

3.05 BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:
Budget and Administrative Services

ADOPTED:
September 22, 2020

Fiscal Policy

Charlotte County's responsibility to its citizens is to correctly account for public funds, manage county finances wisely, and plan for adequate funding of services desired by the public. With the change in federal policies toward local government and the rate of growth in our area, Charlotte County needs to ensure that it is capable of adequately funding and providing local government services needed by the community.

Sound fiscal policies that are realistic and consistent provide useful guidance for the long-term programming of services and facilities. They also provide a set of assumptions under which budget and tax decisions should be made.

The following list reflects the budget policies followed by Charlotte County:

General Policy

The board at the account group summary level will annually adopt the operating budget authorizing expenditure of county funds.

The budgeted expenditures and reserves of each fund (including reserves for contingencies, balances to be carried forward, and all other purposes) will equal the sum of projected beginning balances for the fiscal year and all revenues that reasonably can be expected to be received during the fiscal year. In other words, the revenues and expenditures must be equal in order to present a "balanced budget."

The revenue division shall estimate 95 % of all receipts reasonably anticipated from all sources [F.S.129.01(2)(b)]

Reserve Policy

The Charlotte County Charter directs that a reserve policy will be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and reviewed annually by April 1. The following is the adopted reserve policy.

Financial Reserve Policy - General Policy Statements

1. The Board of County Commissioners realizes it is essential for governments to maintain adequate levels of fund balance to mitigate current and future risks such as revenue shortfalls, natural disasters, unanticipated expenditures, and to ensure stable tax rates and other unforeseen situations after exhausting all other funding options.
2. Charlotte County's reserve policies are based on sound fiscal principles designed to allow the county to maintain continuity of operations in adverse conditions while being mindful of our fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers, both current and future

generations.

3. The county realizes adequate fund balance levels are an essential component of the county's overall financial management strategy and a key factor in external agencies' measurement of the county's financial strength.
4. Various bond rating agencies recognize the best reserve policies provide both specificity and flexibility, accomplishing one or more of at least three main criteria: establishing a target level of reserves, or a reserve floor; specifying the appropriate circumstances for drawing down reserves; and directing the replenishment of reserves.
5. The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada recommends a minimum general fund reserve of no less than 5-15% of operating revenues, or no less than one to two months of regular operating expenditures.
6. Charlotte County lies within a coastal zone highly susceptible to hurricane and storm damage.
7. There exists uncertainty in the economic markets around the world, in regard to the cost of construction materials, interest rates, personnel costs, medical insurance costs, and general inflation.
8. Each sizable fund has been analyzed to determine the type of risk it may be exposed to, the duration of the risk, methods to mitigate that risk and the amount of funds needed to mitigate against that risk.
9. The county's aging infrastructure will require increasing repair and replacement.
10. The county wishes to mitigate other forms of uncertainty such as:
 - Unanticipated changes in the tax and spending policies of federal and state governments;
 - Imposition of mandates by federal and state governments or the courts;
 - Financial impacts of labor agreements, particularly those stemming from collective bargaining; and,
 - Unforeseen increases in energy costs.
11. The fund balance definitions will be reported in accordance with generally accepted governmental accounting principals

SECTION 1 The Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners hereby establishes the following financial reserves policy that includes guidelines for the use of reserve funds, the level of funding (minimum and maximum) for reserve funds and the time period over which reserve funds should be accumulated, and procedures for reporting and managing reserve funds.

SECTION 2 Ad Valorem Reserves

The components of the ad valorem reserve are the combined reserves of the General Fund, Capital Projects Fund, and Law Enforcement Fund and should include, but not be limited to the following:

I. Reserve for Contingencies

The purpose of reserve for contingencies is to maintain adequate levels of fund balance to mitigate current and future risks such as revenue shortfalls, unanticipated expenditures, and to ensure stable tax rates; and other unforeseen financial situations after exhausting all other funding options. The county should

strive to maintain a balance not less than 5% and not greater than 10% percent of the total of the budget. Budget is defined as the amount available to spend to include beginning balance and revenues.

II. Cash Carried Forward

A reserve amount for the purpose of paying expenses from Oct. 1 of the ensuing fiscal year until the time when the revenues for that year are expected to be available. The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 5% or greater than 10% percent of the total revenue receipts and balances (beginning balance) of the budget.

