

FOREWORD

The unique nature and complexity of Arizona's state budget law for cities and towns first prompted the publication of a Budget Manual by the League in 1963. The spending and property tax limitations passed by the Legislature and by the people through a constitutional amendment in 1980 led to the publication of a new edition. Since that time the publication has been updated to reflect amendments to the uniform expenditure reporting system, and amendments to other budget and finance related areas. In order to simplify future updates of this manual, we have published this edition digitally. The text has been updated to reflect minor changes in the law.

We hope this publication will be a useful document for elected officials and staff members concerned with the municipal budgetary process. Any comments, criticisms or suggestions on the publication will be appreciated.

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Executive Director

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INTRODUCTION

Municipal finance and the municipal budgetary process are, of necessity, central concerns for every city and town official. The mayor and council, as well as administrators, must have a basic understanding of these subject areas in order to govern and manage effectively and in compliance with state law.

A city or town budget should be more than a simple accounting mechanism. It is actually a policy statement outlining priorities for expenditure, needs of the citizens, proposed capital improvements, problem areas within the municipality, programs which will be initiated or abandoned and most importantly, the basic level of public services which the citizens will receive from their government.

The budget can and does express all of the above characteristics of a city or town, but in Arizona the state constitution and state law govern, to a large degree, the contents of the municipal budget and the methods for financing city operations.

This publication is designed to provide a basic outline of the budgetary process and general finance information for Arizona cities and towns. The manual is divided into three main areas covering the topics of budget preparation, state budget law requirements and financial management. The manual also contains an appendix with a number of documents helpful to the financial management of a city or town.

CHAPTER ONE

REVENUE SOURCES AND PRIMARY PROPERTY TAX REQUIREMENTS

The first section of this chapter will list and explain the main revenue sources available to city and town governments in Arizona. Secondly, the chapter will provide some suggestions about the preliminary groundwork necessary to prepare a municipal budget.

REVENUE SOURCES

There are a variety of funding sources available to units of local government. This section is organized by sources: local revenues that can be raised by the local government itself, federal revenues, and state revenues shared with local governments.

Local Revenue Sources

Arizona's cities and towns under state law have the authority to establish certain taxes for revenue purposes. In addition to this power of taxation, there are a number of other fees and finance mechanisms available to cities and towns to support local services.

State law requires that cities and towns provide 60 days' notice on the home page of their websites prior to approving any new fee or tax or any increased fee or tax rate. This law also applies to a property tax rate increase, not a levy increase and it requires that cities and towns demonstrate that the new fee or tax or the increase in fee or tax was established in accordance with state statute. This requirement does not apply to impact fees.¹

State law requires a municipality to prepare a schedule and written report if proposing to levy or assess any new or increased tax or fee, with specific exceptions for water and wastewater rates, registration based classes and programs, court fees established per law, fees for public housing, and other fees set by State or Federal law. The new law also requires the municipality to post the report on its website and utilize social media to advertise proposed changes. Sample schedules and reports can be found in [Exhibit J](#).²

Local Transaction Privilege Tax (Sales Tax). In recent years, the local sales tax has become the predominant means of financing municipal services. All incorporated cities and towns presently have a local sales tax. As the name implies, this is a tax on retail sales and other activities such as contracting. The statewide average local sales tax rate is two and three-tenths percent. Rates range from one and one-half percent to four percent. The authority for a local sales tax is contained in state statute.³ A city or town may establish a local sales tax through adoption of an ordinance. The initiation of this tax does not have to be submitted to a vote of the people; however, there are a number of charter cities with charter provisions requiring voter approval to increase the sales tax above a specified limit. Cities and towns adopting a local sales tax become part of the sales tax collection system administered by the Arizona Department of Revenue (ADOR) by entering into an intergovernmental agreement with ADOR. Under the system, the local sales tax is collected by ADOR at the same time the state sales tax is collected. The local sales tax collections are then returned to the city or town.

All of the cities and towns in the state that impose a local sales tax have adopted the Model City Tax Code, selecting various options for their municipality. In order to keep taxpayers up to date on what a particular city either taxes or exempts, the ADOR maintains a website at <http://modelcitytaxcode.az.gov>. It consists of a master version of the Model City Tax Code with both Model Options and Local Options displayed within the code, a chart displaying which options each particular city or town has chosen, and a "City Profile"

¹ [A.R.S. §9-499.15](#)

² [A.R.S. §9-499.15](#)

³ [A.R.S. § 9-240 \(B\)\(18\)](#)

section showing any code language that is unique to that city or town and other specific information pertaining to each city and town such as tax rates and contact information.

The Municipal Tax Code Commission was created by the state Legislature to act as a forum for discussion of all changes to the Model City Tax Code.⁴ All changes to the code must be submitted to the commission at least 60 days prior to any city taking action to change their code. The commission can hold hearings and must approve any changes before any city or town is authorized to make changes to its code. Any changes approved by the commission must be adopted by every city or town council.⁵ Changes in sales tax rates or adoption or elimination of existing Local or Model Options do not have to be reviewed, but **ALL ordinances making changes to a city or town tax code must be filed with the Commission and the ADOR within 10 days after council action or the council action is voided.** All correspondence with the Commission should be sent to: Cities Program Liaison, Arizona Department of Revenue, 1600 West Monroe Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007.

State statute prohibits municipalities from imposing or increasing transaction privilege taxes on rental of residential property, unless the increase is approved by the voters at a regular municipal election. The law does not apply to health care facilities, long-term care facilities or hotel, motel or other transient lodging businesses.⁶ “A Guide for Amending Your Sales Tax Code” has been prepared and appears in the appendix as [Exhibit G](#).

Use Tax. Another revenue source for cities and towns is the Use tax. Essentially, Use tax is an excise tax on the use or consumption of tangible personal property that is purchased without payment of a municipal tax to any city or town. In other words, it is a mechanism for taxing purchases made outside the boundaries of the municipality where the property is used. Imposing a Use tax has the effect of leveling the playing field for local businesses that are subject to the city or town TPT by eliminating the financial incentive of making purchases outside the municipality. The Use tax, if enacted, is part of the Model City Tax Code discussed above. Adopting a Use tax that matches the local Retail tax is highly recommended for all cities and towns as good tax policy promoting competitive fairness for all sellers.

Bed Tax. Most cities and towns have adopted a bed tax in addition to their local sales tax. A bed tax is a special excise tax on hotel and motel room rentals. Increases in the bed tax rate by cities are governed by state statute, which specifies how the proceeds from such increases must be used.⁷ The imposition of this tax in most cities and towns comes under the Model City Tax Code discussed above.

Property Tax. Beginning with the 1980 tax year, property tax levies were divided into a primary property tax levy and a secondary property tax levy. A secondary property tax may only be levied to pay the principal and interest charges on bonds. The primary property tax levy is for all other purposes. There are no statutory limits on the amount of secondary property taxes, while there are strict limits placed on the primary property tax.⁸ These limitations are discussed in detail [later in this manual](#).

Starting in Tax Year 2015, Proposition 117, A.R.S. § 42-11001, subsection 7 (b) now requires using the Limited Property Tax Value (Primary Net Value on February State Abstract Report) in determining and levying primary and secondary taxes on all property. This includes all municipal districts such as SLIDs, CFDs, MIDs, etc. “Limited property value” means the value determined pursuant to A.R.S. § 42-13301 and is the basis for a) computing levy limitations for counties, cities, towns and community college districts and, b) assessing, fixing, determining and levying primary and secondary property taxes on all property except property described in A.R.S § 42-13304.

The primary property tax has been a traditional means of financing city and town services. While the importance of the property tax has been decreasing in recent years due to the increased revenues from sales taxes, it still is a significant source of local revenue for many Arizona cities and towns. The property tax has also been one of the most stable sources of revenue, because it is not subject to the same fluctuations sometimes experienced with excise taxes.

Any city or town that wants to initiate a primary property tax must submit the proposed amount to be raised

⁴ [A.R.S. § 42-6052](#)

⁵ [A.R.S. § 42-6053](#)

⁶ [A.R.S. § 42-6011](#)

⁷ [A.R.S. § 9-500.06](#)

⁸ [Article IX, Section 19, Arizona State Constitution](#)

from the tax to the voters at an election to be held on the third Tuesday in May.⁹ The amount approved by the voters will constitute the base on which future limitations on levies will be determined. If the voters approve the levy, the city or town council may levy the tax in the fiscal year immediately following the election. The city or town, however, is not required to levy the entire amount approved by the voters in the first year. Caution should be exercised in establishing this base levy because not only will it be used as the base for future limitations but also cities currently have no authority to override the limit once it is established. Procedures for establishing a primary property tax are discussed in greater detail [later in this manual](#).

A city or town that incorporates or annexes land must give proper notice before levying a property tax in the next fiscal year. State law requires that notice must be given to the Department of Revenue and the appropriate county assessor. A map showing the boundaries of the newly incorporated or annexed area should be included along with the report. This notice must be given by November 1 of the year prior to the fiscal year when the tax will be levied.¹⁰

Adoption of Tax Levy

Before adopting the property tax levy, the council must receive property value information from the county assessor. These values must be provided to the council on or before February 10 of the tax year.¹¹ These values must be made available for public inspection on or before February 15 of the tax year.¹² Along with the property values, the county assessor will transmit the final levy limit worksheet, and each city or town levying a property tax is required to notify the Property Tax Oversight Commission in writing within 10 days of its agreement or disagreement with the final levy limit. After adoption of the levy the Property Tax Oversight Commission will review the primary property tax levy to determine the adequacy of compliance.¹³ Notice of any violation of the levy limit will be sent by September 15.¹⁴ If a city or town disputes the findings of the commission it may request, on or before October 1, a hearing before the commission to attempt to resolve the dispute. If the city or town continues to dispute the findings of the commission after the hearing, it may appeal the matter to Superior Court within 30 days after the decision of the commission.¹⁵ If the proposed tax levy will increase the tax rate, a 60-day notice prior to council action must be posted on the city/town website including the authority to raise the rate.

The tax levy for a city or town must be adopted on or before the third Monday in August.¹⁶ Using the information provided by the county assessor, the council must specify the amount that will be levied in an ordinance that will become effective immediately.¹⁷ The tax levy ordinance does not require a three-fourths vote or a super-majority vote to make the levy effective immediately because this is an administrative matter and not an act of legislation. This determination is based on a state Supreme Court decision that the state general appropriation bill was not legislation, but merely an administrative method of setting apart funds necessary for use and maintenance of state government.¹⁸ This case also applies to the municipal budgetary process. The main dates and deadlines in the budgetary process are outlined in the budget calendar ([Exhibit D](#)).

Any money received in excess of the maximum allowable limit must be maintained in a separate fund and used to reduce the primary property tax levy in the following year.¹⁹ However, additional amounts collected from escaped property and monies that are received from the payment of delinquent property taxes properly assessed in prior years are exempted from this requirement.²⁰ Escaped property are those parcels that did not appear on the assessment rolls for the tax year, but that would have appeared if they had been identified.

Establishment of a New Primary Property Tax Levy

A number of cities and towns in Arizona currently do not impose a primary property tax. Therefore, a method

⁹ [A.R.S. § 42-17056](#)

¹⁰ [A.R.S. § 42-17257](#) and [A.R.S. § 42-17003](#)

¹¹ [A.R.S. § 42-17052](#) and [A.R.S. § 42-17003](#)

¹² [A.R.S. § 42-17055](#)

¹³ [A.R.S. § 42-17055](#)

¹⁴ [A.R.S. § 42-17005 \(D\)](#)

¹⁵ [A.R.S. § 42-17004 \(E\)](#)

¹⁶ [A.R.S. § 42-17151](#)

¹⁷ [A.R.S. § 42-17151](#)

¹⁸ [Sellers v. Frohmiller, 42 Arizona 239, 24 Pac. \(2d\) 666](#)

¹⁹ [A.R.S. § 42-17005 \(C\)](#)

²⁰ [A.R.S. § 42-17051 \(B\)](#)

to establish such a tax if the city or town desires to do so has been provided in state law.

To establish a primary property tax, a city or town must present the proposed levy to the voters at an election on the third Tuesday in May. The ballot must state that the amount on the ballot will be the base for determining levy limitations for the city or town in subsequent years.

