



**CITY OF PONTIAC**  
**OFFICE OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGER**  
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**Dated: August 12, 2013**

**ORDER NO. S-317**

**RE: Capital Asset Policy**

**TO: Sherikia Hawkins, City Clerk**  
**John Naglick, Finance Director**

The Local Financial Stability and Choice Act (Act 436 of 2012/MCL 141.15411, et. seq.) in Section 10 empowers an Emergency Manager to issue orders to the appropriate local elected and appointed officials and employees, agents, and contractors of the local government a Manager considers necessary to accomplish the purposes of the Act and any such orders are binding on the local elected and appointed officials and employees, agents, and contractors of the local government to whom they are issued.

Section 12(1) of the Act provides that “[a]n emergency manager may take 1 or more of the following additional actions with respect to a local government that is in receivership, notwithstanding any charter provision to the contrary: (ee) [t]ake any other action or exercise any power or authority of any officer, employee, department, board, commission, or other similar entity of the local government, whether elected or appointed, relating to the operation of the local government. The power of the emergency manager shall be superior to and supersede the power of any of the foregoing officers or entities.”

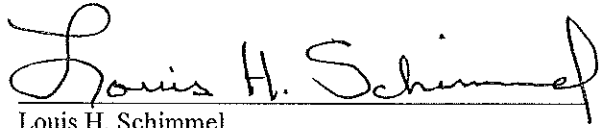
**It is hereby ordered:**

1. The attached “City of Pontiac Policy on Capital Assets” is adopted.
2. All other capital asset policies adopted by the City of Pontiac are hereby repealed.

**The Order shall have immediate effect.**

Copies of the documents referenced in this Order are to be maintained in the offices of the City Clerk and may be reviewed and/or copies may be obtained upon submission of a written request consistent with the requirements of the Michigan Freedom of Information Act and subject to any exemptions contained in that state statute and subject to any exemptions allowed under that statute (Public Act 442 of 1976, MCL 15.231, et. seq.).

This order is effective as indicated and is necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities required of the Emergency Manager as set forth in the Local Financial Stability and Choice Act (Act 436 of 2012/MCL 141.15411, et. seq.) and the contract between the Local Emergency Financial Assistance Loan Board and the Emergency Manager.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louis H. Schimmel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Louis H. Schimmel  
City of Pontiac  
Emergency Manager

cc: State of Michigan Department of Treasury  
Mayor Leon B. Jukowski  
Pontiac City Council

# **City of Pontiac**

## **Policy on Capital Assets**

### **Capitalization Policy**

A "capital asset" is land, improvement to land, easements, buildings, building improvements, vehicles, machines, equipment, works of art, historical treasures, and all other tangible and intangible items used in operations that have an estimated useful life of at least two years following the date of acquisition and when valued individually, contain a value of at least ten thousand dollars. A capital asset shall be considered to have been acquired on the date that the item was placed into useful service.

A minimum capitalization threshold of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) is hereby established for any individual item, unless the effect of doing so would be to eliminate a significant portion of total capital assets. Specific minimum thresholds are given to the following class of items:

<u>Asset Class</u>	<u>Minimum</u>
Land	\$ 10,000.00
Land Improvements	\$ 25,000.00
Buildings and Building Improvements	\$ 50,000.00
Machinery and Equipment	\$ 10,000.00
Vehicles	\$ 20,000.00
Office Machines	\$ 10,000.00
Office Furniture	\$ 10,000.00
Intangible Assets	\$ 10,000.00

To assist in the differentiation between a capitalizable item and maintenance, an item shall be capitalized if it meets the criteria established above and increases the capacity, efficiency, or useful life of the item.

At a minimum, the Finance Director or his designee shall assign the following information, if applicable, on all capital assets acquired after June 30, 2013 and still in the possession of the City of Pontiac:

- major asset class;
- asset subclass;
- function and activity;
- fund and account;
- asset number;
- asset description;
- estimated useful life in accordance with this policy.

At a minimum, the Finance Director or his designee shall maintain the following information, if applicable, on all capital assets acquired after June 30, 2013 and still in the possession of the City of Pontiac:

- property identification number for land;
- manufacturer;

- model year;
- model number;
- serial number;
- service contract information;
- insurance information;
- purchase information including vendor, price, method of payment, check number, date of payment, and purchase order number.

