Board of Supervisors reaffirmed and approved Budget Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2005.** These guidelines are considered an important tool in the budget development process and are to be considered during future budget deliberations.

1. The Board directs the County Executive to develop a budget for Fiscal Year 2005 that limits increases in expenditures to projected increases in revenue.
2. Information on the FY 2005 revenue and economic outlook should be forwarded to the Board for discussion in late 2003 so guidance to the County Executive regarding the tax rate as well as the transfer to the Schools can be provided by the Board.
3. The available balances materializing at the Carryover and Third Quarter Reviews which are not required to support County expenditures of a critical nature or to address the Board's policy on the Revenue Stabilization fund should be held in reserve to offset future requirements.
4. In order to avoid structural imbalances between County resources and requirements, resources should be allocated with consideration for the continued availability of these funds:
  - Non-recurring funds will be directed toward non-recurring uses.
  - Only recurring resources may be targeted toward recurring expenses.
5. The County's policy concerning the utilization of recurring and non-recurring funds should be followed by the School Board.
6. The Board directs the following reviews of County programs:

#### **OFFICE OF PARTNERSHIPS**

Staff is directed to review the County's Office of Partnerships to explore options to provide these services under a foundation rather than through a County agency. The review and recommendations should be provided to the Board of Supervisors to be considered as part of the FY 2005 Advertised Budget Plan.

#### **PUBLIC SAFETY SALARIES**

County staff is directed to undertake a comprehensive review of public safety salaries. In addition to comparing Fairfax County compensation with surrounding jurisdictions, we should explore the issue of Holiday Pay. The review and recommendations should be provided to the Board of Supervisors to be considered as part of the FY 2005 Advertised Budget Plan.

#### **MENTAL RETARDATION GRADS**

Acknowledging the work that has been done by the Human Services Council and the Community Services board regarding the study of the Mental Retardation (MR) graduate program, County staff is directed to undertake a review of these and other recommendations regarding the current and future cost of the program and options for enhancing the sliding fee scale to reduce the County's share of these costs. In addition, information should be provided to the Board regarding the impact of the growth of the MR graduate program on Mental Health and Alcohol & Drug Services rehabilitation programs.

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

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## **INCLUSION OF CERTIFICATION/OTHER SUPPLEMENTAL PAY IN RETIREMENT CALCULATION**

Staff is directed to undertake a review of the different types of certification and other supplemental pay that are not included in the regular salary base against which retirement contributions and benefits are calculated. This review should include certification pay, retention pay, recruiting bonuses and other items not included in the regular salary base.

The review, fiscal impact and recommendations should be provided to the Board of Supervisors to be considered as part of the FY 2005 Advertised Budget Plan.

## **ATHLETIC FIELD MAINTENANCE**

County staff is directed to work with the Athletic Council and other community groups to undertake a review of the Athletic Field Maintenance program including appropriate fees and the current Adopt-a-Field program, to determine a reasonable approach to implementing uniform field improvements and continuing maintenance. The review and recommendations should be provided to the Board of Supervisors to be considered as part of the FY 2005 Advertised Budget Plan.

## **PAY FOR PERFORMANCE**

Recognizing that in FY 2005 we will be entering the fifth year of the pay for performance program and that pay for performance systems typically have a four to five year "shelf-life" before changes are needed to address problems/conflicts, offset rating creep and reinvigorate the system. County staff in consultation with the Employees' Advisory Council, is directed to undertake a review of the program. The review and recommendation should be provided to the Board of Supervisors to be considered as part of the FY 2005 Advertised Budget Plan to allow for implementation of any significant reworking of the system in FY 2005.

## **HEALTH BENEFITS SUBSIDY**

The County Executive is directed to work with public safety and general county employees on further enhancements to the health benefits subsidy for retirees. In addition, the Board directs the County Executive to look at the County's retirement program with advice and recommendations from the Retirement Boards of Trustees and encourages the School Board to conduct the same review of its retirement programs. The review and recommendation should be provided to the Board of Supervisors to be considered as part of the FY 2005 Advertised Budget Plan.

