

# Debt Management Policy

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City of Santa Cruz I-89

Administrative Procedure Order

Section I, #89 (Effective March 2017)

TO: Department Heads

SUBJECT: DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

## PURPOSE

To establish policies for the issuance and administration of City debt.

## POLICY

This Debt Management Policy establishes objectives, parameters, and guidelines for responsibly issuing and administering the City's debt. Prudent management of the City's debt program is necessary to achieve cost-effective access to the capital markets and demonstrates a commitment to long-term financial planning.

## SCOPE

These policies establish the restrictions within which the City of Santa Cruz and the City of Santa Cruz Public Financing Authority, on behalf of the City, may issue debt. Additionally, these policies apply to debt issued by the City on behalf of assessment, community facilities, or other special districts, as well as conduit debt.

## DEBT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

This policy sets forth key objectives for the City in issuing and administering the City's debt, which are to:

- Maintain the City's sound financial position.
- Minimize debt service and issuance costs.
- Maintain access to cost-effective borrowing.
- Achieve and maintain highest reasonable credit rating.
- Ensure full and timely repayment of debt.
- Maintain full and complete financial disclosure and reporting.
- Ensure compliance with State and Federal laws and regulations.

## GOVERNING AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

A. Legal Authority: The City's debt portfolio for all City funds shall be administered in conformance with all applicable Federal, State, and other legal requirements, including the City Charter. The City will comply with applicable law as it pertains to the maximum term of debt and the procedures for levying and imposing any related taxes, assessments, rates, and charges.

B. Delegation of Authority: The City Council has assigned duties to the Finance Director for authorizing, managing, and coordinating activities related to the structure, issuance, and administration of the City's long-term and short-term debt. No debt obligations shall be presented to the City Council, including capital leases, for their authorization without a joint assessment and approval by the City Manager and Finance Director. No department shall directly issue debt and departments planning debt-financed capital programs or equipment acquisitions will work in close

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coordination with the Finance Department and the City Manager's Office to provide information and facilitate the issuance and ongoing administration of debt.

C. Point of Contact: The Finance Director shall be responsible for maintaining good communication with rating agencies, investors, other service providers, and the general public regarding the City's financial condition, and will enforce a policy of full disclosure.

D. Policy Approval and Review: This Debt Management Policy is an official policy of the City, approved by the City Manager as an Administrative Procedure Order. The Finance Department shall conduct an annual review of this policy and recommend amendments deemed necessary and appropriate.

E. Annual Debt Report: The Finance Department shall prepare an annual report to the City Council containing a summary of the City's current credit ratings, and outstanding and newly issued debt. This report shall be presented either separately or within another financial report.

F. Professional Assistance: 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, and bond counsel. To achieve 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.

G. Method of Sale: Except to the extent a competitive bidding process is required by law, the Finance Director shall determine the most appropriate manner in which to offer any securities to investors. The City's preferred method of sale is by competitive bid. However, other methods such as negotiated sale and private placement may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## **TYPES AND PURPOSE OF DEBT**

The City may utilize the following types of municipal debt obligations to finance long-term capital projects. Long-term debt is only issued to finance the acquisition and/or construction of capital improvements unless otherwise decreed by court order or adjudicated settlement. Long-term debt financing shall never be used to fund operating or maintenance costs.

### **Types of Debt**

A. Assessment Bonds: Proceeds from Assessment Bonds may be used to finance local public improvements, and are repaid with taxes assessed on the parcels of land that benefit from the improvements. Local streets, street lights, landscaping, sidewalks and sanitary sewers are some examples of local improvements commonly financed by Assessment Bonds.

B. General Obligation (GO) Bonds: The City may issue GO Bonds with two-thirds approval of a popular vote as stated in the California State Constitution (Article XVI, Section 18). GO Bonds are secured by a pledge of the full faith and credit of the City, or by a levy on property taxes to pay the debt service. GO Bonds are used to finance the acquisition, construction, or improvement of public facilities such as parks and public safety facilities.

C. Pension Obligation Bonds: Pension Obligation Bonds may be issued to finance all or part of the City's unfunded pension liability, and are a general obligation of the City. Typically, these bonds are issued at an interest rate which is lower than that being charged by CalPERS, the City's pension administrator.