## **Useful Lives**

In establishing the useful lives of capital assets acquired after June 30, 2013, the Finance Director or his designee should take into consideration the quality of the asset obtained, the application of the asset in the future, and the environment in which the asset will be used and stored. Past experience with similar assets and the City's capital improvement program must also be considered. As a guide, the City Council recommends that the Finance Director or his designee use "Estimating useful lives for capital assets" by Paul Gruenwald, as published in the GAAFR Review by the Government Finance Officers Association and is hereby attached to this policy.

At least annually, the Finance Director or his designee should review the depreciation schedule of each capital asset and compare the schedule to the City's actual experience; if upon such comparison the decision is made that an adjustment to the depreciation schedule is required, then such adjustment should be made.

Annually, each department head shall be responsible for evaluating the condition of each capital asset under his control and reporting its condition to the Finance Director or his designee. The Finance Director or his designee shall create the various condition levels and standards.

For all capital infrastructures, the custodian shall provide an annual report to the Finance Director by the first day of February that addresses the following items:

- A condition rating jurisdiction wide;
- A condition rating for each asset class;
- Indirect condition data such as major repairs or continuous complaints;
- Suggestion if asset should be retired, replaced, or depreciation schedule extended.

At a minimum, depreciation should be entered into the City's books annually; however, the Finance Director or his designee has the option of making either quarterly or monthly entries. Straight-line depreciation shall be used. Assets acquired during the fiscal year shall be depreciated monthly.

## **Implementation**

The Finance Director or his designee is hereby authorized to make the necessary adjustments to the City's books to remove all items that do not meet the capitalization

threshold as established by this policy and have been fully depreciated. The Finance Director or his designee shall continue to depreciate all items listed on the City's books that do not meet the capitalization threshold as established by this policy and are not fully depreciated, and only such items when fully depreciated, the item and its related depreciation shall be removed from the City's books. If the item remains in the City's possession, the item shall be listed as a controllable asset.

All items acquired by the City after June 30, 2013 shall be capitalized if they adhere to this policy.

All items acquired by the City before July 1, 2013 for which the City does not have adequate detail to support the general ledger shall be removed from the general ledger.

### **Controllable Assets**

The City Council hereby establishes a policy for the concept of "controllable assets". A controllable asset is an item that does not meet the technical definition of a capital asset, but special care must be taken to ensure that adequate control is maintained over any such item that falls within the following categories:

- Items that require special attention to ensure legal compliance where legal or contractual provisions require a higher than ordinary level of accountability over certain items (e.g. items acquired through grant contracts or on loan to the City);
- Items that require special attention to protect public safety and avoid potential liability where some items by their very nature pose a risk to public safety and could be the source of potential liability (e.g. police weapons);
- Items that require special attention to compensate for a heightened risk of theft, where the item is easily transportable and readily marketable or easily diverted to personal use (e.g. computers, communication devices, certain tools).

The Finance Director or his designee shall maintain a list of all real property titled to the City and not included on the capital asset list as a controllable asset.

The Finance Director or his designee shall create a master template of controllable assets that identifies the item, its make, model, serial number, acquisition date, vendor, custodian, and storage location or use. Department heads shall be responsible for annually updating this list and certifying to the Finance Director or his designee that 1) the list is on file and available for inspection, and 2) that the list is reliable and complete. The department head shall require each custodian to maintain a list of items that are under their supervision.

### **Transfer and Disposal**

No capital asset or controllable asset shall be transferred from one custodian to another unless a form developed by the Finance Director or his designee has been filed with the record keeper.

No capital asset shall be disposed until the City Council passes a resolution authorizing such disposal. The Finance Director or his designee shall develop a form that shall be used by all custodians to request disposal of a capital asset.

No controllable asset shall be disposed until the Finance Director signs a form authorizing such disposal. The Finance Director or his designee shall develop a form that shall be used by all custodians to request disposal of a controllable asset.

The effective date of this section shall be July 1, 2013 or at such time when the Finance Director or his designee creates the list of controllable assets, whichever comes first.

## **Record Keeping**

The Finance Director shall designate a record keeper who shall maintain a file that contains the purchase order, original invoice, copy of method of payment, and asset disposal request form for a period of two years after the disposal of the capital asset or six years, whichever is later. The record keeper, in all practical instances, shall not have access to make adjustment to the general ledger.

