

Catawba County Fiscal Year 2016/17 Financial Policies

Financial Policies are used to guide the County in the financial management of all funds. The North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act regulates North Carolina governmental units in financial matters. These policies are used by the Catawba County Board of Commissioners to allow the County to function as a fiscally sound governmental unit.

1. Revenue Policy

- a. The property tax rate shall be set each year based on the cost of providing general government services.
- b. The fee structure established for the Solid Waste Management Fund will be sufficient to finance needed operating, capital, and debt costs of providing solid waste services.
- c. Revenue projections will be made in a conservative manner.
- d. Any County service that benefits specific recipients shall be supported either fully or in part by user fees, based on cost recovery percentages established by the Board of Commissioners.
- e. Fund Balance Appropriated shall not exceed an amount that management can reasonably expect to save during the year.

2. Operating Budget Policy

- a. The County will continue to develop benchmarks and monitor performance measurements to assist in the evaluation of expenditures.
- b. Operating budget projections will include annual costs plus allowances for operating costs associated with new capital.

3. Capital Improvement Policy (*See CIP section for 8-year plan*)

- a. The County will review and adopt annually an Eight-Year Capital Improvement Plan detailing each capital project, the estimated cost, and description. This plan will be used as a guide in the development of the annual budget.

4. Accounting Policy

- a. Annually, a firm of licensed, certified public accountants will issue an official opinion on the County's annual financial statements to the Board of Commissioners.
- b. Financial systems will be maintained to monitor revenues and expenditures on a monthly basis.
- c. Staff will give a Financial Report to the Board of Commissioners covering revenues and expenditures on a periodic basis.

5. Debt Policy (*See Appendices for full policy*)

- a. The County will manage its debt obligations to meet demands for capital facilities while striving to maintain or to improve the County's Aa2/AA bond rating.
- b. Outstanding debt should not exceed 8 percent of the Countywide tax base.
- c. The County's annual debt service payment should not exceed 15 percent of the General Fund budget.

6. Reserve Policy

- a. The County has a goal of maintaining an Undesignated General Fund Fund Balance of 16 percent, the equivalent of two months of operating expenses. These funds will be used to avoid cash flow interruptions, generate investment income, eliminate the need for short-term borrowing, and for use in the case of unanticipated emergencies.
- b. The County will maintain a Contingency Reserve to provide for unanticipated expenditures of a non-recurring nature to meet unexpected increases in the operating budget.
- c. The Water and Sewer Fund shall maintain a minimum fund balance of \$5,000,000.
- d. Catawba Valley Medical Center is public non-profit hospital and an entity or component unit of Catawba County Government. The County owns the assets but the Hospital is not included in the County budget. The Hospital is authorized to operate as an enterprise fund. The Hospital maintains a balance of not less than \$4 million with the County, in the Hospital Capital Reserve Fund, to finance and construct major Hospital capital projects. This Fund is intended to be used primarily to finance and construct major Hospital capital projects. However, in an emergency situation, with written request of the Hospital, the County may, in its discretion, permit amounts on deposit in the Fund to be extended for any lawful purpose including payment of operating expenses of the Hospital. As long as a \$4 million balance in the Fund is maintained, monthly depreciation payments from the Hospital are not required. Monthly payments of \$50,000 will be required any time such \$4 million balance is not maintained.

7. Investment Policy (*See Appendices for full policy*)

- a. The County's investments will be undertaken in a manner that (1) seeks to ensure the preservation of capital in the overall portfolio (safety), (2) provides for sufficient liquidity to meet the cash needs of the County's various operations (liquidity), and (3) attains a fair market rate of return (yield) its debt obligations to meet demands for capital facilities while striving to maintain or to improve the County's Aa2/AA bond rating.

8. Balanced Budget Policy

- a. The County will annually develop and adopt a balanced budget in which the sum of estimated net revenues and appropriated fund balances is equal to appropriations, pursuant to the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act.

FUNDS AND FUND STRUCTURE

The County uses four basic fund types: General, Special Revenue, Capital, and Enterprise. Each of these fund types has its own specific legal and accounting requirements. Appropriations lapse at year-end in the General, Special Revenue, and Enterprise Funds, for which annual budgets have been legally adopted. The Capital Projects Funds budgets are adopted on a project ordinance basis, spanning more than one year. Appropriations are carried over in these funds until the project is completed. Each fund also has its own fund balance. Fund balance represents monies that remain unspent after all budgeted expenditures have been made. These unspent monies serve as a working capital reserve to pay expenditures in the early part of the fiscal year before taxes are collected. The fund balances are also available for appropriation or may be saved for major capital expenditures. The Finance Director estimates fund balances for the current year and upcoming fiscal year based on expected revenue and expenditure occurrences throughout the year. Appropriations shown are amounts being deducted from the fund balance during the upcoming fiscal year.