

§ 159-13. The budget ordinance; form, adoption, limitations, tax levy, filing.

(a) Not earlier than 10 days after the day the budget is presented to the board and not later than July 1, the governing board shall adopt a budget ordinance making appropriations and levying taxes for the budget year in such sums as the governing board may consider sufficient and proper, whether greater or less than the sums recommended in the budget. The budget ordinance shall authorize all financial transactions of the local government or public authority except for all of the following:

- (1) Those capital, grant, or settlement projects authorized by a project ordinance, as defined in G.S. 159-13.2.
- (2) Those accounted for in an intragovernmental service fund for which a financial plan is prepared and approved.
- (3) Those accounted for in a trust or custodial fund established to account for moneys held by the local government or public authority as an agent or common-law trustee or to account for a retirement, pension, or similar employee benefit system.
- (4) Representative payee funds received under the Social Security Agency Representative Payee Program. These restricted funds belong to and are used for the support of minor children and certain adults.

The budget ordinance may be in any form that the governing board considers most efficient in enabling it to make the fiscal policy decisions embodied therein, but it shall make appropriations by department, function, or project and show revenues by major source.

(b) The following directions and limitations shall bind the governing board in adopting the budget ordinance:

- (1) The full amount estimated by the finance officer to be required for debt service during the budget year shall be appropriated.
- (2) The full amount of any deficit in each fund shall be appropriated.
- (3) A contingency appropriation shall not exceed five percent (5%) of the total of all other appropriations in the same fund, except there is no limit on contingency appropriations for public assistance programs required by Chapter 108A. Each expenditure to be charged against a contingency appropriation shall be authorized by resolution of the governing board, which resolution shall be deemed an amendment to the budget ordinance setting up an appropriation for the object of expenditure authorized. The governing board may authorize the budget officer to authorize expenditures from contingency appropriations subject to such limitations and procedures as it may prescribe. Any such expenditures shall be reported to the board at its next regular meeting and recorded in the minutes.
- (4) No appropriation may be made that would require the levy of a tax in excess of any constitutional or statutory limitation, or expenditures of revenues for purposes not permitted by law.
- (5) The total of all appropriations for purposes which require voter approval for expenditure of property tax funds under Article V, Sec. 2(5), of the Constitution shall not exceed the total of all estimated revenues other than the property tax (not including such revenues required by law to be spent for specific purposes) and property taxes levied for such purposes pursuant to a vote of the people.
- (6) The estimated percentage of collection of property taxes shall not be greater than the percentage of the levy actually realized in cash as of June 30 during the preceding fiscal year. For purposes of the calculation under this subdivision only, the levy for the registered motor vehicle tax under Article

22A of Chapter 105 of the General Statutes shall be based on the nine-month period ending March 31 of the preceding fiscal year, and the collections realized in cash with respect to this levy shall be based on the 12-month period ending June 30 of the preceding fiscal year.

