



# Town of Mansfield Department of Finance

**To:** Matt Hart, Town Manager  
**From:** Cherie Trahan, Director  
**Date:** August 24, 2012  
**Re:** Agenda Item – Fund Balance Policy

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At its August 23, 2012 meeting, the Finance Committee made one slight change to the proposed revision to the Fund Balance Goals. The final sentence in the last paragraph has been restated. Attached is a copy of the Fund Balance Policy highlighting the change.

## FUND BALANCE POLICY

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this policy is to set guidelines for fund balance to ensure financial security through the maintenance of a healthy reserve fund. The primary objective is to maintain a prudent level of financial resources to protect against reducing service levels or raising taxes and fees due to temporary revenue shortfalls or unpredicted one-time expenditures. The Town also seeks to maintain the highest possible credit ratings which are dependent, in part, on the Town's maintenance of a healthy fund balance.

### *General Policy*

The following fund type definitions will be used in reporting activity in the governmental funds for the Town:

- General Fund is used to account for all financial resources not accounted for and reported in another fund.
- Special revenue funds are used to account and report the proceeds of *specific revenue sources* that are *restricted* or *committed* to expenditure for *specific purposes* other than debt service or capital projects.
- Debt service funds are used to account for all financial resources restricted, committed or assigned to expenditure for principal and interest.
- Capital projects funds are used to account for all financial resources restricted, committed or assigned to expenditure for the acquisition or construction of capital assets.
- Permanent funds are used to account for resources restricted to the extent that only earnings, and not principal, may be used for purposes that support the Town's needs.

Fund Balance is essentially the difference between the assets and liabilities reported in a governmental fund. There are five separate components of fund balance, each of which identifies the extent to which the Town is bound to honor constraints on the specific purpose for which amounts can be spent.

- Nonspendable fund balance (inherently nonspendable, i.e. inventory)
- Restricted fund balance (externally enforceable limitations on use, i.e. grants)
- Committed fund balance (self-imposed limitations on use)
- Assigned fund balance (limitation resulting from intended use)
- Unassigned fund balance (residual net resources)

The first two components listed above are not addressed in this policy due to the nature of their restrictions. This policy is focused on the last three components comprising the unrestricted fund balance.

## *Provisions*

The Town will strive to maintain an unrestricted fund balance of seventeen (17) percent of the General Fund operating budget, with up to two (2) percent of the General Fund operating budget accounted for in unrestricted fund balance of other governmental funds. Any year-end operating surpluses will revert to unassigned fund balance for use in maintaining reserve levels.

1. Committed Fund Balance

The Town Council, as the Town's highest level of decision-making authority, may commit fund balance for specific purposes pursuant to constraints imposed by the formal actions taken, such a majority vote or resolution. These committed amounts cannot be used for any other purpose unless the Town Council removes or changes the specific use through the same type of formal action taken to establish the commitment. Town Council action to commit fund balance needs to occur within the fiscal reporting period, no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>; however, the amount can be determined subsequent to the release of the financial statements.

2. Assigned Fund Balance

Assigned Fund Balance includes amounts *intended* to be used for a specific purpose. The Finance Director is the official authorized to assign fund balance to a specific purpose as approved by this fund balance policy for the purpose of reporting these amounts in the annual financial statements. The primary use of this category for the General Fund is open encumbrances.

3. Unassigned Fund Balance

This is the residual classification of the general fund and includes all amounts not contained in the other classifications. Unassigned amounts are technically available for any purpose.

If the unrestricted fund balance falls below the goal or has a deficiency, the Town will develop a budgetary plan to return the reserve to the minimum level as soon as economic conditions allow. Revenue sources that will be considered to aid in the replenishment of fund balance will include but not be limited to: non-recurring revenues and yearend budget surpluses. The budgetary plan shall also identify the target timeframe, including milestones until reaching full replenishment. The Town recognizes that at its current level of fund balance, it will take a number of years to reach the desired level of fund balance but that is its goal.

Effective Date:

Approved Date: