



City of West Covina

Debt Management Policy

Adopted – May 19, 2020

CITY OF WEST COVINA DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Section 1 – Introduction

The purpose of this Debt Management Policy (Policy) is to establish guidelines for the issuance and management of debt for the City of West Covina and all affiliated city entities (collectively, the “City”). While the City prefers to finance projects on a pay-as-you-go basis, in the event debt is necessary, this Policy confirms the commitment of the Council, management, staff, advisors and other decision makers to adhere to sound financial management practices, including full and timely repayment of borrowing, and achieving the lowest possible cost of capital within prudent risk parameters.

Debt Issuance Priorities:

1. Achieve the lowest cost of capital while maintaining compliance with state and federal laws and regulations
2. Maintain a prudent level of financial risk and maintain the City’s sound financial position
3. Preserve future financial flexibility
4. Ensure that all debt is structured to maximize the benefit to both current and future taxpayers, ratepayers, and constituents of the City
5. Maintain full and complete financial disclosure and reporting
6. Obtain and maintain the highest practical credit ratings consistent with maximizing the benefit to both current and future taxpayers, ratepayers and constituents of the City.
7. Maintain good relations with all investors in City debt
8. Ensure that the City’s debt is consistent with the City’s planning goals and objectives and capital improvement program or budget, as applicable

This policy shall govern the issuance and management of all debt and lease financing funded from the capital markets (including private placement and bank loans), including the selection and management of related financial services and products and investment of bond and lease proceeds. While adherence to this policy is required in applicable circumstances, it is recognized that changes in the capital markets, agency programs and other unforeseen circumstances may from time to time produce situations that are not covered by this policy and will require modifications or exceptions to achieve policy goals. In these cases, management flexibility is appropriate, provided specific authorization from the City Manager and City Council is obtained.

Section 2 – Responsibilities

The City’s debt program for all City funds shall be operated in conformance with applicable federal, state, and other legal requirements, including the West Covina Municipal Code.

Responsibility for managing the coordinating of all activities related to the structure, issuance and administration of all long and short-term debt obligations shall rest with the Finance Director.

No debt obligations shall be presented to the City Council for their authorization without the joint assessment and recommendation of the City Manager, Finance Director and the City Attorney. Departments planning debt-financed capital programs or equipment acquisitions shall work closely with the City Manager, Finance Director

and City Attorney to provide information and otherwise facilitate the issuance and on-going administration of debt.

The Finance Director shall have the authority to periodically select service providers as necessary to meet legal requirements and minimize debt costs. Such services may include financial advisory, underwriting, trustee, verification agent, escrow agent, arbitrage consulting, special tax consulting, bond and disclosure counsel, and other consultants as needed. To achieve an appropriate balance between service and cost, the Finance Director is authorized to select such service providers through sole source selection or a competitive process using a Request for Proposals.

The Finance Director shall be responsible for maintaining good communications with rating agencies, investors and other debt related service providers about the City's financial condition and will follow a policy of full disclosure.

The Finance Director shall conduct an annual review of the Policy and bring forward to the City Council any amendments deemed necessary and appropriate.

Section 3 – Debt Considerations

The City will evaluate the need for debt financing a project compared to a pay-as-you-go financing methodology. The City prefers to fund projects on a pay-as-you-go basis.

A. Factors favoring a pay-as-you-go methodology include:

- a. Current projected revenues and fund balances available are sufficient to fund the project
- b. Long term total costs are lower due to the avoidance of interest expense
- c. Existing debt capacity is insufficient to absorb the additional debt without adverse impact to credit ratings
- d. Market conditions are unfavorable or present difficulties in marketing

B. Factors favoring debt financing include:

- a. Current and projected revenues available for debt service are sufficient and reliable so that financing can be marketed with investment grade credit ratings
- b. Market conditions present favorable interest rates and demand for the City financings
- c. A project is mandated by state or federal requirements, and current resources are insufficient or unavailable to fully fund the project
- d. The project is immediately required to meet or relieve capacity needs or emergency conditions and current resources are insufficient or unavailable
- e. The savings from the project are sufficient to pay for the debt service costs

The City will review debt limits in conjunction with any proposed financing. It is the City's goal to limit debt service costs in the General Fund to no more than twenty-five (25%) percent of revenues, including transfers. Payments on bonds that are tied to a specified revenue stream other than General Fund resources (e.g. enterprise revenue bonds, tax allocation bonds, and land secured bonds) are not subject to the twenty-five (25%) percent limit. The debt limit will exclude pension obligation bonds and other refunding bonds. Each proposed

financing will be individually assessed by the Finance Director and subject to the approval policies contained herein.

