

# **Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority**



**Annual Report  
for  
Fiscal Year 2007**

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**October 16, 2007**

**PENNSYLVANIA INTERGOVERNMENTAL  
COOPERATION AUTHORITY**

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Uri Z. Monson.....Deputy Executive Director  
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Andrew Wietstock ..... Analyst  
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Kim Richardson ..... Secretary/Receptionist

**Professional Advisors**

Authority Counsel

Reed Smith LLP

Independent Auditors

Isdaner & Company, LLC

## The Mission of the Authority

The mission of the Authority, as stated in its enabling legislation, is as follows:

*Policy.--It is hereby declared to be a public policy of the Commonwealth to exercise its retained sovereign powers with regard to taxation, debt issuance and matters of Statewide concern in a manner calculated to foster the fiscal integrity of cities of the first class to assure that these cities provide for the health, safety and welfare of their citizens; pay principal and interest owed on their debt obligations when due; meet financial obligations to their employees, vendors and suppliers; and provide for proper financial planning procedures and budgeting practices. The inability of a city of the first class to provide essential services to its citizens as a result of a fiscal emergency is hereby determined to affect adversely the health, safety and welfare not only of the citizens of that municipality but also of other citizens in this Commonwealth.*

*Legislative intent.--*

*(1) It is the intent of the General Assembly to:*

*(i) provide cities of the first class with the legal tools with which such cities can eliminate budget deficits that render them unable to perform essential municipal services;*

*(ii) create an authority that will enable cities of the first class to access capital markets for deficit elimination and seasonal borrowings to avoid default on existing obligations and chronic cash shortages that will disrupt the delivery of municipal services;*

*(iii) foster sound financial planning and budgetary practices that will address the underlying problems which result in such deficits for cities of the first class, which city shall be charged with the responsibility to exercise efficient and accountable fiscal practices, such as:*

- (A) increased managerial accountability;*
- (B) consolidation or elimination of inefficient city programs;*
- (C) recertification of tax-exempt properties;*
- (D) increased collection of existing tax revenues;*
- (E) privatization of appropriate city services;*
- (F) sale of city assets as appropriate;*
- (G) improvement of procurement practices including competitive bidding procedures; and*
- (H) review of compensation and benefits of city employees; and*

*(iv) exercise its powers consistent with the rights of citizens to home rule and self government.*

*(2) The General Assembly further declares that this legislation is intended to remedy the fiscal emergency confronting cities of the first class through the implementation of sovereign powers of the Commonwealth with respect to taxation, indebtedness and matters of Statewide concern. To safeguard the rights of the citizens to the electoral process and home rule, the General Assembly intends to exercise its power in an appropriate manner with the elected officers of cities of the first class.*

*(3) The General Assembly further declares that this legislation is intended to authorize the imposition of a tax or taxes to provide a source of funding for an intergovernmental cooperation authority to enable it to assist cities of the first class and to incur debt of such authority for such purposes; however, the General Assembly intends that such debt shall not be a debt or liability of the Commonwealth or a city of the first class nor shall debt of the authority payable from and secured by such source of funding create a charge directly or indirectly against revenues of the Commonwealth or city of the first class.*

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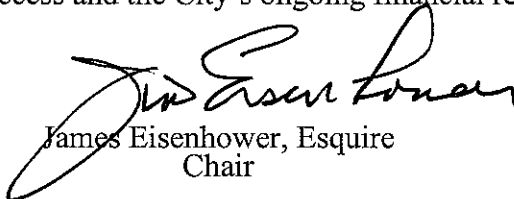
October, 2007

To: The Governor and the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
The Chairperson and the Minority Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the  
Pennsylvania Senate  
The Chairperson and the Minority Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
The Mayor, the City Council and the Controller of the City of Philadelphia  
Other Parties Concerned with the Maintenance of Financial Stability of and Achieving  
Balanced Budgets for the City of Philadelphia

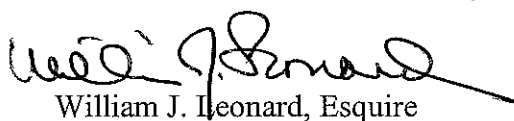
As the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority ("PICA") marks its sixteenth anniversary, we are pleased to provide you with this Annual Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2007 ("FY2007"). In 1991, the City of Philadelphia ("City") faced a deficit of \$137 million, and lacked a coherent fiscal planning mechanism. The City projects it will end FY2007 with a surplus of over \$215 million, and projects positive fund balances for the next five years as part of the continued success of the annual Five-Year Financial Plan required by PICA. Though the City faces challenges, including a high debt burden, a large Pension Fund liability, underinvestment in core infrastructure, an uncompetitive tax structure, rapidly increasing health insurance costs, and a struggling Philadelphia Gas Works, we remain confident in PICA's ability to help the City maintain a positive fiscal outlook.

Even after sixteen years, PICA continues to have a significant role in the ongoing City financial recovery. FY2007 activity included: (1) the approval of a Five-Year Financial Plan for Fiscal Years 2008 through 2012 which anticipates balanced budgets and tax reductions in each component year; (2) monitoring Five-Year Financial Plan compliance; (3) publication of issues papers on the key fiscal challenges facing the City; (4) continuing review and monitoring of the City's operations; (5) oversight as to utilization of remainder moneys borrowed by PICA for City capital projects, productivity enhancements and indemnity costs; (6) beginning an assessment of key City facilities; and (7) service as the primary independent source of objective financial information and opinion for the benefit of the citizens of the City and the Commonwealth as well as for the media, the financial community and other outside observers.