- (7) Estimated revenues shall include only those revenues reasonably expected to be realized in the budget year, including amounts to be realized from collections of taxes levied in prior fiscal years.
- (8) Repealed by Session Laws 1975, c. 514, s. 6.
- (9) Appropriations made to a school administrative unit by a county may not be reduced after the budget ordinance is adopted, unless the board of education of the administrative unit agrees by resolution to a reduction, or unless a general reduction in county expenditures is required because of prevailing economic conditions. Before a board of county commissioners may reduce appropriations to a school administrative unit as part of a general reduction in county expenditures required because of prevailing economic conditions, it must do all of the following:
 - a. Hold a public meeting at which the school board is given an opportunity to present information on the impact of the reduction.
 - b. Take a public vote on the decision to reduce appropriations to a school administrative unit.
- (10) Appropriations made to another fund from a fund established to account for property taxes levied pursuant to a vote of the people may not exceed the amount of revenues other than the property tax available to the fund, except for appropriations from such a fund to an appropriate account in a capital reserve fund.
- (11) Repealed by Session Laws 1975, c. 514, s. 6.
- (12) Repealed by Session Laws 1981, c. 685, s. 4.
- (13) No appropriation of the proceeds of a bond issue may be made from the capital project fund account established to account for the proceeds of the bond issue except (i) for the purpose for which the bonds were issued, (ii) to the appropriate debt service fund, or (iii) to an account within a capital reserve fund consistent with the purposes for which the bonds were issued. The total of other appropriations made to another fund from such a capital project fund account may not exceed the amount of revenues other than bond proceeds available to the account.
- (14) No appropriation may be made from a utility or public service enterprise fund to any other fund than the appropriate debt service fund unless the total of all other appropriations in the fund equal or exceed the amount that will be required during the fiscal year, as shown by the budget ordinance, to meet operating expenses, capital outlay, and debt service on outstanding utility or enterprise bonds or notes. A county may, upon a finding that a fund balance in a utility or public service enterprise fund used for operation of a landfill exceeds the requirements for funding the operation of that fund, including closure and post-closure expenditures, transfer excess funds accruing due to imposition of a surcharge imposed on another local government located within the State for use of the disposal facility, as authorized by G.S. 153A-292(b), to support the other services supported by the county's general fund.
- (15) Sufficient funds to meet the amounts to be paid during the fiscal year under continuing contracts previously entered into shall be appropriated unless such

contract reserves to the governing board the right to limit or not to make such appropriation.

- (16) The sum of estimated net revenues and appropriated fund balance in each fund shall be equal to appropriations in that fund. Appropriated fund balance in a fund shall not exceed the sum of cash and investments minus the sum of liabilities, encumbrances, and deferred revenues arising from cash receipts, as those figures stand at the close of the fiscal year next preceding the budget year.
- (17) No appropriations may be made from a county reappraisal reserve fund except for the purposes for which the fund was established.
- (18) No appropriation may be made from a service district fund to any other fund except (i) to the appropriate debt service fund or (ii) to an appropriate account in a capital reserve fund unless the district has been abolished.
- (19) No appropriation of the proceeds of a debt instrument may be made from the capital project fund account established to account for such proceeds except for the purpose for which such debt instrument was issued. The total of other appropriations made to another fund from such a capital project fund account may not exceed the amount of revenues other than debt instrument proceeds available to the account.
- (20) If a sheriff or police chief executes an agreement to provide school resource officers pursuant to G.S. 160A-288.5(b) or G.S. 162-26.5(b), respectively, and the governing board receives the funds pursuant to the agreement, the governing board shall appropriate the funds for that purpose.

Notwithstanding subdivisions (9), (10), (12), (14), (17), or (18) of this subsection, any fund may contain an appropriation to another fund to cover the cost of (i) levying and collecting the taxes and other revenues allocated to the fund, and (ii) building maintenance and other general overhead and administrative expenses properly allocable to functions or activities financed from the fund.

(c) The budget ordinance of a local government shall levy taxes on property at rates that will produce the revenue necessary to balance appropriations and revenues, after taking into account the estimated percentage of the levy that will not be collected during the fiscal year. The budget ordinance of a public authority shall be balanced so that appropriations do not exceed revenues.

(d) The budget ordinance shall be entered in the minutes of the governing board and within five days after adoption copies thereof shall be filed with the finance officer, the budget officer, and the clerk to the governing board. (1927, c. 146, s. 8; 1955, cc. 698, 724; 1969, c. 976, s. 2; 1971, c. 780, s. 1; 1973, c. 474, ss. 7-9; c. 489, s. 3; 1975, c. 437, ss. 13, 14; c. 514, ss. 5, 6; 1981, c. 685, ss. 3-5, 10; 1987, c. 796, s. 3(2); 1989, c. 756, s. 2; 1999-261, s. 1; 2000-140, s. 80; 2002-126, s. 6.7(a); 2013-413, s. 59.4(b); 2021-60, s. 3.2; 2024-1, ss. 1.1(c), 2.8A(f).)