

City of Lawrence

Debt Management and Fiscal Policy

General Policy

The Debt Management Policy Statement sets forth comprehensive guidelines for the financing of capital expenditures. It is the objective of the policies that (1) the City obtain financing only when desirable, (2) the process for identifying the timing and amount of debt financing be as efficient as possible and (3) the most favorable interest rate and other related costs be obtained.

Debt financing, to include general obligation bonds, special assessment bonds, revenue bonds, temporary notes, lease/purchase agreements, and other City obligations permitted to be issued or incurred under Kansas law, shall only be used to purchase capital assets that will not be acquired from current resources. The useful life of the asset or project shall exceed the payout schedule of any debt the City assumes. This allows for a closer match between those who benefit from the asset and those that pay for it.

To enhance creditworthiness and prudent financial management, the City is committed to systematic capital planning, intergovernmental cooperation and coordination, and long-term financial planning. Evidence of this commitment to capital planning will be demonstrated through adoption and periodic adjustment of the City's Capital Improvement Plan and the annual adoption of a multi-year Capital Improvement Budget.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEBT MANAGEMENT

The primary responsibility for making debt-financing recommendations rests with the Director of Finance. In developing such recommendations, the Finance Director shall be assisted by other City staff. The responsibilities of City staff shall be to:

- Consider the need for debt financing and assess progress on the current Capital Improvement Budget and any other program/improvement deemed necessary by the City Manager;
- Test adherence to this policy statement and to review applicable debt ratios listed in the Debt Issuance Guidelines,
- Review changes in federal and state legislation that affect the City's ability to issue debt and report such findings to the City Manager as appropriate;
- Review annually the provisions of ordinances authorizing issuance of general obligation bonds of the City;
- Review the opportunities for refinancing current debt; and,
- Recommend services by a financial advisor, bond trustees, bond counsel, paying agents and other debt financing service providers when appropriate.

In developing financing recommendations, the City staff shall consider:

- Options for interim financing including short term and inter-fund borrowing, taking into consideration federal and state reimbursements;
- Effects of proposed actions on the tax rate and user charges;
- Trends in bond markets structures;
- Trends in interest rates; and,
- Other factors as deemed appropriate.

USE OF DEBT FINANCING

Debt financing will not be considered appropriate for any recurring purpose such as current operating and maintenance expenditures. The City will use debt financing only for one-time capital improvement projects and unusual equipment purchases under the following circumstances:

- The project is included in the City's capital improvement budget and is in conformance with the City's general plan;
- The project is the result of growth-related activities within the community that require unanticipated and unplanned infrastructure or capital improvements by the City;
- The project's useful life, or the projected service life of the equipment, will be equal to or exceed the term of the financing;
- There are revenues sufficient to service the debt, whether from future property taxes, user fees, or other specified and reserved resources, debt supported by user fees, special assessments or special charges shall be preferred,
- The debt shall be primarily used to finance capital projects with a relatively long life, typically ten years or longer.
- The equipment is an item that is purchased infrequently, has an expected useful life of at least five years, and costs in excess of \$100,000.

STRUCTURE AND TERM OF DEBT FINANCING

Debt will be structured to match projected cash flows, minimize the impact on future property tax levies, and maintain a relatively rapid payment of principal. As a benchmark, the City shall strive to repay at least 50% of the initial principal amount within ten years.

General Obligation Bonds

The City shall use an objective analytical approach to determine whether it desires to issue new general obligation bonds. Generally, this process will compare ratios of key economic data. The goal will be for the City to maintain or enhance its existing credit rating.

These ratios shall include, at a minimum, debt per capita, debt as a percent of statutory debt limit, debt as a percent of appraised valuation, debt service payments as a percent of governmental expenditures, and the level of overlapping net debt of all local taxing jurisdictions. A set of ratios shall be adopted and itemized in the City's Debt Issuance Guidelines.

The decision on whether or not to issue new general obligation bonds shall, in part, be based on (a) costs and benefits, (b) the current conditions of the municipal bond market, and (c) the City's ability to issue new general obligation bonds as determined by the aforementioned benchmarks.

Revenue Bonds

For the City to issue new revenue bonds, projected annual revenues as defined by the ordinance authorizing such issuance, shall be a minimum of 125% of the issue's average annual revenue bond service or at a higher amount if required by the bond indentures. If necessary, annual adjustments to the City's rate structures will be considered in order to maintain the required coverage factor. Revenue bonds will be the preferred financing option for enterprise funds.

Special Assessment Bonds

The City shall maintain a watchful attitude over the issuance of special assessment bonds for benefit district improvements. The City's share of any benefit district project may not exceed more than 95% of any proposed costs related to a benefit district. The developer shall be required to deposit 25% of the costs allocated to the benefit district prior to authorization. In most cases, the debt will have a maximum term of ten years, however, a longer term may be allowed provided it does not exceed the life of the improvements included in the benefit district. The benefit district will be assigned costs such as administration, engineering, financing and legal associated with the formation of the district and issuance of any debt.

