



# STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** JUNE 9, 2026

**TO:** MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

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**SUBJECT:** DEBT MANAGEMENT AND DISCLOSURE POLICY

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## OVERVIEW

The City has historically utilized conservative financial practices and carefully evaluated financing options to support public infrastructure, capital improvement, and long-term financial needs. The City has also previously utilized pension obligation bonds to refinance unfunded pension liabilities at lower interest rates, thereby reducing long-term pension costs and generating savings for the City. Adoption of a formal Debt Management and Disclosure Policy will codify these practices and establish a comprehensive framework for evaluating, issuing, and managing debt obligations in a manner consistent with applicable state and federal laws.

## BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

The proposed Debt Management and Disclosure Policy establishes guidelines for the use of debt financing, identifies acceptable types of debt instruments, outlines the relationship between debt financing and the City's Capital Improvement Program and annual budget process, and sets forth policy objectives designed to preserve the City's financial stability and creditworthiness. The policy also establishes internal controls and post-issuance compliance procedures to ensure debt proceeds are used for their intended purposes and that all reporting and disclosure requirements are satisfied.

The policy is intended to provide the City Council and staff with a consistent framework for evaluating future financing opportunities while maintaining flexibility to address capital improvement needs, emergency expenditures, cash flow requirements, and refinancing opportunities when financially beneficial. Adoption of the policy will ensure the City remains in compliance with SB 1029 requirements and demonstrates its commitment to sound fiscal management and long-term financial planning.

At the November 18, 2025, City Council meeting, the City Council approved a Tax-Exempt Financing Reimbursement Resolution related to the potential financing of the George F Canyon Nature Center Project and directed staff to pursue obtaining a credit rating for the City. Securing a credit rating would support the City's ability to obtain short-term financing, if needed, to address cash flow requirements and provide greater flexibility in future financing options.

Subsequently, the City completed the credit review process and received an “AA+” issuer credit rating from S&P Global Ratings. The rating reflects the City's strong financial position, prudent fiscal management practices, and stable economic outlook, and enhances the City's ability to access financing on favorable terms should borrowing become necessary.

The City is currently undertaking two major public works projects simultaneously: the George F Canyon Nature Center Project and the Palos Verdes Drive North and Dapplegray Elementary School Intersection Improvement Project. Both projects are substantially funded through reimbursable grant programs. Because grant reimbursements are typically received several weeks or months after eligible expenditures are incurred, the City may need to pursue short-term financing to address temporary cash flow needs while awaiting reimbursement.

As part of the credit rating process and to strengthen the City's financial management framework, it is recommended that the City adopt a formal Debt Management and Disclosure Policy. The policy establishes guidelines and best practices governing the issuance and management of debt, promotes transparency and compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and demonstrates the City's commitment to prudent fiscal stewardship. Adoption of a debt policy is viewed favorably by credit rating agencies and potential lenders, as it reflects sound financial planning and governance practices.

The proposed Debt Management and Disclosure Policy was previously presented to the City Council during the Policy Development Session on March 30, 2026 for review and discussion. The City Council provided feedback and recommended revisions to the draft policy. Staff and the City Attorney incorporated all requested and recommended changes. The revised policy was subsequently reviewed by the City Attorney for compliance with applicable state law, City governance structure, and potential financing needs, including emergency repairs and improvements. The policy presented for adoption reflects the City Council's input and the City Attorney's review, revisions (based on discussions at the Policy Development Session), and approval.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt the proposed Debt Management and Disclosure Policy as presented.

# CITY OF ROLLING HILLS ESTATES



## Debt Management and Disclosure Policy

### Adopted:

### Amended:

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### **Section 1. Introduction**

This Debt Management and Disclosure Policy ("Debt Policy") provides guidelines for debt issuance, management and post-issuance related policies and procedures for the City of Rolling Hills Estates ("City"). This Debt Policy may be amended by the City Council as it deems appropriate from time to time in the prudent management of the debt and financing needs of the City.