## **BUDGET PROCESS REDESIGN**

County staff is directed to undertake a redesign of the County budget process consistent with the efforts already initiated by the County Executive to undertake a strategic planning process and linkage of strategic planning goals to the annual budget. The redesign should more clearly communicate funding decisions based on County priorities, track and communicate program performance as well as create measures to identify County-wide successes across departments and agencies. The first phases of this redesign should be included in the FY 2005 Advertised Budget Plan.

## **COMPETITIVE SOURCING**

Include the previously approved guidelines for review of Competitive Sources, approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 10, 2003, in the FY 2005 Budget Guidelines. The review and recommendations should be provided to the Board of Supervisors to be considered as part of the FY 2005 Advertised Budget Plan.

# **LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS**

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## **Managed Reserve**

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors to maintain a managed reserve in the General Fund at a level sufficient for temporary financing of unforeseen emergency needs and to permit orderly adjustment to changes resulting from termination of revenue sources through actions of other governmental bodies. The reserve will be maintained at a level not less than 2.0 percent of total General Fund disbursements in any given year. This reserve has been maintained since FY 1983.

## **Revenue Stabilization Fund**

On September 13, 1999, the Board of Supervisors established a Revenue Stabilization Fund to provide a mechanism for maintaining a balanced budget without resorting to tax increases and expenditure reductions that aggravate the stresses imposed by the cyclical nature of the economy. The Revenue Stabilization Fund has a target balance of 3.0 percent of General Fund disbursements. The Fund is separate and distinct from the County's 2.0 percent Managed Reserve; however, the aggregate balance of both reserves shall not exceed 5.0 percent of General Fund disbursements. It is anticipated that the target balance of 3.0 percent of General Fund disbursements will be accomplished by transferring funds from the General Fund over a multi-year period. The Board of Supervisors determined that a minimum of 40 percent of non-recurring balances identified at quarterly reviews would be transferred to the Revenue Stabilization Fund. Additionally, the Fund will retain the interest earnings on this balance, and the retention of interest will continue until the Reserve is fully funded.

The Revenue Stabilization Fund will not be used as a method of addressing the demand for new or expanded services; it is solely to be used as a financial tool in the event of an economic downturn. Therefore, three specific criteria that must be met in order to make a withdrawal from the Fund include:

- Projected revenues must reflect a decrease greater than 1.5 percent from the current year estimate,
- Withdrawals must not exceed one-half of the fund balance in any fiscal year, and
- Withdrawals must be used in combination with spending cuts or other measures.

## **Other Reserves**

In addition, to the Managed Reserve and the Revenue Stabilization Fund, the County has several reserves maintained within various funds. These reserves are necessary to provide a source of funding for planned replacement of major equipment or infrastructure over several years, or to maintain the necessary debt service reserves required to support the County's obligations on bond funded programs. For example, the County maintains a vehicle replacement reserve within the Department of Vehicle Services to plan for vehicle replacement once age, mileage, and condition criteria have been met. General Fund monies are set aside each year over the life of the existing vehicle in order to pay for its replacement. Helicopter, ambulance, and large apparatus replacement funds are also maintained for the Police and Fire and Rescue Departments. Fixed payments to these reserves are made annually to ensure funding is available at such time that the equipment must be replaced. The County also manages a Personal Computer (PC) Replacement Fund. This reserve ensures that funding is available for future replacements to remain consistent with the advancements of technology. Another example of a County maintained reserve is the Sewer Bond Debt Reserve which was established to provide one year of principle and interest for the 1993 and 1996 bond series as required by the Sewer System's General Bond Resolution.

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

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## Third Quarter/Carryover Reviews

The Department of Management and Budget conducts a Third Quarter Review on the current year Revised Budget Plan which includes a detailed analysis of expenditure requirements. All operating agencies and funds are reviewed during the Third Quarter Review and adjustments are made to the budget as approved by the Board of Supervisors. Section 15.1162.1 of the *Code of Virginia* requires that a public hearing be held prior to Board action when the potential increases in the appropriation are greater than \$500,000 or 1.0 percent of revenues. The Board's adopted budget guidelines indicate that any balances identified throughout the fiscal year, which are not required to support expenditures of a legal or emergency nature, must be held in reserve.

