

FINANCIAL POLICY MANUAL | TOWN OF HAMILTON

A COMMUNITY COMPACT CABINET INITIATIVE

MARCH 2018



DLS
DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES
MA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

PREPARED BY:

DLS | Technical Assistance Bureau

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DLS

DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES
MA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

Christopher C. Harding
Commissioner of Revenue

Sean R. Cronin
Senior Deputy Commissioner

March 5, 2018

Board of Selectmen
Town of Hamilton
577 Bay Road
Hamilton, MA 01936

Dear Board Members,

I am pleased to present the enclosed set of financial policies for the Town of Hamilton as part of the Baker-Polito Administration's Community Compact Cabinet initiative. This collaborative program strives to create clear mutual standards, expectations, and accountability for both the state and municipalities. It is my hope that our guidance provides direction and serves as a resource for local officials as we build better government for our citizens.

If you have any questions regarding the report, please contact Zack Blake, Technical Assistance Bureau Chief, at (617) 626-2358 or blakez@dor.state.ma.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean R. Cronin".

Sean R. Cronin
Senior Deputy Commissioner

Supporting a Commonwealth of Communities

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INTRODUCTION

At the board of selectmen's request, the Division of Local Services Technical Assistance Bureau (TAB) created a set of financial policies for the Town of Hamilton. This project was a result of the Community Compact Cabinet (CCC) initiative (www.mass.gov/ccg), whose goal is to encourage best practices that promote efficiency, accountability, and transparency in municipal government. The adoption of formal financial policies provides instructive guidance and promotes consistency as local officials plan, direct, monitor, and protect municipal assets and resources.

All the policies presented here should be periodically reassessed and modified as conditions change. Incorporated in them are specific provisions local leaders need to consider and decide upon. An example taken from the reserves policy is: "The Town shall set a year-to-year goal of maintaining its free cash in the range of [three to five] percent of the annual budget." In each case, the draft policy has brackets around the decision point with the word(s) in the bracket representing TAB's suggestion based on researched best practices. In these cases, local officials should finalize the decisions and remove the brackets prior to adopting the policies. Some policies also reference currently contracted service providers, namely Munis and Harpers Payroll. The town should modify those policies whenever the contractors change.

Please note there are three policies that will require specific town meeting actions before they can be adopted as presented here.

OPEB: The trust fund Hamilton established in May 2010 for other postemployment benefits (OPEB) was not properly created under an authorizing statute and does not conform to the Governmental Accounting Standards Board's (GASB) requirements. To correct this, we advise the board of selectmen to present town meeting voters with articles that propose the following:

1. Accept [M.G.L. c. 32B, § 20](#) to establish a GASB compliant OPEB trust fund.
2. Authorize the prudent investor rule as detailed in [M.G.L. c. 203C](#) to make available the options required to meet the investment goals of the OPEB trust.
3. Transfer the balance in the existing fund into the new fund established under § 20.
4. Designate the treasurer/collector as fund trustee or establish a separate board of trustees. By statute, such a board must have between five and 13 members and minimally include a person with investment experience, citizen at-large, employee, retiree, and local official.

Tailings: The tailings policy includes expedited procedures for managing uncashed checks as allowed under [M.G.L. c. 200A, § 9A](#). Accordingly, it can only be adopted after town meeting's acceptance of this statute.

Tax Enforcement: To adopt the tax title payment agreement section of the tax enforcement policy, town meeting must approve a related bylaw, per [M.G.L. c. 60, § 62A](#). The following text may serve as a template:

Chapter X, Section X: Payment Agreements for Properties in Tax Title

- Section X (a) Pursuant to the provisions of M.G.L. c. 60, sec. 62A, the Treasurer/Collector will pursue and establish a written payment agreement with any person(s) entitled to redeem ownership of parcels taken by the Town for nonpayment of real estate taxes ("redeemer").
- Section X (b) Tax title categories eligible for payment agreements include [*specify criteria here, based on: amount owed, assessed property value, length of delinquency, and/or any other criteria*].
- Section X (c) At the start of the agreement, the redeemer shall pay 25 percent of the total amount due.
- Section X (d) The agreement's maximum term shall be five years.
- Section X (e) Full compliance with agreement terms will result in a waiver of [*local decision: choose a percent up to 50 percent*] of the tax title account's accrued interest.

Additionally, the capital planning, financial reserves, and forecasting policies include references to a capital stabilization fund, although the town currently has no such fund. As a best practice, we recommend communities establish a capital stabilization fund as an available source to finance future capital needs, augment capital spending in years with large capital requests or in years without sufficient free cash, and provide future debt service payments. Possible annual funding sources include appropriations from free cash, amounts equal to current retired debt as a means to maintain level debt service, and other one-time revenues.

TOWN OF HAMILTON

FINANCIAL POLICIES MANUAL



PREFACE

The Town of Hamilton is committed to safeguarding public funds, protecting local assets, and complying with financial standards and regulations. To that end, this manual of financial policies provides guidance for local planning and decision making. The policies as a whole are intended to outline objectives, provide direction, and define authority to help ensure sound fiscal stewardship and management practices. Each should be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary.

With these policies, the Town of Hamilton, through its Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Finance and Advisory Committee, and employees, commits to the following objectives:

- Sustaining a consistent level of service and value for residents and businesses
- Safeguarding financial integrity and minimizing risk through a system of internal controls
- Ensuring the quality and maintenance of capital assets
- Conforming to general law, uniform professional standards, and municipal best practices
- Preserving the town's AAA credit rating
- Promoting transparency and public disclosure
- Ensuring accurate and timely reporting

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Antifraud	1
Capital Planning	4
Debt Management	7
Disbursements	10
Financial Reserves	13
Forecasting	16
Grant Management.....	19
Indirect Cost Allocation	23
Investments.....	26
Other Postemployment Benefits Liability.....	30
Procurement Conflict of Interest	32
Reconciliations	35
Revenue Turnover.....	39
Tailings	42
Tax Enforcement	44
Tax Recapitulation.....	47
Travel Reimbursement.....	51
Year-end Closing	54
 Appendix	
Policy Log	59
Massachusetts Collectors & Treasurers Association Investment Policy Statement.....	61
Municipal Calendar	69

ANTIFRAUD

PURPOSE

To protect the Town's assets and reputation from misappropriation and abuse, this policy provides guidelines to safeguard against fraudulent activities and any appearance thereof. Policy objectives include:

- To create an environment in which employees and citizens can report any suspicion of fraud
- To communicate the Town's intent to prevent, report, investigate, and disclose to proper authorities suspected fraud, abuse, and similar irregularities
- To provide management with guidelines and responsibilities regarding appropriate actions in conducting investigations of alleged fraud and similar improprieties

APPLICABILITY

This policy pertains to any suspected fraud, abuse, or similar irregularity against the Town. It applies to all elected and appointed Town officials and employees and to any other persons acting on behalf of the Town, such as vendors, contractors, volunteers, casual employees, and grant subrecipients.

POLICY

The Town is committed to protecting its revenue, property, information, and other assets from any attempt, either by members of the public, contractors, consultants, vendors, agents, or its own employees, to gain by deceit, financial or other benefits at the expense of taxpayers. Town officials, employees and other persons acting on behalf of the Town must, at all times, comply with all applicable policies, laws, and regulations. The Town will not condone any violation of law or ethical business practices and will not permit any activity that fails to withstand the closest possible public scrutiny. The Town intends to fully, objectively, and impartially investigate any suspected acts of fraud or other similar irregularities regardless of the position, title, length of service, or relationship with the government of any party who may be the subject of such investigation.

A. Definitions

Any person acting on behalf of the Town will mean any person responsible for or to Hamilton's government placed in that position by some official relationship with the Town.

Abuse can occur in financial or nonfinancial settings and refers to, but is not limited to:

- Improper use or misuse of authority
- Improper use or misuse of Town property, equipment, materials, records, or other resources
- Waste of public funds

Fraud or other irregularity refers but is not limited to:

- Any dishonest or fraudulent act
- Forgery or alteration of any document or account
- Forgery or alteration of a check, bank draft, or any other financial document
- Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, or other assets
- Impropriety in the handling or reporting of money or financial transactions

- Profiteering as a result of insider knowledge of Town activities
- Disclosing confidential or proprietary information to outside parties
- Accepting or seeking anything of material value from consultants, contractors, vendors, or persons providing services or materials to the Town
- Destruction, removal or inappropriate use of records, furniture, fixtures, and equipment
- Any claim for reimbursement of expenses not made for the exclusive benefit of the Town
- Any computer-related activity involving the alteration, destruction, forgery, or manipulation of data for fraudulent purposes
- Any omissions and misrepresentations made in bond offering documents, presentations to rating agencies, and annual financial reports

B. Antifraud Responsibilities

Every employee has the responsibility to assist the Town in complying with policies and laws and in reporting violations. The Town encourages the support and cooperation of all employees in meeting the Town's commitment and responsibility to such compliance.

Town officials and department heads are responsible for instituting and maintaining a system of internal controls to reasonably ensure the prevention and detection of fraud, misappropriations, and similar irregularities. Management should be familiar with the types of improprieties that could occur within their areas of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.

The Town Manager has primary responsibility for investigating all activity defined in this policy and will, to the extent practical, notify the Board of Selectmen of reported allegations of fraudulent or irregular conduct upon commencing the investigation. In all circumstances where there are reasonable grounds to indicate a fraud may have occurred, the Town Manager, subject to the advice of Town Counsel, will contact the Hamilton Police Department and/or the District Attorney's office. Upon concluding the investigation, the Town Manager will report results to the Selectmen and others as determined necessary.

C. Disclosure

If the Town's investigation concludes that there was a violation of any federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery or gratuity potentially affecting a federal award, the Town Manager will disclose such in writing to the federal awarding agency in compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Omni Circular. Similarly, if there are findings of bond offering information falsification, the Town Manager will disclose this in writing to the bondholders.

PROCEDURES

The Town Manager will create a set of procedures to be appended to this policy or incorporated by reference. The procedures should cover all of the following at minimum:

1. Procedure and methods for reporting suspicions of fraud, abuse and other irregularities
2. Assignment of responsibilities in response to reported suspicions
3. Employee protections from retaliation
4. Security of investigation documents
5. Treatment of anonymous allegations and false allegations (intentional and unintentional)
6. Personnel disciplinary actions

7. Responsibilities around media contact
8. Training, education, and awareness
9. Disclosure requirements and protocols

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 149, § 185](#)

U.S. Office of Management and Budget's [Omni Circular](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

CAPITAL PLANNING

PURPOSE

To effectively maintain the Town's infrastructure and protect the value of its capital assets, this policy outlines guidance for planning, reviewing, and coordinating capital improvements. Adherence to this policy will help the Town meet its capital needs despite limited resources.

APPLICABILITY

This policy establishes a framework for long-term capital improvements, sets guidelines and expectations for all Town departments in planning for and requesting capital projects, and outlines consensus budgetary goals for the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, and Finance and Advisory Committee.

POLICY

The Town will maintain its physical assets by providing funding in the operating budget to protect its capital investments and minimize future maintenance and replacement costs. To provide and preserve the infrastructure needed for achieving the highest levels of public services and quality of life possible within available financial resources, the Town will maintain an annually updated, five-year plan for capital improvements. The Town will emphasize preventive maintenance as a cost-effective approach to capital reinvestment and replace exhausted goods as necessary.

The Town Manager is charged to oversee Hamilton's capital improvement program. This involves identifying and prioritizing projects, analyzing funding, and creating a long-term financial plan achievable within the Town's budget limitations.

A. Definition of a Capital Improvement

A capital improvement is a tangible asset or project estimated to cost over [\$25,000] and to have, or to extend, [five] or more years of useful life. These include:

- Real property acquisitions, construction, and long-life capital equipment
- Major improvements to physical infrastructure, including streets, sidewalks, stormwater drains, and water distribution systems
- Major renovations of existing capital items that extend their useful lifespans, as distinguished from normal operating expenditures
- Planning, feasibility studies, and designs for potential capital projects
- Items obtained under a long-term capital lease
- Bulk purchases of similar items, like software or furniture, with expected useful lifespans of five or more years that, when aggregated, have total costs exceeding the capital threshold

B. Inventory

To support a systematic acquisition and replacement schedule, the Finance Director will annually update and maintain a detailed inventory of all capital assets, which shall include dates built, acquired or last improved, original cost, current condition, expected and remaining useful lifespans, depreciated value, extent of use, and any scheduled replacement or expansion dates.

C. Evaluation of Capital Projects

As part of the annual budget process, the Town Manager will solicit capital project requests from department heads. The Town Manager will then evaluate and prioritize the requests using the criteria below:

1. Eliminates a hazard to public health and safety
2. Required by state or federal laws or regulations
3. Uses outside financing sources, such as grants
4. Supports adopted plans, goals, objectives, and policies
5. Stabilizes or reduces operating costs
6. Makes better use of a facility or replaces a clearly obsolete one
7. Maintains or improves productivity or existing standards of service
8. Directly benefits the Town's economic base by increasing property values
9. Provides new programs having social, cultural, historic, economic, or aesthetic value
10. Increases operational or personnel costs

D. Multiyear Capital Plan

The Town Manager will annually update and propose to the Finance and Advisory Committee and Board of Selectmen a five-year capital improvement plan, including the upcoming fiscal year's capital budget and a four-year projection of capital needs and expenditures that details their estimated costs, descriptions, and anticipated funding sources.

Throughout the year, the Finance Director will monitor active capital projects to ensure they remain properly funded, and will report any capital plan amendments to the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen.

E. Capital Financing

Long-term debt is an appropriate funding source for certain types of projects, while short-term debt and current revenues should be used for assets with short useful lifespans. The Town will strive to maintain [three to five] percent of the general fund operating budget, net of debt, on capital investment allocations. Funding shall be derived from a combination of property taxes and the general [and capital] stabilization fund[s].

The capital improvement plan shall be prepared and financed in accordance with the following policies:

- Special revenue sources (e.g., grants, trust funds) shall be evaluated as funding options whenever practical.
- The annual operating costs of each proposed capital project, as well its debt service costs, shall be identified before any long-term, bonded capital project is recommended.
- Short-term debt may be used to fully finance purchases with useful lifespans of less than 10 years.
- Major capital projects, such as new construction or major renovations to existing facilities, may be accomplished through capital or debt exclusions.

- Infrastructure or facility maintenance budgets built into the general operating budget will not be reduced to fund other departmental budgets.
- To the fullest extent feasible, all capital projects associated with the Town's water enterprise fund shall be financed from user fees.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 20](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 33B](#)

Division of Local Services (DLS) Best Practice: [*Presenting and Funding Major Capital Projects*](#)

DLS Financial Management Guidance: [*Capital Improvement Planning Manual*](#) and [*Capital Improvement Planning Guide – Developing a Comprehensive Community Program*](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

DEBT MANAGEMENT

PURPOSE

To provide for the appropriate issuance and responsible use of debt, this policy defines the parameters and provisions governing debt management. Policy adherence will help the Town to responsibly address capital needs, provide flexibility in current and future operating budgets, control borrowing, sustain capital investment capacity, and maintain or enhance the Town's bond rating so as to achieve long-term interest savings.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, and Finance and Advisory Committee in their budget decision-making duties, the Treasurer/Collector's debt management responsibilities, and the Finance Director's budget analysis and reporting duties.

POLICY

Under the requirements of federal and state laws, the Town may periodically issue debt obligations to finance the construction, reconstruction, or acquisition of infrastructure and other assets or to refinance existing debt. The Town will issue and manage debt obligations in such a manner as to obtain the best long-term financial advantage and will limit the amount of debt to minimize the impact on taxpayers. Debt obligations, which include general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, bond anticipation notes, lease/purchase agreements, and any other debt obligations permitted to be issued under Massachusetts law, will only be issued to construct, reconstruct, or purchase capital assets that cannot be acquired with current revenues.

A. Debt Financing

In financing with debt, the Town will:

1. Issue long-term debt only for purposes that are authorized by state law and qualify for tax-exempt bonds and only when the financing sources have been clearly identified.
2. Use available funds to the greatest extent possible to reduce the amount of borrowing on all debt-financed projects.
3. Confine long-term borrowing to capital improvements and projects that cost at least [\$100,000] and that have useful lifespans of at least [10] years or whose lifespans will be prolonged by at least [10] years.
4. Refrain from using debt to fund any recurring purpose, such as current operating and maintenance expenditures.
5. Consider using revenue bonds, special assessment bonds, or other types of self-supporting bonds instead of general obligation bonds whenever possible.
6. Set user fees to cover capital costs for the water enterprise operation to the extent practicable.