## **Internal Control Reviews**

A person other than the custodian shall conduct a physical review of all capital assets on a test basis, at least once every five years. The initial review shall be conducted before December 31, 2013. The purpose of verifying is that the capital asset is still in the possession of the City and in the condition and location as claimed by the custodian. Such review should be done with minimal advanced notice.

If an item listed as a capital asset cannot be reasonably visually verified, a written report should be made immediately to the Finance Director, unless the Finance Director is the custodian, then such report should be made to the City's independent auditor.

The Finance Director or his designee shall be responsible for verifying that all controllable assets agree with the list on file in the department at least once every five years. If an item listed as a controllable asset cannot be reasonably visually verified, a written report should be made immediately to the Finance Director, unless the Finance Director is the custodian, then such report should be made to the City's independent auditor.

## **Effective Date**

As far as reasonably practical, this policy shall be considered effective July 1, 2013 and should be fully implemented by June 30, 2014, unless date-specific implementation dates are included.

(Dated July 23, 2013.)

# GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTING FOCUS

## Estimating useful lives for capital assets

By Paul E. Gruenwald, American Appraisal Associates

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board's (GASB) Statement No. 34, *Basic Financial Statements—and Management's Discussion and Analysis—for State and Local Governments*, will require that governments depreciate their exhaustible capital assets, including infrastructure.

Depreciation is the systematic and rational allocation of the (estimated) historical cost of a capital asset, (or if donated, the fair value of a capital asset at the time of donation), over its estimated useful service life. Accordingly, one of the principal challenges facing those attempting to implement depreciation accounting for previously undepreciated categories of capital assets is estimating the useful service lives of those assets (i.e., "lifing"). This article will attempt to provide financial statement preparers with information that may be useful for making such estimates.

**Background.** GASB Statement No. 34, paragraph 161, provides the following guidance on estimating the useful lives of capital assets:

For estimated useful lives, governments can use (a) general guidelines obtained from professional or industry organizations, (b) information for comparable assets of other governments, or (c) internal information. In determining estimated useful life, a government also should consider an asset's present condition and how long it is expected to meet service demands.

As discussed in an previous issue of *GAAFR Review* (October 2001), a number of states (especially state departments of transportation) are using the internet to make information available to local governments on the estimated useful lives of various categories of capital assets. Likewise, professional groups and consultants have provided information that should be useful for lifing purposes.

It is important, however, that such general information be adapted to a government's specific circumstances. GFOA issued a recommended practice earlier this year on *Estimating the Useful Lives of Capital Assets* that emphasized the need to take into account each of the following factors :

- **Quality.** Similar assets may differ substantially in quality, and hence in their useful lives, because of differences in materials, design and workmanship. For example, an asphalt road will not have the same useful life as a concrete road. Likewise, the depth of the material used for paving purposes, as well as the quality of the underlying base, will also affect the useful life of a road.
- **Application.** The useful life of a given type of capital asset may vary significantly depending upon its intended use. Thus, the life of a motor vehicle used in the public safety function may differ from the life of the same type of vehicle used in the parks and recreation function.
- **Environment.** Environmental differences among governments can have an important impact on the useful lives of their respective capital assets. For instance, the useful life of a road in a climate subject to extremes in temperature is likely to be different from that of a similar road located in a more temperate climate. Also, regulatory obsolescence may shorten the service life of some capital assets used in connection with highly regulated activities (e.g., utilities).

The GFOA's recommended practice goes on to explain that the potential effect of each of these factors could be mitigated or exacerbated as a consequence of a government's maintenance and replacement policy. For example, the potential for road damage is increased in a cold environment when cracks are not promptly repaired because water settling in the cracks will expand and contract, thereby accelerating the initial deterioration represented by the crack itself.

GFOA's recommended practice also emphasizes that lifing is not a one-time exercise. Governments need to monitor their actual experience with capital asset lives and make appropriate changes to estimated useful lives based upon that experience.

**Data on estimated useful lives.** The paragraphs that follow will offer information on the *average*

estimated useful lives of various types of capital assets. This information is based upon our experience performing studies designed to assist clients as they implement GASB Statement No. 34.

