



**City of Black Diamond**  
**Financial Management Policies**  
Per Resolution 08-560  
Updated for Long Term Planning Per Resolution 13-866

**Background and Purpose**

Financial policies provide guidelines for City of Black Diamond's leaders to ensure sound decision-making that safeguards core services while moving the community forward to achieve its vision. Good financial management ensures the City is able to withstand economic fluctuations, maintain focus on the entire financial picture, and adjust to the changing service needs of the community of Black Diamond.

This policy incorporates past financial practices in defining the current policies to be used by the City to meet its obligations and operate in a financially prudent manner. These policies have been established to provide general fiscal guidelines and are intended to provide sound direction in the management of the City's financial affairs.

**Operating Budget Policies**

General budget policies ensure service levels are reasonable and attainable and that budget documents detailing revenues and expenditures accurately reflect Council and community goals. The City of Black Diamond budget procedures are in compliance with the Revised Code of Washington, Chapter 35A.33. The City budgets annually on the calendar year beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> and Ending December 31<sup>st</sup>. The City Council shall adopt the budget by Ordinance at the fund level. Amendments to the budget that change fund totals will be adopted by the Council through an Ordinance, which is usually done mid-year and year-end.

**Citizen Involvement**

Citizen involvement shall be encouraged in the budget decision-making process through public hearings and study sessions.

**Service Level Determinations**

The City Council will establish municipal service levels and priorities for the upcoming year to guide staff in developing goals, objectives and budget proposals.

### **Conservative Budgeting**

The City will use a conservative budgeting approach and accepted analytical techniques including trending, per capita estimates of intergovernmental revenue and sales and property tax estimates based on prior year revenues adjusted for reasonable known growth factors. All positions will be budgeted for a full year.

### **Long Term Financial Planning**

Long-term financial planning is the process of aligning financial capacity with long-term service objectives. Financial forecasting is the process of projecting revenues and expenditures over a long-term period, using assumptions about economic conditions, future spending scenarios, and other salient variables.

The City shall, utilizing best available, cost-effective practices, engage in collaborative long-term financial planning as part of its overall budget process. To provide insight into future financial planning, such long-term financial planning should combine financial forecasting and analysis with a strategic operational perspective. The overall goals of long-term financial planning\* are to:

1. Balance-Budgets: Recognize the long-term impacts of today's decisions, setting the stage for balanced budgets in successive years by avoiding temporary solutions.
2. Reduce Conflict During Budgeting: Organize financial planning around a consensus-based set of service and financial goals, which sets boundaries on the budget process and creates an understanding of budget priorities.
3. Manage Growth: Optimize the City's ability to sustain operations and support service levels through a financial strategy that balances the needs of new and existing residents.
4. Stabilize Rates: Identify potential peaks and valleys in future revenues and expenses, allowing the City to take countervailing action ahead of time.
5. Provide Planned Services: Provide a process for making decisions about the level of service that government will provide over a multi-year period.

\*Note: See, Government Finance Officers Association, Long-Term Financial Planning for Governments, [www.gfoa.org/ltfp](http://www.gfoa.org/ltfp) - [ltfp@gfoa.org](mailto:ltfp@gfoa.org).

### **Maintenance of Facilities and Equipment**

Adequate maintenance and replacement of the City's facilities, equipment and technology will be provided for in either the operating or capital budget. As practicable, these expenses will be forecasted in an equipment replacement fund in the operating budget.

### **Sustainable Revenue Sources**

Ongoing operating program costs will not exceed the amount of ongoing revenue to finance those costs. The ongoing revenue will be identified along with new program costs. Cash balances in excess of the amount required to maintain strategic reserves will be used to fund one-time or non-recurring costs. In the event a fund has an emergency or economic downturn, resources from reserves may be used provided that they are replaced within the next five years.

### **Cost Recovery**

All taxpayers should not pay for a service that benefits only certain individuals. Therefore, fees will be established where possible to recover costs of such services or programs. Fees for services will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary and at least once a year. Based on Council direction, general taxpayer revenues may be used to subsidize all or a portion of the cost of services.

## **Fund Balance Reserve Policies**

Adequate fund balance and reserve levels help mitigate short-term emergencies and the effect of fluctuations in the economy, as well as assist in the financial strength of the City's bond ratings.