B. Debt Limits

The Town will adhere to these debt parameters:

1. Total debt service, including debt exclusions and any self-supporting debt, shall be limited to [10] percent of general fund revenues, with a target balance of [five to seven] percent.
2. As dictated by state statute, the Town's debt limit shall be five percent of its most recent equalized valuation.

C. Structure and Term of Debt

The following shall be the Town's guidelines on debt terms and structure:

1. The Town will attempt to maintain a long-term debt schedule such that at least [50] percent of outstanding principal will be paid within 10 years.
2. The term of any debt shall not exceed the expected useful life of the capital asset being financed and in no case shall it exceed the maximum allowed by law.
3. The Town will limit bond maturities to no more than [10] years, except for major buildings, water and water facility projects, land acquisitions, and other purposes in accordance with the useful life borrowing limit guidelines published by the Division of Local Services (DLS).
4. Any vote to authorize borrowing will include authorization to reduce the amount of the borrowing by the amount of the net premium and accrued interest.
5. The Town will work closely with its financial advisor to follow federal regulations and set time frames for spending borrowed funds to avoid committing arbitrage, paying rebates, fines and penalties to the federal government, and jeopardizing any debt issuance's tax-exempt status.

D. Bond Refunding

To achieve potential debt service savings on long-term, tax-exempt debt through bond refunding the Town will:

1. Issue debt with optional call dates no later than 10 years from issue.
2. Analyze potential refunding opportunities on outstanding debt as interest rates change.
3. Use any net premium and accrued interest to reduce the amount of the refunding.
4. Work with the Town's financial advisor to determine the optimal time and structure for bond refunding.

E. Protection of Bond Rating

To protect its bond rating, the Town will:

1. Maintain good communications with bond rating agencies, bond counsel, banks, financial advisors, and others involved in debt issuance and management.
2. Follow a policy of full disclosure on every financial report and bond prospectus, including data on total outstanding debt per capita, as a percentage of per capita personal income, and as a percentage of total assessed property value.

F. Reporting

1. The Finance Director and Treasurer/Collector will report to the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager on the Town's debt status at least annually.

2. The Finance Director will include an indebtedness summary as part of a report on receipts and expenditures in Hamilton's Annual Town Report.
3. The Finance Director, with the Town's financial advisor, will file the annual audit and official disclosure statement within 270 days of the end of the fiscal year.

REFERENCES[M.G.L. c. 41, § 59](#)[M.G.L. c. 41, § 61](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 4](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 6](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 6A](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 7](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 8](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 17](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 19](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 20](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 21A](#)[26 USC § 148](#)

Hamilton Capital Planning policy

DLS Best Practice: [Understanding Municipal Debt](#)

DLS Borrowing Guidelines: [Asset Useful Life - Borrowing Limits](#)

DLS Informational Guideline Releases 17-21: [Borrowing](#) and 17-22: [Premiums and Surplus Proceeds for Proposition 2½ Excluded Debt](#)

Government Finance Officers Association Best Practice: [Refunding Municipal Bonds](#)

Internal Revenue Service Guidance: [Arbitrage Guidance for Tax-Exempt Bonds](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

DISBURSEMENTS

PURPOSE

To mitigate the risk of fraud and ensure the Town disburses cash only for valid legal liabilities, this policy establishes guidelines for the expenditure of Town funds.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the job responsibilities of the Finance Director, Assistant Town Accountant, Treasurer/Collector, and Payroll Coordinator and to the warrant approval duties of the Town Manager. It further applies to all department heads and elected or appointed officials who submit requests for expense and payroll disbursements (all referred to here as “department heads”).

POLICY

No disbursement for any payroll or accounts payable (AP) expense shall occur without the prior review and approval of the Finance Director and Town Manager. Accordingly, the Finance Director is responsible for finalizing every AP and payroll warrant, and the Town Manager’s warrant approvals must be evidenced by his or her signature prior to any disbursements being done. Every disbursed check will include on its face: “Void if not cashed within one year of issuance.” The Treasurer/Collector shall secure prepared checks in a safe until distributed.

Payroll expenditures must be based on approved time and attendance records and be consistent with collective bargaining agreements or the Town’s annual compensation/classification table. Vendor payments must be based on original invoices and made only to entities with valid form W-9s on file. As a tax-exempt organization, the Town will not pay sales tax on any expense, including any employee personal reimbursement.

A. Responsibilities

The Treasurer/Collector is responsible for maintaining a database of active town employees and all retirees, including salaries, pay rates, stipends, weekly work hours, earned leave time, benefit options, and withholdings. Any change to an employee’s employment status, work hours, leave accrual rate, or compensation rate can only be made by the Treasurer/Collector based on the annual manpower summary and signed by the appropriate department head, Finance Director, and Town Manager.

On a biweekly basis, department heads must review, approve, and submit AP requests to the Finance Director and payroll requests to the Payroll Coordinator. Any elected and appointed board serving as a department head may vote to delegate approval authority to one board member, who shall report back to the board on the approval actions. These boards cannot assign this responsibility to any professional or other staff.

For each AP or payroll submission, the tasks below will be completed.

Department Heads:

- Review departmental invoice entries in the Munis AP invoice entry module to verify the appropriate accounts are charged.

- Reconcile the Munis batch total to the invoice and receipt totals.
- For every new contract, submit supporting documents showing that procurement requirements have been met.
- Submit the signed Schedule of Bills Payable indicating the total department submission, Munis batch number, and warrant date, along with all the original invoices or receipts to the Finance Director.
- In Harpers, review and electronically approve departmental payroll entries of hours worked by date and pay type (e.g., regular, overtime, holiday, etc.) and any accrued time used (e.g., vacation, personal, sick).

Treasurer/Collector's Office:

Payroll Coordinator:

- Review and accept departmental input file.
- Create the preprocess file, reconcile it to departmental balances, and forward the final preprocess report to the Finance Director.
- After receiving approval from the Finance Director, create and submit the final payroll file to Harpers.
- Print Harpers reports and create a gross payroll file for posting to the general ledger.
- Submit the reports and gross payroll file to the Finance Director.

Treasurer/Collector (AP and Payroll):

- Review the detailed warrant signed by the Town Manager and verify whether outstanding amounts are due from any listed individuals or vendors.
- For any a payee with a liability to the Town, hold back the check, apply it to the amount due, and issue a net check to the recipient for any remaining balance.
- Fund the gross payroll plus the Town's portion of Medicare tax or the total AP warrant and disburse the payments by check, bank transfer, or direct deposit.

Finance Director:

Payroll

- Review and approve the Harpers preprocess register verifying that expenditures are legal, appropriate accounts are being charged, and funds are available.
- Post the Harpers gross payroll file to the general ledger.
- Submit the payroll warrant to the Town Manager for approval.

Accounts Payable

- Review each AP submission for accuracy, original invoice, and signature.
- Contact the department head if any information is missing.
- For any new contract, confirm that proper procurement procedures were followed.
- Verify that the expense is for a legal purpose, the appropriate account is being charged, and funds are available.
- Include the expense with the warrant or delete and return the submission if any of the above cannot be validated.
- Prepare and submit the warrant to the Town Manager for approval.

Town Manager:

- Review each warrant for appropriateness by examining invoices, back-up documents, and payroll detail, and direct inquiries to the Finance Director.
- Approve and sign the warrant.

B. Emergency Disbursements

If there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance where payment must be made to a vendor outside of the normal warrant process, the Treasurer/Collector may issue a manual check with the written authorizations of the Town Manager and Finance Director. In such case, the department head will enter the disbursement in Munis to be processed as a no-check on the next accounts payable warrant.

C. Petty Cash

To mitigate any risks of illegal expenditures, violations of procurement laws, or instances of expenses exceeding appropriations, no petty cash accounts are authorized. The Treasurer/Collector maintains [\$300] in cash drawers, which is used exclusively for making change.

D. Prior Fiscal Year Bills

To maintain the integrity of the annual budget, departments will charge all invoices to the proper fiscal year. In the event a department has an invoice for a prior fiscal year, it shall be submitted at a town meeting to authorize the payment and funding source. The appropriation can only be approved with a four-fifths vote of annual town meeting or a nine-tenths vote of a special town meeting.

E. Audit

All disbursement activity is subject to audit by Hamilton's independent auditor.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 41, §§ 41, 41A, 41B, 41C, 42, 43, 52, 56](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, §§ 56, 58, 64](#)

[M.G.L. c. 30B](#)

Hamilton's collective bargaining agreements, annual wage grids, and compensation/classification tables

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

FINANCIAL RESERVES

PURPOSE

To help the Town stabilize finances and maintain operations during difficult economic periods, this policy establishes prudent practices for appropriating to and expending reserve funds. With well-planned sustainability, Hamilton can use its reserves to finance emergencies and other unforeseen needs, to hold money for specific future purposes, or in limited instances, to serve as revenue sources for the annual budget. Reserve balances and policies can also positively impact the Town's credit rating and consequently its long-term cost to fund major projects.

APPLICABILITY

This policy pertains to short- and long-range budget decision making and applies to the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, and Finance and Advisory Committee in those duties. It also applies to the related job duties of the Finance Director and Board of Assessors.

POLICY

The Town commits to building and maintaining its reserves so as to have budgetary flexibility for unexpected events and significant disruptions in revenue-expenditure patterns and to provide a source of available funds for future capital expenditures. The Town will strive to maintain overall general fund reserves in the level of [eight to 12] percent of the annual operating budget. Adherence to this policy will help the Town withstand periods of decreased revenues and control spending during periods of increased revenues. There are multiple types of reserves, including free cash, stabilization funds, retained earnings, and overlay surplus.

A. Free Cash

The Division of Local Services (DLS) defines free cash as "the remaining, unrestricted funds from operations of the previous fiscal year, including unexpended free cash from the previous year." DLS must certify free cash before the Town can appropriate it.

The Town shall set a year-to-year goal of maintaining its free cash in the range of [three to five] percent of the annual general fund budget. To achieve this, the Town Manager will propose budgets with conservative revenue projections, and department heads will carefully manage their appropriations to produce excess income and budget turn backs. Further, budget decision makers will avoid fully depleting the Town's free cash in any year, so that the succeeding year's calculation can begin with a positive balance. Moreover, as much as practicable, the Town will limit its use of free cash to funding one-time expenditures (such as capital projects, snow and ice deficits, or emergencies) and will appropriate any excess above five percent of the annual budget to build reserves or to offset unfunded liabilities.

B. Stabilization Funds

A stabilization fund is a reserve account allowed by state law to set aside monies to be available for future spending purposes, including emergencies or capital expenditures, although it may be appropriated for any lawful purpose. Prior to the adoption of this policy, Hamilton established a general stabilization fund and a recreation fields stabilization fund.

General Stabilization: The Town will endeavor to maintain a minimum balance of [five] percent of the current general fund operating budget in its general stabilization fund. The Town will annually appropriate a minimum of [one] percent of general fund operating revenues to the general stabilization fund until the target minimum balance is met. Withdrawals from general stabilization should only be used to mitigate emergencies or other unanticipated events that cannot be supported by current general fund appropriations. When possible, withdrawals of funds should be limited to the amount available above the [five] percent minimum reserve target level. If any necessary withdrawal drives the balance below the minimum level, the withdrawal should be limited to [one-third] of the general stabilization fund balance. Further, the Town Manager and Finance Director will develop a detailed plan to replenish the fund to the minimum level within the next two fiscal years.

Special Purpose Stabilization Funds: Hamilton currently has a special purpose stabilization fund for recreation fields. The Town will appropriate annually to this fund, and any future special purpose stabilization funds, so that over time they achieve target balances sufficient to cover cash outlays for capital needs. The target for a town-wide capital stabilization fund should minimally equate to the total annual asset depreciation the Finance Director calculates under the requirements of the Government Accounting Standards Board's Statement 34. Sustaining funding in these reserves enables the Town to pay outright for moderate-range capital expenditures and thereby preserve debt capacity for major, higher-dollar purchases or projects. This approach balances debt with pay-as-you-go practices and protects against unforeseen costs.

C. Retained Earnings

The Water Department's finances are managed under an enterprise fund. By accounting for its revenues and expenditures in a fund separate from the general fund, the Town can effectively identify the utility's true delivery costs—direct, indirect, and capital—and set user fees at a level sufficient to recover them. Under this accounting, the Town may reserve the water operation's generated surplus

For the water enterprise fund, the Town will maintain a minimum reserve amount of [20] percent of the operation's total budget, but the reserve target may be significantly higher if major infrastructure improvements are necessary. The reserve will be used to provide rate stabilization and to fund major capital projects. To maintain the target reserve level for the enterprise fund requires the Board of Selectmen to periodically review, and when necessary, adjust user rates.

D. Overlay Surplus

The overlay is a reserve the Town uses to offset uncollected property taxes and other unrealized revenue resulting from property tax abatements and exemptions.

At the conclusion of each fiscal year, the Board of Assessors will submit to the Town Manager and the Finance Director an update of the overlay reserve with data that includes, but is not limited to, the gross balance, potential abatement liabilities, and any transfers to surplus. If the balance exceeds the amount of potential liabilities, the Board of Selectmen may request that the Board of Assessors vote to declare those balances surplus and available for use in the Town's capital improvement plan or any other one-time expense.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 40, § 5B](#)

[M.G.L. c. 59, § 25](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 53F½](#)

DLS Best Practices: [Free Cash](#) and [Special Purpose Stabilization Funds](#)

DLS Departmental Procedure Manual: [Enterprise Funds](#)

DLS Informational Guideline Releases 17-20: [Stabilization Funds](#) and 17-23: [Overlay and Overlay Surplus](#)

Government Finance Officers Association Best Practices: [Fund Balance Guidelines for the General Fund](#) and [Working Capital Targets for Enterprise Funds](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

FORECASTING

PURPOSE

To assess the range of choices available to budget decision makers when determining how to allocate resources, this policy establishes guidelines for evaluating revenue sources and the requirement to determine an expenditure strategy as part of the annual budget process and longer range fiscal planning. Forecasting helps local officials understand the long-range implications of pending near-term decisions.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, and Finance and Advisory Committee in their budget analysis and decision-making responsibilities. It also applies to the job duties of the Finance Director and the managers of all revenue-generating departments, including the Water Department.

POLICY

A. Revenue Guidelines

The Town will continuously seek to diversify its revenue to improve the equity and stability of sources. Each year and whenever appropriate, the Town will reexamine existing revenues and explore potential new sources. A balance will be sought between elastic and inelastic revenues to minimize any adverse effects caused by inflation or other economic changes. Additionally, intergovernmental revenues (e.g., local aid, grants) will be reviewed annually to determine their short- and long-term stability in order to minimize detrimental impacts.

The Town will avoid using one-time revenues to fund ongoing or recurring operating expenditures. These one-time revenue sources can include, but are not limited to, free cash, overlay surplus, sale of municipal assets, legal settlements, insurance proceeds, and gifts. Additionally, the Town hereby establishes the following priority order when appropriating one-time revenues:

- [Snow and ice deficit]
- [General stabilization fund]
- [Capital stabilization fund]
- [Recreation fields stabilization fund]
- [Cash capital budget]
- [OPEB trust fund]
- [Other]

Economic downturns or unanticipated fiscal stresses may compel reasonable exceptions to the use of one-time revenue. In such cases, the Town Manager, in consultation with the Finance Director, can recommend to the Board of Selectmen its use for operational appropriations. Such use will trigger the Town Manager to develop an action plan with the Finance Director to avoid continued reliance on one-time revenues.

State laws impose further restrictions on how certain types of one-time revenues may be used. The Town will consult the following General Laws when the revenue source is:

- Sale of real estate: [M.G.L. c. 44, § 63](#) and [M.G.L. c. 44, § 63A](#)
- Gifts and grants: [M.G.L. c. 44, § 53A](#) and [M.G.L. c. 44, § 53A½](#)

This policy further entails the following expectations regarding revenues:

- The Assessing Department will maintain property assessments for the purpose of taxation at full and fair cash value as prescribed by state law.
- Town departments that charge fees will annually review their fee schedules and propose adjustments when needed to ensure coverage of service costs.
- The Building Department will notify the Town Manager of any moderate-to-large developments that could impact building permit volume.
- Department heads will strive to seek out all available grants and other aid and will carefully consider any related restrictive covenants or matching requirements (both dollar and level-of-effort) to determine the cost-benefit of pursuing them.
- Revenue estimates will be adjusted throughout the budget cycle as more information becomes available.
- To the extent feasible, the Board of Selectmen will set water rates sufficient to cover all fiscal year operating and capital improvement costs and thereby minimize any general fund subsidies.

