



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE  
LANSING

RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

BRIAN CALLEY  
LT. GOVERNOR

March 1, 2013

Dave Bing, Mayor  
City of Detroit  
2 Woodward Avenue  
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Detroit City Council  
2 Woodward Avenue  
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Dear Mayor Bing and Detroit City Councilmembers:

Public Act 72 of 1990, the Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act, requires that I, as Governor, reach one of the following three conclusions within 30 days of receiving a financial review team report:

- (a) A serious financial problem does not exist in the local government.
- (b) A serious financial problem does exist in the local government, but a consent agreement containing a plan to resolve the problem has been adopted pursuant to Section 14(1)(c) of the Act.
- (c) A local government financial emergency exists because no satisfactory plan to resolve a serious financial problem exists.

I have reviewed in detail the report and supplemental documentation submitted to me on February 19, 2013, by the Detroit Financial Review Team. I agree with the conclusion of the report, which was that a financial emergency exists within the City of Detroit because no satisfactory plan exists to resolve a serious financial problem.

Therefore, I wish to inform you that, pursuant to Section 15(1)(c) of the Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act, I have determined that a local government financial emergency exists within the City of Detroit because no satisfactory plan to resolve a serious financial problem exists.

### **Findings of Fact**

Section 15(2) of the Act requires that, upon a determination by me of a financial emergency, I provide you with findings of fact utilized as the basis upon which this determination was made, and a concise and explicit statement of the underlying facts supporting the factual findings.

## **Preliminary Review**

On December 11th through December 14th, 2012, the Department of Treasury conducted a preliminary review of the finances of the City of Detroit to determine whether or not a serious financial problem existed. Section 12(1) of the Act provides that a preliminary review must be conducted if one, or more, of the conditions enumerated therein occurs. The preliminary review of the City of Detroit resulted from the conditions enumerated in subdivisions (j) and (k) of Section 12(1) having occurred within the City.<sup>1</sup> The preliminary review found, or confirmed, the following:

- The City violated requirements of Section 17 of Public Act 2 of 1968, the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act, which requires that local officials monitor and promptly amend an adopted budget as necessary to prevent deficit spending. In addition, City officials violated requirements of Sections 18 and 19 of the Act providing, respectively, that local officials not incur expenditures against an appropriation account in excess of the amount appropriated by the legislative body and that local officials not authorize or participate in the expenditure of funds except as authorized by a general appropriations act.
- The City experienced cash flow problems throughout the 2010 and 2011 fiscal years, some of which had been alleviated by the issuing or refinancing of debt. The City projected possibly depleting its cash prior to its June 30, 2013 fiscal year end. However, because of inherent problems within the reporting function of the City, the projections continued to change from month to month making it difficult to make informed decisions regarding its fiscal health. The City would not have experienced significant cash flow challenges if City officials had complied with statutory requirements to monitor and amend adopted budgets as needed.
- The City incurred overall deficits in various funds, including the General Fund. In fact, the City experienced cumulative General Fund deficits that had exceeded \$100 million dating back to 2005. These deficits had fluctuated between \$155.4 million and \$331.9 million. One of the primary methods City officials had used to reduce the deficits had been to issue more debt. Total General Fund debt and other long-term liability proceeds for the years between 2005 and 2011 were over \$600 million, temporarily reducing the deficits by an equal amount. Debt proceeds reduced the deficit in the year the debt was issued, but reduced fund balance over time as debt service payments increased.

Based upon the foregoing preliminary review, the State Treasurer concluded, and reported to me on December 14, 2012, that a serious financial problem existed in the City of Detroit and recommended the appointment of a financial review team.

---

<sup>1</sup> Subsection (j) provides that “[t]he local government has violated the requirements of sections 17 to 20 of the uniform budgeting and accounting act, 1968 PA 2, MCL 141.437 to 141.440, and the state treasurer has forwarded a report of this violation to the attorney general.” Subsection (k) provides that “[t]he local government has failed to comply with the requirements of section 21 of the Glenn Steil state revenue sharing act of 1971, 1971 PA 140, MCL 141.921, for filing or instituting a deficit recovery plan.”



## **Review Team Findings**

On December 18, 2012, I appointed a six-member Financial Review Team. The Review Team convened on December 19th and 20th 2012, and January 3rd, 7th, 9th, 16th, 25th, February 1st, 14th, and 15th 2013.