These steps outline the process to initiate a primary property tax²¹:

1. The council passes a resolution calling the election to be held at the regular voting places. The call must state that the election is to establish a primary property tax. There is no longer a time requirement related to the call of election, but we suggest that it be done not less than 30 nor more than 150 days before the date of the election.²²
2. Post a notice on the city/town website at least 60 days before the council votes to place the proposal to impose a property tax on the ballot and that the authority to impose the tax is specified in A.R.S. §42-17056.²³
3. The election conforms to the general election laws.²⁴
4. The election is held on the third Tuesday in May.²⁵
5. The returns are made to the council within 12 days after the election.²⁶
6. The council holds a special meeting within 20 days of the election to canvass and certify the vote.²⁷
7. A certificate is filed with the county recorder, giving the purpose of the election, the total number of votes cast and the total number of votes for and against establishing the primary property tax, and stating that the tax has been ordered by the council.²⁸

Primary Property Tax Levy Limit

There is a strict limitation on how much a city or town can levy as a primary property tax. The primary tax levy is limited to an increase of two percent more than the previous year's maximum allowable primary levy plus an increased dollar amount due to a net gain in property not taxed the previous year.²⁹ In November 2006, voters elected to reset the “base year” from which annual levy increases are calculated from 1979-80 to 2005-06.³⁰

Note that the two percent increase is based on a city or town's “maximum allowable levy” for the prior year. That is, even if you do not adopt the maximum allowable levy from year to year, the two percent allowable increase will be based on the prior year's “maximum allowable levy” anyway. Also, it should be pointed out that the “net new property” factor is included in the calculation to take into account all new construction and any additional property added to a community due to an annexation. There is an Attorney General's Opinion that has been interpreted to state that a city or town can levy in excess of its maximum allowable levy limit for involuntary tort judgments.³¹

The Property Tax Oversight Commission will recognize an involuntary tort judgment if:

1. The judgment is pursuant to a court order or settlement agreement; and
2. The judgment is approved for payment by the city or town council; and

²¹ [A.R.S. § 42-17056](#)

²² [A.R.S. § 35-453 \(C\)](#)

²³ [A.R.S. § 9-499.15](#)

²⁴ [A.R.S. § 35-453](#)

²⁵ [A.R.S. § 42-17056](#)

²⁶ [A.R.S. § 35-454 \(B\)](#)

²⁷ [A.R.S. § 35-454 \(E\)](#)

²⁸ [A.R.S. § 35-454 \(F\)](#)

²⁹ [A.R.S. § 42-17051](#)

³⁰ [Article IX, Section 19, paragraph 4, Arizona State Constitution](#)

³¹ [Attorney General Opinion \(I86-031\)](#)

3. The Attorney General certifies that the judgment is an involuntary tort judgment; and
4. The city or town submits copies of the court order or settlement agreement and the minutes of the meeting at which the council approved payment on or before the first Monday in July.

The primary property tax from all taxing jurisdictions for homeowners may not exceed 1 percent of their home's primary assessed value.³² If the combined primary property tax (for the city or town, county, etc.) exceeds 1 percent of the primary assessed value of the home, the school districts will reduce their rate until the homeowners aggregate rate is equal to or less than the allowable one percent. The state will then subsidize the school district for the reduced revenue. Note that this one percent limitation only applies to primary property taxes and does not affect the secondary property tax levy.

Property Tax Refund in Budget

Any affected political subdivision, including cities and towns, must include in their budgets for the next fiscal year the proportional amount of any property tax refund for which they are liable when the refund is for overpayment as a result of a change in the tax roll pursuant to state statute authorizing such change.³³

Truth in Taxation

It is required that the county assessor, on or before February 10 of each year, transmit to each city and town an estimate of the total net assessed valuation of the city or town, including new property added to the tax roll.³⁴ If the proposed primary tax levy, excluding amounts attributable to new construction, is greater than the amount levied by the city or town in the previous year the council must publish a notice that meets the following requirements:³⁵

1. The notice has to be published twice in a newspaper of general circulation in the city or town. The first publication shall be at least 14 but not more than 20 days before the date on which the proposed levy is to be discussed. The second publication must be at least seven but not more than 10 days before the hearing.
2. The notice has to be published in a location other than the classified or legal advertising section of the newspaper.
3. The notice must be at least one-fourth page in size and shall be surrounded by a solid black border at least one-eighth inch in width.
4. The headline of the notice must read "Truth in Taxation Hearing - Notification of Tax Increase" in at least 18-point type and the text must be in substantially the same form as the statute ([Exhibit H](#)).
5. In addition to publishing the notice according to the above requirements, it is required that the city or town issue a press release with the same information included in the notice required above.³⁶

The law does provide that in lieu of publishing the notice it may be mailed to all registered voters in the city or town at least 10 but not more than 20 days before the hearing on the proposed levy.³⁷ The hearing is to be held on or before adoption of the final city or town budget.³⁸ It also requires that a roll call vote be taken on the matter of adoption of the primary property tax levy if an increase is proposed.³⁹ State law requires that if the proposed primary property tax levy is increased by more than 15% over the previous year's levy, excluding increases due to new construction, the increase must be approved by a unanimous roll call vote of the council.⁴⁰ Following the public hearing, the city or town must, within three days of the hearing, mail a copy of the truth in taxation notice, a statement of its publication or mailing and the result of the council's vote to the Property Tax Oversight

³² [Article IX, Section 18, Arizona State Constitution](#) and [A.R.S. § 42-17152](#)

³³ [A.R.S. § 42-18061 \(A\)\(4\)](#)

³⁴ [A.R.S. § 42-17107 \(A\)](#)

³⁵ [A.R.S. § 42-17107 \(A\)](#)

³⁶ [A.R.S. § 42-17107 \(A\)\(3\)](#)

³⁷ [A.R.S. § 42-17107 \(A\)\(2\)](#)

³⁸ [A.R.S. § 42-17107 \(A\)\(2\)](#)

³⁹ [A.R.S. § 42-17107 \(A\)\(4\)](#)

⁴⁰ [A.R.S. § 42-17107 \(A\)\(4\)](#)

Commission. ⁴¹ Both the hearing and the notice can be combined with the regular budget notices.⁴²

The Legislature added a penalty to the truth in taxation law. If a city or town failed to comply with the notice and hearing requirements, then the next year the jurisdiction is prohibited from levying more than was levied in the prior year.⁴³

Other Local Taxes

Business License Tax. The general law authority for a city or town to initiate a local sales tax is the same authority that allows a municipality to place a business license tax on professions, occupations or businesses within the community. State law stipulates that a business license tax can only be issued for the period of one year and may not be less than \$10 nor more than \$5,000.⁴⁴ However, charter cities are not necessarily subject to this stipulation. Most cities and towns in Arizona have a business license tax structure of some type. Traditionally, there have been two means of levying these taxes on local businesses - a flat rate charge on an annual or quarterly basis or a flat rate charge based on the level of gross proceeds from sales. While most cities and towns have this type of tax, it has not been an important source of revenue. The tax has been used primarily as a means of regulating businesses within the community and collecting a minimum amount of information to provide a registry of businesses and their contacts.

It should be noted that there are several restrictions on a city or town's authority to require a business license, including:

1. A city or town may not require a business license of person who is defined as a "food producer", unless they engage in selling non-food or animal feed items or items they didn't grow or produce from their crops and livestock.⁴⁵
2. A city or town is prohibited from requiring a business license as a condition for receiving a building permit. However, a contractor can be required to apply for a business license within 30 days of receiving a building permit.⁴⁶
3. Licensed real estate brokers and salespersons are only subject to business licensing in the city or town where their office is located and cannot be required to secure a business license in any other city or town.⁴⁷
4. A city or town cannot increase business license taxes or fees on "hospitality industry businesses" without a corresponding equal dollar increase in the business license tax or fees imposed on all other businesses in the city or town. Also, a city or town may not increase the fees on hospitality businesses in any year by an amount that exceeds the amount of any increase in the consumer price index compared to the average of the last five years of consumer price indexes. "Hospitality industry businesses" means a restaurant, bar, hotel, motel, liquor store, grocery store, convenience store or recreational vehicle park. This definition was amended to include rental car companies located within a county stadium district which has imposed a car rental surcharge.⁴⁸

⁴¹ [A.R.S. § 42-17107\(A\)\(5\)](#)

⁴² [A.R.S. § 42-17103\(C\)](#)

⁴³ [A.R.S. § 42-17107\(B\)](#)

⁴⁴ [A.R.S. § 9-240\(B\)\(19\)](#)

⁴⁵ [A.R.S. § 3-563](#)

⁴⁶ [A.R.S. § 9-467\(B\)](#)

⁴⁷ [A.R.S. § 9-491.01](#)

⁴⁸ [A.R.S. § 48-4234](#) and [A.R.S. § 9-500.06](#)

Franchise Tax. Cities and towns in Arizona are given exclusive control over all rights-of-way dedicated to the municipality. This exclusive control enables the municipality to grant franchise agreements to utilities using the city or town's streets in the distribution of utility services. As an example, many cities and towns in Arizona have granted franchises to natural gas companies to place gas lines underground within the public right-of-way. In conjunction with this franchise, a franchise tax can be charged by the municipality. To grant a franchise, state law requires the municipality to place the question before the voters of the community for approval and limits the term of a franchise agreement to a maximum of 25 years when a new franchise agreement has to be approved by the voters.⁴⁹

Government Property Lease Excise Tax. State law provides an excise tax as the successor to the tax on possessory interests.⁵⁰ The law imposes an excise tax on buildings that are owned by a city or town, leased by a private party and occupied and used for commercial, residential rental or industrial purposes. The excise tax is assessed on a per-square-foot basis with different rates for different uses, which are annually adjusted by the Arizona Department of Revenue based on the producer price index. A city or town is allowed to abate the tax for a period of eight years, from the date that the certificate of occupancy was issued, for both existing and new projects within redevelopment areas that are part of a single central business district. The city or town must calculate the excise tax for each prime lessee and provide a copy of the return to the County Treasurer and the prime lessee. The County Treasurer of each county where a GPLET property is located acts as the collection agent for the tax, and distributes the revenues to the county, school district and community college district in that county. There are a number of exemptions including property used for airports, public housing, utility easements, convention and recreational facilities.

A city or town must record a memorandum of lease with the County Recorder and submit a copy of the lease to the respective County Treasurer, if the following conditions exist:

- The building is owned of record by the city or town.
- The building is leased in whole or part by a private party.
- The leased space is occupied for commercial, residential rental or industrial purposes.
- The duration of the lease is at least 30 days.
- The age of the building is less than 50 years.
- The abatement provisions in the law do not apply.
- The exemption provisions in the law do not apply.

State law now requires the city or town making the lease (instead of the Department of Revenue) to maintain a database of all its government property leases or post its lease agreements on its website. The city or town must also provide a current link to the database or postings to the Department of Revenue and notify the Department when the database no longer contains any active leases. The Department of Revenue shall place links to all of the government lessors' databases or postings with active leases on their website.

Magistrate Court Fines/ Fees. Another revenue source for Arizona cities and towns is the money from fines paid to the municipal magistrate court. Specifically, this revenue comes from traffic violations and other fines paid for the violation of municipal ordinances. The courts, counties, cities and towns have the authority to contract with the Motor Vehicle Division to require payment of traffic fines, sanctions and penalties prior to the renewal of automobile registrations.⁵¹

If a city or town operates a municipal court, the Arizona Supreme Court may provide it revenues from the Judicial Collection Enhancement Fund (JCEF) and the Fill the Gap Fund, to be used specifically by the municipal court for specified expenses.⁵²

⁴⁹ [A.R.S. § 9-502](#)

⁵⁰ [A.R.S. § 42-6202](#)

⁵¹ [A.R.S. §28-1633](#) and [A.R.S. §22-404](#)

⁵² [A.R.S. §12-113](#) and [A.R.S. § 41-2409](#)

Fees

Municipalities are prohibited from levying or assessing a municipality-wide tax or fee against property owners based on the size or value of the real property or improvements for any public service provided by the municipality unless it was adopted in compliance with the statutes governing property taxes. Municipalities that adopted an ordinance before December 31, 2013 requiring property owners to obtain fire prevention and control services are grand-fathered.⁵³

Permit Fees. Revenues from this source include the fees collected from building permits, zoning permits and a variety of other programs.

User Fees. User fees are collected from municipal residents for the use of certain city and town facilities or services. Examples of user fees would include the amounts charged to use lighting in city or town parks or fees charged for sanitation pickup, building or zoning permits, water or sewer.

In addition to the 60-day notice requirement for all tax and fee increases, cities and towns considering a rate increase for water and sewer service are required to prepare a written report or supply data, supporting the rate increase, give at least 60 day-notice of a rate increase and hold a public hearing on the proposal. The report must contain cash flow projections that indicate all anticipated revenues from residential and nonresidential customers and the overall expenses for providing water or wastewater service. A copy of the written report or data must be available to the public and must be filed in the clerk's office and posted on the city or town website at least 30 days before the public hearing. Also, a copy of the notice of intention must be published one time in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town at least 30 days before the public hearing date. A rate increase may be adopted by ordinance or resolution and becomes effective 30 days after adoption.⁵⁴ There is a vague requirement that all rates and charges for water and wastewater service shall be “just and reasonable.”⁵⁵ Because “just and reasonable” are not defined in the statute, it is difficult to say what this means.