B. Expenditure Guidelines

Annually, the Town will determine a particular budget approach for forecasting expenditures, either maintenance (level service), level funded, or one that adjusts expenditures by specified increase or decrease percentages (either across the board or by department). A maintenance budget projects the costs needed to maintain the current staffing level and mix of services into the future. A level-funded budget appropriates the same amount of money to each municipal department as in the prior year and is tantamount to a budget cut because inflation in mandated costs and other fixed expenses still must be covered.

Under any chosen approach, expenditure projections will include potential cost-of-living adjustments to account for the impact of future contract settlements and compensation plan increases.

C. Financial Forecast Guidelines

To determine the Town's operating capacity for each forthcoming fiscal year, the Town Manager and the Finance Director will annually create a detailed budget forecast, including a five-year projection of revenues and expenditures for all operating funds. These forecasts will be used as planning tools in developing the following year's operating budget as well as the five-year capital improvement plan. The Town Manager will provide the forecasts to the Finance and Advisory Committee and Board of Selectmen for use in their budget decision making.

To ensure the Town's revenues are balanced and capable of supporting desired levels of services, forecasts for property taxes, local receipts, and state aid will be conservatively based on historical trend analyses and will use generally accepted forecasting techniques and appropriate data. To avoid potential revenue deficits, estimates for local receipts (e.g., inspection fees, investment income, license fees) should generally not exceed [90] percent of the prior year's actual collections without firm evidence that higher revenues are achievable.

Additionally, the Town's forecast model should assume that:

- The Town's current level of services will provide the projected baseline.
- Property taxes (absent overrides) will grow at the limits of Proposition 2½.
- New growth will be projected conservatively, taking into account the Town's three- to five-year average by property class.
- Local receipts and state aid will reflect economic cycles.
- Historical trends in the growth of specific operating expenses and employee benefits will prevail.
- Debt service on existing debt will be paid, and the Town's Capital Planning and Debt Management policies will be followed.
- Annual pension contributions and appropriations to amortize other postemployment benefit liabilities will continue.
- Reserves will be built and maintained in compliance with the Town's Financial Reserves policy.
- The water enterprise fund will reimburse the general fund for indirect costs.
- Hamilton will make payments to and collect payments from the Town of Wenham according to the benefit and indirect costs calculated for the communities' various joint venture programs (e.g., Library, Veterans Memorial Pool).

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 20](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 53A](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 53A½](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 63](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 63A](#)

Hamilton policies on Capital Planning, Debt Management, Financial Reserves, and Indirect Cost Allocation

DLS Best Practice: [Revenue and Expenditure Forecasting](#)

DLS Informational Guideline Release 17-21: [Borrowing](#)

Government Finance Officers Association article: [Structuring the Revenue Forecasting Process](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

GRANT MANAGEMENT

PURPOSE

To ensure Hamilton efficiently and appropriately manages its grant-funded programs, this policy sets a framework for evaluating grant opportunities, tracking grant activity, and processing grant revenues and expenditures. Effective grant management helps promote the pursuit of grants that are in the Town's best interest and assure timely reimbursements to optimize cash flow, and to guard against year-end account deficits. As a legal contract, every grant agreement must be fulfilled in accordance with its prescribed terms and conditions, as well as all applicable federal, state, and local regulations. Failure in this regard exposes the Town to legal and financial liabilities and compromises future grant funding.

APPLICABILITY

This town-wide policy applies to the grant project managers in each department applying for or receiving grant funding. It further applies to the grant-related responsibilities of the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Finance Director, and Treasurer/Collector.

POLICY

All departments are encouraged to solicit grant funding for projects and programs consistent with the Town's goals. All municipal grant applications in excess of \$5,000 must receive preapproval by the Board of Selectmen. To be eligible for preapproval, there must be sufficient staff available to effectively administer the grant program and perform its required work scope, along with adequate matching requirements (both cash and in-kind).

No department shall expend grant funds until a fully executed grant agreement has been accepted and approved for expenditure by the Board of Selectmen. Further, no grant funds shall be used to supplant an existing expense for the purpose of diverting current funds to another use.

Operating departments through their designated grant project manager(s) have primary responsibility for seeking grant opportunities, preparing applications, and managing awarded programs. The Finance Director is responsible for consulting with project managers on grant budgetary matters, accounting for grants in the general ledger, monitoring grant expenditures for consistency with award requirements, tracking the timeliness of reimbursement requests, and distributing monthly reports of grant expenditures to departments. The Finance Director will also maintain a database of all grants and grant activity from inception to closure.

A. Grant Opportunity Assessment

Well in advance of a grant application's due date, the departmental project manager will assess the opportunity in consultation with the Town Manager and Finance Director. Below are the factors to be considered, at minimum.

Programmatic:

- Alignment of the grant's purpose with the Town's and department's strategic priorities
- Department's capacity to administer the grant through to closeout
- Office space, facilities, supplies, or equipment required
- Ongoing impact of the grant program after it is completed

- Compliance and audit requirements, particularly as they may differ from the Town's

Financial:

- Total anticipated project cost
- Expenditure requirements and anticipated cash flow schedule
- Required cost matching shares and sources, including cash and in-kind
- Staffing requirements, including salary and benefit increases for multiyear grants
- Administration and indirect recapture amounts
- Program income potential

In this stage, the project manager will also develop a continuation plan to address the potential future loss of grant funding, which may include alternative funding proposals or plans for reducing or terminating program positions or components after grant closeout.

B. Grant Application and Award Acceptance

Prior to filing any grant application greater than \$5,000, the project manager will submit a meeting agenda item requesting preapproval from the Board of Selectmen with a report summarizing the grant and how it complies with this policy. The Town Manager will then make a determination as to whether any preapproved application should be submitted to the Town Counsel for a legal review. Following this, the project manager will submit the grant application to the grantor and forward a copy to the Finance Director.

When a project manager receives notice of any grant award, he or she will submit it as a meeting agenda item for the Board of Selectmen to formally accept by signatures and thereby approve the expending of grant funds. The project manager will then send copies of the signed agreement to the grantor and the Finance Director.

Upon receipt of the grant documents, to record the grant activity separately from regular expenses, the Finance Director will create new general ledger accounts identifying them by name and including the CFDA (catalogue of federal domestic assistance) number for any federal grants. When notified of any amendment or adjustment by the grantor, the project manager will immediately forward the information to the Finance Director, who will make adjustment(s) to the grant's budget in the general ledger.

C. Grant Financial Management

At the start of a new grant, the Finance Director and project manager will discuss its requirements and the timing of reimbursement requests (e.g., at the time of expenditure, monthly or quarterly), when applicable.

The project manager will ensure all expenditures made are allowable and consistent with each grant award's requirements. The project manager will submit project invoices to the Finance Department consistent with the Town's disbursement policy. The project manager will also ensure the proper payroll account codes for grant-funded employees are reported on the department's submission to the Finance Director and Payroll Coordinator as part the regular payroll process.

Because required retirement system remittances and/or general fund benefit reimbursements vary by grant, the Finance Director will calculate these for each grant and notify project managers of the resulting amounts to include on the AP submissions.

To minimize the use of advance town funds, every project manager will request reimbursements as often as the grant's guidelines allow and always no later than June 30th. In doing so, the project manager will prepare all required reports and requests as detailed in the agreement and submit these to the grantor. Immediately following each submittal, the project manager will send an email notification of the reimbursement request to the Finance Director and Treasurer/Collector.

The Finance Director will monitor each grant's deficit balance to assure it is temporary and receives reimbursement within the grant's allowable timeline and always prior to year-end. The Treasurer/Collector will match reimbursements received electronically or by check with their requests and credit the proper revenue lines.

D. Grant Closeout

Upon completion of the project work or grant period, whichever comes first, the project manager will verify that all grant requirements have been met and will send to the Finance Director a grant closeout package that includes a final report and either a final reimbursement request or notification of the amount to be refunded to the grantor.

Upon receipt of the closeout package, the Finance Director will put the general ledger's grant account into inactive status and will reconcile the project manager's report with the general ledger's record of grant activity. The project manager will subsequently submit the final reimbursement request to the grantor or, if a refund is due, the Finance Director will add the refund amount to the AP warrant.

Within 30 days of any grant closeout or the year-end closure, whichever is earlier, the Finance Director will determine if the grant account has been overexpended and will either apply the expense to the operating budget or propose an appropriation from other available funds.

E. Audit

All grant activities are subject to audit by the particular grantors, the Finance Director, and Hamilton's independent auditor. The Finance Director will maintain all grant documents and financial records for seven years after their closeouts or for the lengths of time specified by the grantors, whichever period is longer.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 40, § 5D](#)

[M.G.L. c. 41, § 57](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 53A](#)

Hamilton Disbursement policy

Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission: [Memo #12/2003](#)

Mass.gov webpage: [Municipal Grant Finder](#)

US grant search website: [grants.gov](#)

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education webpage: [Grant Notifications and Alerts](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

INDIRECT COST ALLOCATION

PURPOSE

To apportion all the indirect costs associated with the Town's water enterprise fund and the various programs operated jointly with the Town of Wenham in an equitable manner that reflects their true shared costs, this policy provides guidelines for calculating, allocating, and reviewing those costs.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the Town Manager, Finance Director, and Director of Public Works.

BACKGROUND

Under authority established in [M.G.L. c. 44 § 53F½](#), the water service is managed and accounted for separately from the general fund and has its own financial statements. Consolidating the program's direct and indirect costs, debt service, and capital expenditures into a segregated fund allows the Town to demonstrate to the public the true, total cost of providing the service.

The Town's joint programs with Wenham are governed by intermunicipal agreements (IMAs) as defined under [M.G.L. c. 40, § 4A](#). Each IMA includes specific provisions for allocating shared personnel and operational expenses between the two communities, and this policy provides the methodology that shall be used to determine those costs.

POLICY

As part of the annual budget process, the Finance Director, with approval by the Town Manager, will calculate the indirect costs to the general fund of the Town's water department and those of each joint program. Each of the calculations will take into account the given entity's personnel expenses budgeted in the general fund, as well as any-related expenses of the Town departments that provide administrative services to that operation, which include the Town Manager, Finance Director, and Treasurer/Collector departments. The Finance Director will review the calculations with the responsible department manager or town official.

The Finance Director will calculate costs using the most recent fiscal year's appropriations and based on one or more of the following methodologies: actual, transactional, estimated support, and proportional (as outlined on the next page). The following expenses shall be included in the calculations:

- Benefits for active and retired employees, including insurances, Medicare tax, unemployment, and workers' compensation
- Pension costs
- Vehicle insurance
- Property insurance
- Administrative costs
- Audit services
- Actuarial services
- Legal services
- Information technology expenses
- Other costs that may be considered and agreed to, such as: printing, postage, materials, supplies, software, infrastructure, and fuel

The Finance Director will maintain written instructions detailing the calculation methodology and will track and record operating transfers between the relevant funds, as well as reimbursements from and payments to the Town of Wenham.

Options for Calculating Indirect Costs

1. **Actual cost** uses specific schedules to provide documentation of indirect costs, which generally include debt service and life, health, and property insurances.
2. The **transaction-based** method is calculated based on the number transactions attributed to a service as a percentage of the whole. For example, the number of bills issued by the Treasurer/Collector for water service as a percentage of the total bills issued. This percentage is applied against the Treasurer/Collector's total budget, including health and life insurance, Medicare, retirement and any worker's compensation attributable to the department.

$$\frac{\text{Number of transactions for the water department}}{\text{Total number of transactions processed by the non-enterprise department}} \times \frac{\text{Total budget plus benefits of the department processing enterprise transactions}}{\text{Total budget plus benefits of the department processing enterprise transactions}} = \text{Indirect Departmental Salaries}$$

3. A department or official may be able to provide a reasonable **estimate of support**, or estimate of the average time spent to support a particular service. For example, the Town Manager estimates that he spends on average four hours weekly, or 10 percent of his time, on water- related activities (e.g., meetings, commitment/billing, budgeting, clerical tasks). This percentage is applied against the department's or official's salary and benefits, including health and life insurance, Medicare, retirement and any worker's compensation.

$$\frac{\text{Hours worked on enterprise activities per year by individual(s)}}{\text{Total hours worked per year by individual(s)}} \times \frac{\text{Salary and benefits of individual(s) working on enterprise activities}}{\text{Salary and benefits of individual(s) working on enterprise activities}} = \text{Indirect Departmental Salaries}$$

Any department's or official's expenses related to water activities are charged directly to the water budget.

4. The **proportional** method is a straightforward calculation of the water department's direct budget (net of debt) as a percentage of the gross general fund (net of debt) and enterprise fund (net of debt) budgets. This percentage is applied against a town department's budget, including employees' benefits, that provides support to the water department.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 40, § 4A](#)

Hamilton-Wenham IMAs: Recreation; Veterans Memorial Pool; Energy Manager; Emergency Center Operations; Vaccination Clinics; Collection of Refuse, Garbage, Recycling, and Organic Waste; Library; Pleasant Pond; and Grounds Maintenance

Government Finance Officers Association Best Practices: [*Indirect Cost Allocation*](#) and [*Full Cost Accounting for Government Services*](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

INVESTMENTS

PURPOSE

To ensure the Town's public funds achieve the highest possible, reasonable rates of return available while following prudent standards associated with safety, liquidity, and yield, this policy establishes investment guidelines and responsibilities. It is further designed to comply with the Governmental Accounting Standards Board's recommendations that every community disclose its key policies affecting cash deposits and other long-term investments to ensure they are managed prudently and not subject to extraordinary risk.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the Treasurer/Collector's duties to invest and manage Town funds. It pertains to short-term operating funds, including general funds, special revenue funds, bond proceeds, and capital project funds, to all accounts designated as long-term (e.g., trusts, stabilization funds, other postemployment benefits trust fund), and to others the Town may set aside for long-term use, including scholarship and perpetual care funds. It does not pertain to the Town's retirement fund, which is invested and managed by the Essex Regional Retirement Board.

POLICY

The Treasurer/Collector will invest funds in a manner that meets the Town's daily operating cash flow requirements and conforms to state statutes governing public funds while also adhering to generally accepted diversification, collateralization, and prudent investment principles regarding safety, liquidity, and yield. The Treasurer/Collector will separately maintain all long-term accounts in order to proportion interest and any realized and unrealized gains or losses. All trust funds are under the Treasurer/Collector's control unless otherwise directed by the donor.

The Treasurer/Collector will ensure all investment activity complies with state statutes governing allowable investment instruments, diversification principles, and investment restrictions for all short- and long-term funds. The Treasurer/Collector will also comply with the principles outlined in the Investment Policy Statement published by the Massachusetts Collectors & Treasurers Association (MCTA), which is included in this manual's appendix.

A. Investment Objectives

To secure the highest return consistent with safety of principal while meeting the Town's daily cash needs, the Treasurer/Collector will adhere to the following guidelines on safety, liquidity and yield:

- To preserve capital, the Treasurer/Collector will mitigate credit and interest rate risks by prudently selecting and diversifying investment instruments and depository choices.
- The Treasurer/Collector will ensure the overall investment portfolio remains sufficiently liquid to meet all reasonably anticipated operating requirements. Since all possible cash demands cannot be anticipated, the Treasurer/Collector will carry out investment activities in a manner that provides for meeting unusual cash demands without liquidating investments and thereby potentially forfeiting accrued interest earnings and losing principal.

- The Treasurer/Collector will manage all investments so as to achieve a fair market average rate of return, taking into account safety and liquidity constraints as well as all legal requirements.

B. Risk Tolerance

The Treasurer/Collector will employ the following strategies to mitigate the range of investment risks:

- The Treasurer/Collector will manage **credit risk** by following the guidelines on investment instruments published by the MCTA and incorporated here by reference. This mitigates the risk that an insurer or other counterparty to an investment will not fulfill its obligations.
- To mitigate **custodial risks** when investing with any financial institution, the Treasurer/Collector will review its financial statements and advisor's background to limit the Town's exposure only to institutions with proven financial strength, capital adequacy, and overall affirmative reputations in the municipal investment industry. The Treasurer/Collector will further ensure that all securities not held directly by the Town will be held in the Town's name and tax identification number by third-party custodians approved by the Treasurer/Collector and evidenced by safekeeping receipts showing individual CUSIP (Committee on Uniform Security Identification Procedures) numbers for each.