III. Fiscal Stabilization Reserve

The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 15% percent of the total of the General Fund budget. Budget is defined as the amount available to spend to include beginning balance and revenues to meet unexpected immediate increases in service delivery costs, or to maintain service levels in the event that an economic downturn should cause a shortfall in revenues or for expenditures associated with a major storm or other unforeseen disaster that fundamentally alters the current tax base.

IV. Future Capital Outlay Reserve

A reserve amount for the purpose of funding capital project expenditures that are part of the approved Capital Improvement Program and are held within the Capital Projects Fund. These dollars are restricted for approved capital projects using ad valorem revenues. Reserves in this area may be used as contingency on approved capital projects or future planned expenses on projects that are part of the Capital Needs Assessment.

V. Disaster Retention Reserve - A reserve established to fund non-reimbursable expenses resulting from natural disasters, ensuring adequate resources are available for disaster recovery-related costs. The County should strive to maintain a 25-million-dollar balance.

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SECTION 3 Other General Government Operating Funds

I. Tourism Development Budget

The components of the tourism development reserves should include, but not be limited to the following:

a. Reserve for Contingencies

The purpose of reserve for contingencies is to maintain adequate levels of fund balance to mitigate current and future risks such as revenue shortfalls, unanticipated expenditures, and to ensure stable tax rates; and other unforeseen financial situations after exhausting all other funding options. The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 5% and not greater than 10% percent of the total of the budget. Budget is defined as the amount available to spend to include beginning balance and revenues.

b. Cash Carried Forward

A reserve amount for the purpose of paying expenses from Oct. 1 of the ensuing fiscal year until the time when the revenues for that year are expected to be available. The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 5% or greater than 10% percent of the total revenue receipts and balances

(beginning balance) of the budget.

c. Fiscal Stabilization Reserve

The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 15% percent of the total of the budget. Budget is defined as the amount available to spend to include beginning balance and revenues to meet unexpected immediate increases in service delivery costs, or to maintain service levels in the event that an economic downturn should cause a shortfall in revenues or for expenditures associated with a major storm or other unforeseen disaster that fundamentally alters the current tax base.

II. Municipal Service Benefit Units

The components of Municipal Service Benefit Units reserves should include, but not be limited to the following:

a. Reserve for Contingencies

The purpose of reserve for contingencies is to maintain adequate levels of fund balance to mitigate current and future risks such as revenue shortfalls, unanticipated expenditures, and to ensure stable tax rates; and other unforeseen financial situations after exhausting all other funding options. The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 5% and not greater than 10% percent of the total of the budget. Budget is defined as the amount available to spend to include beginning balance and revenues.

b. Cash Carried Forward

A reserve amount for the purpose of paying expenses from Oct. 1 of the ensuing fiscal year until the time when the revenues for that year are expected to be available. The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 5 or greater than 10% percent of the total revenue receipts and balances (beginning balance) of the budget.

c. Future Capital Outlay

Any reserve amount accumulated for the purpose of funding capital projects must be spent on such project within six years from the date it was assessed or collected.

III. All other Special Revenue Funds

Except where prohibited by funding source, the components of special revenue funds reserves should include, but not be limited to the following:

a. Reserve for Contingencies

The purpose of reserve for contingencies is to maintain adequate levels of fund balance to mitigate current and future risks such as revenue shortfalls, unanticipated expenditures, and to ensure stable tax rates; and other unforeseen financial situations after exhausting all other funding options. The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 5% and not greater than 10% percent of the total of the budget. Budget is defined as the amount available to spend to include beginning balance and revenues.

b. Cash Carried Forward

A reserve amount for the purpose of paying expenses from Oct. 1 of the ensuing fiscal year until the time when the revenues for that year are expected to be available. The county should strive to maintain a balance not less than 5% or greater than 10% percent of the total revenue receipts and balances

(beginning balance) of the budget.

IV. Internal Service Funds

Internal service funds are used to account for the financing of goods or services provided by one department or agency to other departments or agencies of the county, or to other governmental units, on a cost-reimbursement basis. These funds are generally intended to operate on a break- even basis. There shall be appropriated, in each of the internal service funds, a reserve for cash balance to be carried over in an amount necessary to ensure that balances in the fund as of the end of each fiscal year is greater than or equal to zero. In any fiscal year when it is projected that the actual amount of balances will be less than or equal to zero at year end, it will be necessary to either increase the rates charged or reduce expenses or both. In any fiscal year when it is projected that the actual amount of balances will be greater than zero at year end, consideration will be given to reducing the rates charged, or to using the accumulated surplus for any legal purpose.