Statute prohibits a municipality from assessing or collecting a fee on new water or wastewater service for the purpose of recovering the municipality's costs of acquiring, whether by purchase or by eminent domain, the utility plant, facilities, system or other property of a public service corporation or another municipality engaged in the business of providing water or wastewater service. The requirement does not apply to water or wastewater fees adopted before January 1, 2016 or to water or wastewater fees included in a notice of intent to adopt or increase water or wastewater rates and fees adopted before January 1, 2016.⁵⁶

A municipality may not seek recovery of water and wastewater charges from anyone other than an individual who has contracted for the service and resides or has resided at the service address when the residential property contains four or fewer units. A property owner, an immediate family member of the person who does not reside at the property or any other entity, at its sole discretion, may contract for water and wastewater service with a municipality and shall provide payment for such services.⁵⁷

Additionally, a city or town considering operating a public utility must, before construction, purchase, acquisition or lease of any plant or property or portion of plant or property devoted to the business of or services rendered by a public utility, must have authorization to do so by the affirmative vote of a majority of the qualified electors of the city or town voting at a general or special municipal election duly called and held for the purpose of voting on the question.⁵⁸

Development (Impact) Fees. Cities and towns have the authority to impose fees that provide a direct benefit to a new development area for their proportionate share of items such as infrastructure,

⁵³ [A.R.S. §9-499.17](#)

⁵⁴ [A.R.S. § 9-511.01 \(C\)](#)

⁵⁵ [A.R.S. § 9-511.01 \(E\)](#)

⁵⁶ [A.R.S. § 9-511.01 \(F\)](#)

⁵⁷ [A.R.S. § 9-511.01 \(F\)](#)

⁵⁸ [A.R.S. § 9-514](#); *Town of Marana v. Pima County*, 230 Ariz. 142, 281 P.3d 1010 (App. 2012)(concluding the Town's ballot measure requesting general approval was inadequate because a municipality must obtain voter authority to acquire a *particular* plant or property).

improvements, real property, engineering and architectural services, financing and professional services for preparation of an impact fee plan, certain kinds of equipment and public safety vehicles. If a city or town has impact fees, they must be assessed on residential, commercial and industrial property, although there can be different rates for the different categories of property. There are specific requirements for the preparation and imposition of these fees and special attention must be paid to state statute.⁵⁹ The League has prepared a model ordinance for implementing this statute.⁶⁰

Before impact fees may be adopted or amended, a city or town must update local land use assumptions, a new or modified Infrastructure Improvement Plan (IIP), and have “qualified professionals” develop an impact fee report that: identifies the methodology for calculating the amount of the fee, explains the relationship between the fee and the IIP and includes documentation that supports the assessment of a new or modified fee. A graphical representation of the timeline for establishing or amending impact fees and for development of your IIP is located in the appendix as [Exhibit I](#).

Land use assumptions are projections of changes in land uses, densities, intensities, and population for a Service Area over a period of at least ten years as specified in the model ordinance.

An IIP is one or more written plans that individually or collectively identify each public service that is proposed to be the subject of a development fee and otherwise complies with the requirements of this section, and may be the municipality’s capital improvement plan. As of January 1, 2012, there are certain types of infrastructure projects that may no longer be financed using developmental impact fees.

Each city and town imposing impact fees must develop an annual report to account for the collection and use of development fees. The report is due within 90 days of the end of each fiscal year and is required to be maintained and available upon request in the clerk’s office and posted on the city or town’s website. The law allows the report to contain financial information that has not been audited. Additionally, there is a requirement for a biennial audit of impact fees OR creation of an Advisory Committee.⁶¹

There are six specific areas that the Development (Impact) Fee annual report is required to address:

1. The amount of each type of development fee assessed by a city or town.
2. The balance of each fund at the beginning and end of the fiscal year maintained for each type of development fee.
3. The amount of interest or other earnings on monies in each fund as of the end of the fiscal year.
4. The amount of development fees used to repay either (a) bonds issued by the municipality to pay the cost of a capital improvement project for which the development fee was assessed or (b) monies advanced by the city or town from funds other than development fee funds to pay for a capital improvement project for which a development fee was assessed.
5. The amount of development fees spent on each capital improvement project for which a development fee was assessed and the physical location of each capital improvement project.
6. The amount of development fees spent for each purpose other than a capital improvement project for which a development fee was assessed.

Failing to comply with these reporting requirements will prohibit the municipality from collecting development fees until the report is filed.

Refunds are due to the property owner if infrastructure for which a fee has been collected is not completed within 10 years, or 15 years for water and wastewater facilities.

Effective August 1, 2014, if a city or town has a differential construction sales tax rate in addition to an impact fee program, the impact fees must be offset against the differential amount collected from the sales tax.⁶²

Please refer to A.R.S. § 9-463.05 and the League’s model ordinance for specific definitions and details.

⁵⁹ [A.R.S. § 9-463.05](#)

⁶⁰ [League Model Ordinance on Impact Fees](#)

⁶¹ [A.R.S. § 9-463.05](#)

⁶² [A.R.S. § 9-463.05 \(B\) \(12\)](#)

State Shared Revenues

Cities and towns in Arizona are fortunate to be involved in a fairly progressive shared revenue program which passes through funds to Arizona municipalities from four state revenue sources. The TPT and income tax revenue sharing programs were enacted by statewide votes as a result of voter initiative measures proposed by the League. The following are sources of shared revenue.

State Transaction Privilege Tax (TPT). The current rate of the state sales tax is five and six-tenths percent (5.6 percent). Cities and towns share in a portion of the collection total. A municipality receives its share of the state shared sales tax based on the relation of its population to the total population of all incorporated cities and towns in the state according to the most recent decennial census or population estimates of the United States Census Bureau beginning on July 1 in the second year following the decennial census through June 30 of the year following the next decennial census.⁶³ This money may be expended for any municipal public purpose; outside of this stipulation, there is no restriction on the expenditure of these revenues. The state sales tax revenues are distributed on a semi-monthly basis.

State Income Tax (URS). Proposition 200 from 1972 provides that cities and towns receive a 15 percent share of the annual state income tax collections. This source of money is officially called Urban Revenue Sharing. This money is distributed to a city or town based on its population in relation to the total population of all incorporated cities and towns according to the decennial census or population estimates of the United States Census Bureau beginning on July 1 in the second year following the decennial census through June 30 of the year following the next decennial census.⁶⁴ The annual amount of urban revenue sharing money distributed is based on income tax collections from two years prior to the fiscal year in which the city or town receives these funds. There is no restriction on the expenditure of urban revenue sharing funds, except that they must be expended for a municipal public purpose. Revenues from this source are distributed on a monthly basis.

Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF). This revenue source is commonly referred to as the gasoline tax; however, there are a number of additional transportation related fees including a portion of vehicle license taxes that are placed in the highway user revenue fund. Cities and towns receive 27.5 percent of the highway user revenues.⁶⁵ One-half of the monies that a city or town receives under this formula is distributed on the basis of the municipality's population in relation to the population of all incorporated cities and towns in the state according to the decennial census or population estimates of the United States Census Bureau beginning on July 1 in the second year following the decennial census through June 30 of the year following the next decennial census.⁶⁶ The remaining half of the highway user revenue monies is allocated on the basis of "county of origin" of gasoline sales and the relation of a municipality's population to the population of all incorporated cities and towns in the county. (The "county of origin" factor used in the formula is determined on the basis of the gasoline and other fuel sales in a county in relation to the sale of gasoline and other fuels in other counties in the state). The intent of the distribution formula is to spread a portion of the money across the state solely on the basis of population while the remaining money flows to those areas with the highest gasoline and other fuel sales. Three percent of the state portion of this fund is directed to cities with a population of more than 300,000.⁶⁷ Also, 12.6 percent of the state highway fund is allocated to certain projects in Maricopa and Pima counties.⁶⁸ These monies are distributed on a monthly basis.

There is a state constitutional restriction on the use of the highway user revenues, which requires that these funds be used solely for street and highway purposes. Eligible expenditures would include the cost of right-of-way acquisition, construction, reconstruction, maintenance, repair, roadside development of city and town roads, streets and bridges and payment of the interest and principal on highway and street bonds.⁶⁹

⁶³ [A.R.S. § 42-5029 \(D\) \(1\)](#), [A.R.S. § 42-5033](#) and [A.R.S. § 42-5033.01](#)

⁶⁴ [A.R.S. § 43-206](#), [A.R.S. § 42-5033](#) and [A.R.S. § 42-5033.01](#)

⁶⁵ [A.R.S. § 28-6538 \(A\) \(3\)](#)

⁶⁶ [A.R.S. § 28-6532](#), [A.R.S. § 28-6540](#) and [A.R.S. § 42-5033.01](#)

⁶⁷ [A.R.S. § 28-6538 \(A\) \(4\)](#)

⁶⁸ [A.R.S. § 28-6538 \(B\) \(1\) & \(2\)](#)

⁶⁹ [Article IX, Section 14, Arizona State Constitution](#) and [A.R.S. § 28-6533](#)

It is the opinion of the League General Counsel that the use of these funds for street and highway purposes would include any construction or reconstruction occurring in the entire area defined as the public right-of-way.⁷⁰ This would include specific activities such as the paving of streets, construction of sidewalks, curbs, gutters, street lighting, and placement of traffic signs. State law specifically prohibits the use of highway user revenues for the enforcement of traffic laws or the administration of traffic safety programs.

The Auditor General, if requested by the joint legislative audit committee, may conduct performance audits of a city, town or county receiving highway user revenue fund monies to determine if the monies are being spent according to the constitutional and statutory provisions explained above.⁷¹

Some jurisdictions have experienced serious fluctuations in HURF distributions. These happen for various reasons; many times they are due to amended reports filed by gasoline distributors. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), as the collection and distribution agency, has the authority to adjust distributions as amended reports are filed. However, they can only take up to 25 percent of a jurisdiction's normal monthly allocation in a given month to make up the adjustment. For further information contact: Maria Mendez, Revenue Accounting Manager, Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Division, 1801 W. Jefferson St., Mail Drop 519M, Phoenix, AZ 85007. Phone: 602.712.8924. E-mail: MMendez3@azdot.gov

Vehicle License Tax (VLT). Approximately 20 percent of the revenues collected for the licensing of motor vehicles are distributed to incorporated cities and towns.⁷² (38 percent of the total revenues from this source are distributed to the highway user revenue fund and four percent to the state highway fund.) A city or town receives its share of the vehicle license tax collections based on its population in relation to the total incorporated population of the county. These monies are distributed on a monthly basis. There is no restriction on the expenditure of vehicle license tax revenues except they must be spent for a municipal public purpose.

Population Reporting for State Shared Revenue Purposes (Annexations)

The US census bureau has a program to provide geographically updated population certifications so that jurisdictions can get credit for the additional population in annexed areas. When available, the program will involve a fee and an application process. The application and detailed information is available at the following website: www.census.gov/mso/www/certification/. These procedures affect the updating of populations for distribution of all types of state shared revenue. A copy of the request form is provided here: [\(GUPCP\) Request Form](#).

Federal Revenues

The federal government has curtailed a number of programs that had previously made revenues available for cities and towns. The amount of federal dollars, type of programs and the projects for which the money can be expended are constantly changing. Summarized below are the two general categories of federal revenue sources that remain.

Block Grant Programs. In theory, a block grant program is intended to fund various federal programs within a broadly defined area. An example of a block grant program is the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG). This particular program is designed to fund a variety of housing, public works and physical construction projects.

A portion of the CDBG program is directed to smaller cities and towns. Under this portion of the program, the state allocates community development monies to cities and towns with populations of less than 50,000 persons. This is not an entitlement program, cities and towns must apply to receive these grants. In most areas, the council of governments receives the applications and determines the allocation from this program.

⁷⁰ [General Counsel Opinion 4-20-1987](#)

⁷¹ [A.R.S. §28-6533](#) and [A.R.S. § 41-1279.03](#)

⁷² [A.R.S. § 28-5808](#)

Categorical Grants. Categorical grants are special federal appropriations of money to fund specific projects of a definite limitation and scope. For example, a federal grant to fund the construction of a wastewater treatment facility would be a categorical grant, since the construction of this facility would have the limited use and scope of “wastewater treatment.” Categorical grants are usually awarded within a strict framework of federal guidelines governing this single purpose program. Cities and towns must meet specific guideline requirements to receive federal money. Securing a federal categorical grant also involves competition between various levels of government. At one point in time, categorical grants were more prevalent; however, this source of funding has become very limited in recent years.

CHAPTER TWO

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS AND ADOPTION

To familiarize local officials with the state budget law, this chapter will cover the topics of funds, the state imposed expenditure limitation, alternatives to the state expenditure limitation, and budget development and deadlines.

FUNDS

A fund within a municipal budget is a sum of money set aside as a separate and independent fiscal and accounting mechanism. Since a fund is only an accounting mechanism, a separate bank account is not required for each fund. State law refers to only two budgetary funds. However, as indicated later in this chapter, additional budgetary funds may be created.

First of all, cities and towns all have what is commonly called a “general fund.” The term general fund is only a descriptive name, and there is no specific legal requirement to establish an account with this particular name. State statute stipulates that each city or town “prepare a full and complete statement of the financial affairs of such political subdivision for the preceding fiscal year and an estimate of the different amounts which will be required to meet the public expense of each such political subdivision for the current fiscal year.”⁷³ Most of these expenses would be included in the general fund.

The second fund common to each city and town in Arizona is the Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) which is considered a “special revenue” fund because the revenues are restricted by expenditures within the right of way.⁷⁴ State law requires that monies collected by the state from the tax on the sale of gasoline, sale of diesel fuels and other transportation related fees go into this fund. The state then passes a certain amount of this revenue on to cities and towns. As mentioned in [Chapter One](#), the expenditure of highway user revenues is limited to projects within the public right-of-way.⁷⁵ There are also a number of special revenue funds such as grants, excise transportation funds, etc. that many communities create to track the restricted nature of the revenues.

There are several national accounting standards that may be used as a guide of fund types you may wish to establish. For example, you may wish to establish a library or water or sewer fund. If bonds are outstanding, certain funds may be required by the bond resolution, and there are also special requirements for improvement districts.