Custodial risk for deposits is the risk that, in the event of the failure of a depository financial institution, the Town would not be able to recover deposits or to recover collateral securities in the possession of an outside party. The custodial risk for investments is the risk that, in the event of a failure of the counterparty to a transaction, the Town would not be able to recover the value of an investment or to recover collateral securities in the possession of an outside party.

- The Treasurer/Collector will minimize **concentration of credit risk** by diversifying the investment portfolio so that the impact of potential losses from any one type of security or issuer will be minimized. This mitigates the risk associated with the magnitude of the Town's investment in a single issuer.
- The Treasurer/Collector will carefully manage the duration of each investment account to mitigate **interest rate risk**, which is the risk that changes in interest rates will adversely affect an investment's fair market value.
- The Treasurer/Collector will mitigate **foreign currency risk** by limiting investments in any instruments with foreign currency exposures. This minimizes risk that changes in foreign exchange rates will adversely affect an investment deposit or its fair market value.

C. Ethics

The Treasurer/Collector will refrain from any personal activity that may conflict with the proper execution of the investment program or that could impair or appear to impair the ability to make impartial investment decisions. The Treasurer/Collector will disclose to the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager any personal, material financial interest in financial institutions that do business with

the Town. The Treasurer/Collector will also disclose any large personal financial investment positions or loans that could be related to the performance of the Town's investments.

D. Relationship with Financial Institutions

The Treasurer/Collector will consider soundness and stability when selecting financial institutions. To do so, the Treasurer/Collector will subscribe to and use one or more of the recognized bank rating services, such as Veribanc or Sheshunoff, and will work with only recognized, reputable brokers/dealers.

When using the Veribanc rating service, the Treasurer/Collector may invest in banks that show green ratings and will subsequently monitor the ratings quarterly. If a banking institution's rating turns yellow, the Treasurer/Collector will request the institution provide a written explanation for the rating change and expected timetable for changing back to green. If the rating is still yellow for a second quarter, the Treasurer/Collector will consider liquidating all funds that are not collateralized or do not carry some form of depositor's insurance. If any rating becomes red, the Treasurer/Collector will ensure that all money is immediately collateralized, covered by some form of depositors insurance, or removed from the banking institution.

The Treasurer/Collector will require any brokerage houses and brokers/dealers wishing to do business with the Town to supply the following information:

- Audited financial statements
- Proof of National Association of Security Dealers certification
- Statement that the broker/dealer has read and will comply with this policy
- Proof of credit worthiness (minimum standards: at least five years in operation and a minimum capital of \$10 million)

E. Reporting Requirements

The Treasurer/Collector will assess investment activity and keep the Town Manager and Finance Director apprised of any major changes by providing a report of investment activity annually or more often as needed. The investment activity report shall incorporate all of the Town's investment funds and include the following information at minimum:

- List of all the individual accounts and securities held at the end of the period
- List of short-term investment portfolios by security type and maturity to ensure compliance with the diversification and maturity guidelines
- Summary of income earned on monthly and year-to-date bases
- Disclosure of the fees associated with managing each fund
- Brief statement of general market and economic conditions and other factors that may affect the Town's cash position
- Statement on the degree of compliance with the tenets set forth in this policy
- Disclosure of all fees associated with investment fund management

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 29, § 38A](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 54](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 55](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 55A](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 55B](#)

[M.G.L. c. 167, § 15A](#)

[M.G.L. c. 203C](#)

Office of the Commissioner of Banks: [List of Legal Investments](#)

Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement 40: [Deposit and Investment Risk Disclosures](#)

MCTA Investment Policy Statements (see Appendix)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

OTHER POSTEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS LIABILITY

PURPOSE

To ensure fiscal sustainability, this policy sets guidelines for a responsible plan to meet the Town's obligation to provide other postemployment benefits for eligible current and future retirees. It is designed to achieve generational equity among those called upon to fund this liability and thereby avoid transferring costs into the future.

BACKGROUND

In addition to salaries, the Town compensates employees in a variety of other forms. Many earn benefits over their years of service that they will not receive until after retirement. A pension is one such earned benefit. Another is a set of retirement insurance plans for health, dental, and life. These are collectively referred to as other postemployment benefits, or OPEBs. OPEBs represent a significant liability for the Town that must be properly measured, reported, and planned for financially.

APPLICABILITY

This policy encompasses OPEB-related budget decisions, accounting, financial reporting, and investment. It applies to the Board of Selectmen and Finance and Advisory Committee in their budget decision-making duties, and it also applies to the OPEB-related job duties of the Treasurer/Collector and Finance Director.

POLICY

The Town is committed to funding the long-term cost of the benefits promised its employees. To do so, the Town will accumulate resources for future benefit payments in a disciplined, methodical manner during the active service life of employees. The Town will also periodically assess strategies to mitigate its OPEB liability. This involves evaluating the structure of offered benefits and their cost drivers while at the same time avoiding benefit reductions that would place undue burdens on employees or risk making the Town an uncompetitive employer.

A. Accounting for and Reporting the OPEB Liability

The Finance Director will obtain actuarial analyses of the Town's OPEB liability every two years and will annually report the Town's OPEB obligation in financial statements that comply with the current guidelines of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). The Town Manager will ensure the Town's independent auditor reviews compliance with this policy's accounting, reporting, and investment provisions as part of its annual audits and will report on these to the Board of Selectmen.

B. Trust Management and Investment

As the designated trustee of the OPEB Trust Fund, the Treasurer/Collector is charged with investing the fund's assets and managing its associated bank account and any subaccounts. The Treasurer/Collector will manage the fund in conformance with the Town's investment policy and the state's prudent investor laws. Further, the Treasurer/Collector will invest the fund's assets for the primary purpose of growth while minimizing the risk of loss.

On an annual basis, the Town will analyze its option to invest the OPEB trust with the [State Retiree Benefits Trust Fund](#).

C. Mitigation

On an ongoing basis, the Town will assess healthcare cost containment measures and evaluate strategies to mitigate its OPEB liability. The Finance Director will monitor proposed laws affecting OPEBs and Medicare and analyze their impacts. The Treasurer/Collector will regularly audit the group insurance and retiree rolls and terminate any participants found to be ineligible based on work hours, active Medicare status, or other factors.

D. OPEB Funding Strategies

To address the OPEB liability, decision makers will analyze a variety of funding strategies and subsequently implement them as appropriate with the intention of fully funding the obligation. The Town will derive funding for the OPEB trust fund from taxation, free cash, and any other legal form. To ensure that the Town's water enterprise fund remains self-supporting, the Board of Selectmen will factor its proportional OPEB contributions into the setting of user fees.

Achieving full funding of the liability requires the Town to commit to funding its actuarially determined contribution (ADC) each year, which is calculated based on actuarial projections. Among strategies to consider for funding the ADC:

- Transfer unexpended funds from insurance line items to the OPEB trust fund.
- Appropriate amounts equal to the Town's Medicare Part D reimbursements.
- Determine and commit to appropriating an annual portion of free cash.
- Appropriate an annually increasing percentage of yearly revenues.
- Once the pension system is fully funded, on a subsequent annual basis, appropriate to the OPEB trust fund the amount equivalent to the former pension-funding payment or the ADC, whichever is less.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 32B, § 20](#)

[M.G.L. c. 32B, § 20A](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 54](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 55](#)

[M.G.L. c. 203C](#)

Hamilton Investment Policy

GASB Statements 75: [Accounting and Financial Reporting for Postemployment Benefits Other Than Pensions](#) and 74: [Financial Reporting for Postemployment Benefit Plans Other Than Pension Plans](#)

Government Finance Officers Association Best Practices: [Ensuring Other Postemployment Benefits \(OPEB\) Sustainability](#) and [Sustainable Funding Practices for Defined Benefit Pensions and Other Postemployment Benefits \(OPEB\)](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

PROCUREMENT CONFLICT OF INTEREST

PURPOSE

To ensure integrity in the procurement and contract processes, to educate Town employees, consultants, uncompensated outside parties, and any other person involved in decisions to award contracts about potential conflicts of interests, and to establish a process for the screening of conflicts of interest.

APPLICABILITY

The policy pertains to all the Town's procurement and contract processes governed under the provisions of the state's Uniform Procurement Act associated with, but not limited to: specification development, preparation and issuance of solicitations, evaluation of solicitations and submissions, and other evaluations that lead to Town contract awards. The policy applies to the job responsibilities of the Town Manager (as Hamilton's chief procurement officer) and to the related duties of the Finance Director. It further applies to all Town employees, officials, and others working on the Town's behalf who are involved with any procurement and contract process and to the prospective contractors.

POLICY

The Town is committed to ethical business practices, professional integrity, and compliance with all procurement laws and regulations. Hamilton will provide fair opportunities to participants in competitive processes for the award of Town contracts. Process integrity will be reinforced by the practices outlined here to ensure confidentiality during the bid evaluation process and to assess and address conflicts of interest in all competitive solicitations. The Town will investigate all allegations of conflict of interest or misconduct brought to the attention of Town staff.

To comply with the state's [Uniform Procurement Act](#), any purchase for supplies or services ([with certain exceptions](#)) costing more than \$10,000 requires solicitation of three written quotes for contracts and those over \$50,000 require competitive sealed bids or proposals for contracts. No quote or bid process is required when procuring supplies or services from vendors that are under state contracts or involved in regional cooperative purchasing agreements.

A. Confidentiality during the Bid Evaluation Process

Town staff, consultants, and outside evaluators who are participants in a bid evaluation process are required to sign confidentiality agreements, which bind them not to share any information about responses received and the evaluation process until the Town issues a Notice of Intended Award.

The departmental employee procuring goods and services must:

1. Identify all participants of an evaluation process who receive proposals or other documents used in the evaluation process, including nonevaluating observers.
2. Ensure that these participants sign confidentiality agreements.
3. Submit the confidentiality agreements to the Town Manager.

The Town Manager must:

1. Verify that signed confidentiality agreements for all participants in the evaluation process, including nonevaluating observers, are submitted.
2. Maintain signed confidentiality agreements on file.

B. Conflict of Interest in Procurement

To ensure decisions are made independently and impartially, Town employees and officials are expected to avoid any conflicts of interest and also avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest, or the appearance of one, must be disclosed whenever a vendor, employee, or officer has, or can reasonably anticipate having, an ownership interest, a significant executive position, or other remunerative relationship with a prospective supplier of goods or services to the Town or knows that a family member or other person with whom they have a personal or financial relationship has such an interest.

According to the federal Office of Management and Budget's Omni Circular, a conflict of interest arises when: *"the employee, officer, or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein, has a financial or other interest in or a tangible personal benefit from a firm considered for a contract."*

And it states that: *"The officers, employees, and agents of the non-federal entity must neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors or parties to subcontracts."*

The Omni Circular further requires that for any federal grant involving a parent, affiliate, or subsidiary organization that is not a state or local government, the Town must also maintain written standards of conduct covering organizational conflicts of interest. An organizational conflict of interest means that due to a relationship with a parent company, affiliate, or subsidiary organization, the Town is unable or appears to be unable to be impartial in conducting a procurement action involving the related organization.

Any person with a conflict as described above will not participate in the preparing of specifications, qualifying vendors, selecting successful bidders on products or services in which they have an interest, or approving payment to those interests. The only exception to this arises if the person makes full disclosure of a potential conflict and receives an advance, written determination from the [State Ethics Commission](#) that the interest is not so substantial as to be deemed likely to affect the integrity of the goods or services the Town may expect from that individual.

Department heads and other officials are required to ascertain and disclose to the Town Manager any potential conflict of interest affecting procurement transactions before a contract is signed, a commitment made, or an order placed. The Town Manager will then notify the Finance Director, who will verify the availability of funds before any order is placed with a vendor.

The following measures will be taken to ensure the Town avoids any conflicts of interest in procuring Town contracts:

1. Employees, officials, and others who regularly participate in contract activities on behalf of the Town must disclose relevant financial interests as required by state and federal laws and to annually review the statements in conjunction with this policy and other ethical standards.
2. Other persons involved in procurements must review this policy and other ethical standards and provide information in order to determine if there is a conflict of interest. Such persons will include, but are not limited to, authors of specifications; paid and unpaid evaluators; and paid and unpaid consultants who assist in the procurement process.
3. If a possible conflict of interest is identified, it must be documented and reviewed with Town Counsel.

The departmental employee procuring goods and services must:

1. Identify employees, consultants, outside uncompensated parties, and any other persons who will be involved in a procurement or contract activity, such as specification development, preparation and issuance of solicitations, evaluation of solicitations or submissions, or other evaluations, that will lead to an award of contract.
2. Provide conflict of interest forms to the identified participants.
3. Submit the completed forms to the Town Manager prior to commencing any procurement or contract activity.

The Town Manager must:

1. Review the submitted forms for potential conflicts of interest.
2. Discuss any potential conflicts of interest with Town Counsel and document the resulting determinations.
3. Provide the Board of Selectmen with the documented result.
4. If a conflict or the appearance of one exists, take appropriate actions, including but not limited to, removal of the employee, consultant, or outside uncompensated party from the procurement or contract activity or cancelation of the solicitation.

C. Compliance Reviews

The Finance Director will conduct random audits of compliance with this policy. All procurement activities are also subject to audit by Hamilton's independent auditor.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 30B](#)

[M.G.L. c. 41, § 57](#)

[M.G.L. c. 268A](#)

State Ethics Commission's webpage: [Disclosure Forms for Municipal Employees](#)

Inspector General's webpage: [Procurement Assistance](#)

U.S. Office of Management and Budget's [Omni Circular](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

RECONCILIATIONS

PURPOSE

To ensure transactions are in balance, to mitigate fraud, and to safeguard general ledger accuracy, financial officers must conduct regular reconciliations of their accounting records, and these must be reconciled to the general ledger. Although each financial officer is responsible for maintaining independent records of his or her office's transactions, they are also collectively accountable for the overall accuracy of Hamilton's financial records. Failure to reconcile cash, receivables, and withholdings hampers the Town's ability to produce reliable reports, close its books, make timely submissions to the Division of Local Services (DLS), and complete audits. In addition, unresolved variances reduce the amount of certified free cash and may result in significant deficiency findings by the independent auditor.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the Finance Director, Treasurer/Collector, their designees, and all departments that use special revenue funds or have accounts receivable responsibilities (e.g., Water, Police, Recreation, etc.).

POLICY

The Treasurer/Collector and all department heads with accounts receivable duties will internally reconcile their respective accounting records and subsequently reconcile them with the Finance Director according to the guidelines and periodic time frames outlined in this policy.

A. Cashbook Reconciliation

To ensure an accurate accounting of all revenue activity, the Treasurer/Collector will maintain a cashbook that reflects up-to-date and accurate information for all cash and assets. To do so, the Treasurer/Collector will make certain that all cash receipts, disbursements, transfers, and interest are recorded in the cashbook within [two business days] of each transaction and will reconcile cashbook accounts to their corresponding bank accounts within [five days] of receiving bank statements. These will include zero-balance vendor and payroll bank accounts, whose balances must equal the outstanding checks at the end of any month.

The Treasurer/Collector will identify all reconciling items, including deposits in transit, bounced and voided checks, and discrepancies between the cashbook and financial institutions, and will correct them when appropriate. The Treasurer/Collector will then forward the reconciled cashbook balances from Excel and cash, bank, and investment balances from Quicken to the Finance Director and, when needed, an additional Schedule of Receipts for any adjustments made.

B. Payroll Withholdings Reconciliation

Payroll withholdings include federal and state taxes, child support and other wage assignments for legal obligations, deferred compensation, optional insurances, association dues, and other employer-sponsored options. Although payments for withholdings and deductions are automatically issued through Harpers Payroll Services via electronic funds transfer or check, the Finance Department must verify and reconcile certain deductions, such as health insurance, with vendor invoices.

To reduce the risk to the Town for liabilities in excess of deductions, the Assistant Town Accountant will conduct a monthly reconciliation of the specific payroll deductions subject to vendor invoices and identify any discrepancies prior to remitting payment for the invoice. The Assistant Town Accountant will provide the results of these activities to the Treasurer/Collector and Payroll Coordinator to make any necessary changes or adjustments.

