

THE CITY OF VAUGHAN

CORPORATE POLICY

POLICY TITLE: OPERATING BUDGET

POLICY NO.: 12.C.11

Section:	Finance & Budgets		
Effective Date:	June 22, 2021	Date of Last Review:	August 16, 2024
Approval Authority: Council	Policy Owner: DCM, Corporate Services, City Treasurer & Chief Financial Officer		

POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Vaughan’s (“City”) operating budget is a primary tool in the management of the City, enabling it to fulfill its commitment to service excellence in governance and fiscal responsibility.

The City’s Budget and Financial Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives set in the Term of Council Strategic Plan.

Decisions made regarding the operating budget ensure that the budget plans support economic growth, maintenance of infrastructure, responds to changing needs and are fiscally responsible.

PURPOSE

This policy provides guiding principles and direction for the development and form of the operating budget and plan that:

- Becomes a plan of action to enable staff and Council to make informed decisions about the financial commitments to meet the provision of programs and services for achieving Council objectives;
- Serves as a statement of priorities to guide allocation of resources through approved budgets that reflect Council priorities and Strategic Plan;
- Reflects financial policies in the framework for budget development, management, and controls that ensures consistent and responsible use of financial resources across the City;

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- Allows for managing adverse and unanticipated situations through a transparent and accountable process that provides flexibility to respond to changes and risk while keeping Council and the public informed; and,
- Contributes to measures of performance for programs and services against stated objectives and key results.

1) GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Financial sustainability guiding principles provide a conceptual approach to making responsible budget decisions, including:

a) Existing service levels

- i) The City will strive to maintain existing infrastructure and services in a climate of increasing costs by leveraging efficiencies and preparing for anticipated future needs through reserves and contingencies.

b) Growth pays for growth

- i) Infrastructure and services that support new growth should be funded, to the fullest extent possible, through new property tax assessment and growth-related revenues.

c) New initiatives to enhance the City

- i) Investments in new initiatives should enhance service levels, improve efficiencies, mitigate risk, support service excellence, or enhance the quality of life for residents while staying within the City's financial means.

2) BUDGET OBJECTIVES

- a) To ensure that the City's operating revenues and Tax-Levy are allocated in ways which best realize the City's objectives, priorities, and approved plans;
- b) To ensure that municipal programs, services, and administrative units have the resources required to carry out their work effectively, subject to the constraints imposed by the flow of revenue; and,
- c) To provide an effective means of monitoring and controlling revenues and expenditures in accordance with the highest standards of financial management and accounting.

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SCOPE

This policy applies to all operating revenues and operating expenditures undertaken by the Corporation of the City of Vaughan.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Municipal Act, 2001 (“Act”) sets out provisions and minimum standards for municipal budgets. Municipalities have flexibility regarding the format and level of detail of its budgets.

Section 290 of the Act sets out provisions for local municipalities and sets minimum standards of what the budget must contain. “For each year, a local municipality shall, in the year or the immediately preceding year, prepare and adopt a budget including estimates of all sums required during the year for the purposes of the municipality”. A budget for a year immediately following a year in which a regular election is held, may only be adopted in the year to which the budget applies.

Section 291 of the Act allows (but does not mandate) multi-year budgets of two to five years. Notwithstanding the adoption of a multi-year budget, it is mandatory to review the second and every subsequent year annually.

Ontario Regulation 284/09, *Budget Matters – Expenses* (O. Reg. 284/09) was put in place to consider the Public Sector Accounting Board standards for tangible capital assets on municipal budgeting. This regulation explains that specific expenses (amortization, post-employment benefits, and solid waste landfill closure and post-closure liabilities) may be excluded from the budget if a report is produced annually that describes the future impact on the municipality.

DEFINITIONS

- 1) Accrual Basis Accounting:** An accounting method that recognizes revenue when earned and expenditures when incurred regardless of when cash is received or paid out. It is the basis on which the City’s financial statements are prepared.
- 2) Administrative Amendment:** Fiscally-neutral adjustment to the approved operating budget as reflected in the City’s budget and financial systems, to reflect organizational changes, reallocation of costs and line item transfers, for the effective financial management, reporting and monitoring of the City’s programs and services.
- 3) Annual Operating Budget:** Annual budget for the operations of City departments, including operating revenue and operating expenditures; referred to as approved upon Council adoption.

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- 4) **Budget:** A financial plan defined as an estimate of costs, revenues and resources over a specified period that reflect a forecast of financial conditions based upon a set of assumptions.
- 5) **Budget Line Item:** A budget item that reflects grouping of similar expenses by category (object code). i.e. grouping of consulting costs for various projects within a budget that represents the sum.
- 6) **Budget Transfer:** A transfer of an amount initially recorded within one budget line item to a different budget line item.
- 7) **Budget and Financial Plan:** A multi-year budget approach adopted by the City where the 'budget' refers to the financial allocations for the upcoming year, while the 'financial plan' extends the budget projections to future years beyond the upcoming year. Only the upcoming year's budget is considered by Council, while the financial plan is endorsed in principle and updated and considered in the years to which they apply.
- 8) **Business Unit:** An organizational unit focused on a municipal program or service.
- 9) **Chief Financial Officer and City Treasurer ("CFO"):** The employee appointed by Council as the City Treasurer.
- 10) **City:** The Corporation of the City of Vaughan.
- 11) **Consolidated Operating Budget:** Includes Revenues, Expenditures and Transfers for the Corporation of the City of Vaughan.
- 12) **Department:** Functional area within a Portfolio responsible for the delivery of municipal services.
- 13) **Deputy Treasurer:** The second most senior official(s) that oversees the management of the City's financial affairs.
- 14) **Fiscally Neutral Budget Adjustment:** An adjustment that has no impact to the approved net operating budget, and no impact to the current annual Tax-Levy or tax-funded reserves.
- 15) **Modified Accrual Basis:** The basis of budgeting used at the City that excludes certain expenses as permitted by O. Reg. 284/09.
- 16) **Public Sector Accounting Board ("PSAB"):** An independent body with authority to set accounting standards for the public sector, which includes

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municipalities.