Section 4 – Debt Term

The City Council recognizes that any new debt obligation will have an impact on the long-term affordability of all outstanding debt and any future planned debt, as well as budgetary impacts associated with the maintenance and operating costs of debt financed facilities.

- A. Term of Debt – Debt will be structured for the shortest period possible, consistent with a fair allocation of costs to current and future beneficiaries or users. The weighted average maturity of the debt (or the portion of the debt allocated to the project) shall not exceed the useful life of the project.
- B. Debt Repayment – Typically, the City desires level debt service payments over the term of the debt. However, the cost of capital, financial risk, current economic conditions, future financial flexibility, credit ratings and available cash flow will be evaluated to determine the most appropriate method of debt amortizations for each debt issue. Notwithstanding the above, back loading of debt service will be evaluated as the circumstances dictate. Back loading occurs when debt service payments are lower in the initial years of a debt term and higher toward the later years of a debt term.

Section 5 – Debt Issuance

The City has the capacity to issue long and short-term debt and to refund any outstanding debt. The following section details the purposes of debt issuance and the method of determining the type of sale for such debt.

- A. Long-term Debt – Long-term debt financings are appropriate when the project to be financed is necessary to provide basic services and long-term debt may be used to finance the acquisition or improvement of land, infrastructure, facilities or equipment for which it is appropriate to spread the costs of such over more than one budget year. Long-term debt may be used to fund capitalized interest, cost of issuance, required reserves and any other financing related costs that may be legally capitalized. Long-term debt shall not be used to fund City operating costs.
- B. Short-term Debt – Short-term debt will be considered as an interim source of funding in anticipation of long-term debt. Short-term debt may be issued for any purpose for which long-term debt may be issued, including capitalized interest and financing related costs. Short-term debt is also appropriate to address legitimate short-term cash flow requirements during a given fiscal year to fund the operating costs of the City to provide necessary public services. The City will not engage in short-term borrowing solely for the purpose of generating investment income.
- C. Financings on Behalf of Other Entities - The City may also find it beneficial to issue debt on behalf of other governmental agencies or private third parties to benefit the public purposes of the City. In such cases, the City shall take reasonable steps to confirm the financial feasibility of the project to be financed and the financial solvency of any borrower and that the issuance of such debt is consistent with the policies set forth herein.
- D. Refunding – Refunding opportunities will be identified by periodic reviews of outstanding debt obligations. Refunding will be considered when there is a net economic benefit from the refunding of a least three (3) percent on a net present value basis. Non-economic refunding may be undertaken to achieve City objectives relating to changes in covenants, call provisions, operational flexibility, tax status, issuer, or other non-economic factors related to the debt.

- E. Method of Sale – The City shall have the flexibility to determine which method of sale is appropriate for each debt issuance in light of market interest rates and City objectives. Determination of the appropriate method of sale will rest collectively with the City Manager, Finance Director, and City Attorney. Potential methods of sale include:
 - a. A competitive bidding process through which interested underwriters submit proposals to purchase an issue of bonds and the award is based on, among other factors, the lowest offered true interest cost.
 - b. A negotiated sale process through which a selected underwriter, or team of underwriters, negotiate the terms of an issue and sell bonds in the municipal market. Negotiated sales are often used where there are unusual conditions or unique considerations related to the bond sale. A negotiated sale is subject to approval by the City to ensure that interest costs are in accordance with comparable market interest rates.
 - c. A private (or direct) placement sale typically occurs when the financing can or must be structured for a single or limited number of purchasers or where the terms of the private placement are more beneficial to the City than either a negotiated or competitive sale.
- F. Pooled Financing – The City may also consider use of pooled financing as a method of accessing the capital markets. Use of pooled financing will be evaluated collectively by the City Manager, Finance Director, and City Attorney.