C. Accounts Receivable Reconciliation

Accounts receivable are outstanding monies owed to the Town, whether from committed bills (i.e., taxes and excises) or from uncommitted department invoices (e.g., police details). To ensure these assets are accounted for and balanced, the Treasurer/Collector, deputy collector, and any department head with accounts receivable duties (each referred to here as “record-keeper”) will make certain that all cash receipts are recorded timely, maintain a control record for each receivable type and levy year, and verify the detail balance agrees with the receivable control.

The receivable control is a record of original entry in which the record-keeper reduces a commitment according to collections, abatements, and exemptions and increases it by refunds issued. To maintain accuracy, the record-keeper must review the detailed list of receivables, identify credit balances as prepaid amounts or investigate them for possible correction, and reconcile the control balance to the detail.

Whenever these records do not agree, the record-keeper must determine the discrepancy by:

- Verifying the various transactions (commitments, abatements, refunds, chargebacks) against their supporting documents
- Comparing the total amount of posted payments to the turnovers accepted by the Treasurer/Collector
- Determining whether any revenues were incorrectly recorded as payments to the commitment, such as interest and fees

The record-keeper will forward a copy of the internally reconciled accounts receivable balances to the Finance Director. For the Treasurer/Collector, this is the Schedule of Outstanding Receivables.

D. Special Revenue Reconciliation

Governed by various state statutes, special revenue funds are specific revenues segregated from the general fund and earmarked for specific purposes. They include gifts and grants from governmental entities, individuals, and organizations; revolving funds; and receipts reserved for appropriation. To ensure these funds are balanced, department heads with responsibility for special revenue funds will verify that all revenues turned over to the Treasurer/Collector, expenditures authorized for payment by the Finance Director, and properly authorized transfers are recorded for the period. These department heads will subsequently provide the Finance Director with reconciliation reports on the funds.

E. General Ledger Reconciliation

To achieve the core objective of maintaining the general ledger’s integrity, the Finance Director must regularly reconcile it with the separately maintained accounting records outlined in Sections A – D

above. In addition, it is the Finance Director's responsibility to review all accounts analytically from time to time for reasonableness and to identify unusual activity.

The general ledger's cash accounts should reflect only those transactions reported to the Finance Director by the Treasurer/Collector, so that in theory, the general ledger should be in balance with the cashbook. However, errors may occur due to omitting transfers or transactions or applying them in the wrong amounts or to the wrong accounts. Whenever the Finance Director identifies a discrepancy between the general ledger and the cashbook, the following steps must be taken in conjunction with the Treasurer/Collector to determine the cause:

- If the total amount of revenue reported in the cashbook does not agree with the amount recorded in the ledger for that month, the Treasurer/Collector must verify that the monthly Treasurer/Collector's Schedule of Receipts agrees by detailed amount and classification with the cashbook and correct any errors.
- Compare the total amount of warrants paid during the month as recorded in the cashbook with the total recorded in the ledger for the same period. The last warrant paid must be the last one recorded; otherwise, a timing problem will create a discrepancy.
- If the records still do not agree, the Treasurer/Collector and Finance Director must trace each entry to the ledger until the variance is determined.

All receivable records must also be reconciled to the Finance Director's general ledger. If a given receivable control has been internally reconciled, any discrepancy must be in the general ledger, so the Finance Director must:

- Review the commitments, charges, payments, abatements, refunds, reclassifications, and adjustments in the general ledger, as appropriate for the particular control.
- Verify whether receipts are recorded to the correct type and levy year.
- Verify the dates that activities were recorded.

The Finance Director's receivable accounts in the general ledger should reflect the transactions provided by each particular record-keeper. Therefore, the above steps must resolve any discrepancies between the receivable control and the ledger. If they do not, the record-keeper and Finance Director must trace each ledger entry until they determine the reason for variance.

The Finance Director will verify that all special revenue fund reconciliations match the general ledger. The responsible department head and Finance Director must research any discrepancy, and correct the record(s) as appropriate.

F. Time frames and Documentation

Employees subject to this policy will complete reconciliations of their internal accounting records early each month so that subsequent reconciliations to the general ledger take place no later than [the 15th] of the month following the one being reconciled. At each quarter-ending month, the Finance Director will extend the cash reconciliation process to individually reconcile every general ledger account that directly corresponds to a specific bank account (e.g., stabilization funds, trust funds, guarantee bond deposits).

Each general ledger reconciliation will be documented by a worksheet cosigned by the two parties. If, at that time, any variance has not yet been fully resolved, this must be noted, along with a work plan and timetable for resolution. The Finance Director will collectively submit the reconciliation worksheets to the Town Manager at each month's end.

G. Audit

All reconciliation activities are subject to audit by Hamilton's independent auditor.

REFERENCES

Hamilton Revenue Turnover Policy

DLS Best Practice: [*Reconciling Cash and Receivables*](#)

Massachusetts Collectors & Treasurers Association: [*Treasurer's Manual*](#) and [*Collector's Manual*](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

REVENUE TURNOVER

PURPOSE

To safeguard Town assets and maximize cash flow, this policy provides guidelines for departments to turn over receipts to the Treasurer/Collector. Included are details of internal controls designed to provide reasonable assurance that the Town's revenues are properly and timely secured, recorded, and deposited in Town bank accounts.

APPLICABILITY

This policy pertains to all cash, check, credit card, and other forms of payment received by all Town departments for taxes, excise, fees, federal and state government receipts, and charges. It applies to all individuals within each department assigned responsibility for handling payments. It further applies to the Finance Director's duty to keep the general ledger up to date.

POLICY

The head of each department that receives payments is responsible for instituting and employing internal controls designed to ensure that all receipts are recorded accurately, kept secure from loss or theft, and turned over timely to the Treasurer/Collector. The Town Manager will ensure surety bonds are maintained for all individuals responsible for handling payments to indemnify the Town from potential loss or theft. Each department must turn over at least weekly and must do so immediately whenever cash receipts total [\$100] or more. At month-end, departmental staff will turn over all revenues no later than [11:00 am] on the last business day of the month. All cash management activity is subject to review by the Finance Director and independent auditor.

A. Receiving Payments

Using prenumbered receipt books, assigned departmental staff must issue a receipt for every payment received, even when the payer attempts to refuse it. As the exception, employees in the Treasurer/Collector's office receiving taxes and other collections from the public need only issue receipts for cash payments. All departments must identify the forms of payment (check, cash or credit card) in their receipt books. Every staff person who receives any check will immediately endorse it "For Deposit Only" using a stamp or by handwriting. Every department receiving payments shall secure them in a locked cashbox or safe until completing a turnover to the Treasurer/Collector.

Each department head is responsible for overseeing the processing, recording, record retention, and turning over of receipts to the Treasurer/Collector. To the extent practicable, separate individuals should be tasked with: 1) receiving and endorsing payments, 2) recording payments in Munis, and 3) turning receipts over to the Treasurer/Collector.

B. Turning Over Revenues

After entering a batch of receipts in the Munis treasury receipts module, departmental staff will create a turnover by printing a Munis payments proof report, completing Forms AD-9 and AD-10, "Schedule of Departmental Payments" (i.e., duplicate turnover forms), and obtaining the department head's signature on each form. All receipts should tie back to the numbered receipt book, turnover form, and receipts summary reports maintained by the department head. Departmental staff will

deliver the turnover package in person and retain a copy of the AD-9. At no time will an employee leave a turnover in the Treasurer/Collector's office unattended.

No less than weekly and at month-end, the Treasurer/Collector will complete a turnover of all the collections processed during that period for taxes and other committed receivables. The turnover form will report all the collections summarized by receipt type, which must reconcile to the bank deposits for the same period.

When the Treasurer/Collector's office has accepted the turnover, the department employee will receive back two copies of the turnover form signed and dated by a Treasurer/Collector staff member. The department employee will retain one turnover copy on file and is responsible for delivering the other (the AD-10) to the Finance Director. The Finance Director will refuse to accept any turnover that is not signed by a Treasurer/Collector staff member.

The head of every department that receives payments will review the Finance Director's monthly revenue reports to verify all turned over receipts have been accurately recorded in the appropriate general ledger accounts and report any discrepancies to the Finance Director.

C. Receiving Turnovers

When presented with the turnover, Treasurer/Collector staff will count the receipts in the presence of the authorized department employee. Any inaccuracies on the turnover form will be corrected then initialed by both parties. The Treasurer/Collector staff member will then sign two turnover copies and return them to the departmental employee.

At the close of business each day, Treasurer/Collector staff will review the Munis postings, turnover documents, and receipts, post the receipts into the cashbook, create a deposit package, and deposit the revenues at the bank. Until the deposit is completed, Treasurer/Collector staff will ensure that all receipts are secured at all times, either in a cash drawer, or if being held overnight, in a safe.

[Weekly], the Treasurer/Collector will forward a Munis Schedule of Receipts report to the Finance Director. The Finance Director will compare this report with the turnover documents received directly from departments and contact the Treasurer/Collector about any discrepancies. The Finance Director will then accept the verified receipt batches in Munis, which posts them to the general ledger.

D. Insufficient Funds

Upon notification from the bank of an insufficient check or an invalid or otherwise unpaid electronic funds transfer (EFT), the Treasurer/Collector will enter a negative deposit to the original revenue account in Munis and notify the department responsible for the turnover. The Treasurer/Collector will also make a reversal entry in the cashbook, assigning it to the appropriate bank account.

The Treasurer/Collector will notify the issuer in writing of the bounced check or rejected EFT. Payment of the original amount plus a [\$25.00] penalty is due in [10] days and must be in the form of cash, money order, or certified check.

It is the department head's (or designee's) responsibility to follow-up on collecting the amounts owed. If the payment was for a license or permit, the department shall suspend the license or permit

until the original amount and penalty have been paid. If it was for a committed receipt (e.g., tax bill), the commitment will be reinstated by the appropriate official and the usual collection procedures followed.

E. Reconciliation

In accordance with the Town's Reconciliation policy, the Treasurer/Collector will reconcile the cashbook with bank statements and provide a summary of cashbook balances to the Finance Director monthly.

F. Audit

All cash management activity is subject to review by the Finance Director and Hamilton's independent auditor.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 41, § 35](#)

[M.G.L. c. 41, § 57](#)

[M.G.L. c. 60, § 57A](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, § 69](#)

Hamilton Reconciliations Policy

Massachusetts Collectors & Treasurers Association: [Treasurer's Manual](#) and [Collector's Manual](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

TAILINGS

This policy is subject to town meeting's acceptance of [M.G.L. c. 200A, § 9A](#).

PURPOSE

To minimize the liability posed by uncashed checks and the associated negative impact on cash position certainty, this policy sets guidelines for the timely resolution of tailings.

A tailing refers to a disbursed but uncashed check, which represents a debit liability on the Town's books. It can arise from any treasury check issued to pay an employee or vendor, refund a municipal tax or charge, or pay any other municipal obligation. Tailings constitute unclaimed property under M.G.L. c. 200A. Accepting § 9A of that chapter enables the Town to expedite the tailing resolution process and prevent the eventual escheatment of the funds to the State Treasurer, as otherwise required. This policy sets forth the steps that must be taken to properly manage tailings under § 9A.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the Treasurer/Collector, Finance Director, and all department heads.

POLICY

In accordance with § 9A and Hamilton's Disbursements policy, every check issued by the Treasurer/Collector will include this language on its face: "Void if not cashed within one year of issuance." On a monthly basis, the Treasurer/Collector will identify all uncashed checks older than 30 days and attempt to resolve them using the procedures outlined below. Furthermore, at a consistent time once each year, the Treasurer/Collector and Finance Director will work together to resolve accumulated tailings, either by prompting the actual pay out or through escheatment to the Town.

PROCEDURES

A. Monthly Review

Once a month, as part of the bank reconciliation, the Treasurer/Collector will review the outstanding check log to ascertain all outstanding checks 30 days or more after issuance. The Treasurer/Collector will email the department head associated with each check to follow up with the employee or vendor payee. The department head will attempt to contact the payee by phone to determine why the check has not been cashed. For all checks still outstanding two weeks after notices to departments, the Treasurer/Collector will send an uncashed check notice to the payees at their last known addresses.

Also once a month, the Treasurer/Collector will identify all checks that are uncashed more than one year after issuance and notify the bank to stop payment on them. At this point, the checks may still be claimed by the payees but will require reissuance. The Treasurer/Collector will provide a report of the stop-paid checks to the Finance Director, who will then record the funds as abandoned property liability in the general ledger.

B. Yearly Review

At least once a year, the Treasurer/Collector will review the accumulated inventory of stop-paid tailings and do the following:

1. List the unclaimed checks on the Town's website for a minimum of 60 days under the heading: "Notice of names of persons appearing to be owners of funds held by the Town and deemed abandoned." Along with payee names, the notice will detail the process to claim funds and set a deadline for making a claim not less than 60 days after the initial posting date of the notice on the website.
2. For all checks still unclaimed after the website deadline, publish a notice of the checks in the Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle. This notice will be in the same form as the website posting and state a new claim deadline not less than 60 days after the publication date.
3. After 60 days lapse from the newspaper publication, send a notice of all unclaimed funds under \$100 to the Finance Director. For those \$100 or greater, publish a second notice in the Chronicle with the same language as the previous except that it provides a deadline for claiming funds at least one year after the new publication date.
4. Schedule a calendar prompt one year after the second publication to review the checks and notify the Finance Director of all that are still unclaimed at that time.

C. Escheatment

Upon receipt of either notice from the Treasurer/Collector described in Section B above, the Finance Director will escheat the listed funds. This involves reversing the abandoned property liability and recognizing the funds as revenue.

D. Check Claiming

At any point prior to escheatment, if a payee contacts the Treasurer/Collector to claim a check, the Treasurer/Collector will review the claim for validity and timeliness. If deemed appropriate, the Treasurer/Collector shall submit the claimed amount to the Finance Director for inclusion on the next disbursement warrant.

E. Audit

All activity related to tailings is subject to audit by the Finance Director and independent auditor.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 200A, § 9A](#)

Hamilton policies on Disbursements and Reconciliations

Massachusetts Collectors & Treasurers Association: [Treasurer's Manual](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

TAX ENFORCEMENT

PURPOSE

To provide guidance for equitably enforcing tax obligations and set expectations for both the Town and taxpayers, this policy clearly defines when and how the Town will transition unpaid property taxes from tax title through to foreclosure. It is in the best interest of the Town and its residents that property taxes be paid when due. The Town budget is set in anticipation of the collection of taxes, and taxes not paid by some property owners shift the cost burden onto others. The Town recognizes that individuals may go through periods of financial difficulty, but any taxpayer who becomes delinquent will be encouraged to find alternative resources to pay in full as soon as possible.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the job duties of the Treasurer/Collector, including the responsibility for managing services contracted through the Town's tax title attorney. Tax enforcement applies to all Town real estate property owners whose taxes or water charges are not exempt.

POLICY

The Town intends to timely pursue all legal methods to collect taxes from delinquent property owners with the aim of achieving a target [99] percent property tax collection rate by fiscal year-end. A tax delinquency is defined as a bill outstanding at least one year and one day after its final due date, and represents a lien on property that remains in effect until all taxes, interest, and fees have been paid in full. The costs of all collection methods are added to the real estate tax bill and property lien. The Town will also periodically pursue foreclosure actions with the primary objective of receiving all monies due.

A. Demands

Final taxes are due to be paid as of May 1 each year (the due date for the fourth quarter tax bill). No later than June 1, the Treasurer/Collector will issue demand notices to all assessed property owners who have failed to pay in full, have not been granted full exemptions, and do not have automatic stays on record due to bankruptcy filings.

B. Tax Taking

The Treasurer/Collector will begin the tax taking process within [60 days] of the demand notice. State law allows the process to begin as soon as 15 days after the demand, but, in every case, the Treasurer/Collector must complete the takings within 3½ years from the end of the fiscal year for which the taxes were assessed to secure, or perfect, the tax liens. The Treasurer/Collector shall carefully document the taking process to preserve the Town's rights for future actions.

The Treasurer/Collector will send at least one enforcement letter to delinquent property owners as a courtesy to potentially avoid a tax taking advertisement. If this does not result in full remittance by [September 1], the Treasurer/Collector will publish a Notice of Tax Taking in a local newspaper and post the notice in two or more convenient, public places. The Town customarily publishes in the Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle and on the Town's website. In addition, the Treasurer/Collector posts notices at the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library and the two Hamilton post offices. From this point forward only cash, certified check, or cashier's check are acceptable forms of payment.

