

2020-21

City of Austin
Approved Budget



21. A Non-Nuclear Plant Decommissioning Fund shall be established to fund plant retirement. The amount set aside will be based on a decommissioning study of the plant site. Funding will be set aside over a minimum of four years prior to the expected plant closure.
22. The Power Supply Stabilization Reserve shall be created and established for mitigating power supply cost volatility which causes frequent variation in the Power Supply Adjustment. The Power Supply Stabilization Reserve shall maintain a cash equivalent of 90 days of net power supply costs. Net power supply costs shall be defined as costs eligible for inclusion in the Power Supply Adjustment. The Power Supply Stabilization Reserve shall be funded using net revenues after meeting other obligations and consistent with the flow of funds schedule.

Austin Water Financial Policies

1. The term of debt generally shall not exceed the useful life of the asset, and shall not generally exceed 30 years.
2. Capitalized interest shall only be considered during the construction phase of a new facility if the construction period exceeds seven years. The time frame for capitalizing interest may be three years but not more than five years. Council approval shall be obtained before proceeding with a financing that includes capitalized interest.
3. Principal repayment delays on revenue bonds shall be one to three years, but shall not exceed five years.
4. Each utility shall maintain a fully funded debt service reserve for its existing revenue bond issues and future issues, in accordance with the Combined Utility Systems Revenue Bond Covenant.
5. Debt service coverage of at least 1.50x shall be targeted.
6. Short-term debt, including tax-exempt commercial paper, shall be used when authorized for interim financing of capital projects. The term of short-term debt shall not exceed five years. Commercial paper will be converted to refunding bonds when appropriate under economic and business conditions. Total short-term debt shall generally not exceed 20% of outstanding long-term debt.
7. Commercial paper may be used to finance new water and wastewater plants, capital expansions, and growth-related projects as well as to finance routine capital improvements required for normal business operation. Commercial paper for the necessary amount may also be used to finance improvements to comply with local, State and Federal mandates or regulations.
8. Capital improvement projects for new water and wastewater treatment plants, capital expansions, and growth-related projects that are located in the Drinking Water Protection Zone (DWPZ) will be identified and submitted, as part of the annual budget process, to the following Boards and Commissions: Water and Wastewater Commission, Resource Management Commission, Environmental Board, Planning Commission, and the Zoning and Platting Commission.

These Boards and Commissions will review growth-related DWPZ capital projects spending plans, obtain Board and Commission and citizen input, review consistency with Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, review effect on growth within the DWPZ, and make recommendations on project approval for inclusion in Austin Water's five-year capital spending plan.

A public hearing will be held during the City's annual budget review process to provide citizens an additional opportunity to comment on growth related projects located within the DWPZ.

9. Ongoing routine, preventive maintenance should be funded on a pay-as-you-go basis.
10. Capital projects should be financed through a combination of cash, referred to as pay-as-you-go financing (equity contributions from current revenues), and debt. An equity contribution ratio of at least 20% is desirable.
11. Austin Water shall maintain a minimum quick ratio of 1.50 (current assets less inventory divided by current liabilities). Source of information shall be the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.
12. Austin Water shall maintain operating cash reserves equivalent to a minimum of 60 days of budgeted operations and maintenance expense.
13. Revenue generated by Austin Water from debt service coverage requirements shall be used for General Fund transfers, capital investment, or other Austin Water requirements such as working capital reserve or non-CIP capital.
14. Austin Water rates shall be designed to generate sufficient revenues to support the full cost (direct and indirect) of operations and debt, provide debt service coverage and meet other revenue bond covenants, if applicable, and ensure adequate and appropriate levels of working capital.
15. The General Fund Transfer shall not exceed 8.2% of the Austin Water three-year average revenues, calculated using the current year estimate at March 31 and the previous two years' actual revenues.

Revenue collected from the Reserve Fund Surcharge will be included in the General Fund Transfer calculation; however, any use or transfer of the reserve fund back into the operating fund in the future due to revenue loss will not be included in the total revenues to calculate the General Fund Transfer.

16. A Water Revenue Stability Reserve Fund shall be created and established for the purpose of offsetting current year water service revenue shortfalls below budgeted revenue levels.

The target funding level for the Reserve Fund is 120 days of the budgeted water operating requirements of Austin Water, which includes operations and maintenance and other operating transfers, but excludes debt service and other transfers. In the event that any portion of the Reserve Fund is used, the balance will be replenished to the target level within five years.

Upon creation of the Reserve Fund, the goal to reach the target funding level of 120 days of budgeted water operating requirements will be no later than five years. If the fund is drawn down prior to reaching the 120 day target during the first five-year development period, the reserve fund surcharge shall not be lower than it was during the year in which the draw down occurred until such time as the fund reaches its 120 days of operating costs.

Sources of funding for the Reserve Fund may include a Reserve Fund volumetric surcharge charged to all customer classes, operating reserves in excess of 60 days of operating requirements, and any available net water service revenue after meeting all obligations of Austin Water.

The City Council must approve all Reserve Fund utilization of funds through a separate action during the year. The Reserve Fund shall only be used to offset a current year water service revenue shortfall where actual water service revenue is less than the budgeted level by 10% or more. The maximum use of the Reserve Fund in any fiscal year is 50% of the existing balance at the time of request for Council action.

When the target levels of the Reserve Fund are reached, any Reserve Fund Surcharge shall be reduced to levels sufficient to only maintain the goal of 120 days of operating requirements as may be necessitated by changes in budgeted operating costs over time.

All interest earned by the Reserve Fund account shall remain in the Reserve Fund in order to offset funding and replenishment requirements and to minimize rate impacts for water customers.

Airport Financial Policies

1. Debt service coverage shall be targeted at a minimum of 1.25x.
2. The Debt Service Reserve shall be funded at the same time long-term debt is issued (typically equal to one year's average debt service requirement).
3. The term of long-term debt shall not exceed the expected useful life of the capital asset being financed, and in no case shall the life of the debt exceed 30 years.
4. Capitalized interest during construction shall generally not exceed five years. Council approval shall be obtained before proceeding with financing that includes capitalized interest.
5. The Airport shall maintain a ratio of current assets plus operating reserve to current liabilities of at least 1.5x. Source of information shall be the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.
6. The Aviation Fund shall maintain working capital that is equivalent to 60 days of budgeted operations and maintenance expense, in accordance with bond ordinance provisions (current assets plus operating reserve less current liabilities).

Drainage Utility Financial Policies

1. A Drainage Utility Fund will be established to account for all revenues and all operational expenses related to this activity.
2. The department that manages the Drainage Utility Fund shall recommend to Council in the budget setting rates sufficient to pay all requirements including debt service and to maintain a fund balance which is equivalent to 30 days of budgeted operations and maintenance.

Austin Resource Recovery Financial Policies

1. The Austin Resource Recovery Fund shall provide for the closure, monitoring, and all post-closure care of the City's landfills in compliance with Federal and State regulations.
2. The department that manages the Austin Resource Recovery Fund shall recommend to Council in the budget setting rates sufficient to pay all requirements including debt service. The department shall also maintain a fund balance which is equivalent to 30 days of budgeted operations and maintenance. In the event that operating reserves drop below the policy requirement, and to the extent that funds allow, the balance will be replenished to the target level within five years. In the event that operating reserves exceed the reserve requirement, the department may temporarily set rates below the level sufficient to