

Financial Policies

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The City form of government is designed to provide maximum local self-government.

The City of Homer is a first class General Law City incorporated in 1964 under Title 29 of the Alaska State Statute. City Code establishes a December 31 year-end. A wide range of services are provided by the City for the citizens of Homer and surrounding areas. Some of the services are planning and zoning, docks & small boat harbor, airport facility, water and wastewater services, library, parks and recreation, police protection, jail facilities, fire and emergency medical services and general administrative services. In addition to general governmental activities, the City provides financial support to certain community service organizations that promote education, health, recreation and economic stability for the citizens of the community. .Funding for the City, by order of importance, is provided from sales tax, property tax, state revenue, interest earnings, federal revenue and other sources.

The City of Homer Council has the responsibility to set the budget and establish the mill rate for the City.

The need to demonstrate compliance with regulations governing the funding sources for those services requires a complex and advanced accounting system. To fulfill this need, the National Council on Governmental Accounting recommended the use of fund accounting by state and local governments. A description of the fund types is presented in the Fund Description section of this document. Depending on the type of fund referred to, the basis of accounting may be different. The basis of accounting determines when revenues and expenditures or expenses are recognized in the accounts and reported in the financial statements. The budgetary basis is the same as the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) basis, where encumbrances outstanding at year-end are not treated as expenditures but as reservations of fund balance. The City's budget and accounting systems are operated on the modified accrual basis for governmental fund types (this includes the general, special revenue, capital projects and debt service funds) and the agency funds. Revenues are recognized when they become measurable and available as net current assets, and expenditures are recognized when the related fund liability is incurred. The accrual basis of accounting is used for the proprietary fund types, whereby revenues are recognized when earned and expenses are recorded when incurred.

The City of Homer's financial policies set forth the basis framework for the overall fiscal management of the City. The established long-range policies regarding financial management have been to take a conservative approach on forecasting revenues due to the uncertainty of the revenue source, particularly State revenues. This policy takes into consideration any changes in circumstances or conditions when evaluating both the current and long-range goals, and has helped to maintain financial stability.

The following policies assist the decision-making process of the Homer City Council.

Prudent budgeting and effective budgetary control.

Working capital, sufficient to meet current operating needs, is provided for all funds. The working capital designation will provide the cash flow to fund day-to-day City operations. It also significantly reduces the likelihood of the City ever needing short-term debt to cover cash shortages.

Formal budgetary integration is employed as a management control device during the year for the General Fund. Capital projects are budgeted on a project length basis. The objective of these budgetary controls is to insure compliance with legal provisions embodied in the annual appropriated budget approved by the Homer City Council. The legal level of control (that is, the level at which expenditures cannot legally exceed the appropriation) is at the fund level. The City Council may pass subsequent supplemental appropriations. Activities of the General Fund and Enterprise Funds are included in the annual appropriating budget. Appropriations lapse at the end of the year.

The City maintains an encumbrance accounting system as one technique of accomplishing budgetary control. Open encumbrances are reported as reservations of the fund balances and are charged to subsequent year

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appropriations.

The City's financial records for governmental fund types are maintained on a modified accrual basis. Revenues and other financial resource increments are recognized when they become susceptible to accrual. Expenditures are recognized when the fund liability is incurred except for inventories of materials and supplies, prepaid insurance, and similar items that may be considered expenditures when consumed. The City's Proprietary Funds are accounted for on the accrual basis. The accrual basis means that financial records are affected when the revenues are earned and expenses are incurred.

Efficient safeguarding of City assets.

Management of the City of Homer is responsible for establishing and maintaining an internal control structure designed to ensure that the assets of the City are protected from loss, theft, or misuse and to ensure that adequate accounting data are compiled to allow for the preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. The internal control structure is designed to provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that these objectives are met. The concept of 'reasonable assurance' recognizes that: 1) the cost of a control should not exceed the benefits likely to be derived; and 2) the valuation of costs and benefits require estimates and judgments by management. Authorization, through purchase orders, is required for the encumbrance and expenditure of funds. An encumbrance is the reservation of the funds necessary to pay for the purchase. The proper account must have adequate appropriations available prior to approval of the purchase order. Formal bids are required for purchases exceeding \$25,000.

Manageable debt administration.

Debt administration procedures include the scheduling of bond payments spread over the life of the issue, producing a total debt service schedule that is manageable. Under state statutes, a municipality may incur general obligation bond debt only after a bond authorization ordinance is approved by a majority vote at an election. There is no legal debt limit established for the City. Debt repayment is timed to correspond to expected cash inflows.

Maintenance of a sound investment policy of City monies.

The City uses a Central Treasury whereby all cash of the general government, enterprise fund, and any other agency's of the City is accumulated and invested. This procedure not only provides internal control but yields a higher rate of return on our investments because the amount available to invest is larger. The investment policies included in the City's Code of Ordinances include requirements for collateralization, diversification and safekeeping, as well as listing authorized investment instruments. The main objectives of this policy is the safeguarding of principal, maintaining sufficient liquidity to meet the City's cash flow requirements, and striving to achieve the highest rate of return on City investments and deposits, with due regard to the security of the investments and margins of risk. The city's investment policy is to minimize credit and market risks while maintaining a competitive yield on its portfolio. The City's cash is fully invested at all times.

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