V. Risk Management

Risk Management Self Insurance Funds include Health Benefits, Casualty, and Worker's Compensation Programs, and all maintain reserves for Outstanding Liabilities.

The Health Fund will endeavor to maintain approximately 90 days of claim payments based upon previous full year spending averages.

Minimum reserving for the Casualty Program, and the Worker's Compensation Program, shall not be less than the Annual Actuarial Report at the 70% undiscounted confidence level for Outstanding Liabilities.

SECTION 4 General Government Debt Service Funds: Debt Service Funds

Debt Service reserves will be maintained as required by bond covenants or other debt obligations. Excess Debt Service Fund balances should be returned to the general or special revenue fund where the pledged revenue stream is collected.

SECTION 5 General Government Capital Funds: Capital Funds

Capital funds should maintain fund balance budgeted in reserves if allowable by type of fund. Many of the capital funds are time limited revenues, such as infrastructure sales surtax, and those funds will be expended as available and allowable. Other capital funds have time limitations, such as impact fees that are required to be spent within six years; those funds will be expended as soon as possible within allowable parameters. Excess funds should be returned to the general or special revenue fund where the appropriated revenue stream is collected.

SECTION 6 Enterprise Funds

I. Charlotte County Utility

The Utility should strive to maintain a minimum balance in the renewal and replacement fund equal to the lesser of 5% of the prior year's gross revenue or \$2,000,000. The Utility shall strive to maintain an unrestricted operating reserve

fund balance equal to an average of 120 days of the Utilities operating and maintenance expenses as established during its annual budget.

Reserves of the Utility funds are for the exclusive use and security of the utility system. Any reserves of the Utility which are in surplus to minimum reserve policies of the Utility shall be maintained as reserve balances or utilized by the Utility to expedite maintenance of and capital investment in the utility system. No transfer shall be made of any Utility reserves or other surplus funds outside of the various enterprise-controlled funds, and no expenditure shall be incurred against, or paid from, the Utility enterprise funds except for maintenance, capital outlay and expenditure for the account and benefit of the Utility.

Upon recommendation of the county administrator and approval of the Board of County Commissioners, transfer of surplus reserve funds may be made, excluding connection fees, from a Utility enterprise fund (the lending fund) to another fund held by the county (the borrowing fund) provided that any such transfer shall be treated as a loan only. Interest shall be paid by the borrowing fund to the lending fund in an amount equal to the interest lost by the lending fund as a result of the transfer. No transfer of funds shall be permitted which will hinder the lending fund's ability to fund authorized expenditures which are intended to be made within that particular fund of the Utility.

II. Solid Waste

The Solid Waste System should strive to maintain a reserve of 60 to 90 days of operating expenditures, plus 50% of the six-year Capital Improvement Plan funding. In addition, all reserves required by Florida Department of Environmental Protection Administrative Code associated with landfill operations will be maintained.

III. Sanitation District

The Sanitation District should strive to maintain a reserve of sixty (60) to ninety (90) days of operating expenditures. The reserve will be used in the event of a major interruption to the current revenue stream due to unforeseen circumstances, such as natural or man-made disaster, or significant downturn.

Additional Information

All corresponding calculations and interpretation of calculations of a definitive nature will be determined by the county administrator or his designee.

Reserve funds will be accumulated over a period that is deemed appropriate by the Board of County Commissioners given the complexity and consideration of a variety of economic conditions.

Reserve funds will be reported and approved by the Board of County Commissioners annually during the budget process. Related to the management of reserve funds, all uses and transfers from reserve accounts must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners. This policy will be reviewed by the Board of County Commissioners annually.

Transfer Policy

1. Transfers among expenditure or revenue accounts may be made during the

fiscal year without Board approval if a division remains within its total operating budget. Transfers between funds, or from reserves in any fund, require approval of the Board of County Commissioners.

2. Changes in the adopted total budget of a fund will be made only with Board approval of a budget amendment. Such amendments may only be made for a receipt of a nature from a source not anticipated in the budget and received for a particular purpose, including but not limited to grants, donations, or reimbursements.

Capital Improvement Policy

1. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Capital Needs Assessment (CNA) – collectively referred to as the **Capital Improvement Plan** – represent a statement of Charlotte County’s policy regarding long-range physical development for the next 6-year and 20-year periods, respectively. The Capital Improvement Plan serves as a planning and implementation tool for the development, acquisition, construction, maintenance and renovation of public facilities, infrastructure and capital equipment.