Within 60 days of the tax taking announcements, the Treasurer/Collector shall prepare an Instrument of Taking form for each delinquent property and record it at the Registry of Deeds, the recording of which perfects the tax lien. After receiving the recorded Instruments back from the Registry, the Treasurer/Collector will notify the affected property owners of the liens by sending each of them a letter and a photocopy of the Instrument. The Treasurer/Collector will provide copies of the List of Recorded Takings to the Finance Director and Town Manager.

C. Subsequent Taxes

After the demand bill and before June 15 each year, the Treasurer/Collector will certify all unpaid taxes and charges for parcels of real estate taken into tax title for nonpayment of taxes in prior years and not yet redeemed and put them in a Subsequent Tax Takings list. The Treasurer/Collector will provide copies of the list to the Finance Director and Town Manager and retain one on file.

D. Interest, Fees, and License Revocation

All delinquent taxpayers are subject to charges, which the Treasurer/Collector will add to their accounts. These include interest accrued to the date of tax taking, advertising fees, certified mailing costs, legal fees, and all recording fees.

The Treasurer/Collector will provide a listing of all individuals who are delinquent in paying taxes or other charges to the Town departments, boards, and committees that issue licenses and permits in accordance with the Town bylaws. These authorities will review the list to deny, suspend, or revoke delinquent taxpayers' licenses and permits.

E. Tax Title Payment Agreements

This section is subject to the adoption of a tax title payment agreement bylaw, [M.G.L. c. 60, § 62A](#).

The Treasurer/Collector will pursue and establish payment agreements for parcels in tax title to allow delinquent taxpayers to pay off their tax liens over time. The Treasurer/Collector will actively monitor compliance with all agreements, which will have the following features in common:

- *Signed agreement between the Treasurer/Collector and taxpayer*
- *Upfront payment of at least 25 percent of full balance owed*
- *Specific amount to be paid each month*
- *Incorporation of payments for the current tax bill*
- *Agreement term not exceeding five years*
- *Statement that defaulting on the agreement will immediately trigger foreclosure action by the Town*

For taxpayers that fully comply with their payment agreements, the Treasurer/Collector will waive [50 percent] of the interest accrued on their tax title accounts.

F. Redemption or Foreclosure

The primary policy goal of the Town's foreclosure process is to receive the outstanding amounts owed. At least once every year, the Treasurer/Collector will review all tax title properties that are older than 180 days and do not have payment agreements or bankruptcy recordings. From these, the Treasurer/Collector will identify all properties of significant value to process for potential foreclosure in Land Court. To do this, the Treasurer/Collector will thoroughly verify the properties' enforcement histories before referring them to the tax title attorney, beginning with those having the largest dollar value of taxes owed.

As manager of the service contract, the Treasurer/Collector will ensure the tax title attorney complies with the objectives laid out in this policy section. The Treasurer/Collector will work with the tax title attorney to prepare parcels in tax title status for foreclosure, beginning by providing each Instrument of Taking. The tax title attorney will research the tax title properties and also mail new collection enforcement letters to the taxpayers telling them of the importance of redeeming the property and warning of potential foreclosure action.

If a taxpayer or other party pays the outstanding amount on a tax title property, the Treasurer/Collector will prepare an Instrument of Redemption and file it at the Registry of Deeds, which removes the lien. Redemption can only be done prior to the property being foreclosed. If the obligation remains unpaid, the tax title attorney will proceed with foreclosure action in Land Court, possibly resulting in auctioning of the property.

In addition to Land Court foreclosure referrals, the Treasurer/Collector is responsible for completing foreclosures on any properties below the "Land of Low Value" threshold, which is annually updated each spring by the Division of Local Services (DLS).

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 60, § 6](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 53](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 61](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 63](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 79](#)

[M.G.L. c. 60, § 16](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 54](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 62](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 76](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 80](#)

[M.G.L. c. 60, § 50](#)
[M.G.L. c. 40, § 57](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 62A](#)
[M.G.L. c. 60, § 77](#)

Hamilton bylaws Chapter V, Section 3 Denial or Revocation of License or Permit for Nonpayment of Local Taxes, Fees or Other Charges

DLS Best Practice: [Enforcing Collections](#)

DLS Informational Guideline Releases 05-208: [Payment Agreements and Tax Receivable Assignments](#) and [Land of Low Value Foreclosure Valuation Limit](#) updated annually

Massachusetts Collectors & Treasurers Association: [Treasurer's Manual](#) and [Collector's Manual](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

TAX RECAPITULATION

PURPOSE

To ensure the Town timely and appropriately charges taxes to property owners in support of the annual budget, this policy sets forth the roles, responsibilities, and deadlines associated with the tax recapitulation (i.e., “tax recap”) process. A timely and accurate annual tax recap helps ensure the Town complies with state statutes, prevents workflow disruptions in its financial offices, and avoids any temporary borrowing costs associated with cash shortfalls.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager in their policymaking and management responsibilities and to the Board of Assessors in its role as principal overseer of the tax recap process. It also applies to the related job duties of the Finance Director, Director of Assessors, Treasurer/Collector, and Town Clerk.

BACKGROUND

The property tax levy is Hamilton’s largest source of revenue, which therefore makes the tax recap a vital component of the Town’s fiscal operations. The Assessing Department oversees two core phases: property valuation and tax rate setting. However, the full process begins with town meeting, involves many other local officials, and requires careful management, teamwork, and cooperation.

The tax recap forms and schedules present the Town’s annual budget plan for the fiscal year. They summarize all appropriations made by town meeting since the previous year’s tax rate was set and identify all non-property-tax revenue sources, such as state aid, local receipts, and reserves. The difference between these revenue sources and the total budgeted appropriations must be raised through the property tax levy.

By completing the tax recap and submitting it to the Division of Local Services (DLS) for approval, the Town establishes its property tax levy and sets the tax rate for the year. The Town may issue actual tax bills only after DLS reviews the tax recap and approves the tax rate.

POLICY

At the Town Manager’s direction, Hamilton’s financial team will annually complete the tax recap process no later than [November 30]. The Treasurer/Collector will provide the tax bill file to the print vendor by [December 10] and mail the actual tax bills by December 31. The Town Manager will develop a realistic plan and timetable to meet these deadlines and keep the Board of Selectmen apprised of progress.

A. Preparation and Town Meeting

A successful tax recap process starts with a balanced annual budget, valid funding sources, and proper town meeting actions, which will be accomplished as follows:

- The Board of Selectmen, through the Town Manager and Town Counsel, will assure the production of a properly written town meeting warrant, such that town meeting voters, under the Town Moderator’s oversight, can properly authorize annual budget appropriations

that are funded by specific revenue sources (e.g., raise and appropriate, free cash, stabilization).

- The Board of Selectmen will ensure that any annual increase in the tax levy does not exceed the maximum amount allowed under Proposition 2½.
- The Finance Director, Town Manager, and Board of Selectmen will verify that the proposed budget is balanced.
- The Finance Director will prepare a schedule of funds available for appropriation by town meeting.
- The Treasurer/Collector and Town Counsel will ensure any debt issuance authorizations are proper.
- The Board of Selectmen will ensure that any proposal for a general override, debt exclusion, or capital exclusion is properly presented in the town meeting warrant and, if passed, put to a town-wide referendum.

Whereas the budget is typically adopted at the spring town meeting, all appropriations and borrowings approved at this or other town meetings not recorded in the previous tax rate must be included in the current tax recap process.

B. Recording Legislative Actions

To allow time for any required corrective measures, the following tasks will be completed within [two weeks] after town meeting:

- The Town Clerk will certify all appropriations approved since the last tax rate was set.
- The Finance Director will reconcile all votes and authorized amounts.
- The Town Clerk, with the Finance Director's assistance, will enter all town meeting appropriation votes by article into the DLS Gateway system (page 4 of the tax recap).
- From the certified town meeting authorizations, the Finance Director will complete the following Gateway forms:
 - enterprise receipts and appropriations (Schedule A-2)
 - revolving funds (Form A-3)
 - free cash used (Form B-1)
 - available funds used (Form B-2)
- If applicable, the Treasurer/Collector will prepare the debt exclusion report, including any use of reserved bond premiums (Form DE-1), and report any reserved bond premium amounts used as funding sources (Form B-2).
- In accordance with Hamilton's Indirect Cost Allocation policy, the Finance Director will include all of the Water Departments' indirect costs appropriated in the general fund in part 2. b. of Schedule A-2.

C. Tax Recap Entries done after the Fiscal Year-end Closing

Within [two weeks] of closing the books for the fiscal year, the Finance Director will continue completing the tax recap by:

- Reporting and documenting all deficits or other expenditures that must be funded, including debt and snow and ice (page 2 of the tax recap)

- Recording the actual amounts received for each type of local receipt (page 3, column (a) of the tax recap and column (a) section 1 on Schedule A-2)
- Entering estimated local receipts using the revenue projections from the final budget approved at town meeting (page 3, column (b) of the tax recap, and column (b) section 1 on Schedule A-2)

D. Property Value Certification

Assessors must value all taxable real and personal property and must classify each property into one of four classes (residential, open space, commercial/industrial, or personal) based on use as of January 1. To do this, the Director of Assessors will:

- Complete the property sales report (Form LA-3) for all sales over \$1,000 and submit it to DLS for approval.
- Analyze market conditions and set final property values in compliance with DLS certification standards.
- Report the total assessed valuation for real and personal property by class (Form LA-4, which is transferred to page 1 of the tax recap).
- Report fiscal year tax base growth used to determine the levy limit under Proposition 2½ (Form LA-13, which is transferred to the Levy Limit Worksheet).
- Update any prior-year omitted and revised assessments that included growth (Form LA-13A, which is transferred to the Levy Limit Worksheet).

The Director of Assessors will submit the above forms to DLS for review and certification.

E. Tax Rate Setting

After DLS has certified property values, the Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing to decide tax policy. At this classification hearing, the Board of Selectmen may vote for a single tax rate, which thereby allocates the tax levy proportionately across all property classes, or for a shift the tax burden between the four classes. Leading to this hearing, the following must be completed:

- The Director of Assessors and Finance Director prepare an overlay analysis (Form OL-1).
- The Board of Assessors estimates and votes the amount of overlay to raise.
- The Board of Assessors prepares a financial analysis of the various tax alternatives.
- The Board of Selectmen votes on residential, small commercial, and open space exemptions.
- The Board of Selectmen acknowledges excess levy capacity (Form LA-5).
- The Town Clerk attests to notice having been given to taxpayers regarding the public hearing (Form LA-5).

F. Review and Submittal to DLS

The Board of Assessors, working through the Director of Assessors, is responsible for submitting all forms and supporting documents to DLS for tax rate approval. To do this:

- The Director of Assessors and Finance Director will review all schedules, verify signatures, and verify that all proper documents are attached.

- The Finance Director will ensure that all budget authorizations are represented and clearly reconcile to the amounts reported in the tax recap schedules.

G. Tax Commitment Creation

After DLS notifies the Town that the tax rate has been approved, the Director of Assessors will create a tax commitment list and warrant duly signed by the Assessing Board members and refer it to the Treasurer/Collector to generate the actual tax bills.

REFERENCES

Hamilton policies on Forecasting, Indirect Cost Allocation, and Year-end Closing

DLS Training Publications: [New Officials Financial Handbook](#) and [Assessors Course 101 Handbook Chapter 5: Setting the Tax Rate](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

PURPOSE

To mitigate opportunities for fraud, waste, and abuse, the Town must properly monitor and control travel costs. This policy establishes rules governing reimbursement to town officials and employees for necessary travel expenses incurred in performing official duties. It also provides employees with guidelines for determining reasonable travel-related expenses and details the procedures, forms and documentation necessary to receive reimbursement.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all elected and appointed officials and employees authorized to travel for work purposes.

POLICY

The Town will reimburse employees and officials (all referred to here as “employees”) for reasonable expenses incurred for travel on the Town’s behalf as authorized by their Department Heads, the Board of Selectmen, or the Town Manager. Travel shall be restricted to necessary activities that provide a public benefit, such as training, professional conferences, and other municipal-related activities.

All travel on Town business shall be planned for using the most economical mode and class of transportation reasonably available and the most direct and time-efficient route. Officials and employees will travel using government and group rates when available. The Town will not reimburse or pay sales tax but will, however, pay meals and room excise taxes.

When this travel policy is not followed, there is no guarantee that all expenditures will be reimbursed. Employees should determine estimates for their travel costs, discuss any extraordinary travel circumstances and expenses with their Department Heads, and obtain their authorizations in advance of travel.

A. Travel Forms

All travel expenditures are to be documented using the Travel Expense Reimbursement Sheet signed by [the traveler and] the authorizing department head. Separate sheets must be completed for each traveler, and the sheets must be retained by the department until the travel is finalized unless advance payments are required.

B. Unauthorized Expenses

The following expenditures will not be reimbursed:

- Alcoholic beverages and tobacco
- Costs associated with any political or charitable event
- Expenses incurred by or on behalf of any person who is not a Town employee who accompanies the employee on official business
- Expenses incurred for the sole benefit of the traveler, such as valet service, entertainment, laundry services, etc.

The Finance Director may refuse to approve for payment any claim deemed to be fraudulent, unlawful, or excessive. In that instance, the Finance Director will file a written statement of the reason for refusal with the Treasurer/Collector and forward copies to the Town Manager and the originating department head. Resolution of all disputes shall reside with the Town Manager.

C. Travel Expense Categories

Transportation

- Employees authorized to travel using their personal vehicle will be reimbursed at the mileage reimbursement rate established yearly by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or, for union employees, the rate established in their particular contractual agreement.
- Mileage will be calculated starting from the employee's office location or residence to the destination point, whichever distance is shorter.
- Employees must present receipts to be reimbursed for parking, tolls, airfares, taxi fares, and, when using a Town-owned vehicle, fuel charges.

Lodging

- If travel requires an employee to be away from home for more than 24 hours, he or she will be reimbursed for reasonable charges for lodging expenses.
- Lodging expenses must not exceed the group rate published by the conference or activity sponsor. If the sponsor's group rate is not available when booking, the Town will reimburse for lodging costs comparable in location and quality and reserved at the lodging's government or group rate, whenever that is available.
- The Town will reimburse for only one night preceding any conference.

Meals

- If travel requires an employee to be away from home for more than 24 hours, he or she will be reimbursed for reasonable charges for meal expenses.
- Meal costs, including tips and taxes, incurred during the course of approved travel will be reimbursed only upon presentation of itemized receipts. If the receipt is for multiple employees, they should be listed on the back of the receipt.
- Meals included in registration costs cannot be claimed for reimbursement or advance.
- Under no circumstance will the total meals reimbursement exceed the Town's per diem rate of [\$40].

Registrations

- Whenever possible, registration fees for any conference or workshop should be paid in advance through the Town's accounts payable warrant process. To pay advance registrations timely, the registration bill must be received in the Finance Director no later than two full weeks prior to the registration deadline.
- If registration is not paid in advance, the employee must pay out-of-pocket and then submit for reimbursement.

Incidentals

- Incidentals must be paid by the traveler and submitted for reimbursement when finalizing the Travel Expense Reimbursement Sheet. Receipts are required for all miscellaneous, unanticipated expenses.

D. Reimbursement Submission

Employees should submit for travel reimbursement as soon as travel concludes, but at maximum, no later than 30 days after the expenses being incurred. If an employee does not submit the Travel Expense Reimbursement Sheet, accompanying receipts, and other documentation within that time, he or she may be personally responsible for the expenses.

E. Violations

Employees who violate this policy will be held directly responsible for their actions. Consequences may include revocation of travel privileges, reparatory payments, suspension, or termination. Improper documentation of otherwise valid travel expenditures creates the appearance of fraud, waste, or abuse and may result in similar consequences. Moreover, misrepresenting expenses and intentionally submitting false claims are fraudulent and could result in criminal penalties.

F. Audit

All expenses are subject to verification that they comply with this policy and to audit by Hamilton's independent auditor.

REFERENCES

[M.G.L. c. 41, §52](#)

[M.G.L. c. 44, §58](#)

[M.G.L. c. 268A, § 3](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was adopted on [date].

YEAR-END CLOSING

PURPOSE

To ensure local officials have accurate financial data in adequate time to make necessary budgetary decisions, the Town must properly close its books promptly after the fiscal year ends. Failure to adhere to a timely schedule delays the completion of closing entries, trial balances, reconciliations, account analyses, and financial reporting. As an important reserve, the Town's annual free cash cannot be certified expeditiously and accurately unless applicable employees adhere to best practice year-end schedules and procedures. To meet these objectives, this policy specifies the tasks that must be completed, their associated deadlines, and the parties responsible.

