



# CITY OF SEAL BEACH

## Reserve Fund Policy

### BACKGROUND

Appropriate reserves are a key attribute of a financially stable organization and are an important component of the City of Seal Beach's (the "City") overall financial health. Strong reserves position an organization to weather significant economic downturns more effectively, manage the consequences of outside agency actions that may result in revenue reductions, and address unexpected emergencies. Establishing a formalized Reserve Policy, along with the City's existing Budget and Fiscal Policies and practices, will serve as the policy framework to enable the City to meet its financial commitments and address unexpected future events in a fiscally prudent manner.

The City considered a number of factors when establishing the Reserve Policy (the "Policy"), including the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Best Management Practices, previously established City Budget and Fiscal Policies, as well as the City's current and historical risk profile and financial condition.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Reserve Policy is to build upon the City's established Budget and Fiscal Policies and to document the City's approach to establishing and maintaining strong General Fund reserves. The guidelines set forth will better enable the City to mitigate various risks, which could result in a shortfall of available money to meet basic services and needs of the City. Examples of risks include natural disasters, such as earthquakes, storms, floods, or unexpected shortfalls in revenue sources, such as property taxes.

This policy is designed to:

1. Identify funds for which reserves should be established and maintained.
2. Establish target reserve levels and methodology for determining levels.
3. Establish criteria for the use of reserves and mechanisms to replenish reserves.

### RESERVE FUND POLICY

Reserve balances will be reviewed on an annual basis at, or near, the end of the fiscal year to ensure compliance with this Policy. In the event that the reserves exceed the established targets, excess monies can be transferred annually to the Capital Reserve. On an as-needed basis, money from the

Capital Reserve can be used to supplement the Disaster/Hazard Mitigation Reserve to cover any shortfalls created by a public emergency or natural disaster.

## **UNASSIGNED GENERAL FUND BALANCE**

The City's Budget and Fiscal Policy is to maintain an unassigned General Fund balance of a minimum of 20% and a maximum of 25% of operating expenditures to maintain the City's credit worthiness and cash flow requirements. Unassigned fund balance refers to the portion of the fund balance that is not obligated to assigned funds, thus making it available for use as previously identified.

The General Fund's unassigned fund balance is maintained to provide for:

- Contingencies for unforeseen operating or capital needs.
- Economic uncertainties, local disasters, and other financial hardships or downturns in the local or national economy.
- Cash flow requirements.

The purpose of this reserve is to provide budgetary stabilization and not serve as an alternate funding source for new programs and ongoing operating expenditures. Recommendations to appropriate from the Unassigned General Fund Balance will be brought forward by the City Manager and will require approval by a majority of the City Council. In the event this reserve is reduced below the amount established by this Policy, the City Council shall prepare a plan as promptly as conditions warrant to replenish the balance to the policy level.

## **ASSIGNED GENERAL FUND BALANCE**

Assigned General Fund balance is the obligation of funds due to policy implementation. The City will maintain the following reserve categories of assigned general fund balance.

### **Disaster/Hazard Mitigation Reserve**

A Disaster/Hazard Mitigation Reserve will be maintained for the purpose of sustaining General Fund operations in the case of a public emergency such as a natural disaster or other unforeseen catastrophic event. The Disaster/Hazard Mitigation Reserve will not be accessed to meet operating shortfalls or to fund new programs or personnel. This reserve may be expended only if an event is declared to be a public emergency by the City Manager and confirmed by a majority vote of the City Council, when such expenditures are necessary to ensure the safety of the City's residents and their property. The target level for this reserve is 10% of the General Fund operating expenditures.

## **Fiscal Policy Reserve**

The GFOA recommends, at a minimum, that general-purpose governments, regardless of size, maintain unrestricted budgetary fund balance in their general fund of no less than two months of regular general fund operating revenues or regular general fund operating expenditures. The City will establish a Fiscal Policy Reserve to mitigate financial and service delivery risk due to unexpected revenue shortfalls or unanticipated critical expenditures. The purpose of this reserve is to provide budgetary stabilization and not serve as an alternative funding source for new programs and ongoing operating expenditures. It is for one-time needs and expenditures identified in the budget and not ongoing structural challenges. The City will aim to maintain a minimum balance in the Fiscal Policy Reserve equal to approximately three months' worth of the City's General Fund operating expenditures. This minimum level will be recalculated each year according to the newly adopted budget and will be increased by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) generally used by the City to adjust contracts.

Recommendations to appropriate from the Fiscal Policy Reserve will be brought forward by the City Manager and will require approval by a majority of the City Council. In the event this reserve is reduced below the amount established by this Policy, the City Council shall prepare a plan as promptly as conditions warrant to replenish the balance to the policy level.

## **Vehicle and Equipment Replacement Reserve**

The City will maintain a Vehicle and Equipment Replacement Reserve, set up as an internal service fund, to provide for the timely replacement of vehicles and capital equipment with an individual replacement cost of \$15,000 or more. The annual contribution to this reserve will generally be based on the annual use allowance, which is determined based on the estimated life of the vehicle, or equipment and its original purchase cost. The City will endeavor to maintain a minimum amount of \$500,000 in this reserve. A minimum of \$310,000 of this reserve will be assigned for vehicle replacement and the remainder will be allocated to equipment replacement.

## **Technology Equipment Replacement Reserve**

As a subset of the Vehicle and Equipment Replacement Reserve, the City will maintain a Technology Equipment Replacement Reserve for the replacement of technological equipment, endeavoring to maintain a minimum amount of \$150,000 in this reserve.

## **Capital Reserve**

The City will strive to maintain a minimum target balance of \$5 million in the Capital Reserve. The Capital Reserve will consist of the following two sub-accounts:

***Capital Improvement Reserve.*** As part of the annual budget process, the City adopts a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget. The City will establish a Capital Projects Reserve and will strive to maintain a minimum target balance in that reserve equal to 25% of the 5-year CIP budget.

The City Manager will recommend projects to be funded during the annual budget process. As projects are approved, funds will be appropriated from available revenues, this reserve, or from the Unassigned General Fund balance.

***Tidelands Improvement Reserve.*** The City will also establish a reserve for the Tidelands Fund. The Tidelands Fund is required by the State of California to account for all revenues and expenditures related to the beach and pier operations in the City (lifeguard, pier and beach operations). The City will establish a minimum target balance for this reserve equal to 25% of the 5-year CIP budget for the Tidelands Fund.

Fund balances and projected improvement projects will be reviewed by staff and the City Council during the presentation and approval of the annual budget.

## CONCLUSION

Maintaining, regularly updating, and adhering to an appropriately constructed reserve policy is a good business practice recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association, and is among the factors considered by credit rating agencies and the investment community when assessing the credit-worthiness of an organization. The City recognizes that the Reserve Policy is a cornerstone of an organization's fiscal health. As such, an annual review of the Reserve Policy will be performed and any changes to the Reserve Policy will be brought forward for City Council consideration and approval.