



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK
Selectmen's Office

302 Main Street · Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475-2384
Telephone (860) 395-3123 · Fax (860) 395-3125

Fund Balance Policy

Adopted by the Board of Finance: August 20, 2019

Purpose

The purpose of the Fund Balance Policy is to recognize that the maintenance of a fund balance is essential to the preservation of the financial integrity of the Town of Old Saybrook ("Town"). This policy addresses the requirement of GASB 54 and specifically sets policy for:

- I. Setting guidelines on how the Town will approve, establish, modify and classify fund balances
- II. Determine the Order of Expenditure of Fund Balances
- III. Minimum unassigned General Fund Balance

Definitions

Fund Balance: The town maintains several distinct funds for the management of its government activities – the largest fund is the General Fund ("GF") along with upwards of 100 additional funds – each of which has its own balance sheet. Each fund maintains a fund balance which is calculated as the difference between total assets and total liabilities in each fund.

General Fund: The GF is the town's primary operating fund. These governmental activities are financed through tax levy, state funding, and other revenues generated by charges for services.

Capital Projects Funds: Capital projects funds are used to account for and report financial resources for the purpose of expending funds for capital outlays, including the acquisition, improvement or construction of facilities and other infrastructure types of capital assets. The Town has several capital project funds that have been set up for the purpose of generating revenues and expenditures associated with the Town's multi-year capital projects funded primarily by debt issuance, grants or GF appropriations that will result in a capital asset at completion.

Reserve Funds: The Town sets aside reserves for future use and/or purchases of capital assets. These funds include the municipal reserve fund (and its components) and other reserve funds, such as catastrophic illness and revaluation. The purpose of these funds is to build fund balances to mitigate the financial impact in any one fiscal year.

Non-Major Government Funds: These Funds are mainly special revenue funds and other internal service funds that are used to account for expenditures that are clearly identifiable with a specific function. The revenues associated with these funds are received from grants, donations and fees for services provided. The expenditures associated with these funds are considered "committed" to the function provided.

Debt Service Funds: These funds are used to account for and report financial resources related to the expenditures for principal and interest.

Fiduciary Funds: Fiduciary Funds include trust funds (Pension Plan), Private Purpose Trust Funds (Scholarships), and Agency Funds, which are held on behalf of others (performance bonds).

Permanent Funds: At present, the Town has one permanent fund, the Cemetery Fund, which is restricted to the extent that only earnings, and not principal, may be used for purposes of supporting cemetery related expenditures. The principal of this fund is classified as non-spendable while the interest earned is classified as restricted.



Fund Classification

GASB Statement 54 requires that fund balances be distinguished, through the following classifications, based on the relative strength of the constraints that control the purposes for which specified amounts may be spent. Beginning with the most restrictive constraints, fund balance amounts will be accounted for and reported in an audited annual statement in the following classifications:

1. **Nonspendable fund balance** – amounts that are not in a spendable form (e.g., inventory) or are legally or contractually required to be maintained intact (e.g., permanent fund principal).
2. **Restricted fund balance** – amounts that can be spent only for the specific purposes stipulated by external parties either constitutionally or through enabling legislation (e.g., grants or donations).
3. **Committed fund balance** – amounts that can be used only for specific purposes. In the case where the use of funds is determined by a formal action of the Board of Selectmen. Commitments may be changed or lifted only by referring to the formal action that imposed the constraint originally (e.g., the use of capital non-recurring funds). Commitments must then be considered by the Board of Finance for appropriation. Ultimately, commitments greater than \$25,000 (or such a limit as established by the Town charter) must be approved by Town meeting or referendum.
4. **Assigned fund balance** – amounts with a narrow focus that relate to the accounting or management of the funds after approval. Assigned fund balance represents an amount that is not restricted or committed. Typically, amounts categorized as the assigned fund balance consist of encumbrances as of year-end or appropriations from the fund balance for the subsequent year's budget. Should the town not have any encumbrances or appropriations made for subsequent year's budget, there will be no reporting of assigned fund balances.
5. **Unassigned fund balance** – includes all amounts not contained in other classifications and is the residual classification of the general fund only. The unassigned GF fund balance is typically positive. In the event that other funds carry an unassigned fund balance, it is typically negative and means that the revenues have not yet been received or that expenditures have outpaced anticipated revenues. In the case of the latter, funds from the general fund should be used to clear these accounts, once all revenues have been received, on an annual basis.

Policy

- I. Guidelines on how the Town will approve, establish, modify and classify fund balances:

Non-Spendable Fund Balance, Restricted Fund Balance, Capital Project and Reserve Committed Fund Balance – The Board of Selectmen must take formal action to establish, modify, or rescind a fund balance commitment related to capital projects, reimbursable grants, and all capital non-recurring requests. These actions will be referred to the Board of Finance to consider the appropriation. Once formally approved via, Board of Finance, town meeting or the budget referendum, a new fund will be established. Once the purpose of the capital funds has been completed, the fund will be closed.

Committed Fund Balance associated with Special Revenue – The First Selectman must approve funds that are associated with ongoing grants, donations or fees from a specific service that offset specified expenditures. Once the purpose of a special revenue fund has been completed, the account will be closed.

Committed Fund Balance associated with an Internal Service Fund – The Finance Director must approve funds that are associated with internal service funds, which are funds that are set up to manage certain aspects of internal government business that are more effectively managed by setting up an off-budget account. Once the purpose of an internal service fund has been completed, the account will be closed.

Assigned Fund Balance – After approval of the Board of Finance, Town Meeting or Referendum, the Finance Director will ensure that the accounting entries to assign fund balances that relate to year-end encumbrances or appropriations from the fund balance for the subsequent year's budget are properly made.

Appropriations of GF balance to eliminate a projected budgetary deficit in the subsequent year's budget to an amount no greater than the projected excess of expected expenditures over expected revenues shall be classified as an **Assigned Fund** balance. In this instance, the following procedure will be followed:



- a. The calculation for the assignment of the fund balance shall be presented to the Board of Finance by the First Selectman.
- b. The conditions under which the fund balance assigned to eliminate the projected deficit may be spent must be presented.
- c. The approval of the Board of Finance and the town's legislative body is required.

II. *Order of Expenditure of Fund Balances*

When multiple categories of fund balance are available for expenditure (e.g., a project is being funded partly by a grant, through an appropriation, or through the use of the unassigned fund balance), the Town will start with the most restricted category and spend those funds first before moving down to the next category with available funds.

III. *Minimum Unassigned Fund Balance*

It is the goal of the town to build an unassigned fund balance in the GF at each fiscal year-end of 15% of approved GF annual expenditures. Fund balances that fall within the range of 12% to 15% are deemed to be healthy and no action or reporting is required. Should the unassigned GF fund balance fall below 12% at fiscal year-end, the Board of Finance shall be notified. Should the unassigned GF balance fall below 5%, the First Selectman shall develop a restoration plan to rebuild the minimum fund balance and present it to the Board of Finance for their approval.

In the event that a fiscal year ends with surplus funds projected to be in excess of the 15% policy target, the Board of Selectmen shall make a recommendation to the Board of Finance which may include one or more of the following options:

- a. Transfer excess funds to a capital reserve account;
- b. Transfer excess funds to a specific capital project;
- c. Transfer excess funds to reduce a town's liability or debt;
- d. Transfer excess funds to a debt stabilization account; or
- e. Other recommendations, as may be appropriate.