### **Section 2. Purpose**

The purpose of this Debt Policy is to establish guidelines and parameters for the effective governance, management and administration of debt and other financing obligations issued by the City. This Debt Policy is intended to improve and direct decision making, assist with the structure of debt issuance, identify policy goals, and demonstrate a commitment to long-term planning, including the City's Capital Improvement Program. Adherence to a debt policy helps to ensure the City's debt is issued and managed prudently in order to maintain a sound financial position and credit worthiness. When used in this Debt Policy, "debt" refers to all indebtedness and financing obligations of the City.

### **Section 3. Debt Policy Objective**

This Debt Policy is intended to comply with the requirements of Senate Bill 1029 (SB 1029), codified as part of California Government Code section 8855(i) and will govern all debt undertaken by the City. The primary objectives of the City's debt and financing related activities are to:

- A. Maintain the City's sound financial position;
- B. Protect the City's credit-worthiness;
- C. Ensure the City has the flexibility to respond to possible changes in future service obligations, revenues, and operating expenses;
- D. Ensure that all debt is structured in order to protect both current and future taxpayers, ratepayers and constituents of the City;
- E. Minimize debt service commitments through efficient planning and cash management; and
- F. Ensure the City is in compliance with all relevant State and Federal securities laws and other applicable laws and regulations.

#### **Section 4. Acceptable Uses of Debt Proceeds**

The City will generally consider the use of debt financing primarily for assets and capital projects only if the term of debt does not exceed the asset(s) or project's useful life or will otherwise comply with Federal tax law requirements. An exception to this long-term driven focus is the potential issuance of short-term instruments, such as tax and revenue anticipation notes, which may be used for reasonable cash management purposes as described below and emergency temporary capital improvements or repairs. Bonded debt will not be issued to finance normal operating expenses. General Fund debt will not be issued to support ongoing operational costs unless such debt issuance achieves net operating cost savings and such savings are verified by independent analysis.

- A. Long-Term Debt.
  - i. Long-term debt may be issued to finance the construction, acquisition, rehabilitation, or repair of capital improvements and facilities, equipment, and land to be owned and/or operated by the City. Long-term debt financings are appropriate when any of the following conditions exist:
    - (1) When the project to be financed is necessary to provide basic municipal services, or other projects for the benefit of the City's constituents;
    - (2) When the project to be financed will provide benefit to the City's constituents over a duration of more than one year (except in emergency circumstances);
    - (3) When the total debt financing would not impose an unreasonable burden on the City and its taxpayers and/or ratepayers, as applicable; or
    - (4) When the debt is used to refinance outstanding debt in order to produce debt service savings or to benefit from debt restructuring.

- ii. The City may use long-term debt financings subject to each of the following conditions:
  - (1) The project to be financed has been or will be considered and approved by the City Council;
  - (2) The weighted average maturity of the debt (or the portion of the debt allocated to the project) will not exceed 120% of the useful life of the project to be financed (except in emergency circumstances);
  - (3) The City estimates that sufficient revenues will be available to service the debt through its maturity; and
  - (4) The City determines that the issuance of the debt will comply with the applicable requirements of State and Federal law.

**B. Short-Term Debt.**

- i. Short-term debt may be issued to provide financing for the City's operational cash flows in order to maintain a steady and even cash flow balance. Short-term debt may also be used to finance the City's short-lived capital projects, such as undertaking lease-purchase financing for equipment or emergency improvements or repairs.

**Section 5. Standards for Use of Debt Financing**

The City recognizes that there are numerous types of financing structures and funding sources available, each with specific benefits, costs, and risks. The City will consider debt issuance only in those cases where public policy, equity and economic efficiency favor debt financing over cash funding. Prior to the issuance of debt or other financing obligations, the City will carefully consider the overall long-term affordability of the proposed debt issuance by conducting an objective analysis of the City's ability to support additional debt service payments. The City will consider its long-term revenue and expenditure trends, the impact on operational flexibility and the overall debt burden on the taxpayers/ratepayers. The evaluation process will include a review of generally accepted measures of affordability and will strive to achieve and/or maintain debt levels consistent with its current operating and capital needs.