The Review Team found, or confirmed, the existence of the following conditions based upon information provided by City officials, or the City's audit firm, or other relevant sources:

- The City continues to experience a significant depletion of its cash. Projections estimated a cumulative cash deficit in excess of \$100.0 million by June 30, 2013, absent implementation of financial countermeasures. The Review Team noted that while City officials deserved credit for considering and, in some instances, adopting difficult financial reforms, those reforms were too heavily weighted toward one-time savings and applied only to non-union employees who represent only a small portion of the City's overall wage and benefit burden.
- The City's General Fund had not experienced a positive year-end fund balance since fiscal year 2004. Since that time, the General Fund had cumulative deficits ranging from \$155.4 million in fiscal year 2005, to \$331.9 million in fiscal year 2009. The General Fund deficit was \$326.6 million in fiscal year 2012. The primary method by which City officials had sought to address these deficits had been by issuing long-term debt. While such an approach reduced the deficit in the year in which the debt was issued, it also reduced fund balance over time as debt service payments increased. Had City officials not issued debt, the City's accumulated General Fund deficit would have been \$936.8 million in fiscal year 2012.
- As of June 30, 2012, the City's long-term liabilities, including unfunded actuarial accrued pension liabilities and other post-employment benefits, exceeded \$14 billion. City officials have projected that over the next five years, the expenditures needed to fund certain long-term liabilities will total approximately \$1.9 billion. However, City officials had not yet devised a satisfactory plan to address the long-term liability issue.
- The City Charter contains numerous restrictions and structural details which make it extremely difficult for City officials to restructure the City's operations in any meaningful and timely manner. These restrictions include numerous steps and time periods which must be observed before certain proposed changes may be implemented and provisions which make it all but impossible to restructure municipal services.

In addition to the foregoing information, the Review Team found that:

- According to the City's fiscal year 2012 financial audit, the cumulative General Fund deficit increased by 82 percent, from \$148.1 million as of June 30, 2011 to \$269.5 million as of June 30, 2012. (The unrestricted General Fund deficit increased by 66.1 percent, from \$196.6 million



to \$326.6 million.) While the General Fund had an operating surplus (i.e., recurring revenues in excess of recurring expenditures) of \$105.8 million, net transfers out of the General Fund of \$227.5 million resulted in a negative net change in the General Fund balance of \$121.7 million.

- According to information provided to the Michigan Legislative Auditor General's Office by the State Court Administrative Office, as of June 30, 2012, the City's 36th District Court had \$279.3 million in outstanding accounts receivables. Of that amount, it is estimated that \$199 million is owed to the City of Detroit, \$76 million is owed to the State of Michigan, and \$100.9 million has been outstanding for more than seven years. The accounts receivables were comprised of fines, fees, and other costs related to parking violations, civil infractions, misdemeanor traffic and drunken driving violations, and other misdemeanor violations. As of June 30, 2012, the 36th District Court's collection rate for accounts receivables was only 7.7 percent compared to an average collection rate of 60 percent for other courts within the seven county region of Genesee, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

In addition, as of January of 2013, 36th District Court officials had taken no actions to reduce expenditures in light of a \$6 million reduction in its appropriation. In fact, the Court's current budget funds 285 employees, but the Court presently has 350 employees, excluding judges.

- The December 28, 2012, management letter which accompanied the City's fiscal year 2012 financial audit report identified numerous material weaknesses and significant deficiencies in the City's financial and accounting operations.
- Financial audit reports for the City reflected significant variances between General Fund revenues and expenditures, both as initially budgeted and amended, versus General Fund revenues and expenditures actually realized. The variances showed that City officials consistently had overestimated fund revenues and expenditures and called into question the ability of City officials to adopt and effectively monitor budgets, or to estimate revenues and expenditures upon which those budgets are built.
- Operational dysfunction contributed to the City's serious financial problem. For example, the Police Department has approximately 2,030 employees. However, the views of City officials differed significantly as to how many of those employees are engaged in police work as opposed to ancillary administrative functions such as payroll. Some City officials asserted to the Review Team that only a third of the Police Department employees are engaged in patrolling the City, while Police Department officials indicated that approximately 68 percent of employees are engaged in patrol work and another 15 percent are engaged in investigations. The Review Team could not resolve this discrepancy because the City's administration has no reliable information concerning what staffing levels are, or should be, within the Police Department.

### **Conclusion**

Based upon the foregoing information, the Review Team confirmed the findings of the preliminary review, and concluded that a financial emergency existed within the City because no satisfactory plan existed to resolve a serious financial problem. After thoroughly reviewing the report and supplemental documentation of the Review Team, I concur with their conclusion. Therefore, pursuant to Section 15(1)(c) of the Act, I have determined that a local government financial emergency exists within the City of Detroit because no satisfactory plan exists to resolve a serious financial problem.

### **Notice of Hearing**

Pursuant to Section 15(2) of the Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act, the chief administrative officer or governing body may within 10 days request a hearing upon the determination of a financial emergency. The deadline for requesting a hearing is 5:00 P.M., Monday March 11, 2013. In the event that a hearing is requested, it will be convened on Tuesday March 12, 2013, at 10:00 A.M., at the Richard H. Austin (Treasury) Building before Mary G. MacDowell, Chief Deputy Treasurer.

It should be noted that the hearing would not be an original fact finding proceeding. Its purpose would be to afford City officials an opportunity to indicate whether the findings of the Review Team report were supported by competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record. Therefore, any information which City officials may wish to present that was not available to the Review Team, or that concerns actions taken by City officials since the Review Team filed its report, or that concerns actions City officials anticipate taking in the future to address the financial emergency in the City, will be considered beyond the scope of the hearing.

Sincerely,



Rick Snyder  
Governor