

FINANCIAL POLICIES FOR THE CITY OF SEATTLE EMERGENCY FUND

Introduction

The Emergency Fund is the City’s main reserve fund and is available to pay for unanticipated or unplanned expenditures that occur during the course of the fiscal year.

Fund Structure

Policy 1. Fund structure. The City shall maintain in the City Treasury an Emergency Fund as described in RCW 35.32A.060. [Ord 125492]

Expenditures

Policy 2. Emergency expenditures. By an ordinance approved by three-fourths of all of its members, the City Council may authorize the expenditure of sufficient money from the Emergency Fund to meet the expenses or obligations:

1. Caused by fire, flood, explosion, storm, earthquake, epidemic, riot, insurrection, act of God, act of the public enemy or any other such happening that could not have been anticipated; or
2. For the immediate preservation of order or public health, or for the restoration to a condition of usefulness of public property the usefulness of which has been destroyed by accident; or
3. In settlement of approved claims for personal injuries or property damages, exclusive of claims arising from the operation of a public utility owned by the city; or
4. To meet mandatory expenditures required by laws enacted since the last budget was adopted. [RCW 35.32A.060, Ord 120489]

Policy 3. Other expenditures with insufficient or no appropriations. By an ordinance approved by three-fourths of all its members, the City Council may appropriate from the Emergency Fund an amount sufficient to meet the actual and necessary expenditures of the City for which insufficient or no appropriations have been made due to causes which could not reasonably have been foreseen at the time of the making of the budget. [RCW 35.32A.060, Ord 120489] Expenditures of this type need not be appropriated from the Emergency Fund, but can be appropriated from other City funds whose purposes are consistent with the intended expenditure, provided sufficient balances are available and provided an ordinance approving the expenditure is passed by three-fourths of all the members of the City Council. [Res 30379]

Revenues/Fund Balances

Policy 4. Fund balance requirements. At the beginning of each year, sufficient funds shall be appropriated to the Emergency Fund so that its balance shall not be less than \$60,000,000 as measured in 2016 dollars and adjusted to current nominal dollars by the Seattle Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) (per the Washington Economic Forecast Summary as prepared by the State of Washington), and, per state law, shall not exceed thirty-seven and one-half cents per thousand dollars of taxable assessed value in the city. [Res 28953, Res 31717], unless a severe or long-lasting event has resulted in a significant depletion of the Fund's resources, consistent with the purposes identified in Policy 2. [New Policy]

If such circumstances lead to deep or multiple years of spending from the fund, the City shall make contributions to satisfy the target balance within a period of five years, and sooner if practically possible. [New policy]

The City may also choose to reimburse the Emergency Fund during the year for any expenditures incurred, by transferring unexpended and unencumbered balances from another City fund, or from other reimbursements the City may receive. [Res 30379]

Planning/Reporting Requirements

Policy 5. Year-to-date appropriations. The City Council will receive with every appropriation request for emergency or other expenditures with insufficient or no appropriation a list of all such year-to-date appropriations, the fund from which they were appropriated, and the cumulative dollar total for the year. [Res 30379, Revised from Res 27206]