STATE IMPOSED EXPENDITURE LIMITATION

Provisions of the state imposed expenditure limitation appear in both the Arizona Constitution and the Arizona Revised Statutes.⁷⁶ The constitution sets forth the framework in some detail for the expenditure limit and the remaining details are provided in state law.

The state imposed limitation uses actual payments of local revenues for FY 1979-80 as the base limit. The Economic Estimates Commission (EEC) has determined this base limit for every city and town based on information supplied by each community in 1980. This base consists of those expenditures “controlled” by the state limitation and does not include those revenues specifically exempted from the limitation. The Uniform Expenditure Reporting System clarifies that the expending of development/impact fees are not excludable expenditures. The Auditor General’s Office has transitioned the Uniform Expenditure Reporting System (UERS) from a single manual to a series of FAQs and Annual Expenditure Limitation Report ([AELR](#)) forms and instructions.

⁷³ [A.R.S. § 42-17101](#)

⁷⁴ [A.R.S. § 28-6533](#)

⁷⁵ [General Counsel Opinion 4-20-1987](#) and [Article IX, Section 14, Arizona State Constitution](#)

⁷⁶ [Article IX, Section 20, Arizona State Constitution](#) and [A.R.S. § 41-563](#)

As a blanket statement, everything not specifically excluded is included under the state imposed expenditure limitation. Consequently, only the following items are exempt from the state imposed expenditure limit:⁷⁷

1. Revenues received from the issuance of bonds or other long-term obligations. Bond principal and interest payments are also exempt.
2. Revenues received as payment of dividends or interest.
3. Trust and agency accounts.
4. Federal grants and aid of any type.
5. Other grants, aid, contributions or gifts of any type.
6. Amounts received from the state that is included under the state's own appropriations limitation. (This does not exclude revenues received from regular state shared sources, but it does exempt such things as flood control money appropriated by the state that is distributed to a particular city.)
7. Interagency or interdepartmental transfers that are funded with monies already subject to the expenditure limit. (This means that you won't have to double count expenditures within the limit.)
8. Amounts or property accumulated for the purchase of land, buildings or improvements or for constructing buildings or improvements if the voters have approved such accumulation and purpose. This is a voter approved public works reserve fund for limited purposes.
9. Amounts received from the HURF over and above that received in FY 1979-80.
10. Revenues received from another political subdivision pursuant to an intergovernmental contract as long as the other entity includes the payments under their expenditure limit, if applicable. "Political subdivision" as used for this exemption includes a city or town, county, school district or community college district. Intergovernmental contracts with the state are also exempt under this provision.
11. Amounts expended for the construction, reconstruction, operation or maintenance of a hospital financially supported by a city or town prior to January 1, 1980.
12. Amounts to pay off warrants issued prior to July 1, 1979.
13. Refunds, reimbursements or other recoveries of amounts expended that were already included once under the expenditure limit or otherwise excluded from the limit.
14. Capital improvements from utility revenues and/or from excise taxes levied for a specific purpose.⁷⁸

In addition to the constitutionally specified exemptions from the expenditure limit, involuntary tort judgments are not subject to the expenditure limitation.⁷⁹ It is important to note that a city or town can adopt a budget higher than the state imposed expenditure limitation only if it includes the specific exemptions listed above.

The EEC will determine each year how much each city and town under the state imposed limit can increase its budget for the next fiscal year. This determination will be made on the basis of a standard increase in inflation and the population growth of your particular community.⁸⁰ The inflation increase is to be measured by an index called the GDP implicit price deflator, which is a U.S. Department of Commerce statistic. Population figures to be used in the calculation will be supplied by the ADOA. State law requires that the EEC provide each city and town with a preliminary estimated expenditure limit for the coming fiscal year by February 1, and a final expenditure limit figure by April 1. If the estimate received by February 1 is felt to be inaccurate for any reason, the city or town may appeal to the EEC for an adjustment through

⁷⁷ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 3 D, Arizona State Constitution](#)

⁷⁸ [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07 \(D\)](#)

⁷⁹ [Attorney General Opinion \(I86-031\)](#)

⁸⁰ [A.R.S. § 41-563](#)

a process detailed in [Exhibit A](#) in the appendix.

In addition, cities and towns should report all annexations to the Population Statistics Unit at ADOA, the Department of Revenue (ADOR) and your local council of governments (COG). The population in the annexed area will be considered when developing the population estimate which is used in determining the expenditure limitations by the EEC.

Annexations occurring after the EEC determines your expenditure limit (on or before April 1) but before the beginning of the fiscal year can also be used to adjust your population estimate for that year if they are submitted in time for both ADOR and the EEC to act. The EEC requires that requests for such adjustments be provided to them at least three weeks prior to the adoption of that city's tentative budget. Also, prior to action by the EEC, ADOA must review the requested population increase. The necessary materials should be provided to ADOA with sufficient lead time for their review.

If, on the other hand, the estimated state imposed limit appears to be correct but does not allow for the expenditure of sufficient funds to meet local needs, the constitution provides five alternative expenditure options to potentially solve this problem:

1. Alternative Expenditure Limitation (Home Rule Option).⁸¹
2. Permanent Base Adjustment.⁸²
3. Capital Projects Accumulation Fund.⁸³
4. One-time Override.⁸⁴
5. Emergency Override⁸⁵

All of these options require voter approval and, therefore, entail a certain amount of risk. If the voters say “no,” then the city or town will be under or subject to the state imposed limitation. Procedures required to seek each of these options are detailed later in this chapter.

It is critical to note that a city or town cannot use its resources, including monies, personnel, equipment, materials, buildings or other things of value to influence the outcome of any election, and employees cannot use the authority of their position to influence the vote or political activities of a subordinate.⁸⁶

NEW CITY OR TOWN LIMITATION

The Economic Estimates Commission by law must determine the base limit of a newly incorporated city or town. This will be accomplished by calculating the average amount of actual FY 1979-80 per capita payments of local revenues for all cities and towns within the county in which the new city or town is located. This average per capita figure will then be multiplied by the population of the new city or town resulting in the base limit for such community.⁸⁷

EXPENDITURE LIMITATION OPTIONS

Any city or town can adopt its own expenditure limitation that allow expenditures to exceed the state imposed expenditure limitation if a majority of the qualified electors voting on the issue at a city or town regular election vote in favor of the alternative limitation option. An alternative limitation may be referred to the city or town voters for approval.⁸⁸

1. Alternative Expenditure Limitation (Home Rule Option)

⁸¹ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 9, Arizona State Constitution](#)

⁸² [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 6, Arizona State Constitution](#)

⁸³ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 3 d viii, Arizona State Constitution](#). This option is now obsolete.

⁸⁴ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 2, paragraph c, Arizona State Constitution](#)

⁸⁵ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 2, paragraph a, Arizona State Constitution](#)

⁸⁶ [A.R.S. § 9-500.14](#)

⁸⁷ [A.R.S. § 41-563 \(A\) \(6\)](#)

⁸⁸ [Article IX, Section 20, Arizona State Constitution](#)

The Alternative Expenditure Limitation (Home Rule Option) is free from any ties to the state imposed expenditure limitation if a majority of the qualified electors voting on the issue at a city or town regular election vote in favor of the Home Rule Option. A Home Rule Option may be referred to the city or town voters by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the city or town council or qualified electors of the city or town may offer a Home Rule Option through the initiative process.⁸⁹ In other words, the annual adopted budget becomes the alternative expenditure limitation for the city or town.

The city or town council contemplating the adoption of a Home Rule Option must hold two public hearings on the proposed action. Notice of these hearings must be published once a week for at least two consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town. Immediately following the second hearing, the city or town council must convene in a special meeting and vote on the proposed Home Rule Option. A record of the vote and, if approved, the amount of expenditure in excess of the state limitation and purposes for the excess expenditure must be published in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town ([Exhibit B](#)).⁹⁰

Before moving forward with any such election cities and towns should consult with their respective county elections department.

Arguments supporting or opposing the alternative expenditure limitation, if any, must be filed with the city or town clerk not less than 90 days before the election.⁹¹

At least 60 days prior to the city or town election, the council or a person or group using the initiative process proposing the alternative expenditure limitation must submit a detailed and summary analyses of the alternative to the Auditor General for review. The Auditor General may request additional information necessary to clarify or correct the submitted materials. Within 15 working days of receiving these reports, the Auditor General must correct any errors or deficiencies in the detailed and summary analyses and provide the city or town council with a copy of their reports. No revisions of the detailed and summary analyses can be made after the Auditor General review is complete.⁹² [Exhibit B](#) contains a sample detailed analysis and summary analysis.

Not less than 10 nor more than 30 days prior to the election, the city or town council must provide a publicity pamphlet that includes the summary analysis of the alternative (as received from the Auditor General) to each household within the city or town containing a registered voter.⁹³ A copy of the printed publicity pamphlet must also be provided to the Auditor General prior to the election. In addition to the summary, the pamphlet must contain several items ranging from the date of the election to a section comparing the proposed alternative limitation to the state imposed limitation ([Exhibit B](#)).⁹⁴ Also, the detailed analysis of the alternative must be made available to registered voters upon voter request.

The ballot used for the election must contain a section comparing the proposed Home Rule Option to the state imposed limitation. If the Home Rule Option is offered to the voters, the ballot should be in the form used for initiatives and referendums ([Exhibit B](#)).⁹⁵ The city or town clerk must notify the Auditor General and the Economic Estimates Commission of the results of the election.⁹⁶

When a Home Rule Option is adopted it remains in effect for four years. Following the fourth year the alternative must be reapproved or a new alternative may be proposed. In other words, the entire detailed procedure involving the Auditor General, publications, election, etc. must be repeated every four years to reaffirm a previously approved Home Rule Option or adopt a new one. In the event the home rule election is defeated, a new Home Rule Option or Permanent Base Adjustment cannot be submitted to voters for at least two years, and the city or town is subject to the state limitation during that time.⁹⁷

See [Exhibit B](#) for a chronology of events that must occur when seeking the home rule option.

⁸⁹ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 9, Arizona State Constitution](#)

⁹⁰ [A.R.S. § 41-563.01](#)

⁹¹ [A.R.S. § 19-141 \(C\)](#)

⁹² [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(E\)](#)

⁹³ [A.R.S. § 19-141 \(B\)](#)

⁹⁴ [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(B\) and \(C\)](#)

⁹⁵ [A.R.S. § 19-125](#) and [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(C\)](#)

⁹⁶ [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(F\)](#)

⁹⁷ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 9, Arizona State Constitution](#)

2. Permanent Adjustment of Expenditure Base

Another expenditure limitation option is the permanent adjustment of the expenditure base. Any city or town can permanently adjust its state imposed expenditure limitation base if a majority of the qualified electors voting on the issue at a regular city or town election vote in favor of the adjustment. The issue can also be placed on a state general election ballot. A base adjustment may be referred to the voters by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the city or town council, or qualified electors of the city or town may propose an adjustment through the initiative process.⁹⁸ If the Permanent Base Adjustment is defeated by a majority of the qualified electors, no new Home Rule Option or Permanent Base Adjustment may be submitted to the voters for at least two years, and the city or town will be subject to the state limitation.

Formerly, a city or town council contemplating the adoption of a permanent base adjustment was required to hold two public hearings on the proposed action, and to publish a record of the vote on the proposed permanent base adjustment. The Auditor General's office has issued an interpretation stating that A.R.S. § 41-563.01 does not apply to permanent base adjustment elections and thus the requirements for hearings and publications in that section are not applicable. However, the city or town council is still required to pass a resolution on the proposed permanent base adjustment in an open meeting, but no record of that vote needs to be published ([Exhibit B](#)).

Arguments supporting or opposing the proposed base adjustment, if any, must be filed with the city or town clerk not less than 90 days before the election.⁹⁹

At least 60 days prior to a regular election, the council or a person (including municipal staff) or group using the initiative process proposing the base adjustment must submit a detailed and summary analyses of the adjustment to the Auditor General for review. Within 15 working days of receiving these reports, the Auditor General must correct any errors or deficiencies in the detailed and summary analyses and provide the city or town council with a copy of each report. No revisions of a detailed and summary analysis can be made after the Auditor General Review is complete ([Exhibit B](#)).¹⁰⁰

Not less than 10 nor more than 30 days prior to the election, the city or town council must provide a publicity pamphlet that includes the summary analysis of the adjustment (as received from the Auditor General) to each household within the city or town containing a registered voter. ¹⁰¹ A copy of the printed publicity pamphlet must also be provided to the Auditor General prior to the election. In addition to the summary analysis, the pamphlet must contain several items ranging from the date of the election to a section stating the impact of the base modification ([Exhibit B](#)).¹⁰² The detailed analysis of the base adjustment must also be made available to registered voters by the city or town clerk upon request.