**Section 6. Types of Debt**

In order to maximize the financial options available to benefit the public, it is the City's policy to allow the consideration of issuing all generally accepted types of debt, including, but not exclusive to the following:

**A. General Obligation (GO) Bonds:**

- i. GO Bonds are suitable for use in the construction or acquisition of improvements to real property that benefit the public at large. The California Government Code, Division 4, Chapter 4, Article 1 commencing with section 43600 authorizes cities to finance certain municipal improvements through GO bonds when a city determines the public interest and necessity demands the acquisition, construction or completion of such municipal improvements, including property or structures necessary or convenient to carry out the objects, purposes, and powers of a city.

- ii. Examples of projects include but are not limited to parks, public services, and public safety facilities. All GO bonds must be authorized by the requisite number of voters.

B. Revenue Bonds:

- i. Revenue Bonds are limited-liability obligations tied to a specific enterprise or special fund revenue stream where the projects financed clearly benefit or relate to the enterprise or are otherwise permissible uses of the special revenue. Generally, no voter approval is required to issue this type of obligation but in some cases, the City must comply with proposition 218 regarding rate adjustments.

C. Certificates of Participation (COPs)/Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Lease Revenue Bonds:

- i. The City may obtain financing payable from the General Fund through the issuance of debt by a public benefit corporation or joint exercise of powers agency with such debt payable from amounts paid by the City under a lease, installment sale agreement, or contract of indebtedness.

D. Loans:

- i. The City is authorized to enter into loans, installment payment obligations, or other similar funding structures secured by a prudent source or sources of repayment.

E. Special Assessment/Special Tax Debt:

- i. The City will consider requests from developers for the use of debt financing secured by property-based assessments or special taxes in order to provide for necessary infrastructure for new development under guidelines adopted by City Council, which may include minimum value-to-lien ratios and maximum tax burdens. Examples of this type of debt are Assessment Districts (ADs) and Community Facilities Districts (CFDs), also known as Mello-Roos Districts. In order to protect bondholders as well as the City's credit rating, the City will also comply with all State guidelines regarding the issuance of special tax or special assessment debt.

F. Short-Term Debt:

- i. Short-term borrowing, such as commercial paper, Tax and Revenue Anticipation Notes (TRANS), and lines of credit, will be considered as an interim source of funding in anticipation of long-term borrowing and may be issued to generate funding for cash flow needs. The final maturity of the debt issued to finance the project shall be consistent with the useful life of the project.
- ii. Short-term debt may also be used to finance short-lived capital projects such as lease-purchase financing for equipment or emergency improvements or repairs.

G. Refunding Bonds:

- i. The City may refinance debt pursuant to the authorization that is provided under California law, including but not limited to Articles 10 and 11 of Chapter 3 of Part 1 of Division 2 of Title 5 of the California Government Code, as market opportunities arise. Refundings may be undertaken in order to:
  - (1) Take advantage of lower interest rates and achieve debt service costs savings;
  - (2) Eliminate restrictive or burdensome bond covenants; or
  - (3) Restructure debt to relieve debt service spikes, reduce volatility in interest rates or free up reserve funds.
- ii. Generally, the City will strive to achieve a minimum net present value debt service savings of at least 3% of the refunded principal amount. The net present value assessment will factor in all costs, including issuance, escrow, and foregone interest earnings of any contributed funds on hand. Refundings which produce a net present value savings of less than 3% will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Upon the advice of the City Manager and with the assistance of a municipal advisor and bond counsel, the City will consider undertaking refundings for other than economic purposes based upon a finding that such a restructuring is in the City's overall best financial interest.

The City may from time to time find that other forms of debt would be beneficial to further its public purposes and may approve such debt without an amendment of this Debt Policy. However, the other form or forms of debt must comply with this Debt Management Policy.

Debt will be issued as fixed rate debt unless the City determines a variable rate issue would be beneficial to the City based on the circumstances.

### **Section 7. Relationship to Capital Improvement Program and Operating Budget**

The City intends to issue debt for the purposes stated in this Debt Policy and the decision to incur new indebtedness should be integrated with the City Council-adopted annual Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program Budget. Prior to issuance of any debt, a reliable revenue source must be identified to secure repayment of the debt and the annual debt service payments must be included in the Operating Budget.

The City will integrate its debt issuances with the goals of its Capital Improvement Program by timing the issuance of debt to ensure that projects are available when needed in furtherance of the City's public purposes.