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D. Enterprise Revenue Bonds: Enterprise Revenue Bonds may be issued to finance facilities for a revenue-producing enterprise, and are payable from revenue sources generated and pledged by that enterprise. Water, sewer, refuse, storm water, and parking are examples of revenue producing enterprises within the City.

E. Lease Revenue Bonds: Lease Revenue Bonds are typically issued by the City of Santa Cruz Public Financing Authority, on behalf of the City. They are secured by and payable from a pledge of revenues consisting primarily of lease payments on the capital project being financed. The City's General Fund is obligated to pay these lease payments.

F. Refunding Bonds: Pursuant to the California Government Code and various other financing statutes, the City is authorized to issue bonds for the purpose of refunding any long-term obligation of the City, provided it produces economic benefit to the City.

G. Conduit Financing Bonds: Conduit financing is a mechanism for other governmental entities, nonprofit agencies, or private companies to fund projects which provide a clear public benefit through the issuance of tax-exempt municipal bonds. These are essentially revenue bonds payable solely from the loan repayments received from the borrower under the loan agreement, for which the City has no liability for debt service. They may also be known as private activity or pass-through bonds. The City may issue Conduit Financing Bonds for projects such as schools, hospitals, universities, public works, housing and industrial development. In such cases, the City will take reasonable steps to confirm the financial feasibility of the project to be financed and the financial solvency of the borrower.

H. Certificates of Participation (COP): COPs are a form of lease revenue bond which permits the investor to participate in a stream of lease payments, installment payments, or loan payments relating to the acquisition or construction of specific equipment, land, or facilities. The City is obligated to make these debt service payments.

I. Lease Financing: The City may finance a capital asset by leasing it directly from the vendor or leasing company under a long-term agreement. This is essentially a lease-purchase contract with the lessor receiving a portion of each rental payment as tax-exempt interest.

J. Bank/Private Loans: The City may borrow directly through a loan with a commercial bank, Letter of Credit, or Line of Credit with a commercial bank, State revolving loan program, or other governmental agency. Each loan will have a specific purpose.

K. Tax Allocation Bonds: Before dissolution of California Redevelopment Agencies (RDAs) in 2012, the City of Santa Cruz RDA issued Tax Allocation Bonds using tax increment funds as a pledge for repayment. The taxes pledged to the repayment came from the increase of assessed value over and above a pre-established base. Dissolution of RDAs in 2012 has ended this type of debt from being issued by California cities and counties.

L. City of Santa Cruz Internal Financing Pool: The Internal Financing Pool provides loans to City departments or funds for significant one-time purchases, such as large vehicles. Such loans are repaid by applicable City departments or funds with interest on an annual basis with the principal amortized evenly over a period of at least five (5) years but not exceeding ten (10) years. The interest rate levied is 2% more in simple interest above the City's pooled investments monthly yield to maturity.

M. Other Obligations: There may be special circumstances when other forms of debt are appropriate and may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Such other forms include, but are not

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limited to, non-enterprise revenue bonds, bond anticipation notes, grant anticipation notes, tax and revenue anticipation notes, and judgment or settlement obligation bonds.

## Purpose of Debt

A. Integration with the City's Capital Improvement Plan: The City is committed to long-term financial planning, including capital planning. This policy will be used in conjunction with the City's capital budget and the capital improvement plan. The City shall strive to fund the upkeep and maintenance of its infrastructure and facilities due to normal wear and tear through its available operating revenues.

B. Long-Term Debt: Long-term debt may be used to finance the purchase or improvement of land, infrastructure, facilities, or equipment for which it is appropriate to spread these costs over more than one budget year. Long-term debt may also cover capitalized interest, costs of issuance, required reserves, and any other financing-related costs which may be legally capitalized. Long-term debt may not be used to fund City operating costs.

C. Short-Term Debt: Short-term borrowing, such as commercial paper and lines of credit, may be used as an interim source of funding in anticipation of long-term borrowing. Short-term debt is defined as debt repaid in twelve (12) months or less and may be issued for the same purpose as long-term debt, including capitalized interest and other financing-related costs. Short-term debt, such as tax and revenue anticipation notes, may be issued to address justifiable cash flow requirements for short-term operating needs to provide necessary public services.