Before beginning, it should be mentioned that sometimes a given asset grouping may be classified either as a *land improvement* or as *infrastructure* depending upon the specific circumstances (e.g., parking lots, sidewalks, pedestrian paths). The criterion used to make a classification in such cases often is the location of the asset. A parking lot adjacent to a building, for example, might be classified as a *land improvement*, whereas a public parking lot on a street corner operated by the government might be classified as *infrastructure*.

**Roadways.** Information on roadways can be reported in one of several ways:

- *by detail* (e.g., curbs, gutters, surface type, guardrails, concrete barriers, etc)
- *by subsystem* (e.g., roadway pavement, including curbs and gutters)
- *by network* (e.g., roadway network, consisting of pavement, curbs, gutters, lighting, guardrails, signage, etc.).

From our experience in setting up and reporting infrastructure values, the most common method for reporting roadway infrastructure is by subsystem. This approach provides a level of detail sufficient for describing the components of the roadway system and allows the use of a component-specific useful life for depreciation purposes. The subsystem approach also facilitates the retirement of infrastructure assets on a go-forward basis.

The estimated useful life of roadways appears to depend more on the type of pavement material used than on the class of roadway (i.e., local, connector, arterial, major arterial). The reason may be that the engineering design of roadways with a high average daily traffic (ADT) adjusts for the high traffic volume compared to the engineering design of a roadway with a lower traffic volume. Thus, a concrete arterial roadway will have the same estimated useful life as a concrete local roadway.

Although roadways usually are reported by type of pavement, governments sometimes prefer to report by class of roadway (i.e. local, collector, arterial or major arterial). In that case, the estimat-

ed useful life is weighted to take into account the mix of surface types comprising each class.

Four factors affect the life assigned to roadways:

- subgrade or bearing capacity of the road (i.e., a harder subgrade under the roadway leads to a longer life for the roadway)
- the composition of the asphalt or concrete surface
- traffic volume (engineered for cars and/or trucks)
- climatic conditions (e.g., as amount of rain or snow, fluctuation in temperature).

One additional factor to consider when assigning roadway lives is the speed limit. Asphalt roads with a slower speed limit, for example, have a shorter life than asphalt roads with a high speed limit because of the "creeping" quality of asphalt.

When arriving at an estimated life for a roadway it is assumed all normal maintenance will be performed to maintain the roadway during its normal life. "Average" lives for roadways are as follows:

Dirt	10 years (subject to weather conditions)
Gravel	15 years (subject to weather conditions)
Concrete	30 years
Asphaltic concrete	20 years
Brick or stone	50 years

**Sidewalks.** As with roadways, climatic conditions, such as the amount of rain or snow and fluctuations in temperature, affect the life of sidewalks. Otherwise, the average lives for sidewalks depend upon the material used for construction, as follows:

Concrete	30 years
Asphalt	25 years
Brick or Stone	50 years (subject to weather conditions)

**Parking lots.** Once again, the key variable in determining useful life is the construction material:

Concrete	35 years
Asphalt	15 years
Gravel	10 years
Brick or stone	45 years



**Bridges and culverts.** Sometimes there is confusion when attempting to distinguish *bridges* from *culverts*. One approach to resolve this potential problem is to use the length of a structure as the determining factor (e.g., all structures with a span of more than 20 feet are to be classified as *bridges*).

As with roadways, a number of state departments of transportation publish estimated useful life guidelines of bridges within the state. For financial reporting purposes, the following average lives may be useful, subject to any adjustment needed to reflect climate and temperature fluctuations.

Precast concrete	40 years
Prestressed concrete	45 years
Steel with truss	50 years
Steel without truss	45 years
Timber/wood	30 years
Pedestrian	
Steel	30 years
Concrete	30 years
Wood	25 years

Unique structures, such as suspension bridges, cable staid bridges, moveable bridges (e.g., rotating, hydraulic, bascule), and covered bridges typically are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Culverts can be divided into two categories: *major* and *small*. *Major culverts* have a side area of 35 square feet or greater. *Small culverts* have a side area less than 35 square feet.

**Major culverts:**

Concrete (precast box, precast elliptical, cast in place)	40 years
Concrete pre stress	45 years
Timber log treated	30 years
Steel (corrugated round, corrugated bottomless arch)	30 years

**Small culverts:**

Plastic	25 years
Cast iron	30 years
Metal corrugated	30 years
Concrete	40 years

**Road signage.** GASB Statement No. 34 limits the mandatory retroactive reporting of infrastructure

assets to *major* networks and subsystems. Consequently, road signage normally is exempt from this requirement. Nonetheless, most governments are choosing to report roadway signage because information is readily available. The average useful life of road signage is 10 years.