### **Section 8. Policy Goals Related to Planning Goals and Objectives**

- A. This Debt Policy has been adopted to assist with the City's goal of financial sustainability and financial prudence. In following this Debt Policy, the City will pursue the following policy goals:
  - i. The City is committed to financial planning, maintaining appropriate reserves levels and employing prudent practices in governance, management and budget administration. The City intends to issue debt for

the purposes stated in this Debt Policy and to implement policy decisions incorporated in the City's annual Operating Budget;

- ii. It is a policy goal of the City to protect taxpayers, ratepayers and constituents by utilizing conservative financing methods and techniques so as to obtain the highest practical credit ratings, if applicable, and the lowest practical borrowing costs;
- iii. It is a policy goal of the City to reduce the unfunded liabilities for employee pension;
- iv. The City will comply with applicable State and Federal law as it pertains to the maximum term of debt and the procedures for levying and imposing any related taxes, assessments, rates and charges; and
- v. When refinancing debt, it shall be the policy goal of the City to achieve, whenever possible and subject to any overriding non-financial policy, minimum net present value debt service savings of at least 3% of the refunded principal amount.

### **Section 9. Internal Control Procedures**

When issuing debt, in addition to complying with the terms of this Debt Policy, the City will comply with any other applicable policies regarding initial bond disclosure, continuing disclosure, post-issuance compliance, and investment of bond proceeds.

The City will periodically review the requirements of and will remain in compliance with the following:

- i. Federal securities law, including any continuing disclosure undertakings under SEC Rule 15c2-12;
- ii. Any federal tax compliance requirements including without limitation arbitrage and rebate compliance, related to any prior bond issues;
- iii. The City's investment policies as they relate to the investment of bond proceeds; and
- iv. Government Code section 8855(k) and the annual reporting requirements therein.
- v. The City will be vigilant in using bond proceeds in accordance with the stated purpose at the time that such debt was issued. The City Manager, Administrative Services Director or designee will monitor the expenditure of bond proceeds to ensure they are used only for the purpose and authority for which the bonds were issued.

### **Section 10. Amendment and Waivers of Debt Policy**

This Debt Policy will be reviewed and updated periodically as needed. Any amendments to this Debt Policy are subject to specific City Council approval.

While adherence to this Debt Policy is required in all applicable circumstances, on rare occasions there might be circumstances when strict adherence to a provision of this Debt Policy is not

possible or not in the best interest of the City. If the City staff has determined that a waiver of one or more provisions of this Debt Policy should be considered by the City Council, it will prepare an analysis for the City Council describing the rationale for the waiver and the impact of the waiver on the proposed debt issuance and on taxpayers, if applicable. Upon a majority vote of the City Council, one or more provisions of this Debt Policy may be waived for a debt financing.

The failure of a debt financing to comply with one or more provisions of this Debt Policy will in no way affect the validity of any debt issued by the City in accordance with applicable laws.

### **Section 11. SB 1029 Compliance**

SB 1029 (codified in California Government Code section 8855(i)), requires issuers to adopt debt policies addressing each of the five items below:

- A. The purposes for which the debt proceeds may be used.
  - i. Section 4 (Acceptable Uses of Debt Proceeds) addresses the purposes for which debt proceeds may be used.
- B. The types of debt that may be issued.
  - i. Section 6 (Types of Debt) provides information regarding the types of debt that may be issued.
- C. The relationship of the debt to, and integration with, the issuer's capital improvement program or budget, if applicable.
  - i. Section 7 (Relationship to Capital Improvement Program and Operating Budget) provides information regarding the relationship between the City's debt and Capital Improvement Program and annual Operating Budget.
- D. Policy goals related to the issuer's planning goals and objectives.
  - i. Section 3 (Debt Policy Objective) and Section 8 (Policy Goals Related to Planning Goals and Objectives) address some of the City's policy goals and how this Debt Policy has implemented them.
- E. The internal control procedures that the issuer has implemented, or will implement, to ensure that the proceeds of the proposed debt issuance will be directed to the intended use.
  - i. Section 9 (Internal Control Procedures) provides information regarding the City's internal control procedures designed to ensure that the proceeds of its debt issues are spent as intended.

Accordingly, this Debt Policy, as written, complies with and meets the requirements of SB 1029.