D. Refunding: Periodic reviews of existing debt will be undertaken to identify refunding opportunities. Refunding will be considered (within Federal tax law constraints) if and when there is a net benefit of the refunding. In general, refundings which produce a net present value savings of at least three percent (3%) of the refunded debt will be considered economically viable. Refundings which produce a net present value savings of less than three percent (3%) will be considered on a case-by-case basis to achieve City goals such as changes in covenants, call provisions, operational flexibility, tax status, issuer, or the debt service profile. Refundings with negative savings will not be considered unless there is a compelling public policy objective that is accomplished by retiring the debt. The City may purchase its own bonds in the open market for the purpose of retiring the obligation when the purchase is cost effective.

E. Lease Financing: The City may finance a capital asset by leasing it directly from the vendor or leasing company, with the lessor receiving a portion of each rental payment as tax-exempt interest.

## DEBT CAPACITY

It is the policy of the City of Santa Cruz that aggregate debt service payments funded from General Fund sources shall be no greater than 10% of Primary General Fund revenues as reflected in the prior year adopted budget. Payments on bonds that are tied to a specified revenue stream other than General Fund sources (e.g., enterprise revenue bonds, tax allocation bonds, and assessment bonds) are not subject to this 10% limit. Each proposed financing will be individually assessed by the Finance Director and subject to the approval policies contained herein.

## DEBT STRUCTURE FEATURES

A. Debt Repayment: The City will structure its debt issues so that the maturity of the debt does not exceed the economic or useful life of the capital project which is financed.

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B. Maximum Maturity: The California Constitution allows for the issuance of long-term debt of up to forty (40) years. The City's standard maximum maturity is thirty (30) years, but up to forty (40) years may be acceptable depending on cash flow assumptions, construction timeline, and remaining useful life of the asset being financed.

C. Credit Quality: The City seeks to obtain and maintain the highest possible credit ratings when required for issuing long-term and short-term debt.

D. Fixed-Rate Debt: Fixed-rate debt shall be the desired method of pricing.

E. Variable-Rate Debt: The City may choose to issue debt that pays a rate of interest that varies according to a pre-determined formula or index. There may be situations in which the City will benefit from variable-rate debt.

F. Call Options and Premium Provisions: Call Options or optional redemption provisions can enable the City to partially or totally repay a bond issue before its stated maturity. These may be considered on a case-by-case basis when issuing bonds, provided they enhance the marketability of the bonds, ensure flexibility related to potential early redemption, or foster future refunding options. The potential for additional costs, such as a call premium or potentially higher interest rates, will be evaluated in the decision to redeem the bonds.

G. Credit Enhancement: To establish or improve the credit rating on a proposed debt issuance, the City may purchase credit enhancement such as bond insurance, surety policy, or letter of credit. The Finance Director will consider the use of credit enhancement if it reduces the overall cost of the proposed financing or furthers the City's overall financial objectives.

## DEBT ADMINISTRATION

The City's Finance Department shall maintain written directives and procedures detailing required actions to certify compliance with local, State, and Federal regulations. The City is committed to full and complete financial disclosure in accordance with the requirements established by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) rule 15c2-12 and the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board. The City is also committed to fully supporting requests from rating agencies, institutional and individual investors, other governmental entities, and to the general public to share clear, timely, and correct financial information.

In addition to financial disclosure and arbitrage rebate compliance, once bonds are issued the City is responsible for verifying compliance with all activities, agreements, and requirements outlined in the bond documents on an ongoing basis. This typically includes: ensuring an annual appropriation to meet debt service payments; that relevant taxes, rates, and fees are levied and collected at a level sufficient to meet indenture requirements and debt service payments; the timely payment of debt service to a trustee or paying agent is completed; and compliance with insurance and other requirements. All investments of bond proceeds shall adhere to the City's Investment Policy which is approved annually by the City Council, Federal tax requirements, and with the requirements contained in the bond documents. Investments related to the bond proceeds shall not allow security types or credit standards less than those stated in the City's Investment Policy.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Advance Refunding:** A refunding that occurs more than ninety (90) days in advance of the first optional redemption date. All covenants and restrictions of the refunded bond indenture are extinguished through an Advance Refunding. Under current IRS regulations, tax-exempt bonds issued after December 31, 1985 are permitted only one Advance Refunding.