Carryover represents the analysis of balances remaining from the prior year and provision for the appropriation of funds to cover the prior year's legal obligations (encumbered items) in the new fiscal year without loss of continuity in processing payments. Carryover extends the prior year funding for the purchase of specific items previously approved in the budget process, but for which procurement could not be obtained for various reasons. All operating agencies and funds are reviewed during the Carryover Review and adjustments are made to the budget as approved by the Board of Supervisors. Again, the *Code of Virginia* requires that a public hearing be held prior to Board action when the potential increases in the appropriation are greater than \$500,000 or 1.0 percent of revenues.

## Cash Management/Investments

Maintaining the safety of the principal of the County's public investment is the highest priority in the County's cash management policy. The secondary and tertiary priorities are the maintenance of liquidity of the investment and optimization of the rate of return within the parameters of the *Code of Virginia*, respectively. Funds held for future capital projects are invested in accordance with these objectives, and in such a manner so as to ensure compliance with U.S. Treasury arbitrage regulations. A senior interagency Investment Committee develops investment policies and oversees the effectiveness of portfolio management in meeting policy goals.

The County maintains cash and temporary investments in several investment portfolios. A general investment portfolio holds investments purchased by the County for the pooled cash and general obligation bond funds. Investments for this portfolio are held by a third-party custodian. Other portfolios are managed to meet the specific needs of County entities, such as, the Resource Recovery Bonds, the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority Parking Revenue Bonds (the Vienna and Huntington Metrorail Projects), Sewer Revenue Bonds, Housing Bonds, and the Equipment Acquisitions Fund. Investments for all portfolios are held by a third-party custodian.

Except where prohibited by statutory or contractual constraints, the General Fund is credited with interest earned in the general investment pool. Non-General Fund activities that earn interest through centralized investment management contribute to the cost of portfolio management by way of a market-based administrative charge that accrues to the General Fund.

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

## Debt Management/Capital Improvement Planning

The Virginia Constitution requires that long-term debt pledged by the full faith and credit of the County can only be approved by voter referendum. There is no statutory limit on the amount of debt the voters can approve. It is the County's own policy to manage debt within the guidelines identified in the *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management*. Specifically, debt service expenditures as a percentage of General Fund disbursements should remain under 10.0 percent and the percentage of debt to estimated market value of assessed property should remain under 3.0 percent. The County continues to maintain these debt ratios, as illustrated below:

### Net Debt as a Percentage of Market Value of Taxable Property

<u>Fiscal Year Ending</u>	<u>Net Bonded Indebtedness</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Estimated Market Value</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
2000	\$1,380,266,450	\$92,692,600,000	1.49%
2001	1,442,682,525	101,048,500,000	1.43%
2002	1,655,613,600	113,824,500,000	1.45%
2003 (est.)	1,709,079,675	128,912,700,000	1.33%
2004 (est.)	1,720,578,252	142,973,800,000	1.20%

<sup>1</sup> Beginning in FY 2003, the ratio includes outstanding Lease Revenue bonds for the Pennino and Herrity Buildings and outstanding Certificates of Participation for the South County Government Center in addition to General Obligation Bonds, Literary Loans and Special Revenue Bonds for Community Centers. In addition, a sale of \$217.23 million for FY 2004 has been included for projection purposes.

### Debt Service Requirements as a Percentage of Combined General Fund Disbursements

<u>Fiscal Year Ending</u>	<u>Debt Service Requirements</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>General Fund Disbursements</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
2000	\$176,004,197	\$1,982,577,128	8.9%
2001	183,740,487	2,148,334,971	8.6%
2002	190,097,946	2,292,016,724	8.3%
2003 (est.)	212,106,642	2,490,747,927	8.5%
2004 (est.)	220,216,948	2,559,804,213	8.6%

<sup>1</sup> Beginning in FY 2003, the ratio includes debt service on Lease Revenue bonds for the Pennino and Herrity Buildings and Certificates of Participation for the South County Government Center in addition to General Obligation Bonds, Literary Loans and Special Revenue Bonds for Community Centers.