**Traffic lights.** The situation for traffic lights is essentially the same as that just described for road signage. The following are average useful lives:

Mast arms	20 years
Hung wire	15 years

**Street lighting.** Once again, most governments will report street lighting voluntarily, because the information is readily available. The average useful life of street lighting varies, as follows:

Concrete	30 years
Metal	20 years
Wood	15 years

**Sewer lines.** For sewer lines, the key factor in estimating the average useful life is the material used, as follows:

Concrete	50 years
Brick	90 years
Metal	40 years

**Storm drains.** The average useful lives of storm drains depends upon the type of material used, as follows:

Plastic	25 years
Cast Iron	30 years
Metal Corrugated	30 years
Concrete	40 years
Ditch/Trench	100 years

**Berms and tunnels.** The average useful life for a berm is approximately 20 years. Tunnels have a highly variable life expectancy. Accordingly, useful lives for tunnels typically are assessed individually.

**Alleys.** The average useful life of an alley is similar to that of a roadway, as follows:

Concrete	20 years
Asphaltic Concrete	20 years
Dirt	10 years
Gravel	15 years
Brick or Stone	50 years

**Man-made lakes, water ways/canals, and boat ramps.** The average useful life of a man-made lake is 100 years. The average useful life of a waterway or canal is also 100 years. The average useful life of a boat ramp depends upon the construction material, as follows:

Wood	10 years
Concrete/Asphalt	20 years
Metal	15 years

**Marinas.** Different estimated useful lives apply to different types of marinas, as follows:

Piers	50 years
Seawalls	50 years
Bulkheads	50 years

**Bike/Jogging paths.** Once again, the type of surface is the key factor in estimating the useful life of a bike or jogging path (just as was the case for roadways and alleys), as follows:

Dirt	10 years
Gravel	15 years
Concrete	30 years
Asphalt	20 years
Composite rubber	7 years
Brick or stone	50 years

**Reservoirs and dams.** Reservoirs have an estimated useful life of 50 years. Dams require individual research. As a general rule, however, earthen dams have a life of 40 years and concrete dams have a life of 60 years.

**Airport runways.** Airport runways have, on average, an estimated useful life of 10 years.

**Moveable equipment.** The following is a list of average estimated useful lives for some of the most commonly encountered categories of moveable equipment:

Athletic equipment	10 years
Appliances/food service equipment	10 years
Audio visual equipment	7 years
Books, multi-media materials	5 years
Business machines	7 years
Communications equipment	10 years
Computer software	5 years
Contractors/construction equipment	12 years
Computer equipment	5 years
Fire department equipment	12 years
Furniture	20 years

Grounds, agricultural equipment	15 years
Lab, science equipment	10 years
Law enforcement equipment	10 years
Licensed vehicles	6 years
Machinery and tools	15 years
Musical instruments	10 years
Outdoors recreational equipment	15 years
Stage and auditorium equipment	20 years
Custodial equipment	15 years
Photocopiers	5 years

**Land improvements.** The following is a list of the average estimated useful lives for common categories of land improvements:

Fencing, gates	20 years
Landscaping	10 years
Outside sprinkler systems	25 years
Athletic fields	15 years
Golf courses	20 years
Septic systems	15 years
Stadiums	45 years
Swimming pools	20 years
Tennis courts	20 years
Fountains	20 years
Retaining walls	20 years
Bleachers	20 years
Soccer fields	15 years
Running track	15 years
Outdoor lighting	20 years

**Buildings, building components, and building services.** The following is a list of the average estimated useful lives for buildings, building components, and building services:

Permanent structures	50 years
Portable structures	25 years
Excavation	50 years
Foundation	50 years
Frame	50 years
Floor structure	50 years
Floor covering	15 years
Carpeting	5 years
Computer flooring	10 years
Exterior walls	50 years
Roof cover	10 years
Interior construction	15 years
Interior renovation	10 years
Ceiling finish	10 years
Plumbing	20 years
HVAC	20 years
Electrical	20 years
Fire system	25 years
Elevators	20 years