

# ***WILLIAMSON COUNTY BUDGET POLICY***

*The stewardship of public funds is one of the greatest responsibilities the Commissioner's Court is tasked with. Therefore, the establishment and maintenance of budget policy is critical to ensure County officials protect public interests and promote citizens' confidence in County government...*

## **I. General Policies**

1. Williamson County will operate on a fiscal year which begins on October 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on September 30<sup>th</sup>.
2. Williamson County will continuously identify areas within the County for evaluation in order to improve efficiency and manage costs.
3. Cost/Benefit studies will be conducted, where appropriate and applicable, on non-recurring and recurring expenditures as well as capital projects.
4. Approved annual budgets, with amendments as approved by the Commissioner's Court, are the management control device utilized by the County. Annual appropriated budgets are adopted for the General, Road and Bridge and Debt Services Funds and lapse at fiscal year end.
5. Each department should make every effort to manage expenditures in a fiscally prudent manner. All programs should be monitored on a regular basis to ensure viability, necessity and efficiency.
6. Proposed expenditure recommendations shall include the following:
  - a. General Fund operating and maintenance expenditures
  - b. Road and Bridge Fund operating and maintenance expenditures
  - c. Debt Service Fund expenditures
  - d. Any additional information as request by the Court
7. Technology requests should increase the efficiency of County government by improving the delivery of service, reducing duplication of data, increasing the accuracy of data, consolidating data entry efforts, reduce the necessity to add staff in future years or be required because of a new statutory requirement.
8. In order to maintain efficient and cost effective services to the citizens of Williamson County, all budget requests are recommended to be prepared from the

modified zero-based budgeting process justifying the proposed expenditures as well as utilizing the most current information and trend analysis.

9. Williamson County seeks to advance economic development within the County. The Court will continuously support efforts to advance economic prosperity of the County when it finds that such efforts are in the best interest of the County and its citizens.
10. The Court at all times will attempt to maintain or lower the present tax rate.

## **II. Revenue and Transfer Policies**

1. Williamson County will establish user charges and fees as permitted by law at a level related to the cost of providing that service to include direct and indirect costs.
2. When necessary, Williamson County will permit increases or decreases in user charges and fees. These charges and fees should be monitored and re-evaluated annually by each department head and/or elected official.
3. The County shall continuously seek public and private grants as well as other outside funding sources.
4. Williamson County allows a department head, appointed/elected official or his/her designee to request line item transfers throughout the fiscal year. Pursuant to Local Government Code Section 111.070, the Commissioner's Court may spend County funds only in strict compliance with the budget. The Commissioner's Court by order may amend the budget to transfer an amount budgeted for one item to another budgeted item without authorizing an emergency expenditure.

## **III. Reserve Policies**

1. Williamson County will maintain adequate levels of fund balance to mitigate current and future risks, maintain an exceptional bond rating, and for long-term planning.
2. It is imperative that all department heads as well as elected officials continuously review expenditures to ensure fiscal responsibility.

#### **IV. Budget Amendment Policies**

1. Pursuant to Local Government Code, Section 111.070 (b), the Commissioner's Court may authorize an emergency expenditure as an amendment to the original budget only in case of a grave public necessity to meet an unusual and unforeseen condition that could not have been included in the original budget through the use of reasonably diligent thought and attention.
2. All budget amendments must be placed on the regular agenda for consideration by the Commissioner's court and any amendments creating an increase in budgetary commitment for the next fiscal year shall be specifically noted.
3. The re-appropriation at the beginning of a fiscal year of funds committed under valid purchase orders of the County but unspent by September 30<sup>th</sup> of the prior fiscal year require a budget amendment from fund balance. These budget amendments have no net effect on spending but simply change the accounting year for expenditures.

#### **V. Capital Improvement Policies**

1. Capital improvement projects include major equipment, software purchases as well as construction and remodeling requiring extensive funding.
2. Each department is encouraged to update their capital projects plan for the next five years so the Budget Officer may consolidate these into a five-year Capital Improvement Plan. Departments in a common functional area (i.e. the Courts of Law Enforcement) should cooperate in planning for capital projects affecting the entire function area. Budgeting and allocation of funds for capital projects will be made on the basis of long term planning.
3. Capital improvement projects may be paid from current revenues or bonds. Bonds or other forms of debt will normally be used for capital projects when appropriate.

#### **VI. Personnel Policies**

1. It is the priority of the Court to provide adequate and qualified staffing for offices and departments while ensuring efficiency. Requests for staff should be made only for new programs and/or upon demonstrated increases in service requirements that cannot be met with improved technology or changes in procedures.
2. Positions will only be recommended and approved when a verifiable need is demonstrated. Complete documentation to include any applicable and verifiable

statistics, metrics, compliance requirements, job description, etc. should be provided at the time of the request.

3. The Court encourages and supports allocating funding to ensure the County's work force is properly trained. It is recommended that all department heads as well as elected officials additionally support reasonable continuing education requests.
4. The Court strives to ensure, where possible and practical, that employee compensation will be competitive with other similarly situated counties and/or local municipalities

## **VII. Fleet Policies**

1. Vehicle replacement funding will be allocated to each department when necessary. Vehicle replacement recommendations will include the following criteria:
  - a. Miles
  - b. Maintenance
  - c. Type of Vehicle Requested
  - d. Fuel Efficiency