The ballot used for the election must contain a section stating the impact of the modification. If only one proposed adjustment is offered to the voters, the ballot should be in the form used for initiatives and referendums ([Exhibit B](#)).¹⁰³ If there is more than one proposed adjustment, the ballot must be in a form that allows electors the opportunity to vote on each base limitation adjustment.¹⁰⁴

Any approved permanent base limitation adjustment must be used in determining a city or town's expenditure limitation beginning with the fiscal year immediately following the approval and every year thereafter or until the city or town again adopts a new base.¹⁰⁵

Auditor General Review

⁹⁸ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 6, Arizona State Constitution](#)

⁹⁹ [A.R.S. § 19-141 \(C\)](#)

¹⁰⁰ [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(D\)](#)

¹⁰¹ [A.R.S. § 19-141 \(B\)](#) and [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(B\)](#)

¹⁰² [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(B\)](#)

¹⁰³ [A.R.S. § 19-125](#) and [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(C\)](#)

¹⁰⁴ [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(G\)](#)

¹⁰⁵ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 6, Arizona State Constitution](#)

As mentioned previously, the Auditor General must review the detailed and summary analysis for both the home rule option and permanent base adjustment. The Auditor General must correct any errors or deficiencies in a detailed and summary analysis and provide the city or town council with a copy of each report within 15 working days of receiving the reports. The Auditor General's staff will use the following procedures in the review:

1. Review of the financial information contained in the analyses submitted to determine if they comply with the requirements set forth in state statute.¹⁰⁶
2. Determine if assumptions, factors or derived amounts are internally consistent.
3. Determine the mathematical accuracy of calculations and totals.
4. Compare the amounts in the detailed analysis to the summary analysis.
5. Determine if historical or independently determined data such as the base limit agree with the indicated sources.

If the Auditor General's staff finds any error or has any questions on the report, staff will contact the city or town for corrections. The Auditor General may request additional information necessary to clarify or correct the submitted materials. After the Auditor General has completed the review, staff will notify the city or town of acceptance of the report.

As a final note, the mailing address, fax number and email address of the Accounting Services Division of the Auditor General is 2910 North 44th Street, Suite 410, Phoenix, Arizona 85018; (602) 553-0051; and asd@azauditor.gov. Reports must be delivered to one of these addresses so that they arrive at the Auditor General at least 60 days prior to the election.

If there is more than one alternative limitation option proposed, the ballot must be in a form that allows electors the opportunity to vote on each proposed alternative expenditure limitation.¹⁰⁷ For example, a ballot can contain both a Home Rule Option and Permanent Base Adjustment Option for voters to consider. If more than one alternative is approved, the limitation option receiving the highest number of votes will apply to the city or town.

3. Capital Projects Accumulation Fund

A capital projects accumulation fund is another option under the state imposed expenditure limitation. However, no cities or towns have the Capitol Projects Accumulation Fund as an expenditure limitation option. This is because the Home Rule Option and Permanent Base Adjustment can include capital project expenditures.

4. One-Time Override

Any city or town may exceed its state imposed expenditure limitation by a voter approved one-time override. This override is effective for one year only and has no effect on your expenditure limitation base or any subsequent fiscal year expenditure limitation.

The one-time override can be sought if two-thirds of the members of the city or town council vote to present the proposed override to the qualified electors of the city or town. A majority of qualified electors voting at either a special election (to be held the third Tuesday in May) or at a regular election in the fiscal year prior to the fiscal year in which the excess is to occur must give their approval in order to expend the additional amount.¹⁰⁸

A city or town council contemplating a one-time override must hold two public hearings on the proposed action. Notice of these hearings must be published once a week for at least two consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town ([Exhibit C](#)). Immediately following the second

¹⁰⁶ [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(D\)](#)

¹⁰⁷ [A.R.S. § 41-563.03 \(G\)](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 2, paragraph C, Arizona State Constitution](#) and [A.R.S. § 41-563.02](#)

public hearing, the city or town council must convene in a special meeting and vote on the proposed excess expenditure. A record of the vote and, if approved, the purposes for the excess expenditure must be published in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town ([Exhibit C](#)).¹⁰⁹

The city or town council seeking a one-time override shall provide arguments in support of the excess expenditure and shall receive override arguments at least 30 days prior to the election.¹¹⁰ These arguments must be included in the publicity pamphlet concerning the override that must be distributed to each household within the city or town containing a registered voter not less than 10 days nor more than 30 days before the election.¹¹¹ In addition to the arguments, the publicity pamphlet must contain several items ranging from the date of the election to a statement of the purpose or purposes for the excess amount to be expended.¹¹²

State law requires that expenditures for amounts authorized by an override election can only be made for purposes stated in the publicity pamphlet for such an election. Expenditures approved pursuant to a one-time override election have to be budgeted separately by the city or town. Although the Auditor General's office is not required by law to review the materials for the one-time override, submitting them to their office can be helpful in making sure the materials are prepared properly.

5. Emergency Overrides of State Limit

The budget law provides for emergency overrides of the state imposed expenditure limitation in two situations:

1. In the case of a governor-declared emergency.¹¹³
2. In the case of a local governing board-declared emergency not declared by the governor.¹¹⁴

A city or town faced with a governor-declared man-made or natural disaster can exceed its expenditure limitation by an amount necessitated by the disaster if two-thirds of the members of the city or town council vote in favor of the excess. However, prior to a vote of the council to authorize such an emergency override, the council must hold two public hearings on the proposed action. Notice of these hearings must be published once a week for at least two consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town ([Exhibit C](#)). Immediately following the second public hearing, the council must convene in a special meeting and vote on the proposed excess expenditure necessitated by the disaster. A record of the vote and, if approved, the amount of excess above the city or town's expenditure limitation and purposes for the excess expenditure must be published in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town ([Exhibit C](#)).¹¹⁵ If the governor declares the disaster, you do not need to take the emergency override to the people for a vote.¹¹⁶

A city or town faced with a natural or man-made disaster that is not declared by the governor needs an affirmative vote of 70 percent of the members of the council to exceed its expenditure limitation by an amount necessitated by the disaster. Again, prior to a vote of the council to authorize such an override, the council must hold two public hearings on the proposed action. Notice of these hearings must be published once a week for at least two consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town ([Exhibit C](#)). Immediately following the second public hearing, the council must convene in a special meeting and vote on the proposed excess expenditure necessitated by the disaster. A record of the vote and, if approved, the amount of excess above the city or town's expenditure limitation and purposes for the excess expenditure must be published in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town ([Exhibit C](#)).¹¹⁷

If the council does not want to reduce the budget the year following the disaster by the amount of money expended on the disaster, they must seek voter approval for their authorization to expend the funds, after the fact. A majority of the qualified electors voting at either a special election (to be held on the third Tuesday in May) or at the city or town's next regular election following the disaster must approve the emergency override. It should be emphasized that if the council does not present the issue of the emergency

¹⁰⁹ [A.R.S. § 41-563.01](#)

¹¹⁰ [A.R.S. § 41-563.02 \(B\) \(8\)](#)

¹¹¹ [A.R.S. § 41-563.02 \(A\)](#)

¹¹² [A.R.S. § 41-563.02 \(B\)](#)

¹¹³ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 2, paragraph a, Arizona State Constitution](#)

¹¹⁴ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 2, paragraph b, Arizona State Constitution](#)

¹¹⁵ [A.R.S. § 41-563.01](#)

¹¹⁶ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 2, paragraph a, Arizona State Constitution](#)

¹¹⁷ [A.R.S. § 41-563.01](#)

override to the voters or if the voters do not approve the override at the election, the city or town must reduce its budget in the fiscal year following the disaster by the amount of excess funds expended due to the disaster.¹¹⁸

Should a natural or man-made disaster not declared by the governor resulting in excess expenditures occur within 90 days of the third Tuesday in May or within 90 days of the city or town regular election, such expenditures cannot be put to a vote of the people until the next subsequent regular or special election.¹¹⁹

A council seeking voter approval for excess expenditures due to an emergency not declared by the governor must provide publicity pamphlets concerning the excess to each household within the city or town containing a registered voter not less than 10 days or more than 30 days before the election.¹²⁰

It should be emphasized that if the voters do not approve the excess expenditures, necessitated by a disaster not declared by the governor, the city or town must reduce its budget in the fiscal year following the disaster by the amount of excess expended due to the disaster.

UNIFORM EXPENDITURE REPORTING SYSTEM (UERS)

To ensure compliance with the state imposed expenditure limitation, the Office of the Auditor General has been directed to develop forms and procedures for a uniform expenditure reporting system (UERS).¹²¹ The report must be filed by all cities and towns even if the community has adopted an alternative to the state imposed expenditure limit.

Specifically, the uniform reporting system establishes the following reporting requirements for cities and towns:

1. Annual expenditure limitation report,
2. Financial statements prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles, and
3. Reconciliation of total expenditures from the financial statements to total expenditures on the expenditure limitation report for cities and towns.

Annual expenditure limitation reports, together with audited financial statements and the reconciliation report are to be submitted by cities and towns to the Auditor General within nine months after the close of the fiscal year.¹²² All cities and towns are required to publish all reports in a prominent location on their official website within seven days of filing them with the Auditor General and the reports must be maintained for not less than five years on the website.¹²³ Since the deadline to file was lengthened to nine months, the Auditor General's Office is no longer authorized to grant extensions.¹²⁴

Figures used in these reports are to be audited figures. If financial statements are not filed on time, the city or town is required to post a form prescribed by the Auditor General stating the financial statements are pending, the reasons for the delay, and the estimated date of completion. This form must also be filed with the Auditor General, The Speaker of the State House of Representatives and the President of the State Senate.¹²⁵ To meet the nine month filing deadline you should contact your auditor soon after the close of the fiscal year.

Examples of the required forms and instructions for completing them are contained in a manual prepared by the Auditor General entitled the "Uniform Expenditure Reporting System" (UERS). The Auditor General's Office has transitioned the Uniform Expenditure Reporting System (UERS) from a single manual to a series of FAQs and Annual Expenditure Limitation Report (**AELR**) forms and instructions. Total expenditures must be detailed by fund on the third form. Cities and towns that have adopted an alternative expenditure limitation are only required to fill out lines A and C of this form. Again, the expenditure limitation report must be filed

¹¹⁸ [Article IX, Section 20, subsection 2, paragraph b, Arizona State Constitution](#)

¹¹⁹ [A.R.S. § 41-563.02 \(E\)](#)

¹²⁰ [A.R.S. § 41-563.02 \(A\)](#)

¹²¹ [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07](#)

¹²² [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07 \(C\)](#)

¹²³ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(E\)](#)

¹²⁴ [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07 \(C\)](#)

¹²⁵ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(G\)](#)

annually by the March deadline.

Responsibility for Filing Reports

The chief fiscal officer designated by the city or town council as responsible for submitting the annual expenditure limitation report, financial statements and reconciliation report must certify to the accuracy of the reports. The designated chief fiscal officer's name needs to be provided to the Auditor General annually by July 31.

Additionally, state law directs that the uniform reporting system include sanctions and penalties for violating such provisions.¹²⁶ The sanctions and penalties provided in the uniform reporting system are specified by law. The designated chief fiscal officer who refuses to file reports within the prescribed time, or who intentionally files erroneous reports, will be guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor. A city or town exceeding its expenditure limitation without authorization will have a portion of its allocation of state income tax withheld and redistributed to the other incorporated communities in the state. This penalty will be imposed in the fiscal year subsequent to the hearing held by the Auditor General on such a violation.¹²⁷ The amount of state income tax to be withheld for exceeding the expenditure limitation will be determined as follows:

1. If the excess expenditures are less than five percent of the limitation, an amount equal to the excess expenditures will be withheld.
2. If the excess expenditures are equal to or greater than five percent but less than 10 percent of the limitation, an amount equal to triple the excess expenditures will be withheld.
3. If the excess expenditures are less than five percent of the limitation but it is at least the second consecutive instance of excess expenditures for the city or town, an amount equal to triple the excess expenditures will be withheld.
4. If the excess expenditures are equal to or greater than 10 percent of the limitation, an amount equal to five times the excess expenditures or one-third of the allocation of a city or town's state income tax will be withheld, whichever is less.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Capital planning is performed by many municipalities to prioritize their capital needs for one to multiple years while integrating this plan into their community's economic development and strategic plans. A CIP can address capital needs by identifying infrastructure, major equipment, major maintenance repairs and replacement, funding options and operating budget impacts to meet demands for services.

State statute does not require municipalities to have a CIP, but it is a recommended best practice to have one. However, if a city or town does have a CIP, state statute requires the CIP to be posted on its website. Furthermore, a utility is entitled to receive, upon request, copies of the CIP, along with information on any new or accelerated projects.¹²⁸

One funding mechanism for capital projects is bonds. Once bonds are issued and revenue secured, a commitment is required from the municipality to repay the debt on the bonds. Revenues generated from bond sales must be spent only for the purposes specified. Also, after satisfying the purposes of a bond issue, unexpended monies can only be used to retire the bonded indebtedness. There are a number of different types of bonds that are discussed below.

BONDS AND BONDING REQUIREMENTS

General Obligation Bonds

General obligation bonds are perhaps the most common method used to raise revenues for large scale municipal projects. The bonds are referred to as general obligation or full faith and credit bonds because

¹²⁶ [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07 \(G\) and \(H\)](#)

¹²⁷ [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07 \(G\) and \(H\)](#)

¹²⁸ [A.R.S. § 9-461.14](#)

they are guaranteed by the full taxing power of the city or town. These bonds are retired from secondary property tax funds. The amount of indebtedness that a city or town can incur through the issuance of general obligation bonds is limited in the state constitution. The constitution states that for general municipal purposes a municipality cannot incur a debt exceeding 6 percent of the assessed valuation of taxable property in the city or town. Additional bonds amounting to 20 percent of the assessed valuation of taxable property can be issued for supplying such specific city and town projects as water, artificial light, sewers, and for the acquisition and development of land for open space preserves, parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities. The Arizona Constitution allows projects concerning public safety, law enforcement, fire and emergency service facilities and streets and transportation facilities to be included in this 20 percent category.¹²⁹ In other words, a total of 26 percent of the assessed valuation can be bonded for these latter projects. Because the full taxing power of a municipality is pledged, general obligation bonds are considered more secure than other bonds. This tends to give them lower interest rates in comparison to other bonds. The issuance of general obligation bonds must be submitted to the voters for approval. Please refer to the discussion of the bond election publicity pamphlet found later in this chapter.