### **Operating Fund Balance Reserves**

The City's goal is to achieve a 10% reserve of anticipated expenditures in the General Fund Balance over the next five years or more. The reserve will be used to meet seasonal cash flow demands, provide a financial cushion in an economic downturn and meet emergency needs. In the event that the fund balance falls below that amount, the City will work to restore the balance with cost reductions, rate increases and other measures within five fiscal years.

### **Contingency Reserve Fund**

A Contingency Reserve Fund may also be maintained in accordance with state law (RCW 35.A.33.145) to meet any municipal extent that could have not been reasonably known at the time of adopting the annual budget. The target balance may be consistent with state law at \$.375 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, or approximately \$201,866 for Black Diamond in 2012.

## **Utility Operating Policies**

City utilities are enterprise funds and therefore need to maintain a revenue and expense structure that allows them to be self-supporting with adequate revenue that pays for maintenance, operations, debt service and capital costs. Adequate reserves, rate analyses and budgetary policies steer the utilities toward ongoing self-sufficiency.

### **Utility Rates and Fees**

As enterprise funds, all utilities will be self-supporting through rates, connection charges and other fees. Whenever practical, smaller utility increases will be considered more frequently, to avoid large jump in rate payer bills. Revenue will pay maintenance, operation, debt service and provide funds for capital repairs and improvements. Rates and fees will be reviewed at least biennially and adjusted to adequately reflect the cost of services. Every five years a detailed rate analysis will take place to ensure financial solvency of the utilities.

### **Utility Fund Reserves**

All utilities will be operated in a manner to ensure an ending annual reserved fund balance in an amount equal to 90 days of annual operational appropriations. In the event that the fund balance falls below that amount or a new utility is formed, the City will work to restore the balance to that level with cost reductions, rate increases and other measures within five fiscal years. The City may use reserves to “smooth” rate increases over a period of years and avoid large jumps in ratepayer bills.

## **Debt Management Policies**

The City will maintain adequate available debt capacity to ensure funding for major, high priority projects.

The City of Black Diamond is an infrequent issuer of debt. Debt is primarily used to finance large capital investments. Various state laws limit the City’s debt capacity. General obligation debt, backed by the full faith and credit of the City, is limited to 2.5% of the value of all taxable property within the City. That percentage includes councilmatic or non-voted debt (1.5% of property values) and Local Option Capital Asset Lending – a financing contract with the Office of the State Treasurer (39.94 RCW). Revenue bonds rely on a funding source, such as utility revenues, for debt repayment.

### **Interfund Loans**

The City will use interfund borrowing when such borrowing is cost effective, thereby eliminating the administrative cost of borrowing when adequate funds are available internally within the City’s own resources. The City will not charge interest for such interfund loans that are repaid within six months. For loans beyond six months, the City will set a reasonable timeline for repayment of between one and five years and use the State’s Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP) rate.

Interfund loans are permitted to cover cash flow for capital projects, where federal or state grants are approved, but there is a timing issue between city expenditures and the actual reimbursement by the granting agencies. Interfund loans shall be approved by Council with a resolution.

### **Bond Rating**

The City will strive to obtain the best bond rating possible to produce the lowest possible interest rate on each bond sale.

### **Cash Management and Investment Policies**

At any one time the City may have several million dollars in various funds that are not needed until some point in the future for operations, capital purchases or the repayment of debt. By placing these revenues in State's Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP) until the funds are needed, the City is able to earn interest that in turn serves as a revenue source to reduce costs to the community. Cash and investment policies reduce the City's investment risk.

#### **Cash Sufficiency**

The City will at all times maintain sufficient cash on hand to meet reasonably expected expenditures for the operating period.

#### **Investment Goals**

The City's idle cash will be invested on a continuous basis to maximize income. Priority will be given to legality of investment practices, the safety of the asset, followed by liquidity in case a need arises where the City needs access to the funds, followed by yield or return.

#### **Allocation of Investment Income**

Where permitted, the City will pool its cash resources for investment purposes. Investment income will be re-allocated to the participating funds as much as practical.

#### **Alternative Financing Schemes and Derivative Products**

The City of Black Diamond shall not utilize alternative financing schemes or derivative products to avoid restrictions imposed by law or to utilize tax loop holes.

### **Capital Projects and Planning Policies**

The City of Black Diamond owns considerable assets in roads, a sewer system, water system, storm water system, parks, buildings, equipment and other capital. The preservation, maintenance and future improvement of these facilities are a primary responsibility of the City. Capital items are defined as those projects and purchases costing more than \$5,000 and lasting three or more years.