Debt Issuance With Intergovernmental Agencies

The City will typically not use of its debt capacity for projects by entities or other special purpose units of government that have the ability to issue tax exempt debt. The City's issuance of debt will be made only (1) after the prior commitment of the full assets and resources of the authority to debt service; (2) if project revenues, or development authority revenues pledged to debt service, are at least 115% of debt service; (3) if debt service reserves provided by the authority's own resources are equal to at least six months debt service; and, (4) if all other viable means financing have been examined. The City will also enter into arrangements with other governmental entities where a portion of the project costs will be reimbursed by the other government. An agreement as to how the project costs will be allocated and reimbursements made must be approved by the governing bodies.

Structure of Debt Obligations

The City normally shall issue bonds with an average life of 10 years or less for general obligation and special assessment bonds and 10-20 years for revenue bonds. The typical structure of general obligation bonds will result in even principal and interest payments over the term of the debt. There shall be no "balloon" bond repayment schedules, which consist of low annual payments and one large payment of the balance due at the end of the term. There shall always be at least interest paid in the first fiscal year after a bond sale. In cases where related revenues may not occur for several years, it may be desirable to capitalize the interest by increasing the size of the issue and deferring the principal payments so that only interest is paid on the debt for the first few years.

Call Provisions

Call provisions for bond issues will be evaluated based upon current market conditions. All bonds shall be callable only at par.

Variable Rate Long-Term Obligations

The City may choose to issue bonds that pay a rate of interest that varies according to pre-determined formula or results from a periodic remarketing of the securities, consistent with state law and covenants of pre-existing bonds, and depending on market conditions.

DEBT ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCING

Capital Improvement Budget

A Capital Improvement Budget shall be prepared and submitted to the City Commission annually. The budget shall provide a list of projects and the means of financing. The budget should cover a five-year period of time. The projects included in the budget should be part of the City's Capital Improvement Plan. Projects must be in either the Capital Improvement Budget or Plan to be authorized.

Bond Fund

Generally, payment of general obligation bonds and special assessment bonds shall be from the City's Bond & Interest Fund. However, in situations where General Obligation bonds are to be paid from user fees or sales taxes, bond payments should be made from the fund that receives the revenue. The minimum fund balance in the Bond & Interest Fund will be maintained at a level equal to or greater than 50% of the total principal and interest payable from that Fund for the upcoming year.

Reserve Funds

Adequate operating reserves are important to insure the functions of the City during economic downturns. The City shall budget a contingency reserve in the General Fund of no less than \$150,000. The City will maintain working capital in an enterprise fund sufficient to finance 120 days of operations, if the fund supports debt payments. In addition, all reserves specified by bond indentures must be maintained. The Equipment Reserve Fund will be funded sufficiently to ensure that adequate funds are available to purchase replacement equipment on a timely basis.

Finance Department

It shall be the responsibility of the Finance Department to prepare the Preliminary and final Official Statements. The City Clerk is responsible for collecting and maintaining all supporting documentation such as minutes of the City Commission meetings and relevant resolutions and ordinances. In the case of general obligation bonds, an estimate of the mill levy required to pay off the debt should be provided to the City Commission. The department will also be responsible following applicable secondary disclosure requirements.

Investments

The bond proceeds will be invested in accordance with the City's investment policy. Adherence to the guidelines on arbitrage shall be followed, which at times, may require that the investment yield be restricted. In most cases, the investment will be selected to maximize interest with the assumption that the City will meet the IRS spend down requirement that allows for an exemption from arbitrage calculations.

Bond Counsel

The City will utilize external bond counsel for all debt issues. All debt issued by the City will include a written opinion by Bond Counsel affirming that the City is authorized to issue the debt, stating that the City has met all Federal and State constitutional and statutory requirements necessary for issuance, and determining the debt's federal income tax status. The City's Bond Counsel will be selected on a competitive basis.

Underwriter's Counsel

City payments for Underwriters Counsel will be authorized for negotiated sales by the Department of Finance on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature and complexity of the transaction and the needs expressed by the underwriters.

Financial Advisor

The City may utilize an external financial advisor. The utilization of the financial advisor for debt issuance will be at the discretion of the Director of Finance on a case-by-case basis. For each City bond sale, the financial advisor will provide the City with information on structure, pricing and underwriting fees for comparable sales by other issuers. The Financial Advisor will be selected on a competitive basis for a period not to exceed five years.

Temporary Notes

Use of short-term borrowing, such as temporary notes, will be undertaken until the final cost of the project is known or can be accurately projected. In some cases, projects might be funded with internal funds that will be reimbursed with bond funds at a future date.

Credit Enhancements

Credit enhancement (letters of credit, bond insurance, etc.) may be used if the costs of such enhancements will reduce the debt service payments on the bonds or if such an enhancement is necessary to market the bonds.