The initial 6-year period of the program is called the **Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**. The CIP forecasts spending for all anticipated capital projects and is considered a link between the County’s Comprehensive Plan and its fiscal planning process. The plan is based on the “physical needs” of the County as identified in the Comprehensive Plan and as prioritized by the CIP Review Committee in alignment with the Board’s strategic goals.

The following 14-year period of the Capital Improvement Plan (i.e. years 7 through 20) is called the **Capital Needs Assessment (CNA)** which helps identify County capital needs beyond the initial 6-year horizon. This assessment plan shall be updated every two years as part of the County’s planning process and helps form the basis for the 6-year CIP as projects are brought forward. Projects included in the CNA are not balanced to revenues but are viewed as potential projects in the planning stage.

In developing the Capital Improvement Program, the County adheres to financial and debt management policies established by the Board. These policies are in place to help preserve the County’s credit rating and establish a framework for the County’s overall fiscal planning and management. Projects are carefully evaluated and prioritized to optimize the use of limited capital funds and meet operational and community needs.

2. Definitions.
 - a. A **capital project** is a planned expense for a facility or physical item exceeding \$100,000, having a useful lifespan of 10 years or more (except for technology products) and meeting one or more of the following criterion:
 - i. Involves the acquisition or construction of any physical facility for the community;
 - ii. Involves the acquisition of land or an interest in land for the community;
 - iii. Increases capacity of a public utility or roadway through acquisition or construction;

- iv. Involves the ongoing acquisition of major equipment or physical systems, i.e. radio systems, computer technology, major specialized vehicles, etc.;
- v. Involves modifications of facilities, including additions to existing facilities, which increases the square footage, useful life, or value of the facility.
- vi. Maintenance or replacement of substantial facility.

Each capital project will have its own page within the CIP.

- b. A capital maintenance or replacement project** is a non-recurring project to repair, maintain or replace existing capital facilities for the purpose of protecting the County's investment in the facility and minimizing future maintenance and replacement costs. Capital maintenance/replacement projects must have expenditure intervals greater than five years, and individual projects may have values below \$100,000.

Capital maintenance or replacement projects will appear in the Capital Improvement Program but will be approved as a schedule of similar repair/replacement activities.

- c. Information technology purchases** are durable products but typically have a useful life of only three to five years, these purchases are planned in the CIP and have various funding sources. Technology replacement or maintenance with a useful life of up to five years shall be approved as a schedule of similar activities.

3. Departments will review projects from the Capital Needs Assessment for advancement to the CIP. Departments will rank the projects with their internal ranking methodology and submit to the CIP Review Committee for prioritization. An internal ranking methodology shall also be used for prioritizing Utility enterprise funded capital projects. Ranking of the enterprise funded capital projects will be conducted by Utilities prior to Board review.
4. The **CIP Review Committee** will meet during the budget preparation process to validate, review and prioritize submitted projects based on county needs, strategic focus areas, and available funding resources. The CIP Review Committee will recommend the ranking and allocation of resources to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval. The CIP Review Committee is comprised of the department directors and Fiscal Services staff who are involved with capital projects. Also included will be the county administrator, deputy county administrator, budget director, capital projects manager and others as designated by the county administrator. The Board of County Commissioners will act as the de facto CIP Review Committee fulfilling the policy function for capital projects relating to Charlotte County Utilities. The Utility will rank and prioritize their enterprise funded capital projects separately from other funded projects for final Board approval.
5. During the biennial budget process, citizens will have an opportunity to express their opinion related to capital projects. Annually, a public hearing will take place to update the CIP ordinance per Florida Statutes Chapter 129.
6. A six-year cash flow will be completed for the major CIP funding sources including gas taxes, utility funds, capital projects fund, sales tax extension funds, debt service funds and the impact fee fund. Revenues are to be reviewed and the Capital Needs Assessment (CNA) updated every two years as part of the budget adoption process.