APPLICABILITY

This town-wide policy applies to the responsibilities of all department heads in managing and reporting on their budgets and assets. It further applies to the related year-end compilation, reconciliation, and/or oversight duties of the Town Manager, Finance Director, and Treasurer/Collector. Additionally, it pertains to the budget transfer authority of the Board of Selectmen and Finance and Advisory Committee.

POLICY

The Town Manager will hold every department head accountable for timely and accurately completing the year-end tasks applicable to each as outlined in this policy. Annually no later than May 15, the Town Manager will email this policy to all department heads as a reminder of year-end expectations. The Finance Director will oversee the various components of year-end tasks under the time frames and procedures outlined below. All facets of the Town's year-end closing detailed here will be accomplished no later than October 31 each year.

A. Review of Grant Balances, Other Special Appropriations, and Special Revenue Accounts

By May 15, the Finance Director will distribute management reports of all grant, special appropriation, and special revenue accounts to the responsible department heads to solicit status updates on them. Each department head will notify the Finance Director in writing of any completed project or purpose with an unexpended balance so that she may close its account to fund balance (or to a special revenue source, if appropriate). Alternatively, if any completed project's account is in deficit, the department head will notify the Finance Director in writing, provide funding source(s), and state when it will be resolved so that she can plan for closing the account.

The Finance Director will carefully review any special appropriation account remaining open but inactive in the general ledger for more than two fiscal years to ensure it does not serve as an unauthorized special revenue funding source.

B. Year-end Encumbrances

By June 1, the Finance Director will email all department heads advising them to submit all available invoices by June 30 and to provide notification of any pending obligations remaining from the fiscal year. With proper documentation, the Finance Director will only encumber funds that have been committed to specific purchases (by purchase orders), services (by service agreements), projects (by contracts), or to salary as of June 30.

C. Capital Project Reviews, Capital Asset Updates, and Borrowings

As of March 1, the Finance Director will review all capital project accounts to ensure that any internal borrowings done in anticipation of short- or long-term debt issuances have been covered. For any identified deficits:

- If debt had been authorized, the Finance Director will direct the Treasurer/Collector to initiate a short-term borrowing in an amount sufficient to cover the deficit no later than June 30.
- If debt had not been authorized, the Finance Director will refer the shortfall to the Town Manager to either submit it for a debt authorization or appropriation from available funds by town meeting or for a line-item transfer by the Board of Selectmen and Finance and Advisory Committee (see section D below).

By June 15, the Finance Director will distribute via email a capital asset list to department heads along with next-step instructions. By no later than August 1, each department head with capital assets will respond by forwarding to the Finance Director an asset update report with notes confirming the existing data, making additions, and/or noting appropriate deletions, along with narrative explanations. The Finance Director will update the Town's capital asset inventory based on the returned information.

D. Year-end Transfers

The Finance Director will pay close attention to any appropriation deficits that may be rectified through line-item transfers and notify the Town Manager. No earlier than May 1 and no later than July 15, the Finance Director will put any necessary transfer request on the Finance and Advisory Committee's meeting agenda(s), followed by the Board of Selectmen's meeting agenda(s), for their authorizations by majority votes.

E. Closing the Books

No later than August 31, the Finance Director will do the following to close the books:

- Conduct a reconciliation of each fund type in turn, including transfers between funds, and when completed, close each fund in Munis.
- Zero out all open encumbrances from the prior fiscal year.
- Verify the new opening balances of all special revenue funds.
- Calculate the general fund's unreserved fund balance.

F. Submissions to the Division of Local Services (DLS)

Submissions to DLS will comply with the time frames listed below.

Finance Director:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| ▪ Snow and ice data sheet | September 15 |
| ▪ Community preservation surcharge report (CP-1)
(with the Director of Assessors) | September 15 |
| ▪ Combined balance sheet and supporting documents | September 30 |

- | | |
|---|------------|
| ▪ Schedule A | October 31 |
| ▪ Community preservation fund report (CP-2) | October 31 |

Finance Director and Treasurer/Collector:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| ▪ Statement of indebtedness | September 30 |
| ▪ Treasurer's year-end cash report | September 30 |
| ▪ Cash reconciliation | September 30 |
| ▪ Schedule of outstanding receivables | September 30 |

REFERENCES[M.G.L. c. 44, § 33B](#)[M.G.L. c. 44, § 64](#)[M.G.L. c. 59, § 5](#)

Hamilton policies on Tax Enforcement, Grants Management, and Reconciliations

DLS Informational Guideline Release 17-13: [Appropriation Transfers](#)

Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement 1: [Objectives of Financial Reporting](#)

Government Finance Officers Association Guidance: [Timely Financial Reporting](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

The policy was adopted on [date].

Appendix

POLICY LOG

Policy	Adopted	Reviewed	Amended
Antifraud			
Capital Planning			
Debt Management			
Disbursements			
Financial Reserves			
Forecasting			
Grant Management			
Indirect Cost Allocation			
Investments			
OPEB Liability			
Procurement Conflict of Interest			
Reconciliations			
Revenue Turnover			
Tailings			
Tax Enforcement			
Tax Recapitulation			
Travel Reimbursement			
Year-end Closing			

**MASSACHUSETTS COLLECTORS & TREASURERS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL SCHOOL HANDOUTS, COURSE 202 (MODIFIED FOR HAMILTON)**

Please note: Since the policy statement below was distributed at the MCTA's 46th Annual School on August 16, 2016, the Municipal Modernization Act ([Chapter 218 of the Acts of 2016](#)) modified statutes to allow investment in certificates of deposit for up to three years. This version of the statement has been updated accordingly.

TOWN OF HAMILTON, MA
INVESTMENT POLICY STATEMENT

The primary purpose of this Investment Policy Statement (IPS) is to provide a clear understanding between the Town of Hamilton and [Investment Manager/Advisor] regarding the objectives, goals, risk tolerance, and investment guidelines established for the investment of town funds. The secondary purpose is to describe for the Office of Treasurer/Collector, the public and staff the underlying logic and philosophy supporting this Statement.

I. The Investment of General Funds, Special Revenue Funds, Enterprise Funds, and Capital Projects Funds

A. Scope

This section applies only to short term operating funds such as general funds, special revenue funds, enterprise funds, bond proceeds and capital project funds. Section II deals with trust funds and any other funds with special circumstances, such as stabilization funds. The Essex Regional Retirement Board is responsible for the investment of the Town's pension funds.

B. Investment Instruments

Note: Public investments in Massachusetts are not protected through provisions in state law. Therefore, they are largely uncollateralized. Many banking institutions are willing to put up collateral, albeit at a cost to the entity, resulting in a lower interest rate. The Treasurer/Collector negotiates for the highest rates possible, consistent with safety principles.

The Treasurer/Collector may invest in the following instruments:

- Massachusetts State pooled fund: Unlimited amounts (pool is liquid). The Massachusetts Municipal Depository Trust (MMDT), an investment pool for state, local, county and other independent governmental authorities, is under the auspices of the State Treasurer. It invests in bankers acceptances, commercial paper of high quality, bank certificates of deposit, repurchase agreements (repos), and U.S. Treasury obligations. It has Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) pass-through insurance on the CD's up to the standard limits and takes delivery on the repos and U.S. Treasuries. Under the Government Accounting Standards Board's regulations, it is not considered an uncollateralized product.
- U.S. Treasuries that will be held to maturity: Unlimited amounts (up to one year maturity from date of purchase)
- U.S. Agency obligations that will be held to maturity: Unlimited amounts (up to one year maturity from date of purchase)

- Bank accounts or certificates of deposit (CDs) (up to three years) which are fully collateralized through a third party agreement: Unlimited amounts.
- Bank accounts and CDs (up to three years) insured by FDIC up to the coverage limit. All bank accounts and CDs in one institution are considered in the aggregate for the insurance coverage limit. In some cases, banking institutions carry additional insurance. Depository Insurance Fund: Contact banking representative for amounts of coverage.
- Unsecured bank deposits of any kind such as other checking, savings, money market, or CD accounts at banks that do not fit the above categories. These investments are subject to the following limitations: No more than 5% of an institution's assets and no more than 25% of a Town's cash may be comprised of unsecured bank deposits. This percentage may be increased for not more than 30 days during times of heavy collection or in anticipation of large payments that will be made by the Town in the near future. These payments may be for such items as debt service payment or regional school assessments. Their creditworthiness will be tracked by Veribanc, or other bank creditworthiness reporting systems. They will be diversified as much as possible. CDs will be purchased for no more than one year and will be reviewed frequently.
- Money market mutual funds registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission that have received the highest possible rating from at least one nationally recognized statistical rating organization and as otherwise referenced in the Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44 Section 55.

C. Diversification

Diversification should be interpreted in two ways: in terms of maturity as well as instrument type and issuer. The diversification concept should include prohibition against overconcentration of maturities, as well as concentration in a specific institution. With the exception of U.S. Treasury obligations or investments fully collateralized by U.S. Treasuries or agencies and state pools (MMDT), no more than 10% of the Town's investments shall be invested in a single financial institution.

D. Authorization

The Treasurer/Collector has authority to invest entity funds, subject to the statutes of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44 Section 55, 55A, & 55B.

E. Restrictions

Chapter 44, Section 55 set forth several restrictions that the Treasurer/Collector must be aware of when making investment selections.

- A Treasurer/Collector shall not at any one time have on deposit in a bank or trust company an amount exceeding 60% of the capital and surplus of such bank or trust company, or banking company, unless satisfactory security is given to it by such bank or trust company, or banking company for such excess.
- The Treasurer/Collector shall not make a deposit in any bank, trust company or banking company with which he or she is, or for any time during the three years immediately preceding the date of any such deposit was, associated as an officer or employee.
- All securities shall have a maturity from date of purchase of one year or less.
- Purchases under an agreement with a trust company, national bank or banking company to repurchase at not less than original purchase price of said securities on a fixed date shall not exceed ninety days.

F. Legal References

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 55
Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 55A
Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44; Section 55B

II. The Investment of Long-term Funds

A. Scope

This section applies only to funds that are designated as long-term, i.e., trust funds, stabilization funds, cemetery perpetual care, community preservation act and other funds the Town may have set aside for long term use.

All accounts will be maintained separately, thereby receiving their proportionate interest and any realized and unrealized gains or losses. The account will be established as a pooled investment portfolio unless otherwise stated. Any additional accounts will be maintained in this same manner.

B. Authority

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 54 pertains to the investment of trust funds. All trust funds shall fall under the control of the Treasurer/Collector unless otherwise provided or directed by the donor.

C. Investment Instruments

M.G.L. Chapter 44 Section 54 states that money should be deposited into savings bank, trust companies incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth, banking companies incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth which are members of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, or national banks, or invested in participation units in a combined investment fund under section 38A of chapter 29, or in a paid-up shares and accounts of and in cooperative banks, or in shares of savings and loan associations or in share or savings deposits of federal savings and loan associations doing business in the Commonwealth.

Additionally the Town may invest such funds in securities, other than mortgages or collateral loans, that are legal for the investment of funds of savings banks under the laws of the Commonwealth; provided, that not more than fifteen percent (15%) of any such trust funds shall be invested in bank stocks and insurance company stocks, nor shall more than one and one-half percent (1½%) of such funds be invested in the stock of any one bank or insurance company.

The Treasurer/Collector may invest in the following instruments:

- U. S. Treasuries that maybe sold prior to maturity: Unlimited amounts (with no limit to the length of maturity from date of purchase)
- U.S. Agency obligations that maybe sold prior to maturity: Unlimited amounts (with no limit to the length of maturity from date of purchase)
- Bank accounts or CDs: Unlimited amounts (with no limit to the length of maturity from date of purchase), which is fully collateralized through a third party agreement:
- Bank accounts and CDs: (with no limit to the length of maturity from date of purchase) fully insured by F.D.I.C. and in some cases also Depository Insurance Fund of Massachusetts. All bank accounts and CDs in one institution are considered in the aggregate to receive the insurance coverage limit.

- Unsecured bank deposits of any kind such as other checking, savings, money market, or CD accounts at banks that do not fit the above categories. These investments are subject to the following limitations: These investments will be limited to no more than 5% of an institution's assets and no more than 25% of the Town's cash. This percentage may increase for not more than 30 days during times of heavy collection or in anticipation of large payments that will be made by the Town in the near future. These payments may be for such items as debt service payment or regional school assessments. Their creditworthiness will be tracked by Veribanc, or other bank credit worthiness reporting systems. They will be diversified as much as possible. CDs will be purchased with no limit to the length of maturity from the date of purchase and will be reviewed frequently.
- Common and preferred stock that are listed in the List of Legal Investments.
- Investment funds that are listed in the List of Legal Investments.
- All other items not separately identified here that are listed in the List of Legal Investments.

D. Standards of Care

The standard of prudence to be used by the Treasurer/Collector shall be the "prudent person" standard and shall be applied in the context of managing an overall portfolio. The Treasurer/Collector acting in accordance with written procedures and this IPS, and exercising reasonable due diligence, shall be relieved of personal responsibility for an individual security's credit risk or market price changes, provided the purchases and sale of securities is carried out in accordance with the terms of this IPS.

Investments shall be made with judgment and care, under circumstances then prevailing, which persons of prudence, discretion, and intelligence exercise in the management of their own affairs, not for speculation, but for investment considering the probable safety of their capital as well as the probable income to be derived.

In addition this section would also apply to M.G.L. Chapter 44 Section 55A which refers to the liability of the Treasurer/Collector for losses due to bankruptcy.

E. Diversification

Diversification should be interpreted in two ways: in terms of maturity as well as instrument type and issuer. The diversification concept should include prohibition against overconcentration of maturities, as well as concentration in a specific institution, with the exception of U.S. Treasury obligations or investments fully collateralized by U.S. Treasuries or agencies.

F. Legal References

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 54
Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 55A
Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 55B

Trust funds may be comingled and invested in any instruments allowed by the Massachusetts List of Legal Investments issued by the Banking Commissioner each July. Each trust fund must be accounted for separately. Chapter 44 Section 54 sets forth that Treasurer/Collectors may invest in instruments that are legal for savings banks. This list of investments is included in the List of Legal Investments, Chapter 167 Section 15A.

III. General Provisions

A. Objective

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 44, Section 55B requires the Treasurer/Collector to invest all public funds except those required to be kept uninvested for purposes of immediate distribution.

This section also requires that invested funds are to be placed at the highest possible rate of interest reasonably available, taking into account the acceptable levels of safety, liquidity and yield. Therefore, these guidelines are intended to further the objective of securing the highest reasonable return available that is consistent with safety of principal while meeting the daily cash requirements for the operation of the entity's business.

- Safety of principal is the foremost objective of the investment program. Investments shall be undertaken in a manner that seeks to preserve capital through the mitigation of credit risk and interest rate risk. These risks shall be mitigated by the diversification and prudent selection of investment instruments, and choice of depository. Credit risk is the risk of loss due to the failure of the security issuer or backer. Interest rate risk is the risk that the market value of the security will fall due to changes in general interest rates.
- Liquidity is the next most important objective. The overall investment portfolio shall remain sufficiently liquid to meet all operating requirements that may be reasonably anticipated. Since all possible cash demands cannot be anticipated, the Treasurer/Collector shall attempt to carry out investment activities in a manner that provides for meeting unusual or unexpected cash demands without requiring the liquidation of investments that could result in forfeiture of accrued interest earnings, and loss of principal in some cases.
- Yield is the third, and last, objective. Investments shall be undertaken so as to achieve a fair market average rate of return taking into account safety and liquidity constraints as well as all legal requirements.

B. Risk Tolerance

➤ Credit Risk

"Credit risk" is the risk that an issuer or other counterparty to an investment will not fulfill its obligations.

The Town will manage credit risk several ways. There will be no limit to the amount of U.S. Treasury and U.S. Government Agency obligations. In regards to other investments, the Town will only purchase investment grade securities with a high concentration in securities rated A or better. The Town may invest in the Massachusetts Municipal Depository Trust (MMDT) with no limit to the amount of funds placed in the fund. The Town may place funds in banking institutions as stated in Section C of this IPS.

➤ Custodial Risk

The "custodial credit risk" for deposits is the risk that, in the event of the failure of a depository financial institution, a municipality will not be able to recover deposits or will not be able to recover collateral securities that are in the possession of an outside party. The custodial credit risk for investments is the risk that, in the event of the failure of the counterparty to a transaction, a municipality will not be able to recover the value of investment or collateral securities that are in the possession of an outside party.