17) Reserves and Reserve Funds: Designated accounts established to set aside funds for future purposes or unanticipated events. A reserve is an allocation of accumulated net revenue, whereas a reserve fund is segregated and restricted for a specific purpose.

18) Tax-Levy: The amount the City decided to raise in its budget for the year under s. 290 of the Municipal Act, 2001, also general levy.

19) User Fee: Fee or charge to an individual, business, or identifiable group for using a service provided by the City in which they directly benefit from.

POLICY

1) REQUIREMENT TO SET A BUDGET

- a) The Mayor is to present to Council an annual Consolidated Operating Budget for the upcoming year and a financial plan for future years.
 - i) The Mayor may delegate the City Manager or Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to present the Annual Consolidated Budget.
- b) For any year in which the budget for that year is not approved by Council before December 31st of the preceding year, Council shall adopt an interim operating budget that does not exceed 50 percent of the preceding years Annual Operating Budget before January 1st of the budget year.

2) BASIS OF BUDGETING

- a) The City's Annual Operating Budget is developed on a Modified-Accrual Basis, that excludes all amortization expenses, post-employment benefits expenses, solid waste landfill closure and post-closure expenses as permitted by Ontario Regulation 284/09, s.1.

3) REQUIREMENT FOR A BALANCED BUDGET

- a) The Mayor is to present to Council for consideration an annual Consolidated Operating Budget that is balanced; operating revenues and operating expenses must be equal, net of transfers to or from reserves and other funds.
 - i) The Mayor may delegate the City Manager or Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to present the annual consolidated budget.

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- b) Operating expenditures cannot be financed with debt, except as allowed by the Temporary Borrowing By-law.

4) BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PROCESS

- a) A best practice in financial management is to establish a budget before the start of the fiscal year to which it applies. The steps in the City's budget review process include:

- i) Establishing a budget timetable.
- ii) Initiating a budget plan, supporting data and guidelines.
- iii) Evaluating/reviewing draft budget submissions.
- iv) Engaging public consultation.
- v) Compiling an overall consolidated budget document.
- vi) Council approval of the budget, User Fee and Tax-Levy requirements.
- vii) Budget implementation and budgetary control.

- b) Budget packages including baseline budgets, guidelines, budget envelopes, templates, and other supporting materials will be distributed to staff to assist with developing and preparing budget submissions according to the guiding principles framework:

- i) "Base Budget" starting assumption for operating budget development is that services and service levels approved in the immediately preceding year are maintained wherever possible;
- ii) "Status Quo" changes are related to increasing (or decreasing) costs, including operating impacts of capital, required to maintain service levels to the community;
- iii) "Growth" related budget items are associated with maintaining existing service levels to a growing population, including operating impacts of capital; and,
- iv) "New services or enhancements" are associated with new or enhanced levels of service currently provided to the community.

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5) BUDGET CONTROL

- a) The budget as approved by Council establishes the operating spending authority for the year to which the budget applies.
- b) Amendments to the approved budget must be approved by Council unless the amendment is of an administrative nature.
- c) Delegated authority to approve or recommend administrative budget amendments are outlined in Appendix A of this policy.

6) BUDGET MONITORING AND REPORTING

- a) Operating budgets are used to plan the City’s day-to-day spending. The operating budget document serves many important purposes for Council, including:
 - i) Policy document in the form of goals, objectives, and strategies.
 - ii) Communication tool that provides summary information that can be used by media and the public.
 - iii) Operations guide that describes the organization of the City and data to provide a basis for comparison year-over-year.
 - iv) Financial plan includes projected operating expenses and revenue sources for a specific time-period.
- b) The CFO will report bi-annually to Council on the status of actual financial performance relative to approved budgets.

ADMINISTRATION

Administered by the Office of the City Clerk.

Review Schedule:	3 Years <small>If other, specify here</small>	Next Review Date:	August 15, 2027
Related Policy(ies):	12.C.12 – Capital Budget, 12.C.09 – Corporate Debt, 12.C.10 – Consolidated Reserve and Reserve Fund		
Related By-Law(s):			
Procedural Document:			

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Revision History	
Date:	Description:
16-Aug-24	Update responsibility for budget presentation to reflect the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022; recognize the City's multi-year budgeting practice; and minor updates to definitions.
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APPENDIX

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APPENDIX	
Responsibility	Budget Amendment Authority
Council	Budget amendments which are not administrative in nature, must be approved by Council. These include budget amendments that are not fiscally neutral, increase the total approved complement of permanent FTEs; pertain to debt, impact reserves in accordance with the Reserve policy (FPDF-004) or changes that alter the ability to deliver Council priorities as approved in the budget.
City Manager, or delegate	Approve administrative budget restatements necessary and proper to create and re-organize departments of the City; Administration of collective agreements, in accordance with by-law 012-2013.
Chief Financial Officer and City Treasurer, or delegate	Approve administrative budget amendments recommended for approval by the Deputy Treasurer.
Deputy City Manager, or delegate	Authorize and recommend to the Deputy Treasurer and CFO budget transfers between business units or departments.
Deputy Treasurer, or delegate	Recommend administrative budget amendment requests to the CFO for approval, and authorize changes in the budget or financial systems, as required.
Director, or delegate	Authorize and recommend to the Deputy City Manager for Approval administrative amendments within the business unit(s) or department(s) for which they are responsible.