7. Funds may be accumulated in a reserve for future capital account in accordance with the County's fiscal reserve policy in order to fund future projects. Capital equipment will be replaced according to a replacement schedule based on the useful life of the asset.
8. Debt may be issued for any capital or capital maintenance projects as long as the payback period does not exceed the life of the asset and a funding source is identified for the repayment.
9. The Capital Needs Assessment (CNA) will be updated biennially during the budget adoption process. The first 6-years of the plan will contain only funded projects within the Capital Improvement Program. The following 14-years (i.e. years 7 through 20) within the Capital Needs Assessment shall incorporate a cost inflation factor based on the industry standard for the project type, including but not limited to indices such as Construction Cost Index and Producer Price Index for Highway and Street Construction. The 20-year plan will be a discussion tool for planning funding mechanisms for future projects. Project sheets for expansionary projects will also include an estimate of ongoing maintenance and operational costs including personnel and equipment.
10. Projects will be fully funded in accordance with Chapter 129 of the Florida Statutes.
11. Capital maintenance or replacement projects will be included in the CIP. Such projects may include more than one location for the same type of maintenance. The estimated total of all locations will be stated in the CIP project with a breakdown of costs associated with specific locations reported on a separate schedule. This schedule of the locations and estimates will be maintained at the department level. Changes to the budgeted amounts of the various locations within a renewal and replacement project may be made by the department director in charge of the project with the approval of the capital projects manager. For Community Services, the capital maintenance schedule also serves as the funding source for programmatic amenity repair, replacement, and for amenity expansion to implement the County-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
12. A review of the progress and financial status of the capital projects, including capital maintenance or replacement projects, shall be performed quarterly with the capital projects manager, department directors, project managers and Fiscal Services staff who are involved with capital projects. Fiscal Services will supply a quarterly report showing the project budget, expenses to date, encumbrances and available budget balance.
13. Any change or modification to a construction contract within the CIP shall be authorized in accordance with the Charlotte County Purchasing Manual and may be approved either by the Board of County Commissioners, or by the County Administrator or his/her designee, based on the criteria outlined within the manual. Changes or modifications below the administrative approval may be brought to the attention of the Board as circumstances dictate. A change to the overall total of the capital project shall require a revision to the project page and approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

Fund Balance Policy

1. Fund balances, which are anticipated at the end of a fiscal year, will be budgeted as the beginning fund balance for that fund for the upcoming fiscal year.
2. The balances of contract commitments, which are anticipated not to be completed by Sept. 30, must be re-budgeted when the budget is adopted in September.

Revenue Policy

1. The use of ad valorem tax revenues will be limited to the General Fund, Fine and Forfeiture Fund, Capital Projects Fund, County Health Unit, and municipal service taxing units.
2. The use of gas tax revenues will be limited to the County Transportation Trust Fund, unless required in other funds by bond indenture agreements.
3. The use of "half-cent" sales tax revenues will be limited to the General Fund, unless required in other funds by bond indenture agreement.
4. Pursuant to Ordinance #84-04 as amended, the Tourist Development Plan, Tourist Development Tax proceeds will be appropriated as follows:
 - a. Tourism development
 - b. Stadium maintenance
 - c. Other tourist facilities as may be provided by general law
5. The use of revenues, which have been pledged to bondholders, will conform in every respect to bond covenants that commit those revenues. Fee revenues will be anticipated for purposes of budget preparation using fee schedules which have been adopted by the Board and historic collection rates.
6. County staff will continue to aggressively pursue grant funds. Revenues will be budgeted for current grants at anticipated grant award levels. The budget will be amended for new grants upon award.
7. The county will allocate countywide revenues to the general and capital projects funds. All revenues, which are reasonably expected to be unexpended and unencumbered at the end of the fiscal year, will be anticipated as beginning balance in the budget of the following fiscal year.
8. Cash balances remaining in any fund at year-end will stay in that fund for subsequent years.

Debt Policy

The Charlotte County Charter directs that a Debt Policy will be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and reviewed annually by April 1. The following is the adopted Debt Policy.

Debt Policy - General Policy Statements

The objective of Charlotte County's (hereinafter "Charlotte County" or County) Debt Policy is to maintain the county's ability to incur present and future debt at the most advantageous circumstances to the county and its citizens, for purposes of financing or refinancing approved elements of its capital improvements program and other county projects. Several guiding principles which are incorporated into the County's Debt Policy are as follows:

1. **Asset Life:** The county will consider long-term financing for the acquisition, replacement, or expansion of physical assets (including land) only if they have a useful life of at least five years. Debt will be used only to finance capital projects and equipment, except in case of emergency. County debt

will generally not be issued for periods exceeding the useful life or average useful lives of the project or projects to be financed.