Secondary Property Tax Levy

The secondary property tax allows a city or town to levy a property tax for the purpose of retiring the principal and interest on general obligation bonded indebtedness. This levy is referred to as the “unlimited” levy. In other words, this property tax may be levied in an amount necessary to retire the bonded indebtedness of a city or town as is deemed necessary by the city or town.¹³⁰

The annual secondary tax levy cannot exceed 10% of the annual payment of principal and interest in the current fiscal year. (If a city or town has an existing balance in excess of the 10% requirement, it must come into compliance by the end of fiscal year 2018-2019.) State statute also allows the levy to include a reasonable tax delinquency factor, an amount necessary to correct prior year errors or shortages in the levy, if applicable, any expenses and fees required in conjunction with the authorization, and, as part of the levy, projected payments of principal and interest on new debt planned for the ensuing year.¹³¹ State law requires the Property Tax Oversight Commission to revenue the secondary property tax levy to identify violations of constitutional and statutory requirements. If the commission determines that a secondary property tax levy is in violation of law (i.e. the tax was levied with no voter authorization), the commission is required to notify the affected entity and the Attorney General by December 31. Monies derived from the levy of the tax when collected shall constitute a fund for payment of principal and interest on the bonds. The fund shall be kept separately and shall be known as the “interest fund” and the “redemption fund” or the two funds may be combined into a single “interest and redemption fund.”

The bottom line on the secondary property tax system is that a city or town can levy the amount necessary to pay off its debt service.

Revenue Bonds. This type of bond is used to finance a revenue producing facility such as a public utility or airport. The bonds are usually secured from revenues produced by the facility for which they were issued. Thus, if these revenues are insufficient to cover the repayment of the bonds, the city or town is not obligated to provide tax funds for repayment. Because these bonds are not secured by taxing authority, they represent a somewhat greater risk for the investor; therefore, revenue bonds usually have a higher interest rate than do general obligation securities. Revenue bonds may be issued for such utility undertakings as electric light or power, water, sewer, gas, common carrier of passengers, garbage or rubbish plant or system, buildings, incinerators, dams and reservoirs, airport buildings or other airport facilities or buildings or structures to provide off-street parking of motor vehicles and such recreational facilities as swimming pools, parks, playgrounds, municipal golf courses and ballparks. Revenue bonds are not subject to the debt limitation in the state constitution. However, it is unclear whether they must be submitted to the voters of the community for approval. Check with bond counsel when considering the use of revenue bonds.

OTHER BONDS

Street and Highway Improvement Bonds. Arizona cities and towns may also issue bonds for constructing streets and highways within the municipality. To pay the principal and interest on this type of

¹²⁹ [Article IX, Section 8, paragraph 1, Arizona State Constitution](#)

¹³⁰ [Article IX, Section 19, subsection 2, paragraph a, Arizona State Constitution](#)

¹³¹ [A.R.S. § 35-458](#)

bond, the municipality may use its share of highway user revenues. There are limitations on the issuance of these bonds for which HURF revenues are pledged for repayment depending on the bond rating. These bonds are not subject to the debt limitation in the state constitution; however, to issue the bonds, the voters first must approve them. Street improvements may also be financed through general obligation bonds.¹³²

Special Improvement District Bonds. Special improvement district bonds can be issued by a city or town to finance improvements in specific areas of the municipality. The property owners benefiting from the improvements to the area are assessed to cover the cost of retiring the bonds. This type of finance mechanism has been used generally on such projects as paving streets, placement of sidewalks, extension of sewer and water lines and similar projects. State law permits a city or town by resolution to combine two or more municipal improvement district projects. The law also allows the construction of the improvements to be under one contract and allows for one series of improvement bonds. State law allows a reserve fund to be created for improvement district bonds. For information on Community Facilities Districts (CFDs) and Street Light Improvement Districts (SLIDs) contact your financial advisor and/or bond counsel.

Municipal Property Corporation. There are a number of ways that municipal property corporations (MPCs) can be used to finance a local government project. In some instances, a municipal property corporation has been formed and bonds issued to complete a revenue producing project. The revenue that is collected from the project is then used to retire the interest and principal on the bonds. When the bonds are retired, the title to the facility is then turned over to the city or town. In other instances, excise taxes have been pledged to finance non-revenue producing projects. Citizens of the community do not have to vote on this means of financing nor are the bonds subject to the constitutional debt limitation.

Bonding Assistance

There are two state agencies that have specific programs that can improve a city or town's ability to use bonding as a revenue source. [The Greater Arizona Development Authority \(GADA\)](#) and the [Water Infrastructure Finance Authority \(WIFA\)](#) have statutory charges to help smaller to medium-sized communities pool their bond issues together to help lower the costs of issuing debt. They also have monies set aside to help secure the debt and allow the bonds to be issued at the lowest interest rate possible. WIFA's charge is specifically with water and wastewater projects. GADA's charge is broader to include public infrastructure projects.

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) established a loan program called the [Highway Extension and Expansion Loan Program \(HELP\)](#) at or below market interest rates to accelerate state highway projects. This program utilizes the new federally authorized concept of state infrastructure bank to assist communities in completing needed highway projects. **Currently, the funding for HELP is so low as to make it non-viable.**

Bond Election Publicity Pamphlet

Any election to authorize bonded indebtedness through the use of secondary property taxes must be held at the November general election. Along with other bond election requirements, state law requires the preparation and dissemination to all voters of an informational pamphlet not less than 35 days prior to a general obligation bond election. It is not clear whether this requirement applies to utility revenue bond elections. We suggest that you consult your bond attorney on this issue.

The pamphlet must contain information on the:

1. Amount of the bond authorization.
2. Maximum interest rate of the bonds.
3. Estimated debt retirement schedules for the proposed bond authorization and the current amount of bonds outstanding, showing both principal and interest payments, the current net assessed valuation as reported by the Arizona Department of Revenue and the current adopted and estimated tax rates, including the estimated average annual tax rate for the proposed bond authorization. In preparing this

¹³² [A.R.S. § 48-681](#); [A.R.S. § 48-682](#) and [A.R.S. § 48-691](#)

information, the projected total increase in secondary assessed valuation for any future year shall not exceed:

- (a) For the first five years of the estimated debt retirement schedule, the average of the annual percentage growth for the previous ten years in the net assessed valuation of the political subdivision.
 - (b) For the remaining years of the estimated debt retirement schedule, 20% of the average of the annual percentage growth for the previous ten years in the net assessed valuation of the city or town.
4. Source of repayment.
 5. Estimated issuance costs.
 6. Estimated tax impact of debt service on class three owner-occupied residence, class one commercial property, and on class two agricultural or vacant property for the current year in the political subdivision, assuming the net assessed valuation of the property increases annually at the lesser of five percent or 50 percent of the projected total annual increase in net assessed valuation over the term of the bonds using the average annual tax rate determined in no. 3 above. (Any written information provided by the political subdivision pertaining to the bond election shall include financial information showing the estimated average tax rate for the proposed bond authorization.) The tax impact shall be shown for an owner-occupied residence with a full cash value of \$250,000; a commercial property valued at \$1 million and an agricultural property valued at \$100,000. The tax impact shall show the projected average annual cost of the proposed bond authorization, including principal and interest, over the life of the proposed bond authorization. The information on estimated tax impact shall be set forth in substantially the form found in A.R.S. § 35-454 using a table for each type of property.¹³³
 7. In bold-faced type, estimated total cost of the proposed bond authorization, including principal and interest.
 8. Current outstanding general obligation debt and constitutional debt limitation.
 9. Purpose for which the bonds are to be issued and, if applicable, in bold-faced type, that the amount of the proposed bond authorization combined with the current outstanding debt exceeds the political subdivision's constitutional debt limit.
 10. Polling location for the addressee.
 11. Hours during the day when the polls will be open.
 12. Arguments for or against the authorization for one or more of the bond propositions. (State law passed in 2012 requires a city or town that is holding a bond authorization election to set a deadline to submit arguments for and against the authorization of one or more of the bond propositions at a public meeting. That deadline must be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the city or town.)

A copy of the informational pamphlet must be submitted to the Department of Revenue within 30 days after the bond election. The Department of Revenue will maintain copies of the pamphlets. Failure of any one or more electors to receive the informational pamphlet will not be grounds to invalidate the election. Variations between the estimates are required to be in the pamphlet and the actual debt retirement schedule, issuance costs and tax rates will not invalidate the election or the bonds.

For any proposed general obligation bond authorization where the principal and interest will be paid by a levy of property taxes, the ballot shall contain the phrase "the issuance of these bonds will result in a property tax increase sufficient to pay the annual debt service on bonds." If the bonds are to be repaid with secondary property taxes, the ballot must contain the phrase, "bond approval, yes" and "bond approval, no" and a statement that a "yes" vote will authorize the governing body to issue and sell the bonds and that a "no" vote will not authorize the governing body to issue and sell the bonds. Any written information provided by the political subdivision pertaining to the bond election shall include financial information showing the estimated average tax rate for the proposed bond authorization.¹³⁴

¹³³ [A.R.S. § 35-454](#)

¹³⁴ [A.R.S. § 35-454 \(C\)](#)

It is critical to note that a city or town cannot use its resources, including monies, personnel, equipment, materials, buildings or other things of value to influence the outcome of any election, and employees cannot use the authority of their position to influence the vote or political activities of a subordinate. ¹³⁵

Publicity pamphlets for elections to approve a bond, sales tax or property tax are required to include an estimate of the annual levy of property taxes sufficient to pay the debt on any bond measure; the amount of the tax increase for an election on sales tax; and for a property tax levy an estimate of the impact of the tax on a single family residence valued at \$100,000, commercial property valued at \$250,000, and vacant land valued at \$100,000.

Bonded Indebtedness Report

The Arizona Department of Administration requires municipalities to produce a yearly bonded indebtedness report that includes information concerning the date of issuance, amount, denomination, rates of interest, maturity, dates of the bonds, certificates of participation or securities and other information the department requires.¹³⁶ Municipal property corporation debt must be reported. State law requires cities and towns to report to the Treasurer, within 60 days of issuance of bonds and securities, a report containing the following information:

1. The par amount of the bonds or securities.
2. The interest rate, by maturity of the bonds or securities.
3. The repayment schedule, showing both principal and interest for the issue.
4. The sources of repayment.
5. The original issue price and any premium or discount, by maturity, for the issue.
6. A detailed listing of all issuance costs, regardless of source of payment, including underwriter's compensation, bond counsel fees, financial advisor fees, verification agent fees, placement agent fees, investment securities brokerage fees, registrar fees, trustee fees, credit enhancement fees, rating agency fees, printing costs, registration fees, transfer and recording fees and any other costs directly or indirectly earned or paid as a result of the issuance of the bonds or securities, as determined by the department.
7. The total amount of parity bonds or securities outstanding, including the issue, at the time of issuance.
8. The total amount of any bonds or securities, senior or subordinate to the issue outstanding at the time of issuance.
9. The amount of any constitutional or statutory limitation on the issuance of bonds or securities of the type issued.
10. The remaining amount of bonds or securities that may be issued within the constitutional and statutory limitations.
11. The amount of any constitutional or statutory voter authorization applicable to the issuance of bonds or securities of the type issued.
12. The remaining amount of bonds or securities that may be issued within the constitutional and statutory authorization.
13. Any other similar or related information that ADOR may determine.

State law defines the "outstanding indebtedness," for the purposes of calculating debt capacity, as the total

¹³⁵ [A.R.S. § 9-500.14](#)

¹³⁶ [A.R.S. § 35-502](#)

principal amount of all bonds outstanding at the time of calculation exclusive of any premium or discount.¹³⁷ It also limits the use of premium associated with original issue and refunding bonds and requires net premium not used to pay the costs of the bond issue to be deposited in a debt service fund and used to pay interest on the bonds.¹³⁸

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION

The preparation of a municipal budget is a long and detailed process. The council and staff will undoubtedly have to set a number of administrative deadlines to make sure that the budget has been given full consideration prior to its final adoption. There are, however, a number of specific dates set in state law with which a city or town must comply when preparing a budget ([Exhibit D](#)). In this section the most important dates are outlined.

Developing the Budget

The budget process is initiated by obtaining accurate estimates of incoming revenues. Estimates of projected state-shared revenues for the upcoming fiscal year are usually provided in lump sum figures from the state departments distributing the funds. If the estimates are made available in a reasonable amount of time prior to the preparation of the budget, the League will publish an estimate of revenues going to each city and town from the state sales tax, the state income tax, the highway user revenue fund and the vehicle license tax. Estimates of revenues raised from local sources will have to be developed by each city or town. Historical revenue collections can be used as the basis for next year's revenue projections.