Per capita debt is also an important measure used in analyses of municipal credit. Fairfax County has historically had moderate to low per capita debt and per capita debt as a percentage of per capita income due to its steady population growth, and growth in the assessed valuation of property and personal income of residents, combined with a record of rapid repayment of capital debt. Per capita debt as a percentage of per capita income as of June 30, 2002 was 3.03 percent and has remained less than 4.0 percent since 1981.

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

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The *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management* establish as a financial guideline a self-imposed limit on the level of the average annual bond sale. Actual bond issues are carefully sized with a realistic assessment of the need for funds, while remaining within the limits established by the Board of Supervisors. In addition, the actual bond sales are timed for the most opportune entry into the financial markets.

The policy guidelines enumerated in the *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management* also express the intent of the Board of Supervisors to encourage greater industrial development in the County and to minimize the issuance of underlying indebtedness by towns and districts located within the County.

It is County policy to balance the need for public facilities, as expressed by the countywide land use plan, with the fiscal capacity of the County to provide for those needs. The five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP), submitted annually to the Board of Supervisors, is the vehicle through which the stated need for public facilities is analyzed against the County's ability to pay and stay within its self-imposed debt guidelines as articulated in the *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management*. The CIP is supported largely through long-term borrowing that is budgeted annually in debt service or from General Fund revenues on a pay-as-you-go basis.

## Pay-as-you-go Financing

Although a number of options are available for financing the proposed capital improvement program, including bond proceeds and grants, it is the policy of the County to balance the use of the funding sources against the ability to utilize current revenue or pay-as-you-go financing. While major capital facility projects are funded through the sale of general obligation bonds, the Board of Supervisors, through its *Ten Principles of Sound Financial Management*, continues to emphasize the importance of maintaining a balance between pay-as-you-go financing and bond financing for capital projects. Financing capital projects from current revenues indicates the County's intent to show purposeful restraint in incurring long-term debt. No explicit level or percentage has been adopted for capital projects from current revenues as a portion of either overall capital costs or of the total operating budget. The decision for using current revenues to fund a capital project is based on the merits of the particular project in relation to an agreed upon set of criteria. It is the Board of Supervisors' policy that non-recurring revenues should not be used for recurring expenditures.

## Risk Management

Continuing growth in County assets and operations perpetuates the potential for catastrophic losses resulting from inherent risks that remain unidentified and unabated. In recognition of this, the County has adopted a policy of professional and prudent management of risk exposures.

To limit the County's risk exposures, a Risk Management Steering Committee was established in 1986 to develop appropriate policies and procedures. The County Risk Manager is responsible for managing a countywide program. The program objectives are as follows:

- ◆ To protect and preserve the County's assets and workforce against losses that could deplete County resources or impair the County's ability to provide services to its citizens.
- ◆ To institute all practical measures to eliminate or control injury to persons, loss to property or other loss-producing conditions.
- ◆ To achieve such objectives in the most effective and economical manner.

While the County's preference is to fully self-insure, various types of insurance such as workers' compensation, automobile, and general liability insurance remain viable alternatives when they are available at an affordable price.

# **LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS**

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## **Pension Plans**

The County funds the retirement costs for four separate retirement systems including: Educational Employees Supplemental Retirement System, Police Officers Retirement System, Fairfax County Employees' Retirement System and Uniformed Retirement System. These retirement systems are administered by the County and are made available to Fairfax County government and school employees in order to provide financial security when they reach an older age or cannot work due to disability. In addition, professional employees of the Fairfax County School Board participate in a plan sponsored and administered by the Virginia Retirement System. The Board of Supervisors reviews the Police Officers Retirement System, Fairfax County Employees' Retirement System and the Uniformed Retirement System plans annually and takes action to fund the County's obligation based on a corridor approach to employer contributions. The corridor approach requires that the systems funding ratios fall within a minimum funding ratio of 90 percent and a maximum funding ratio of 120 percent. In the corridor method of funding a fixed contribution rate is assigned to each System and the County contributes at the fixed rate unless the System's funding ratio falls outside of a pre-selected corridor. Once outside the corridor, the County rate is either increased or decreased to accelerate or decelerate the funding until the ratio falls back within the corridor. The only other changes to employer contributions will be if benefit enhancements are approved. The corridor approach adds stability to the employer contribution rates and at the same time provides adequate funding for the Retirement Systems.