**Arbitrage:** Generally, tax-exempt bond issues are subject to arbitrage rebate requirements, which require that any profit or “arbitrage” be “rebated” to the Federal government in the amount of the excess of the amount earned on investments purchased with gross proceeds of the bonds over the amount which would have been earned if such investments were invested at a rate equal to the yield on the bonds. A rebate computation and payment, if applicable, is generally required to be made every five (5) years and upon final redemption or maturity of the bonds. Failure to comply with these requirements could lead to substantial late filing penalties and interest and/or the loss of tax-exempt status for the bonds.

**Bond Counsel:** A law firm retained by the bond issuer to give a legal opinion that the bond issuer is authorized to issue the proposed securities, the bond issuer has met all legal requirements necessary for issuance, and interest on the proposed securities will be exempt from Federal income taxation, and where applicable from State and local taxation. Usually, Bond Counsel will prepare authorizing resolutions and ordinances, trust indentures, and other bond documents with the exception of the Official Statement.

**Bond Insurance:** An insurance policy which guarantees the timely payment of principal and interest, of either an entire bond issue, or on one or more specified maturities. In exchange for payment of the Bond Insurance premium, a higher Credit Rating is assigned to the insured bonds, and a lower cost of funds is attained. With a Competitive Sale, generally the bidding dealer bears the cost of insurance to the benefit of the firm’s bid. The bond issuer pays the cost of Bond Insurance from bond proceeds with a Negotiated Sale.

**California Debt and Investment Advisory Commission (CDIAC):** A State commission established to provide oversight with respect to public debt and investment activities. It serves as the State’s clearinghouse for information on public debt issuance and local investment practices. CDIAC also provides policy guidance on debt and investment matters.

**Call Provisions:** The terms of the bond giving the issuer the right to redeem all or a portion of a bond prior to its stated date of maturity at a specific price, usually at or above par.

**Capitalized Interest:** Capitalized Interest is a portion of the proceeds of an issue which is set aside to pay interest on the bonds for a specified period of time. Interest is commonly capitalized during the construction period of a revenue-producing project or a project financed with the proceeds of lease revenue bonds whereby the facility securing the lease payments must be available for use and occupancy before lease payments may commence.

**Commercial Paper:** Short-term (1 to 270 days) promissory notes usually issued to provide for interim financing of projects through the construction period and backed by a Letter or Line of Credit from a commercial bank. Following the completion of the projects, principal and interest due on Commercial Paper is often redeemed through the issuance of long-term refunding bonds.

**Competitive Bidding Process:** The sale of a new issue of bonds by an issuer through a bidding process where Underwriters are awarded the bonds on the basis of offering the lowest cost of

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funds for the issuer, usually measured on a True Interest Cost basis. The bid parameters for the public sale are established in the notice of sale or notice inviting bids.

**Continuing Disclosure Certificate:** A commitment entered into by the County for the benefit of the Underwriters and holders of certain bonds pursuant to SEC Rule 15(c)2-12 to provide continuing disclosure of specific County information.

**Credit Ratings:** Evaluations of the credit quality of bonds made by independent ratings services such as Moody's Investors Service, Standard & Poor's Ratings Services, and Fitch Ratings. Credit Ratings are intended to measure the probability of timely repayment of principal and interest on municipal securities. Credit Ratings are assigned before issuance of the bonds, and are periodically reviewed by the rating services, or may be amended to reflect changes in the issuer's credit position. Bonds with investment grade ratings are assigned Credit Ratings between Baa3/BBB- and Aaa/AAA.

**Debt Service:** The sum of principal and interest due on outstanding debt, including any required contributions to a sinking fund for term bonds. Debt Service may be computed on a bond year, fiscal year, or calendar year basis.

**Derivative:** Short for "Derivative investment," a contract whose value is based on the performance of an underlying financial asset, index, or other investment. Generally, Derivatives are risk mitigation tools. Examples include structures with Option-like or Swap-like features.

**Financial Advisor:** A consultant who advises the bond issuer on matters such as bond structure, timing, marketing, pricing, documentation, and Credit Ratings. The consultant may also provide non-bond related advice relating to capital planning and investment management. Financial Advisors must be registered as an independent registered municipal advisor ("IRMA") with the SEC.