2. **Capital Financing:** The county will normally rely on specifically generated funds and/or grants and contributions from other governments to finance its capital needs on a pay- as-you-go basis. To achieve this, it may become necessary to secure short term (not exceeding five years amortization) construction funding. Such financing is anticipated and allows maximum flexibility in Capital Improvement Plan implementation. Debt of longer amortization periods (long-term debt) will be issued for capital projects when it is an appropriate means to achieve a fair allocation of costs between current and future beneficiaries. Debt shall not, in general, be used for projects solely because insufficient funds are budgeted at the time of acquisition or construction.
3. **Credit Ratings:** Charlotte County seeks to maintain the highest possible credit ratings for all categories of short and long-term debt that can be achieved without compromising delivery of basic county services and achievement of adopted county policy objectives.
4. **Capital Planning:** To enhance creditworthiness and prudent financial management, Charlotte County is committed to systematic capital planning, intergovernmental cooperation and coordination, and long-term financial planning. Evidence of this commitment to systematic capital planning is demonstrated through adoption and periodic adjustment of a Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, the Florida Growth Management Act and Rule 9 J 5, and the adoption of the six-year CIP.
5. **Debt Affordability Measures:** The county will examine the following statistical measures to determine debt capacity and compare these ratios to the standard municipal rating agency median for counties of comparable size and historical ratios to determine debt affordability:
 - Debt per capita;
 - Debt to personal income;
 - Debt to taxable property value; and/or
 - Debt service payments as a percentage of revenues.
6. **Debt Limits:** The county will keep outstanding debt within the limits prescribed by state statute at levels consistent with its creditworthiness, best practices, needs and affordable objectives.
7. **Debt Structure:** Debt will be structured to achieve the lowest possible net cost to the county given market conditions, the urgency of the capital project, and the nature and type of security provided. Moreover, to the extent possible, the county will design the repayment of its overall debt as to recapture rapidly its credit capacity for future use.
8. **Length of Debt:** Debt will be structured for the shortest amortization period consistent with a fair allocation of costs to current and future beneficiaries or users.
9. **Backloading:** The county will normally seek to structure debt with level principal and interest costs over the life of the debt. "Backloading" of costs will be considered when natural disasters or extraordinary or unanticipated external

factors make the short-term cost of the debt prohibitive, when the benefits derived from the debt issuance can clearly be demonstrated to be greater in the future than in the present, when such structuring is beneficial to the county's overall amortization schedule, or when such structuring will allow debt service to more closely match project revenues during the early years of the project's operation.

10. **Refundings:** The County Comptroller as chief finance officer of the county, county's staff and advisors will undertake periodic reviews of all outstanding debt to determine refunding opportunities. Refunding will be considered (within federal tax law constraints) if and when there is a net economic benefit of the refunding or the refunding is essential in order to modernize covenants essential to operations and management. In general, advance refundings for economic savings will be undertaken when a net present value savings of at least 3% of the refunded debt can be achieved. Current refundings that produce a net present value savings of less than three 3% will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Refundings with negative savings will not be considered unless there is a compelling public policy or legal objective.
11. **Credit Enhancements:** Credit enhancement, including letters of credit and bond insurance, may be used, but only when net debt service on the bonds is reduced by more than the costs of the enhancement.
12. **Methods of Sale:** The county will issue debt obligations either through competitive or negotiated sale or through a private placement.
 - a. **Competitive Sale:** A competitive sale is the common method for selecting underwriters for general obligation bonds, which are backed by the full faith and credit of the county. In a competitive bid process, the county, with the assistance of the county's financial advisor, will structure the bond issue and publish a Notice of Sale requesting bids from underwriters. After the bids are received, the bonds are awarded to the underwriting syndicate that submitted the best bid, i.e. the lowest true interest cost to the county.
 - b. **Negotiated Sale:** In a negotiated sale, the county works with a single underwriting syndicate. The selection of a syndicate usually is based on factors such as past relationships, special expertise, and the size and nature of the underwriters' sales efforts. The senior manager of the syndicate will assist the county with structuring the bond issue, preparing the official statement, and obtaining a bond rating. The syndicate will engage in pre-sale marketing, and then will negotiate interest rates with the county. Negotiated sales are common with revenue bond offerings, especially when they involve complex features.
 - c. **Private Placement:** When determined to be beneficial and appropriate, the county may elect to sell its debt obligations through a private placement or limited public offering.
13. **Long-Term Debt:** The county will consider the issuance of long-term debt under the following conditions:
 - One-time capital projects or capital improvement projects, when

the project is included in the county's Capital Improvement Program and appropriated in the budget;

- An unusual equipment purchase for which it is determined to be economically beneficial for the county to purchase through financing;
- When a project is not included in the county's Capital Improvement Plan, but it is an emerging critical need whose timing was not anticipated, or it is a project mandated immediately by state or federal requirements. An analysis of the project's impact on the county's Capital Improvement Plan and future budget forecasts will be presented at the time of approval; or
- To finance the acquisition or implementation of a self-supporting proprietary or governmental program/activity.