The School Board reviews the Educational Employees Supplemental Retirement plan annually and takes action to fund the County's obligation based on actuarial valuations that are usually performed annually. Benefits are defined in each system according to the requirements of an ordinance of the Fairfax County Code. Each retirement system is governed by a Board of Trustees whose function is the general administration and operation of the system. Each Board has full power to invest and reinvest the accumulated monies created by the systems in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth as they apply to fiduciaries investing such funds. Investment managers are hired by each Board and operate under the direction of the Boards' investment objectives and guidelines. Each Board meets once a month to review the financial management of the funds and to rule on retirement applications.

## **Grants**

County policy requires that all applications and acceptance of grant funds over \$5,000 must be approved by the Board of Supervisors. Each grant application is reviewed for the appropriateness and desirability of the program or service. Upon completion of the grant, programs are reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether the program should be continued utilizing County funds. The County has no obligation to continue either grant-funded positions or grant-funded programs, if continued grant funding is not available.

On November 20, 2000, the Board of Supervisors established a new County policy for grant applications and awards of \$5,000 or less that meet certain requirements. If a grant is \$5,000 or less, does not require a Local Cash Match, does not create new positions, and if the grantor does not require Board of Supervisors' approval, the agency can work directly with the Department of Management and Budget to receive the award and reallocate funding from the anticipated/unanticipated reserve directly to the agency. For any grant that does not meet all of the specified criteria, the agency must obtain Board of Supervisors' approval in order to apply for or accept the grant award.

## **Contributory Policies**

To improve the general health and welfare of the community, as well as leverage scarce resources, it is the policy of the Board of Supervisors to make General Fund appropriations of specified amounts to various nonsectarian, nonprofit, or quasi-government entities. Because public funds are being appropriated, funds provided to designated contributory agencies are currently made available contingent upon submission and review of financial reports. This oversight activity includes program reporting requirements that require designated contributories to describe accurately, in a manner prescribed by the County Executive, the level and quality of services provided to County residents.

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

## Information Technology

The following ten strategic directions are fundamental principles upon which Fairfax County will base its Information Technology (IT) decisions in the upcoming years. These are intended to serve as guidelines to assist County managers in applying information technology to achieve business goals.

### Ten Fundamental Principles of Information Technology

In addition to the Department of Information Technology's Mission and Goals, Fairfax County Information Technology (IT) projects and processes are guided by ten fundamental principles approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1996, and updated in 2003.

1. Our ultimate goal is to provide citizens, the business community, and County employees with timely, convenient access to appropriate information and services through the use of technology.
2. Business needs drive information technology solutions. Strategic partnerships will be established between the stakeholders and County so that the benefits of IT are leveraged to maximize the productivity of County employees and improve customer services.
3. Evaluate business processes for redesign opportunities before automating them. Use new technologies to make new business methods a reality. Exploit functional commonality across organizational boundaries.
4. Manage Information Technology as an investment.
  - Annually allocate funds sufficient to cover depreciation to replace systems and equipment before life-cycle end. Address project and infrastructure requirements through a multi-year planning and funding strategy.
  - Manage use of funds at the macro level in a manner that provides for optimal spending across the investment portfolio aligned to actualized project progress.
  - Look for cost-effective approaches to improving "legacy systems". Designate systems as "classic" and plan their modernization. This approach will help extend investments and system utility.
  - Invest in education and training to ensure the technical staffs in central IT and user agencies understand and can apply current and future technologies.
5. Implement contemporary, but proven, technologies. Fairfax County will stay abreast of emerging trends through an ongoing program of technology evaluation. New technologies often will be introduced through pilot projects where both the automation and its business benefits and costs can be evaluated prior to any full-scale adoption.
6. Hardware and software shall adhere to open (vendor-independent) standards and minimize proprietary solutions. This approach will promote flexibility, inter-operability, cost effectiveness, and mitigate the risk of dependence on individual vendors.
7. Provide a solid technology infrastructure as the fundamental building block of the County's IT architecture to support reliability, performance and security of the County's information assets. Manage and maintain the enterprise network as an essential communications channel connecting people to information and process via contemporary server platforms and workstations. It will provide access for both internal and external connectivity; will be flexible, expandable, and maintainable; be fully integrated using open standards and capable of providing for the unimpeded movement of data, graphics, image, video, and voice.
8. Approach IT undertakings as a partnership of central management and agencies providing for a combination of centralized and distributed implementation. Combine the responsibility and knowledge of central management, agency staff, as well as outside contract support, within a consistent framework of County IT architecture and standards. Establish strategic cooperative arrangements with public and private enterprises to extend limited resources.

# LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS

9. Consider the purchase and integration of top quality, commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) software requiring minimal customization as the first choice to speed the delivery of new business applications. This may require redesigning some existing work processes to be compatible with beneficial common practice capabilities inherent in many off-the-shelf software packages, and, achieves business goals. In consideration of this, it is recognized that certain county agencies operate under business practices that have in established in response to specific local interpretations and constraints and that in these instances, the institutionalization of these business practices may make the acquisition of COTS software not feasible. Develop applications using modern, efficient methods and laborsaving tools in a collaborative application development environment following the architectural framework and standards. An information architecture supported by a repository for common information objects (e.g., databases, files, records, methods, application inventories); repeatable processes and infrastructures will be created, shared and reused.
10. Capture data once in order to avoid cost, duplication of effort and potential for error and share the data whenever possible. Establish and use common data and common databases to the fullest extent. A data administration function will be responsible for establishing and enforcing data policy, data sharing and access, data standardization, data quality, identification and consistent use of key corporate identifiers.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND PLANNING DOCUMENTS

This section is intended to provide a brief description of some of the financial management tools and long-range planning documents used by the County.

### Budget

The primary financial management tool used by the County is the annual budget process. This involves a comprehensive examination of all expenditure and revenue programs of the County, complete with public hearings and approval by the Board of Supervisors.

### Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

The Board of Supervisors annually considers and adopts a five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) which supports and implements the Comprehensive Plan. The CIP includes five years of project planning and forecasts project requirements for an additional five-year period. The CIP helps to balance the need for public facilities identified by the Comprehensive Plan with the County's fiscal resources and serves as a planning guide for the construction of general County facilities, schools, and public utilities. The CIP process provides a framework for development of reliable capital expenditure and revenue estimates, as well as the timely scheduling of bond referenda.

The CIP is an integral element of the County's budgeting process. The Capital Budget is the foundation for the first year of the advertised five-year CIP. The remaining four years in the CIP serve as a general planning guide. Future planning requirements five years beyond the CIP period are also included. The CIP is supported largely through long-term borrowing, which is budgeted annually in debt service or from General Fund revenues on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Beginning in FY 2003 the Board of Supervisors approved a series of significant improvements to the capital planning process. For the first time the Board adopted the Principles of Sound Capital Improvement Planning and Criteria for Recommending Capital Projects. Among other things the principles establish the County's Comprehensive Plan as the basis for capital planning requirements and emphasize the principle of life-cycle planning for capital facilities. In FY 2004 this effort continues with the first time application of these principles and criteria to recommended projects. In addition significant improvements to the format of the CIP have been completed. Beginning in FY 2004, the CIP is presented at the same time and as an integral part of the Budget Plan, included on the distributed CD of the budget and on the County's website.

# **LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS**

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## **Revenue Forecast**

Revenue estimates are monitored on a monthly basis to identify any potential trends that would significantly impact the revenue sources. A Revenue Task Force meets regularly to review current construction trends, the number of authorized building permits, housing sales, mortgage rates, and other economic data which impact Real Estate Tax revenue collections. In addition, the Revenue Task Force uses statistical models to estimate such revenue categories as: the Personal Property Tax; Local Sales Tax; Business, Professional, and Occupational License Tax; Consumer Utility Tax; Automobile Decal Tax; and Recordation Tax.