Section 6 - Debt Structure

- A. Credit Ratings – The City seeks to obtain and maintain the highest possible credit rating when issuing debt. The City will seek credit ratings from at least one major credit rating agency on all debt, as appropriate. Ratings from multiple rating agencies may be sought for a single debt issue based upon the market conditions at the time of the issuance.
- B. Fixed Rate and Variable Rate Debt – The City prefers to issue fixed rate debt. Variable rate debt may be used, if market conditions warrant at the time of issuance. It is acknowledged that variable rate debt passes an unknown obligation onto future budget cycles.
- C. Call Provisions – The timing for when bonds are callable varies and is determined at the time of pricing such bonds. The City's preferred structure is to negotiate for optional redemption at par in order to maintain flexibility in the future, but a final decision will be made on a case by case basis after evaluation of the marketability of the City's bonds.
- D. Credit Enhancements – The City may use credit enhancements (letters of credit, bond insurance, surety bonds, etc.) when such credit enhancements prove to be cost effective. The City will consider the use of credit enhancements on a case-by-case basis.
- E. Reserve Funds – A debt service reserve fund provides an added measure of security to bond holders and may improve the credit rating and thus lower the costs of borrowing. Reserve funds may be necessary for specific transactions, or the City may choose to create one if it is determined to be cost effective. When cost beneficial, the City may consider the use of surety bonds, lines of credit, or similar instruments to satisfy the reserve requirements.

Section 7 – Private Activity Use Limitations on Tax Exempt Debt

IRS Tax Code Section 141 sets forth private activity tests for the purpose of limiting the volume of tax-exempt bonds that finance activities of persons other than state and local governmental entities. These tests serve to identify arrangements that actually or reasonably expect to transfer the benefits of tax-exempt financing to non-

governmental persons. The law includes tests of private use, security and payment as well as private loan financing tests. The law also provides for various safe harbors and nuances to the application of these limits. The City will manage a process to ensure private use compliance and will consult with bond counsel to obtain federal tax advice regarding whether anticipated project use will be consistent with the restrictions on private business use of the bond financed property and, if not, whether any “remedial action” permitted under §141 of the code may be taken as means of enabling that use arrangement to be put into effect without adversely affecting the tax-exempt status of the bonds.

With respect to tax-exempt bonds, the City pledges in each bond issuance that it will monitor and control the receipt, investment, expenditure, and use of all bond proceeds and will take or omit to take any actions as necessary to cause interest on tax-exempt bonds to remain excludable from the gross income of bond holders. City staff will ensure appropriate lease and building use policies to maintain compliance with this pledge.

Section 8 – Interfund Borrowings

The City may borrow internally from other funds with temporary cash surpluses to meet short term cash needs in lieu of issuing debt. Interfund borrowing extending for more than one year will be brought to Council for approval.

Section 9 – Debt Administration

The Finance Director shall be responsible for administering the City’s debt management program. To that end, this position shall:

- A. Ensure compliance with all disclosure and reporting requirements outlined in the City’s Disclosure Policy
- B. Periodically review outstanding debt for refunding opportunities
- C. Maintain positive working relationships with rating agencies and other financial professionals
- D. Review and recommend appropriate structures for all new debt issuances
- E. Ensure compliance with the Investment Policy and bond documents regarding investing bond proceeds

Section 10 – Arbitrage Compliance

Arbitrage is defined as the profit earned when tax-exempt bond proceeds are invested in higher yielding securities than the interest rates of the bonds issued. The City shall comply with its investment policy and California and federal laws.

To ensure compliance with federal arbitrage laws, the City will monitor ongoing activities, including remittance of any required arbitrage rebate. If necessary, the City will utilize a consultant for arbitrage rebate calculations and preparation of the required Internal Revenue Service forms. Arbitrage rebate calculations on outstanding bond issues will be performed periodically, but never longer than the 5th year after a bond issuance.

Section 11 – Disclosure Policy

The Finance Director will be the disclosure coordinator for the City and will have the responsibility of complying with the City’s Disclosure Policy document, as adopted by City Council.