The Town will review the financial institution's financial statements and the background of the Advisor. The intent of this qualification is to limit the Town's exposure to only those institutions with a proven financial strength, capital adequacy, and overall affirmative reputation in the

municipal industry. Further, all securities not held directly by the Town will be held in the Town's name and tax identification number by a third-party custodian approved by the Treasurer/Collector and evidenced by safekeeping receipts showing individual CUSIP numbers for each security.

➤ Concentration of Credit Risk

"Concentration of credit risk" is the risk of loss attributed to the magnitude of a government's investment in a single issuer.

The Town will minimize concentration of credit risk by diversifying the investment portfolio so that the impact of potential losses from any one type of security or issuer will be minimized.

➤ Interest Rate Risk

"Interest rate risk" is the risk that changes in interest rates will adversely affect the fair value of an investment.

The Town will manage interest rate risk by managing duration in the account.

➤ Foreign Currency Risk

"Foreign currency risk" is the risk that changes in foreign monetary exchange rates will adversely affect the fair value of an investment or a deposit.

The Town will limit investment in any instrument exposed to foreign currency risk.

C. Ethics

The Treasurer/Collector shall refrain from any personal activity that may conflict with the proper execution of the investment program or which could impair or appear to impair ability to make impartial investment decisions. Said individuals shall disclose to the Board of Selectmen any material financial interest in financial institutions that do business with the Town. They shall also disclose any large personal financial investment positions or loans that could be related to the performance of the Town's investments.

D. Relationship with Financial Institutions

Financial institutions should be selected first and foremost with regard to their financial soundness and stability. The Town subscribes to the Veribanc Rating Service to evaluate the banking institutions with which it chooses to establish relationships. Brokers should be recognized, reputable dealers and members of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority.

In instances where the Town does not purchase the Veribanc Rating Service, the Treasurer/Collector should request the banking institution's Veribanc rating from all of the banking institutions that are working with the Town on a quarterly basis.

When using the Veribanc Rating Service, the Treasurer/Collector may invest in such banks that show a green rating in a particular quarter. If a rating is yellow, the Treasurer/Collector should contact the appropriate banking institution and request in writing an explanation of the change in rating and the expected timetable for it to be changed to green. If for a second quarter such rating is not green, the Treasurer/Collector should consider removing all funds that are not collateralized, or carries some form

of depositors insurance. If a rating moves to red, all money should be immediately collateralized or covered by some form of depositors insurance or be removed from the banking institution.

The Treasurer/Collector shall require any brokerage houses and broker/dealers wishing to do business with the Town to supply the following information to the Treasurer/Collector on an annual basis:

- Financial statements
- If acting as a Registered Investment Advisor, copy of their most recent Form ADV
- A statement that the Advisor has read the Town's IPS and will comply with it on an annual basis

E. Reporting Requirements

On a quarterly basis, a report will be prepared by the Treasurer/Collector and distributed to the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, and Finance and Advisory Committee. The report will include the following information as a minimum:

- A listing of the individual accounts and individual securities held at the end of the reporting period.
- A listing of the short-term investment portfolio by security type and maturity to ensure compliance with the diversification and maturity guidelines established in the "Diversification" section of this IPS.
- Summaries of the income earned on a monthly basis and year-to-date basis.
- The degree of compliance with the tenets set forth in the IPS.

MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

Abbreviations Defined

DLS	Division of Local Services
BLA	DLS Bureau of Local Assessment
BOA	DLS Bureau of Accounts
MDM	DLS Municipal Data Management
ATB	Appellate Tax Board
CPA	Community Preservation Act
DESE	Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
EQV	Equalized valuation
NSS	Net School Spending
Tax Recap	Tax recapitulation worksheet

July

1	Collector	Mail Annual Preliminary Tax Bills Per M.G.L. c. 59, § 57C , the 1 st and 2 nd quarter bills may be issued in a single mailing.
15	Accountant and Treasurer	Deadline to Process all Prior-Year Unencumbered Expenditures Under M.G.L. c. 44, § 56 , all unencumbered expenses incurred as of June 30 must be recorded and paid as of this date.
15	Accountant	Report CPA Fund Balance (recommended date) After closing the fiscal year and before the October 31 deadline, the Accountant submits the CPA fund balance report (Form CP-2 in Gateway) to BOA and gives notice to the Community Preservation Committee. CPA fund balances may be appropriated any time after the report.
15	Pipeline Company	Deadline for Appealing Commissioner's Pipeline Company Valuations to the ATB
15	Telephone and Telegraph Company	Deadline for Appealing Commissioner's Telephone and Telegraph Company Valuations to the ATB
20	BLA	Notification of Changes in Proposed EQVs (even-numbered years only)

August

1	Taxpayer	Deadline for Paying 1st Quarter Tax Bill
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Per [M.G.L. c. 59, § 57C](#), this is the deadline to pay the 1st quarter preliminary tax payment without interest for bills that were mailed by July 1. If the bills were mailed between July 2 and August 1, this payment is due 30 days after the mailing date, and the 2nd quarterly payment is due November 1. If the bills were mailed after August 1, the preliminary tax is due as a single installment on November 1 or 30 days after the bills were mailed, whichever is later.

1	Taxpayer	Deadline for Submitting Annual Boat Excise Return
10	Assessors	Deadline for Appealing EQVs to the ATB (even-numbered years only)
31	Accountant	Close Prior-Year Books by this Date

September

15	Assessors	Submit Property Sales Report (recommended date)
15	Accountant	Submit Snow & Ice Data Sheet
15	Accountant and Assessors	Jointly Submit CPA Surcharge Report This is the deadline to submit Form CP-1 (statement of the prior year's net CPA surcharge levy) to MDM in order to receive matching funds from the State Treasurer's distribution on November 15.
15	Accountant	Submit CPA Projects Report This is the deadline to enter new CPA projects and update existing ones in the MassGIS CPA projects database in order to receive matching funds from the State Treasurer's distribution on November 15.
30	Accountant, Treasurer/Collector	Submit Balance Sheet and other Documents for Free Cash Certification The Accountant and Treasurer/Collector coordinate to submit a balance sheet to BOA along with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Statement of Indebtedness ▪ Treasurer's Year-end Cash Report ▪ Cash Reconciliation Form ▪ Schedule of Outstanding Receivables

October

1	Collector	Mail Preliminary Tax Bills for 2nd Quarter Collector mails these bills if the 2 nd quarter bills were not included in the July mailings.
1	Taxpayer	Deadline for Applying to Have Land Classified as Agricultural/Horticultural Land or Recreational Land

Under [M.G.L. c. 61A, §§ 6 and 8](#) and [c. 61B, §§ 3 and 5](#), this is the deadline to apply to the Assessors to have land valued, taxed, and classified as agricultural/horticultural or recreational land in the next fiscal year. Taxpayers who miss this deadline have until 30 days after the mailing of the actual tax bills to apply to the Assessors.

1	Taxpayer	Deadline for Submitting Forest Land Certification & Management Plan As set by M.G.L. c. 61, § 2 , this is the deadline to submit to the Assessors the State Forester's certification and approved management plan to have land classified as forest land for 10 years beginning in the next fiscal year.
15	Assessors and Accountant	Begin Working on the Tax Rate Recapitulation Sheet The Assessors should begin gathering data for the following tax recap pages in order to have enough time for the tax rate to be set and actual tax bills mailed by December 31.
14 days prior to the Third Saturday	Constable	Post Warrants for Fall Town Meeting Per Town bylaws, Chapter 1, Section 1b, the Constable posts the warrant at Town Hall, each of the Post Offices, and the Police/Fire Station at least 14 days prior to the fall town meeting.
15	Assessors	Submit New Growth, Amended Tax Base Levy Growth, and Final Valuations Reports to BLA (recommended date)
Third Saturday	Town Meeting	Fall Town Meeting Per Town bylaws, Chapter 1, Section 2b, Hamilton will usually hold the fall town meeting on the third Saturday in October.
31	Accountant	Deadline to Submit the CPA Fund Balance Report (Form CP-2) [See July 15.]

November

1	Taxpayer	Deadline for Paying 2nd Quarter Tax Bill Per M.G.L. c. 59, § 57C , this is the deadline to pay the 2nd quarter tax payment without interest.
1	Selectmen and Assessors	Hold Classification Hearing (recommended date) The Board of Selectmen holds a public hearing at which the Assessors present information to assist it in determining whether to apply uniform or different tax rates to classes of real and personal property.
30	Accountant	Deadline to Submit Schedule A Schedule A reports the town's revenues received, expenditures made, and all other financial transactions done in the previous fiscal year. Failure to file Schedule A to BOA by November 30 may result in the withholding or forfeiture of state aid.

30	Assessors	Submit Tax Recap and all Schedules to BOA
December		
10	Collector	Prepare Actual Tax Bills (recommended date) Prepare actual bills for the 3 rd and 4 th quarters and deliver file to the print vendor.
31	Board of Selectmen	Deadline for Betterments to be included on Next Year's Tax Bill (M.G.L. c. 80, § 13 ; c. 40, § 42I and c. 83, § 27)
31	Assessors	Mail 3ABC Forms to Charitable Organizations and Forms of List to Personal Property Owners
31	Collector	Deadline for Mailing Actual Tax Bills Issue actual tax bills for the 3 rd and 4 th quarters in a single mailing.
January		
31	DESE	Notify Communities and Districts of Estimated NSS Requirements As soon as the Governor releases the ensuing year's budget, DESE notifies communities and districts of that next year's NSS estimates, which are subject to change once the final state budget is approved.
31	Pipeline Company	Deadline for Pipeline Company to File Form of List with BLA
February		
1	Taxpayer	Deadline to Pay 3rd Quarter Tax Bill Per M.G.L. c. 59, § 57C , this is the deadline to pay the 3 rd quarter actual tax bill without interest unless the bills were mailed after December 31. If mailed after December 31, the actual tax is due as a single installment on May 1 or 30 days after the bills were mailed, whichever is later.
1	Taxpayer	Deadline to Apply for Property Tax Abatement According to M.G.L. c. 59, § 59 , abatements applications are due on February 1 unless actual tax bills were mailed after December 31. In that case, they are due May 1 or 30 days after mailing, whichever is later.
March		
1	MDM	Notification of Cherry Sheet Estimates for the Following Year (pending action taken by the Legislature) The cherry sheet provides estimates of 1) receipts: local reimbursement and assistance programs as authorized by law and appropriated by the General Court and 2) assessments: state and county assessments and charges to local governments. MDM posts

		cherry sheet data on the DLS website and updates them at every stage of the state budget process.
1	Personal Property Owner	Submit Form of List to Assessors This form is due by March 1, but the Assessors may extend the deadline to a date no later than the date abatement applications are due.
1	Charitable Organization	Submit 3ABC Forms To be eligible for exemption from taxation for the next fiscal year, a charitable organization must file this form with the Assessors detailing the property held for charitable purposes. It is due by March 1, but the Assessors may extend the deadline to a date no later than the date abatement applications are due.
1	Telephone and Telegraph Company	Deadline for Telephone and Telegraph Company to File Form of List BLA may extend the deadline to a date no later than April 1.
7 days prior to the First Saturday	Constable	Post Warrants for Annual Town Meeting Per Town bylaws, Chapter 1, Section 1b, the Town posts the warrant at Town Hall, each of the Post Offices, and the Police/Fire Station at least seven days prior to the annual town meeting.

April

First Saturday	Town Meeting	Annual Town Meeting Per Town bylaws, Chapter 1, Section 2b, Hamilton holds its annual town meeting (ATM) on the first Saturday in April.
First Thursday after ATM	Registered Voters	Annual Town Election Per Town bylaws, Chapter 1, Section 2c, Hamilton holds its annual election of town officers on the first Thursday after the opening of the ATM.
1	Collector	Mail 4th Quarter Tax Bills Collector mails these bills if the 4 th quarter bills were not included in the December mailings.
1	Taxpayer	Deadline to Apply for Property Tax Exemptions for Persons, Residential Exemptions, and Small Commercial Exemptions This is the deadline to apply to the assessors if actual tax bills are mailed on or before January 1. If mailed after January 1, taxpayers have 3 months from the mailing date to file exemption applications.

May

1	Taxpayer	Deadline to Pay 4th Quarter Tax Bill without Interest
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1	Accountant or Treasurer	<p>Notification of Amount of Debt Due in Next Fiscal Year</p> <p>As required by M.G.L. c. 44, § 16, the Accountant or Treasurer must notify the Assessors of all debt due in the next fiscal year. The town is required to pay its debts, appropriated or not. Any debt service not covered by appropriations is added to the "Other Local Expenditures" category found on page 2 of the tax recap. It is important the Assessors have this information to avoid setting a tax rate that will raise insufficient revenue to cover the town's expenditures.</p>
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June

1	Town Clerk	<p>Certify Appropriations</p> <p>The Town Clerk should certify appropriations immediately after town meeting so that the Accountant can set up accounts for every department for the next fiscal year.</p>
1	Town Clerk	<p>Update the Local Officials Directory (LOD) in Gateway</p> <p>The Town Clerk annually updates the LOD with the names and email addresses of any new local officials and any changes to position titles.</p>
1	Assessors	<p>Determine Valuation of Other Municipal or District Land</p> <p>In any community where land is owned by another community or district, the Assessors value the land for in-lieu-of-tax payments and send a notice of the new valuation in the year following a revaluation year.</p>
1	BLA	Notification of Proposed EQVs (even-numbered years only)
1	BLA	Notification of State-owned Land Valuations (even-numbered years only)
10	BLA	Conclude Public Hearings on Proposed EQVs (even-numbered years only)
15	BLA	Determine and Certify Pipeline Valuations
15	BLA	Determine and Certify Telephone and Telegraph Company Valuations
15	Assessors	<p>Make Annual Preliminary Tax Commitment</p> <p>The Assessors will make the annual preliminary tax commitment by this date to ensure the ability to mail the bills by July 1. The commitment must be based on the prior year's net tax on the property and may not exceed, with limited exceptions, 50% of that amount.</p>
20	Assessors	<p>Final Date to Make Omitted or Revised Assessments</p> <p>As required by M.G.L. c. 59, §§ 75 and 76, if a property was inadvertently excluded or mistakenly underassessed on the warrant</p>

for property taxes, it is the Assessor's role to fix the mistake and assess the property correctly. The assessment may not be made later than June 20 of the taxable year or 90 days after the date the tax bills are mailed, whichever is later.

30	Assessors	<p>Close Overlay Surplus to Surplus Revenue</p> <p>The Assessors may certify any balance in the overlay account in excess of the remaining amount of the warrant to be collected or abated. The transfer from overlay to the overlay surplus account is done on the Assessors' initiative or within 10 days of a written request by the Selectmen.</p>
30	Taxpayer	<p>Deadline to Apply to Have Land Classified as Forest Land</p> <p>Per M.G.L. c. 61, § 2, this is the deadline to apply to the State Forester to have land certified as forest land.</p>
30	Assessors	<p>Submit Annual Report of Omitted or Revised Assessments to BLA</p>
30	Assessors	<p>Deadline to Submit Requests for Current Fiscal Year Reimbursements of Exemptions Granted Under the Various Clauses of M.G.L. c. 59, § 5</p> <p>Assessors have until this date to submit a request to MDM for state reimbursement to offset the tax revenue lost from granted statutory exemptions. The state partially reimburses for these via the cherry sheet. If actual tax bills were mailed late, the reimbursement request deadline is extended to August 20.</p>

Additional Information

Quarterly Finance Reports	The Finance Director issues quarterly reports with updates on: general fund revenue and expenditures, fixed costs, reserves, water enterprise fund, and special revenue funds (including community preservation, capital project funds, and trust funds).
Local Aid Distributions	The State Treasurer's office distributes local aid to communities on the last calendar day of every month. The monthly distribution breakdown by community can be viewed on the Treasurer's website by clicking on the local aid payments report listed under News and Updates.
Due Date Exceptions	According to M.G.L. c. 4, § 9, if the date for any statutory action or payment falls on a Sunday or legal holiday, that action may be performed or payment made on the next succeeding business day. This rule also applies to any actions required by or payments due on a Saturday in

communities that accepted [M.G.L. c. 41, § 110A](#) permitting public offices to remain closed on that day.

The due dates for any local property tax payment, abatement application, or exemption application are also extended by [M.G.L. c. 59, §§ 57, 57C](#), and [59](#) when municipal offices are closed due to a weather-related or other public safety emergency.