14. **General Obligation Bonds:** When determined to be the most appropriate method of debt issuance, the county will seek approval through voter referendum to issue general obligation bonds. The full faith and credit of the county secure general obligation bonds. The county makes a pledge to levy the necessary ad valorem tax rate to meet the debt service requirements of the bonds.

15. **Revenue Debt:** As part of the county's financing activities, specific General Fund revenue sources may be identified to pledge for repayment of revenue debt. Before such General Fund commitments are made, specific policy goals and objectives that determine the nature and type of projects qualifying for such support and specific limitations to be placed on the maximum amount of General Fund resources pledged to such projects shall be developed. Key factors that will be considered in determining whether or not the General Fund should be used to secure a particular debt obligation will include the following:

- Demonstration of underlying self-support, thus limiting potential General Fund financial exposure
- Use of General Fund support as a transition to a fully stand-alone credit structure, where interim use of General Fund credit support reduces borrowing costs and provides a credit history for new or hard to establish credits.
- General Fund support is determined by the County Commission to be in the county's overall best interest.

The county will finance the capital needs of its revenue producing proprietary activities through the issuance of revenue-secured debt obligations. Prior to approval of such debt, the County Commission will evaluate financial plans and projections showing the feasibility of the planned financing, required rates and charges needed to support the planned financing, and the impact of the planned financing on ratepayers, property owners, county revenues, and other affected parties. The amount of the debt obligations issued by a county will be limited by the feasibility of the overall financing plan on the proprietary activity.

16. **Leasing:** When determined to be advantageous to the county, the county may lease equipment and facilities rather than purchase them outright. Leasing may be appropriate for assets that will be needed for only a short period of time, or

which are subject to rapid technological obsolescence. Leasing may also be determined to be appropriate for procuring assets that are too expensive to fund with current receipts in any one year, but with useful lives too short to finance with long-term debt. The decision to lease will be supported by an analysis of lease vs. purchase.

17. **Interfund Borrowing:** Interfund borrowing will be considered to finance high priority needs on a case-by-case basis, only when planned expenditures in the fund making the loan would not be affected. Interfund borrowing may be used when it would reduce costs of interest, debt issuance, and/or administration. Interest charged will be at the current earnings rate of other county funds.
18. **Taxable Debt:** The cost of taxable debt is higher than tax-exempt debt. The issuance of taxable debt is mandated in certain circumstances, and may allow valuable flexibility in subsequent contracts with users or managers of the improvement constructed with the debt proceeds. Therefore, the county may issue taxable obligations when determined to be the best method for the intended purpose.
19. **Variable Rate Debt:** The county may choose to issue securities that pay a rate of interest that varies according to pre-determined formula or results from a periodic remarketing of the securities, consistent with state law and covenants of pre-existing bonds, and depending on market conditions. The county will limit its outstanding bonds in variable rate form to reasonable levels in relation to total debt.
20. **Subordinate Debt:** The county may issue subordinate debt only if it is financially beneficial to the county or consistent with creditworthiness objectives.
21. **Short-Term Debt:** Use of short-term borrowing, such as bond anticipation notes and tax-exempt commercial paper, will be undertaken only if the transaction costs plus interest on the debt are less than or equal to the cost of internal financing, or available cash is insufficient to meet working capital requirements as with the implementation of the infrastructure surtax programs.
22. **State Revolving Fund Program:** This program provides funds for projects involving water supply and distribution facilities, stormwater control and treatment projects, air and water pollution control, and solid waste disposal facilities. Whenever possible, this program will be utilized since the costs associated with issuing the notes are low and local agencies benefit from the strength of the State's credit.
23. **Other Borrowing Facilities:** The county may maintain or procure a special facility that will allow for borrowing on short notice, either in the form of short-term or long-term notes, for small amounts not economical to finance through a regular bond issuance. The facility can be used as an interim financing mechanism when cost effective.
24. **Derivative or Synthetic Debt Structures:** The use of derivative or synthetic debt securities to finance capital projects or to refinance outstanding debt may be an appropriate method of hedging favorable interest rates or to mitigate the risks of interest rate volatility in a variable rate debt program. The value of such derivative securities is derived from the value of an underlying or reference

market. Derivatives such as interest rate swaps and interest rate caps and collars are examples of securities that are used by corporations and municipal borrowers to lower and stabilize borrowing costs. The use of derivative debt securities by the county should be considered only upon the recommendation of the Finance Committee, in conjunction with the advice of knowledgeable and experienced experts.