Once the finance officer is confident of the revenue estimates, the next step is to analyze the anticipated expenditures for the upcoming year. These estimates should have been developed in the budget preparation phase and will be based on some of the following considerations:

1. The variety, type and level of services that the city or town wants to provide. This would include the maintenance or abandonment of current programs as well as the initiation of any new services. This is an area where the city or town council should play a significant role.
2. The cost of employee salaries is one of the largest if not the largest expenditure in the city or town budget. Therefore, careful attention should be given to any cost-of-living, or merit increases or any other major change in the employee salary schedule such as position additions or deletions.
3. Known cost factors associated with employee salaries include such items as Social Security costs, contribution rates to employee pension and retirement funds, industrial compensation rates and other similar costs.
4. Insurance costs have been steadily increasing for city and town governments. Your insurance agents should be able to provide reasonable estimates of anticipated costs for insurance.
5. Changes in employee benefits would include any modifications to vacation policy, overtime, holidays, uniform allowances, health insurance and sick leave.
6. A fairly comprehensive price list should be developed for anticipated costs on items in the general category of supplies and contractual services. This list should include costs for any anticipated major capital expenditures because expenditures of this nature usually require a considerable amount of budget planning. Cost factors in this area tend to be more susceptible to inflation, and this should be anticipated when making estimates.
7. General economic fluctuations will be one of the most difficult considerations when preparing a budget. The most sophisticated economists in the world have difficulty predicting slow-downs and upswings in the economy. This consideration is mentioned only as a precaution and while economic fluctuations cannot be calculated accurately, administrators should be aware of the potential impact of general economic conditions on the local budget. Also, any local events impacting significantly on the local economy should be taken into consideration.

¹³⁷ [A.R.S. § 35-503](#)

¹³⁸ [A.R.S. § 35-473.01 \(H\)](#)

Once all anticipated expenditures have been taken into consideration, the problem then becomes adjusting the expenditures to the available revenues. This process may involve cutting some expenditure appropriations while expanding others. Again, this is a policy area where the city or town council must provide active leadership.

Some municipalities prepare a budget report on a regular basis throughout the fiscal year that gives a current comparison of incoming revenues and expenditures. The budget report is mentioned in [Chapter Three](#) and an example of the form to use for this report is included in [Exhibit E](#). This type of document is one of the most useful monitoring tools for detecting any trends in collection totals that might affect revenues during the upcoming year. Monitoring would be particularly helpful on local sales tax, building permits and other revenue sources that are highly dependent on the state of the economy. Local revenue estimates or any other revenue estimates that turn out to be too generous can come back to haunt city and town administrators. This is why it is extremely important that estimates be reasonably accurate or even conservative.

Auditor General Forms and Budget Adoption

State law requires that on or before the third Monday in July of each fiscal year, the city or town council must adopt a tentative budget.¹³⁹ Once this tentative budget has been adopted, the expenditures may not be increased upon final adoption; however, they may be decreased.¹⁴⁰ With the adoption of the tentative budget, the council has set its maximum “limits” for expenditure, but these limits may be reduced upon final adoption. The tentative budget must be fully itemized in conformance with forms supplied by the Auditor General and entered upon the council meeting minutes.¹⁴¹ Copies of the Auditor General budget forms required by law are available on the Auditor General’s website, (<http://www.azauditor.gov>). These budget forms include schedules A through G and provide a framework for the development of a city or town budget.

Once the tentative budget has been adopted, it is required that a city or town publish in a local newspaper either Schedule A of the auditor general forms or a summary of those forms once a week for two consecutive weeks.¹⁴² Of these options, it is recommended that cities and towns use Schedule A because it includes the sources and uses of funds, along with consolidated revenues and expenditures by category, department and fund as required by state statute.¹⁴³ It must also include truth in taxation calculations and primary and secondary property tax levies. Along with publication of the tentative budget summary as outlined, notices of the final budget adoption meeting and the public hearing to hear taxpayers on any proposed expenditure or tax levy should also be published. The public hearing must be held on or before 14 days before taxes are levied.¹⁴⁴

A complete copy of the estimates of revenues and expenses (the adopted tentative budget which includes Auditor General Forms - Schedules A through G) must be made available at the city or town library and at city/town hall. In addition, this tentative budget must be posted in a prominent location on the official city/town website within seven business days after adoption. Once the final budget (which includes Auditor General Forms – Schedules A through G) is adopted, it must be posted on the website no later than seven business day after final adoption. Both versions, tentative and final, must be retained and accessible in a prominent location on the website for at least 60 months. (This is true even if there was no change made between adoption of the tentative and final budgets.)

If a truth in taxation notice and hearing is required, the city or town may combine the budget hearing notice with the truth in taxation notice. Details of truth in taxation can be found in [Chapter One](#).

Final Budget Adoption

There is no specific date set by state law for adoption of the final budget, but we recommend that the final budget is adopted prior to the beginning of the fiscal year. However, for cities and towns with a property tax, there is a deadline for adoption of the property tax levy - the third Monday in August. Since state law requires a period of at least 14 days between adoption of the final budget and adoption of the tax levy, the deadline becomes the first Monday in August.¹⁴⁵ The adoption of the final budget may take place through a simple motion approved by the council. Both the tentative budget and final budget from the past five fiscal years must be posted prominently on

¹³⁹ [A.R.S. § 42-17101](#)

¹⁴⁰ [A.R.S. § 42-17105 \(C\)](#)

¹⁴¹ [A.R.S. § 42-17102 \(B\)](#) and [A.R.S. § 42-17105](#)

¹⁴² [A.R.S. § 42-17103 \(C\)](#)

¹⁴³ [A.R.S. § 42-17103 \(A\)](#)

¹⁴⁴ [A.R.S. § 42-17104](#)

¹⁴⁵ [A.R.S. § 42-17151](#)

your website.

Encumbrances

Occasionally there are costs that are still outstanding at the end of a fiscal year. Cities and towns now have the authority to encumber funds for any of these costs that are incurred during the fiscal year but are still outstanding after the fiscal year closes.¹⁴⁶ Encumbering is an accounting tool which is required pursuant to generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). This tool provides a uniform procedure for handling expenses that are incurred toward the end of a budget year, but may not be paid until after the fiscal year closes. Payments may be made from encumbered funds for a period of 60 days following the close of the fiscal year.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ [A.R.S. § 42-17108 \(A\)](#)

¹⁴⁷ [A.R.S. § 42-17108 \(B\)](#)

CHAPTER THREE

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Once the city or town budget has been adopted, the municipality's finance officer must continue to manage the receipts and expenditures of the municipality throughout the fiscal year. While the task of administering the budget involves a wide variety of activities, this chapter of the manual will discuss the functions of accounting, audits, investment of public funds and purchasing.

ACCOUNTING

This publication does not include an analysis of accounting procedures or recommend one particular method over another. However, there are a number of general points to remember throughout the fiscal year.

Control of Expenditures

Arizona state law stipulates that no expenditures may be made for a purpose not authorized in the annual budget.¹⁴⁸ This makes it extremely important for the budget to be closely monitored to ensure that expenditures do not exceed the amount budgeted.

On occasion, it may be necessary to increase an expenditure in the budget above what was approved in the final budget, provided that a corresponding decrease is made in another budget expenditure and all of the following conditions apply:

1. The monies are available.
2. The transfer is in the public interest and based on a demonstrated need.
3. The transfer does not result in exceeding the community's expenditure limitation (state imposed limit or home rule option)
4. The majority of the members of the governing body vote affirmatively on the transfer at a public meeting.¹⁴⁹

In addition, certain expenditures, notably capital expenditures, should be timed to coincide with the receipt of revenues from specific sources. As an example, it is a common practice to schedule major purchases, such as motor vehicles, to coincide with the receipt of property tax revenues. This type of budget planning can avoid cash flow problems.

The budget merely sets forth the purposes for which specific amounts of money may be expended, if and when the funds become available. Good budget administration ensures that no financial obligations are incurred until there is money in hand, and the budget has allocated the amount to be expended.

Financial Reports

The budget contains estimates on revenues to be received as well as anticipated expenditures. Revenues should be constantly monitored throughout the fiscal year to detect any fluctuations in the receipts. This practice is especially true of some excise taxes that are dependent upon the economy. The actual income derived from the various revenue sources should then be compared to the budget estimates to obtain a true picture of the city or town's financial condition at any point in time.

If, upon close examination of the budget, it is found that revenues are not sufficient to support planned activities, the finance officer of the city or town should promptly make recommendations to the governing body for dealing with the situation. There may be unforeseen expenditures that arise during the budget year, which will cause considerable problems even in a well-planned budget. Any problem that arises should be handled immediately

¹⁴⁸ [A.R.S. § 42-17106](#)

¹⁴⁹ [A.R.S. § 42-17106 \(B\)](#)

as financial problems have a way of escalating rapidly.

One helpful administrative tool in many cities and towns is a budget report prepared monthly by the clerk or finance officer to provide the council with current information regarding the collection and expenditure of funds. The report is usually organized to clearly present the budget items and reflect the condition of budgetary accounting funds.

In addition to the basic financial report, whenever there is an unusually large amount of money collected or expended during a particular month, a brief narrative is sometimes attached to the statement describing the nature of the transaction.

[Exhibit E](#) is an example of the format, which may be used for a budget report. This is only a suggested format and, of course, must be adapted to conform to your accounting format.

AUDITS

State law requires an audit of municipal operations to be made by a certified public accountant or a public accountant currently licensed by the Arizona State Board of Accountancy.¹⁵⁰ The audit is required each fiscal year for cities and at least once every two fiscal years for towns.¹⁵¹

The audit, as required by the uniform expenditure reporting system and Arizona state law, must include a financial statement of all accounts and funds of the municipality.¹⁵² Audits must be conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.¹⁵³ This report must include the professional opinion of the auditor regarding the financial statements of the city or town, or a declaration of why such an opinion cannot be expressed.

The audit report must include a “determination” that HURF monies and other dedicated state transportation revenues received by the city or town were used solely for authorized purposes.¹⁵⁴ The Auditor General’s office requires that the auditor specifically report this determination in the auditor’s opinion on the financial statements or a separate report of the auditor within the city or town’s audit report. All cities and towns will need to ensure the required determination is included in their annual fiscal audit report.

Not less than four copies of the audit report are to be signed by the auditor and filed with the city or town. One copy of the annual audit report must be filed with the Auditor General within nine months after the close of each fiscal year.¹⁵⁵ The city or town must immediately make one copy of the report a public record, open to the public for inspection. All cities and towns are required to publish the audit report in a prominent location on their official website within seven days of filing it with the Auditor General, as well as the annual alternative expenditure report (UERS). These reports must be maintained for not less than five years on the website.¹⁵⁶

Also, one additional copy of the audit must be filed with the Arizona Secretary of State.¹⁵⁷ Since the deadline to file was lengthened to nine months, the Auditor General’s Office is no longer authorized to grant extensions.¹⁵⁸ If financial statements are not filed on time, the city or town is required to post a form prescribed by the Auditor General stating the financial statements are pending, the reasons for the delay, and the estimated date of completion. This form must also be filed with the Auditor General, The Speaker of the State House of Representatives and the President of the State Senate.¹⁵⁹

More detailed instructions on audit requirements are contained in the [AELR Manual](#) prepared by the Auditor General.

¹⁵⁰ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(A\)](#)

¹⁵¹ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(A\)](#)

¹⁵² [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(B\)](#)

¹⁵³ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(B\)](#)

¹⁵⁴ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(B\)\(2\)](#)

¹⁵⁵ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(C\)](#) and [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07 \(C\)](#)

¹⁵⁶ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(E\)](#)

¹⁵⁷ [A.R.S. § 9-481 \(D\) \(3\)](#)

¹⁵⁸ [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07 \(C\)](#)

¹⁵⁹ [A.R.S. § 41-1279.07](#)

FEDERAL SINGLE AUDIT ACT

Several years ago, Congress enacted the [Federal Single Audit Act](#) that imposes minimum federal audit requirements for organization-wide audits of state and local governments that receive \$500,000 or more in federal financial assistance. The purpose of the act was to improve financial accountability of state and local governments with respect to federal financial assistance programs.

On December 26, 2013, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published new guidance for Federal award programs, OMB Uniform Guidance: Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Guidance). The Guidance supersedes and streamlines requirements from OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-110, A-122, A-89, A-102 and A-133 and the guidance in Circular A-50 on Single Audit Act follow-up. This OMB Uniform Standards (Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter 2, Part 200) establishes the principles and standards for determining both direct and indirect costs as well as audit requirements applicable to Federal awards. The new standards raise increase the amount of award from federal assistance for audit requirements from \$500,000 to \$750,000 for federal assistance awards after December 26, 2014. Existing awards and incremental amounts to existing awards will continue to be governed by the award terms and conditions prior to December 26, 2014 (\$500,000). The audit requirements went into effect as of July 1, 2015 which will be the fiscal year 2016 audit for cities and towns.

If your city or town falls under the requirements of this act, you need to arrange for the performance of a single audit for the present fiscal year and all future years in which your city or town receives federal funds as outlined in the OMB Uniform Guidance. Those of you that must conduct such an audit should include requirements for a single audit in your contract with your auditor.