#### **Capital Improvement Plan**

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a flexible, multi-year plan containing the City's planned capital improvement projects and the recommended financing methods for funding projects. All funds and departments are brought together in a single consolidated plan for an overall view of the City's capital improvement needs. The plan includes the capital facilities element of

the City of Black Diamond Comprehensive Plan required by the Growth Management Act and other capital projects that may not fit into the capital facilities category.

Capital projects typically apply to: 1) one-time costs for acquisition, construction, improvement, replacement or renovation of land, structures and major equipment; 2) expenditures which take place over two or more years; 3) funding with debt because of significant costs to be shared by current and future beneficiaries; and 4) systematic acquisition or repair and maintenance over an extended period of time.

### **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Participation**

Citizen participation in the Capital Improvement Program is a priority for the City. Among the activities which shall be conducted to address the need are the following:

- a) The Capital Improvement Plan shall be provided to the City Council in a timely manner to allow time for the Council members to review the proposal with constituents before it is considered for adoption
- b) Council study sessions on the Capital Improvement Plan will occur during the budget deliberations and shall be open to the public and advertised sufficiently in advance of the meetings to allow for the attendance of interested citizens.
- c) Prior to the adoption of the budget and Capital Improvement Plan, the City Council shall hold noticed public hearings to provide opportunities for citizens to express their opinions on the proposed plan.

All projects included in the Capital Improvement Plan shall be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

### **Internal Consistency**

The CIP will be consistent with the Capital Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan covering transportation, water, wastewater, stormwater, parks, recreation and general government facilities.

### **Funding Sources**

City staff will analyze funding sources for all proposed capital improvement projects, including grant opportunities. Under Washington law, the City can only expend revenues from the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) for capital items. Real estate excise tax of one-quarter of one percent on the sale of real property is currently dedicated to general government capital improvements and a second one-quarter of one percent is allocated to public works projects. Both allocations may be changed by the Council. These designated revenues are collected in the Special Revenue Funds and then transferred to the appropriate funds for expenditures of debt service or capital projects as budgeted. Each REET fund has established a targeted reserve of \$200,000 to \$250,000 to cover an emergency or economic downturn.

### **Relationship between Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan**

The Capital Improvement Plan, as distinguished from the Operating Budget, is a multi-year

financial plan for the acquisition, expansion, or rehabilitation of infrastructure, capital assets, or productive capacity of City services. Only those projects scheduled during the first year of the plan are adopted as part of the City's annual budget. Additionally, projects to be funded by bonds or "alternative funding" are budgeted when the funding is secured.

## **Accounting, Financial Reporting and Auditing Policies**

The City was incorporated in 1959, and operates under the laws of the State of Washington applicable to a Non-Charter code City classification adopted in 1990 with a Mayor-Council form of government. The City is a general-purpose governmental entity that provides general government services including law enforcement, fire, street improvement, parks and general administrative services. In addition the City owns and operates a water, sewer and drainage system.

### **Accounting and Budgeting System**

The City of Black Diamond will establish and maintain a high standard of accounting practices. Accounting and budgeting systems will at all times conform to the State of Washington Budgeting Accounting Reporting System (BARS) and federal and state regulations. Cities with populations under 25,000 are classified as category 2 cities and use the allowed accounting. The accounting is single-entry, cash basis accounting, which is a departure from generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). The city uses the revenue and expenditure classifications contained in the Budgeting, Accounting and Reporting System (BARS) manual. The manual is prescribed by the State Auditor's Office under the authority of Washington State Law, Chapter 43.09 RCW.

### **Financial Reporting**

**Reporting frequency** –Monthly budget and actual reports are distributed to all departments. Quarterly reports, as a minimum frequency, are presented to the City Council.

**Annual Report**-Will be completed by May 30<sup>th</sup> and is distributed to the City Council, departments and the State Auditor's Office.

**Reporting Improvements**-The City will strive to continue to make improvements in its financial reporting so that information available to the public, the City's governing bodies and other city departments is clear and the best available for sound financial decisions.

**Accounting System**-A comprehensive accounting system is maintained to provide all financial information necessary to effectively operate the City.

**Full Disclosure** -All public reports are to contain full and complete disclosure of all material matters.

### **Audit Policy**

The City will assist the State Auditor's Office in whatever way possible in conjunction with the preparation of the audit every two years and will implement modifications identified by the State Auditor to improve the City's internal controls and financial practices.