25. **Arbitrage Compliance:** The County Comptroller, as chief finance officer of the county, maintains a system of recordkeeping and reporting to meet the arbitrage rebate compliance requirements of the federal tax code. Arbitrage rebate liabilities will be calculated annually, and the liability will be reported in the county's annual financial statements.
26. **Financing Proposals:** Any capital financing proposal to a county department, agency, or utility involving pledge or other extension of the county's credit through sale of securities, execution of loans or leases, marketing guarantees, or otherwise involving directly or indirectly the lending or pledging of the county's credit, may be reviewed by members of the finance committee.
27. **Conduit Bond Financing:** Periodically, the county is approached with a request to provide conduit bond financing for qualified projects through the Charlotte County Housing Finance Authority or Industrial Development Bonds. Applications for such issues are processed pursuant to guidelines approved by the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners. The county's financial advisor, bond counsel, and county attorney, in coordination with Housing Finance Authority and Industrial Development Bond Citizens Advisory Committee, will review all applications to provide a funding recommendation to the Board, and will charge a reasonable fee for costs and time, to be paid for by the applicant. In addition, the applicant will reimburse the county a reasonable fee for time spent on review of the application by county staff.
28. **County Finance Committee:** The county finance committee consists of the chief deputy of board services of the County Comptroller, the chairman of the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners, as seated annually by the Commission, a second representative from the Board of County Commissioners, the county administrator or designee, the county attorney or designee, the director of Budget and Administrative Services, and the County Comptroller. Others participating in the Finance Committee's efforts to provide technical expertise and advice include representatives from the county's financial advisor, Disclosure Counsel and Bond Counsel. The county's Debt Policy is jointly reviewed by the Finance Committee and the Board of County Commissioners at least once every 5 years, and more frequently if so required.
29. **Financial Disclosure:** The county is committed to full and complete financial disclosure, and to cooperating fully with rating agencies, institutional and individual investors, agencies, other levels of government, and the general public to share clear, comprehensible, and accurate financial and other relevant requirements on a timely and comprehensive basis. The County Comptroller, as chief finance officer of the county, is responsible for ongoing disclosure to established national information repositories and for maintaining compliance with disclosure standards promulgated by state and national

regulatory bodies and may carry out such responsibility through the engagement of an outside dissemination agent or supervision of the process by others and will provide final approval.

30. **Investment of Debt Proceeds:** Debt proceeds will be invested primarily to assure the safety and liquidity of such investments, and secondarily, to maximize investment yield. The primary goal of liquidity is to ensure that proceeds will be available to fulfill the purposes of the issue on a timely basis. Debt covenants will specifically address investment guidelines for debt proceeds.

Appropriation Policy

1. Appropriations of the Board will be assigned line item object code numbers as deemed appropriate by the Fiscal Services and County Comptroller to facilitate managerial control and reporting of financial operations.
2. Each year Fiscal Services will prepare an indirect cost allocation plan for administrative/indirect costs along with the preparation of the Self Insurance Plan. These will be budgeted and charged for all departments.
3. The budget requests of all departments will include itemized lists of all needed operating equipment, and of any rolling stock in inventory for which replacement is being requested.
4. Each year the county will prepare a six-year capital improvement program identifying public facilities by service type and location with estimates of corresponding revenues to pay for the facilities. The CIP will be in accordance with guidelines established by the Capital Improvements Element of the Comprehensive Plan.
5. The annual budget will include sufficient appropriations to fund capital projects identified in the CIP for completing the first year of the six-year program. Revenues designated in the CIP to be needed for future year projects will be placed in reserves for future capital outlay.

SCHEDULED REVIEW DATE:
Annually

AMENDED:
October 27, 2020; December 13, 2022; April 25, 2023; February 11, 2025; ~~April 28, 2026~~