In past years, biennial audits were an option; however, this option was discontinued with the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996, and all Arizona cities and towns subject to this act are to have the single audit performed annually.

INVESTMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The public deposit law applies to all “general law” cities and towns in the state. Charter cities are excluded from the coverage of this law, except that charter city funds are subject to the collateral requirements in state law.¹⁶⁰

The procedures to be followed in complying with the public deposit law depend on how much money is available for investment. Funds of \$100,000 or more must be invested according to the procedures specified in State law. For deposits of less than \$100,000, there are procedures as specified by local ordinance or resolution that must be followed ([Exhibit F](#)).

Public Deposits of \$100,000 or More

State law governs the investment of city and town funds in excess of \$100,000 through bidding procedures, a list of eligible investments, minimum interest requirements on certificates of deposit, collateral and record keeping requirements.¹⁶¹

Eligible Investments

The following forms of investment with a five-year maximum maturity are specified as eligible investments:

1. Certificates of deposit in eligible depositories if the interest rate bid is 103 percent or more of the equivalent bond yield of the offer side of treasury bills. Eligible depositories include: banks insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC); savings and loan institutions insured by the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC); and credit unions insured by the national credit union administration (NCUA). The banks and savings and loan institutions must have either a branch or its principal place of business in Arizona.
2. Certificates of deposit in one or more federally insured banks or savings and loan institutions in accordance

¹⁶⁰ [A.R.S. § 35-329](#)

¹⁶¹ [A.R.S. § 35-323](#)

with the following procedures:

- The monies are initially invested through an eligible depository in this state selected by the investing entity.
 - The selected eligible depository arranges for the deposit of the monies in one or more federally insured banks or savings and loan institutions wherever located, for the account of the investing entity.
 - The full amount of principal and any accrued interest of each such deposit is insured by the FDIC.
 - The selected eligible depository acts as custodian for the investing entity with respect to such deposits.
 - On the same date that the investing entity's monies are deposited, the selected eligible depository receives an amount of federally insured deposits from customers of other financial institutions equal to or greater than the amount of the monies initially invested by the investing entity through the selected eligible depository.
 - Monies invested in accordance with all of the conditions prescribed in this section are not subject to any security or collateral requirements.
3. Interest bearing saving accounts in qualified banks and savings and loan institutions.
 4. Repurchase agreements with maximum maturity of 180 days.
 5. The pooled investment funds established by the state treasurer.¹⁶²
 6. Obligations issued or guaranteed by the United States or any of the senior debt of its agencies, corporations or instrumentalities.
 7. Bonds or other evidences of indebtedness of this state, any county, city, town, special district or school district in Arizona.
 8. Bonds, notes or evidences of indebtedness of any county, municipal or municipal district utility within this state that are payable from revenues or earnings specifically pledged for the payment of the principal and interest on the obligations, if they meet certain criteria as specified in state law.¹⁶³
 9. Bonds, notes or evidences of indebtedness issued by any county or municipal improvement district in this state to finance local improvements authorized by law, if the principal and interest of the obligations are payable from assessments on real property within the local improvement district. Once again certain criteria are established in state law for such investments to be eligible.
 10. Commercial paper of prime quality that is rated "P1" by Moody's Investors Service or rated "A1" or better by Standard and Poor's rating service or their successors. All commercial paper must be issued by corporations organized and doing business in the United States.
 11. Bonds, debentures and notes or other evidences of indebtedness denominated in United States dollars and that are rated "A" or better at the time of purchase by at least two nationally recognized rating services.
 12. Negotiable or brokered certificates of deposit issued by a national or state chartered bank or savings and loan association.
 13. Securities of or any other interests in any open-end or closed-end management type investment company or investment trust, including exchange traded funds whose underlying investments are invested in securities allowed by state law, registered under the investment company act of 1940.

¹⁶² [A.R.S. § 35-323](#) and [A.R.S. § 35-326 \(B\)](#)

¹⁶³ [A.R.S. § 35-323 \(A\)\(7-9\)](#)

Collateral

For any deposit over \$100,000, the bank or other depository must provide a surety bond, certain securities or if eligible, a safekeeping receipt as collateral to equal at least 100 percent of the deposit or a letter of credit issued by a federal home loan bank if it has been delivered to the statewide collateral pool administrator. Public deposits up to and including \$100,000 are insured by the FDIC, FSLIC or NCUA.¹⁶⁴

The Office of the Arizona State Treasurer administers a Pooled Collateral Program to ensure all taxpayer funds on deposit with any federally insured depository in excess of any insurance is backed with 102% of eligible collateral and provide an efficient means for eligible depositories to aggregate collateral for public deposits. Under the Pooled Collateral Program, each financial institution with public deposits pledges a pool of collateral against all of the public deposits it holds for the state and local governments of the State of Arizona except as provided by law. That collateral is pledged to the pooled collateral administrator who is responsible for monitoring the collateral on behalf of all public depositors.¹⁶⁵

Restrictions

1. A city or town may not award any bids for certificates of deposit for less than 103 percent of the equivalent yield of the offer side of U.S. Treasury bills.
2. Operating fund monies may not be invested for more than five years.¹⁶⁶

Trust Funds and Sinking Funds

Procedures for investment of trust funds are also specified in state law.¹⁶⁷

Pooled Investment Funds

The state treasurer maintains several pooled investment funds for collective investment of public funds.¹⁶⁸ Cities and towns may participate in these funds. Cities and towns making deposits into this fund must specify the period of time that the funds will remain on deposit.

For more detailed information on these funds, such as monthly earning rates, types of investments involved and other characteristics of the various pools, contact the Office of the State Treasurer (<http://www.aztreasury.gov/>).

PURCHASING

Bidding Procedures For Municipal Purchasing

In general, municipal purchasing procedures are an issue of local concern. However, in a few situations, state law dictates specific competitive bidding procedures. These situations are as follows:

1. State law dictates what construction projects cities and towns can complete with their own regularly employed personnel or with volunteer labor and which projects are subject to a state-mandated competitive bidding procedure. The law includes the following provisions:¹⁶⁹
 - A city or town may complete a project that it believes can be advantageously done by its own employees provided that the total cost of the work, excluding materials and equipment previously acquired by bid, does not exceed a threshold amount that is adjusted annually for inflation. The threshold amount for FY2017-18 is \$21,471, FY2018-19 is \$21,983, FY2019-20 is \$22,506 and FY2020-21 is \$23,072.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ [A.R.S. § 35-323](#)

¹⁶⁵ [A.R.S. § 35-1202](#)

¹⁶⁶ [A.R.S. § 35-323](#)

¹⁶⁷ [A.R.S. § 35-324](#), [A.R.S. § 35-327](#) and [A.R.S. § 35-328](#)

¹⁶⁸ [A.R.S. § 35-326](#)

¹⁶⁹ [A.R.S. § 34-201](#)

¹⁷⁰ [A.R.S. § 34-201\(C\)\(1\)](#)

- A city or town may use its own employees for street, road, bridge, water or sewer work, other than a water or sewer treatment plant or building, without advertising for bids if the total cost of the project does not exceed a threshold amount that is adjusted annually for inflation. The threshold amount for FY2017-18 is \$230,055, FY2018-19 is \$235,530, FY2019-20 is \$241,140 and FY2020-21 is \$247,200.¹⁷¹
- A city or town may construct, reconstruct, install or repair a natural gas or electric utility and distribution system, owned and operated by the city or town, with their employees without going to bid unless otherwise prohibited by charter or ordinance.¹⁷²
- A city or town, without going to bid, may make a contribution for the financing of public infrastructure pursuant to a development agreement up to a threshold amount that is adjusted annually for inflation. The threshold amount for FY2017-18 is \$153,370, FY2018-19 is \$157,200, FY2019-20 is \$160,760, and FY2020-21 is \$164,800.¹⁷³
- A city or town without going to bid, may construct recreational projects, including trails, playgrounds, ballparks and other similar facilities excluding buildings, structures, or additions or alterations to structures or buildings, with volunteer workers or workers provided by a nonprofit organization without advertising for bids for labor and materials provided that the total cost of the work does not exceed a threshold amount which is adjusted annually for inflation. The threshold amount for FY2017-18 is \$203,550 FY2018-19 is \$208,395, FY2019-20 is \$213,345 and FY2020-21 is \$218,715¹⁷⁴

The penalty for violating the aforementioned bid procedures is \$5,000 for each violation!

- A city or town is required to submit plans and specifications to any construction news reporting service that files an annual request with the city or town.
 - Any construction done by a city or town under this section of law must comply with generally accepted accounting principles.
2. State law requires a city or town to use competitive bids in an improvement district.¹⁷⁵ Under this bidding procedure, however, the governing body of a city or town may reject any or all bids when deemed for the public good.¹⁷⁶ In this situation, the law requires that the invitation for bids be published twice in one or more daily newspapers or once in a weekly or semi-weekly newspaper that is published and circulated in the city or town.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, there is a requirement that a copy of the notice be posted for five days on or near the door of the meeting place of the city or town council.¹⁷⁸
 3. In addition to the above requirements for municipal purchasing, state law requires a formal bid process for the sale of any real or personal property by a general law city or town unless the property is sold to another political subdivision. State law allows an exchange of property for property of substantially equal value.¹⁷⁹

Procuring Professional Services

One other area of purchasing where there are state regulations is in the area of contracting for professional services (architects, engineers, etc.). Some of these specifics include the opportunity to use alternative forms of contracting, e.g. design-build, construction manager at-risk, etc. If you are interested in how these alternatives might be used, please consult [A.R.S. Title 34, Chapter 6](#).

The preceding paragraphs specify formal bid requirements as set forth in the Arizona Revised Statutes. However, this section of the manual is not intended as a substitute for the advice of counsel, and it is suggested that in any specific situation the city or town attorney be consulted with regard to the application of statutes and local charter or ordinance requirements.

¹⁷¹ [A.R.S. § 34-201 \(D\)\(1\)](#)

¹⁷² [A.R.S. § 34-201 \(F\)\(1\)](#)

¹⁷³ [A.R.S. § 34-201 \(G\)\(1\)](#)

¹⁷⁴ [A.R.S. § 34-201 \(F\)\(2\)](#)

¹⁷⁵ [A.R.S. § 48-581](#)

¹⁷⁶ [A.R.S. § 48-584 \(B\)](#)

¹⁷⁷ [A.R.S. § 48-584 \(D\)](#)

¹⁷⁸ [A.R.S. § 48-581](#)

¹⁷⁹ [A.R.S. Title 9, Chapter 4, Article 1](#)

It should be noted that the practice of requiring competitive bidding in the letting of municipal contracts is generally for the purposes of inviting competition, guarding against favoritism, and to secure the best work or supplies at the lowest price practicable. In this regard, most municipalities require either by charter provision or by ordinance that purchases over a specified dollar amount be handled with a formal bidding procedure while lesser purchases are handled through an informal bidding process. We recommend consideration of such a local ordinance.

We also suggest consideration of centralized control of municipal purchasing procedures. Although centralized control of purchasing is not required, it is a good method to ensure sound budget control. Because a department has authority in the budget to purchase items does not mean that expected revenues are forthcoming. This pay-as-you-go budget control provides a more precise way to time your expenditures upon the receipt of revenue.

Developing an effective centralized purchasing program should begin with the authorizing of a purchasing officer to be responsible for the scheduling and making of purchases. The purchasing officer is also responsible for developing standard purchasing procedures and seeing that the purchasing schedule and procedures are followed. To ensure that the best products are obtained for the least price, it is essential to maintain a current list of qualified suppliers. Inventory and surplus goods may also be controlled with this program. Therefore, we suggest that such control, along with up-to-date information, may assist you in this budget related area.

DAVIS-BACON ACT

If federal funds are used in construction projects, federal requirements from the Davis-Bacon Act regarding prevailing wages in construction contracts may apply. For example, if federal funds are used to finance or help finance a contracted construction project costing more than \$2,000, then the city or town must ensure compliance with the prevailing wage rate and labor standards established by the Davis-Bacon Act. This act is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor. We suggest your local city or town attorney be consulted on any construction project that will be paid for, either fully or partially, by federal funds.

APPENDIX

EXHIBIT A: [ECONOMIC ESTIMATES COMMISSION APPEALS PROCEDURE](#)

EXHIBIT B: [ALTERNATIVE EXPENDITURE LIMITATION \(HOME RULE OPTION\) AND PERMANENT BASE ADJUSTMENT PACKETS](#)

EXHIBIT C: [PUBLIC HEARINGS AND COUNCIL VOTE SAMPLE FORMS AND CALENDAR FOR ONE-TIME AND EMERGENCY OVERRIDES](#)

EXHIBIT D: [BUDGET CALENDAR](#)

EXHIBIT E: [SAMPLE BUDGET REPORT](#)

EXHIBIT F: [SAMPLE RESOLUTION FOR THE DEPOSIT OF FUNDS](#)

EXHIBIT G: [GUIDE FOR AMENDING YOUR SALES TAX CODE](#)

EXHIBIT H: [TRUTH IN TAXATION HEARING NOTICE](#)

EXHIBIT I: [TIMELINE ESTABLISHING OR AMENDING IMPACT FEES](#)

EXHIBIT J: [TAX AND FEE CHANGE PROCEDURES](#)