**Fixed-Rate Debt:** A borrowing wherein interest is established at a fixed rate of interest for the life of the obligation.

**Line of Credit:** A commitment usually made by a commercial bank to provide liquidity support for issues of notes, Commercial Paper, or bonds if the issuer is unable to pay Debt Service. The timely payment of Debt Service is not guaranteed, and the agreement between the bank and the issuer of the debt may be terminated in the event of a payment default by the bond issuer, or under other certain specified events. Debt issued with a Line of Credit is assigned the short-term Credit Rating of the Line of Credit provider.

**Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board (MSRB):** An independent self-regulatory organization established by the Securities Acts Amendments of 1975, which is charged with primary rulemaking authority over Broker-Dealers and brokers in municipal securities. Its members represent three categories—securities firms, bank dealers, and the public—each category having equal representation on the MSRB.

**Negotiated Sale:** The sale of a new issue of bonds whereby the issuer selects the Underwriters in advance and negotiates the terms of the bonds, including coupons, interest rates, redemption provisions, and the Gross Spread, at the time of sale.

**Official Statement:** A document published by the bond issuer, and often prepared by Disclosure Counsel, which discloses material information on a new bond issue, including the purpose of the issue, source of repayment, bond covenants, as well as financial, economic, demographic, and legal characteristics of the bond issuer. The Official Statement is used by investors to determine

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the credit quality of the bond issue. An Official Statement is deemed preliminary prior to the determination of the interest rates on the bond issue, but is final in all other respects at the time it is circulated in its preliminary form prior to the sale of the bonds.

**Private Placement:** A sale in which the bonds are sold directly to institutional or private investors, rather than through a public offering. Issuers often require investors purchasing privately placed bonds to agree to restrictions as to resale through the use of a signed agreement. This is the same as a direct placement or a direct purchase. Private Placements may also involve the direct sale of a bond or other obligation to a commercial bank.

**Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC):** The Federal agency responsible for supervising and regulating the securities industry. In general, municipal securities are exempt from the SEC's registration and reporting requirements. Brokers and dealers in municipal securities, as well as independent registered municipal advisors, however, are subject to SEC regulation and oversight. The SEC also has responsibility for the approval of MSRB rules, and has jurisdiction, pursuant to SEC Rule 10b-5, over fraud in the sale of municipal securities.

**SEC Rule 15(c)2-12:** A regulation of the SEC which requires Underwriters participating in primary offerings of municipal securities of \$1,000,000 or more (i) to obtain, review, and distribute to investors copies of the issuer's Disclosure documents; (ii) to obtain and review a copy of an Official Statement deemed final by an issuer of the securities, except for the omission of specified information; (iii) to make available upon request, in non-competitively bid offerings, the most recent preliminary Official Statement, if any; (iv) to contract with an issuer of the securities, or its agent, to receive, within specified time periods, sufficient copies of the issuer's final Official Statement, both to comply with this rule, and any rules of the MSRB; and (v) to provide, for a specified period of time, copies of final Official Statements to any potential customer upon request. The rule contains exemptions for Underwriters participating in certain offerings of municipal securities issued in large denominations that are sold to no more than thirty-five (35) sophisticated investors, have short-term maturities, or have short-term tender or put features. SEC Rule 15(c)2-12 also requires that Underwriters participating in a bond offering obtain from the issuer a written Continuing Disclosure Agreement to provide continuing disclosure with respect to those bonds.

**Trustee:** A third-party banking institution which administers the funds specified in the trust indenture or agreement and implements the remedies provided in case of default. The Trustee acts on behalf of the bondholders based on the specific requirements in each trust indenture. The Trustee may also refer to a trustee bank acting in the capacity of escrow agent with respect to refunding bonds or issuing and/or paying agent with respect to Commercial Paper or Variable Rate Debt.

**Underwriter:** A dealer which purchases a new issue of bonds for resale either by negotiation with the issuer or by award on the basis of a competitive bid.

**Variable-Rate Debt:** A borrowing wherein interest changes at intervals according to an index or formula, or is periodically (e.g., daily, weekly, or monthly) reset at the market clearing rate. This is also known as floating rate debt.