## **Financial Forecast**

A forecast of Combined General Fund receipts and disbursements is developed as part of each year's budget process and is updated periodically. Individual and aggregate revenue categories, as well as expenditures, are projected by revenue and/or expenditure type. Historical growth rates, inflation assumptions, and County expenditure priorities are all used in developing the forecast. This tool is used as a planning document for developing the budget guidelines and for evaluating the future impact of current year decisions.

## **Fiscal Impact Review**

It is County policy that all items having potential fiscal impact be presented to the Board of Supervisors for review. Effective management dictates that the Board and County citizens be presented with the direct and indirect costs of all items as part of the decision making process. In addition to its preliminary review of items presented to the Board of Supervisors, County staff also review State and Federal legislative items, which might result in a fiscal or policy impact on the County.

## **Management Initiatives**

The County has undertaken several management initiatives in its ongoing mission to make its government more productive, streamlined, and efficient.

### **Information Technology Initiatives**

The County is committed to providing the necessary investment in information technology, realizing the critical role it plays in improving business processes and customer service. Fund 104, Information Technology Fund, was established to accelerate the redesign of business processes to achieve large-scale improvements in service quality and to provide adequate enterprise-wide technological infrastructure. Consequently, the County is consolidating its investments to accommodate and leverage technological advancements and growth well into the 21st century. Management continues to explore and monitor all areas of County government as potential candidates for further information technology enhancements and/or modifications.

### **Performance Measurement**

Beginning in FY 1998, Fairfax County management initiated a Performance Measurement system to ensure greater accountability to the citizens of Fairfax County, as well as provide better information for resource allocation decisions and enhance continuous improvement efforts. This system supports the regular collection of specific information regarding the results of service in Fairfax County. The County's performance measurement methodology links agency mission and cost center goals (broad) to quantified objectives (specific) of what will be accomplished during the fiscal year. The system places strong emphasis on these quantified objectives linked to a complete "Family of Measures" including output, efficiency, service quality, and outcome measures. The outcome measure is the most important as it reflects the benefits County services have on customers, both internal and external (citizens). The Performance Measurement initiative continues to evolve. In order to improve its effectiveness, it will be an integral component of agency strategic plans under development in FY 2003. The linkage of performance measures with agency mission and strategies will further enhance accountability.

# **LONG-TERM FINANCIAL POLICIES AND TOOLS**

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## **Performance Management/Pay for Performance**

In FY 2001, Fairfax County implemented a new performance management system for non-public safety employees. Based on ongoing dialogue between employees and supervisors regarding performance and expectations, the system focuses on using performance elements for each job class to link employees' performance with variable pay increases. FY 2002 was the last year for the cost-of-living adjustment for over 8,000 non-public safety employees so annual compensation adjustments are now based solely on performance. For the first three years (FY 2001-FY 2003), employees had the opportunity to earn pay increases ranging from 0-7 percent depending on their performance rating. As part of the FY 2004 budget adoption, the Board of Supervisors reduced pay for performance awards by 25 percent, effectively capping non-public safety pay increases at 5.25 percent. In addition, high-performing employees who are at the top of their pay range are eligible for a lump sum bonus of 2.25-3.75 percent. This is also a 25 percent reduction from the previous range of 3.0-5.0 percent. As with the Performance Measurement initiative, Pay for Performance will continue to be monitored and fine-tuned to achieve a system that is both effective and financially viable.

## **Strategic Planning**

At the beginning of FY 2003, the County Executive convened a Leadership Forum to begin a countywide strategic thinking and planning initiative. While a number of agencies already have strategic plans, the County Executive wants to ensure that all are linked to the County's Core Purpose and Vision Elements so that limited resources are appropriately allocated to achieve the community's objectives as articulated by the Board of Supervisors. By the fall of 2003, all agencies will have a clear strategic plan that connects all employees to the County's mission and vision.