

OTTAWA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE POLICY

I. POLICY

All entities face economic constraints. As a result, the County must pay attention both to inflows and outflows to provide consistent services to the public and promote stability. The intent of this policy is to define the County philosophy on revenue collection and expenditure recognition, allocation, and review.

II. STATUTORY REFERENCES

Constitutional Amendment of 1978 – Headlee Amendment
Constitutional Amendment of 1994 – Proposal A
Public Act 123 of 1999

III. COUNTY LEGISLATIVE OR HISTORICAL REFERENCES

Board of Commissioners Policy Adoption Date and Resolution Number: _____

Board of Commissioners Review Date and Resolution Number: _____

Name and Date of Last Committee Review: _____

Related Policies: _____

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE POLICY

PROCEDURE

Revenues:

1. The more dependent the County is on any one revenue source the less able it is to weather changes in that revenue resulting from economic conditions. Consequently, the County will strive to develop a diversified revenue mix in order to avoid disruption to County services.

2. Taxes represent the most significant revenue source for the General Fund. However, there has been legislation that limits the County's ability to tax.

a. It is important that the County find ways to develop flexibility within its taxing authority. To do this, the County will strive to levy less than its legal maximum levy each year. This provides the County with a "cushion" to fall back on should conditions develop that would otherwise result in an immediate reduction of services. This "cushion" provides the County with time to find other funding sources and/or identify more cost effective ways to deliver services.

In addition, flexibility within the levy is also important to bond rating agencies. The agencies look very favorably on entities that have the flexibility to adjust tax revenues. The higher the County's bond rating is, the lower the cost to borrow. This affects not just the County but the public overall, since assessments will be lower.

b. Levying less than the maximum legal amount provides the County with flexibility, it also lessens the burden on citizens and businesses within the County. The County Board will strive to balance the need for taxes to fund public services with the impact the taxes have on citizens and businesses.

c. The County may purchase the real delinquencies of other municipalities and school districts within the County. At that point, the money is no longer owed to the municipality but is now owed to the County. The County will adhere to the requirements provided under Public Act 123 of 1999, which require due notice to the property owner prior to foreclosure.

3. User fees are important in the development of a diversified revenue mix. However, the other benefit of user fees is equity. Instituting user fees allow the beneficiary of the service to be the one paying for it (or a portion of it). User fees, when allowable under the law, will be charged at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners.

a. The County Board will determine the extent that user fees cover the cost of the services. Cost includes both the direct costs as well as indirect costs (e.g.,

administrative overhead). It is not always feasible or desirable to cover the full cost of a service. Exceptions to full cost recovery include:

- The fee is a barrier to a segment of the County in receiving the services.
- The cost of collecting the fees exceeds the revenue collected.
- Some services provide benefits not only to the direct user, but also to other public. Consequently, it is important to set the fee at a rate that will encourage the use of the service.
- The fee is set by statute.

b. It is also important for the fees established to stay relevant. The Board of Commissioners will have a study performed every three years or as needed to determine the appropriateness of fees and to keep them relevant to the cost associated with the service. Such fee changes will be formally adopted at a Board meeting open to the public.

4. One time revenues are non-recurring, often unexpected resources that the County receives. Because they are non-recurring, they should not be used to cover ongoing expenditures. Instead, they should only be used for their intended purpose (if identified) or to fund non-operational expenditures (e.g., capital projects).

Expenditures:

1. The County will fund expenditures at a level sufficient to ensure the ongoing health, safety, and welfare of the public. If not statutorily specified, the level of services provided will be determined the Board of Commissioners through strategic planning and program ranking and evaluation.

2. Indirect Cost:

The expenditures of departments in governmental funds that provide services to other County departments will allocated to all departments through an annual indirect cost allocation study performed by an outside consultant. The allocation of these costs has different bases depending on the function. These bases include (but are not limited to) transaction counts, number of employees and square footage of space occupied.

All departments receiving these services are included in the study, but not all departments are charged. Specifically, the County will charge a department if doing so will provide additional revenue through grants or will help identify the full costs of certain services.

3. The full cost of an employee's compensation is not limited to the cash outlays for salaries and fringe benefits. Most employees are also earning benefits that will not be actually paid for several years. Specifically, in addition to the wages and benefits paid and received during the year, most employees are also earning future compensation in the form of pension and retiree health care. Because these future cash outlays are actually being *earned* now, the County should contribute to them now. This allows us to identify the full cost of the services being provided and avoid passing on costs incurred now to future generations.

The County will strive to fully fund its long-term liabilities. Each year, the County receives actuary studies that calculate the annual required contribution (ARC) for the County's pension and other post employment benefits (primarily retiree health care). The County will make every effort to budget and pay the ARC each year. The County will also analyze ways to reduce these (and other) costs to benefit the taxpayer yet still provide adequate compensation for employees.

4. To provide proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars, the County has an obligation to review the services it provides for effectiveness and efficiency. In some instances, economies of scale and specialized knowledge allow private agencies to do tasks more efficiently and effectively. Consequently, the County will encourage the use of outside agencies and contractors when analysis shows they are able to provide equivalent or better services more cost effectively than County employees.

5. The County provides a variety of services to the public. As departments adjust programs to meet the perceived needs of their clients, a duplication of services can result, both with other County programs and with other government and private agencies. Regular program review can help identify duplications. Where identified, the County will eliminate services duplicated internally or externally in order to use resources more efficiently.

6. Technology can often provide efficiencies for County departments. Such efficiencies may result in improved service to customers, streamlined processes both within the department and with related agencies, and lower personnel demands. It is important for County departments to continually explore technology alternatives and the costs and benefits they may bring. Depending on funding availability and a project's compatibility with long-term planning, new technology initiatives will be considered when the estimated benefits exceed the estimated costs.

REVIEW PERIOD

The County Administrator will review this Policy at least once every two years, and will make recommendations for changes to the Planning & Policy Committee.