Competitive Sale of Debt

The City, as a matter of policy, shall seek to issue its temporary notes, general and revenue bond obligations through a competitive sale. In such instances where the City, through a competitive bidding for its bonds, deems the bids received as unsatisfactory or does not receive bids, it may, at the election of the City Commission, enter into negotiation for sale of the bonds. In cases where the circumstances of the bond issuance are complex or out of the ordinary, a negotiated sale may be recommended if allowed by State statute.

REFUNDING OF DEBT

Periodic reviews of all outstanding debt will be undertaken to determine refunding opportunities. Refunding will be considered (within federal tax law constraints) if and when there is a net economic benefit from the refunding or the refunding is needed in order to modernize covenants essential to operations and management or to restructure the payment of existing debt.

City staff and the financial advisor shall monitor the municipal bond market for opportunities to obtain interest savings by refunding outstanding debt. As a general rule, the present value savings of a particular refunding will exceed 3%.

Refunding issues that produce a net present value savings of less than 3% percent will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Refunding issues with negative savings will not be considered unless there is a compelling public policy objective.

CONDUIT FINANCINGS

The City may sponsor conduit financings in the form of Industrial Revenue Bonds for those activities (i.e., economic development, housing, health facilities, etc.) that have a general public purpose and are consistent with the City's overall service and policy objectives as determined by the City Commission.

All conduit financings must insulate the City completely from any credit risk or exposure and must first be approved by the City Manager before being submitted to the City Commission for consideration. The City should review the selection of the underwriter and bond counsel, require compliance with disclosure and arbitrage requirements, and establish minimum credit ratings acceptable for the conduit debt. Credit enhancement, such as insurance, may be required for certain issues.

ARBITRAGE LIABILITY MANAGEMENT

Federal arbitrage legislation is intended to discourage entities from issuing tax-exempt obligations unnecessarily. In compliance with the spirit of this legislation, the City will not issue obligations except for identifiable projects with good prospects of timely initiation. Temporary notes and subsequent general obligation bonds will be issued timely so that debt proceeds will be spent quickly.

Because of the complexity of arbitrage rebate regulations and the severity of non-compliance penalties, the City will be engage outside consultants to calculate potential arbitrage liability.

CREDIT RATINGS

Rating Agency Relationships

The Director of Finance shall be responsible for maintaining relationships with the rating agencies that assign ratings to the City's debt. This effort shall include providing periodic updates on the City's general financial condition along with coordinating meetings and presentations in conjunction with a new debt issuance.

Use of Rating Agencies

The City will obtain a rating from Moody's Investors Service. The Finance Director will recommend whether or not an additional rating shall be requested on a particular financing and which of the major rating agencies shall be asked to provide such a rating.

Rating Agency Presentations

Full disclosure of operations and open lines of communication shall be made to rating agencies used by the City. The Finance Director, with assistance of City staff, shall prepare the necessary materials and presentation to the rating agencies.

Financial Disclosure

The City is committed to full and complete financial disclosure, and to cooperating fully with rating agencies, institutional and individual investors, City departments and agencies, other levels of government, and the general public to share clear, comprehensible, and accurate financial information. The City is committed to meeting secondary disclosure requirements on a timely and comprehensive basis.

Official statements accompanying debt issues, Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, and continuous disclosure statements will meet (at a minimum), the standards articulated by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), the National Federation of Municipal Analysts, and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). The Finance Director shall be responsible for ongoing disclosure to established national information repositories and for maintaining compliance with disclosure standards promulgated by state and national regulatory bodies.

Appendix

City of Lawrence

Debt Management Policy

TERMINOLOGY

Arbitrage. Arbitrage refers to the rebate amount due to the Internal Revenue Service where funds received from the issuance of tax-exempt debt have been invested and excess interest earnings have occurred.

General Obligation Bonds. Bonds backed by the full faith and credit of the City. The taxing power may be an unlimited ad valorem tax or a limited tax, usually on real estate and personal property. A special tax rate levied for the Bond & Interest Fund annually to pay for general obligation LTO service. Because it is secured by an unlimited tax levy, this structure has strong marketability and lower interest costs.

Revenue Bonds. Bonds secured by revenues generated by the facility from dedicated user fees. Planning for such issues generally are more complex because future costs and revenues directly affect each other. Credit enhancements (e.g., insurance or letter of credit) may be needed because of the limited source of LTO service payments that may be available in outlying years.

Special Assessment Bonds. Bonds issued to develop facilities and basic infrastructure for the benefit of properties within the assessment district. Assessments are levied on properties benefited by the project. The issuer's recourse for nonpayment is foreclosure and the remaining LTO becomes the City's direct obligation.

Temporary Notes. Notes are issued to provide temporary financing, to be repaid by long-term financing. This type of bridge financing has a maximum maturity of four years under Kansas law.