The PICA Board has been gratified by the recognition PICA regularly receives from the financial community and the media for its successful performance as the agency charged with the responsibility for oversight and monitoring of the City's finances. We would be remiss if we failed to acknowledge and express our sincere appreciation for the continuous support PICA receives from the Governor and the General Assembly, and also for the ongoing cooperation of Philadelphia's Mayor, City Council and City Controller. This support and cooperation are vital factors to PICA's continuing success and the City's ongoing financial recovery.



James Eisenhower, Esquire  
Chair



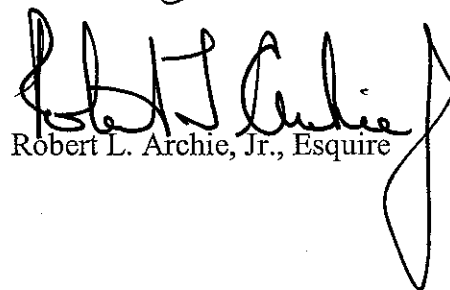
William J. Leonard, Esquire



Varsovia Fernandez



Michael A. Karp



Robert L. Archie, Jr., Esquire

## **PICA Annual Report Requirements**

The Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority Act for Cities of First Class, Act of 1991, P.L. 9, No. 6 at §203(b)(5) requires PICA:

To make annual reports within 120 days of the close of the Authority's fiscal year commencing with the fiscal year ending June 30, 1992, to the Governor and the General Assembly describing its progress with respect to restoring the financial stability of assisted cities and achieving balanced budgets for assisted cities, such reports to be filed with the Governor, with the presiding officers of the Senate and the House of Representatives, with the Chairperson and the Minority Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the Senate and the Chairperson and the Minority Chairperson of the House of Representatives and with the Governing Body, Mayor and Controller of the assisted city.

§207 of the Act further provides for an annual audit to be included with the Annual Report, as follows:

Every Authority shall file an annual report with the Chairperson and the Minority Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the Senate and the Chairperson and the Minority Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives, which shall make provisions for the accounting of revenues and expenses. The Authority shall have its books, accounts and records audited annually in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards by an independent auditor who shall be a certified public accountant, and a copy of his audit report shall be attached to and be made a part of the Authority's annual report. A concise financial statement shall be published annually in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

## Overview - PICA and its Role

### PICA Act

The Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority ("PICA") was created in 1991 to assist the City of Philadelphia (the "City") in overcoming a severe financial crisis. At that time, the City was burdened with a growing cumulative operating deficit, lacked resources to pay mounting overdue bills from vendors, had been pushed below the investment grade level by national rating agencies, had instituted an across-the-board hiring freeze, was in a mode in which the quality of municipal services being provided was rapidly eroding, and verged on bankruptcy. PICA was created through the joint efforts of concerned Philadelphians and State officials who envisioned a structure which would assist the City in putting its revenue collection and spending processes in order, and at the same time reach a consensus on its future priorities, assets and limitations. The PICA Act was a compromise fashioned to meet the requirements of the Pennsylvania Constitution, the concept of local government Home Rule, and the interests of the State in the preservation of the financial integrity of its municipalities. PICA's role, a combination of cooperation, assistance and oversight was determined to be of vital importance in both a financial and political sense. PICA was designed to be a catalyst in the City's re-evaluation of the role and priorities of municipal government.

### Cooperation Agreement

The Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement negotiated by and between PICA and the City and finalized in January of 1992 formalized the relationship contemplated by the PICA legislation. The powers and duties of the respective participants envisioned in the legislation were put into place with the execution of the Agreement. PICA was designed to be much more than a vehicle to raise otherwise unavailable funds for Philadelphia. It has the responsibility to evaluate and approve annually revised Five-Year Financial Plans, to monitor compliance by the City with such Plans, and the power to instruct the Commonwealth's Secretary of the Budget to withhold both substantial Commonwealth financial assistance and the net proceeds of the PICA Tax (after PICA debt service) should the City fail to comply with its duty to balance such Plan in each of its years.

### The PICA Organization

The Authority Board determined at the outset that PICA should not become overburdened with staff, preferring instead to impress upon the City the necessity for Philadelphia to develop and implement its own solutions to its problems. The Authority's staff, which totals seven, is organized to evaluate the actions of the City and to issue appropriate reports thereon to assist those who are properly charged with administration of City affairs or development of underlying policies.

### PICA Financial Assistance to the City

The issuance of bonds to provide the funds directly required to assist the City to avoid insolvency and for essential capital programs was an important initial role of the Authority. That role has been successfully completed and the Authority's "new money" bond issuance powers have expired. Authority bond issuance is currently limited to refinancing existing Authority debt in order to realize net debt service savings to the City.

Through debt issuance and capital program earnings the Authority has provided in excess of \$1,188 million to directly assist the City, allocated to the following purposes:

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount (thousands)</u>
Deficit Elimination/Indemnities Funding	\$ 269,000
Productivity Bank	20,000
Capital Projects	518,003
Retirement of Certain High Interest City Debt	<u>381,300</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$1,188,303</u>

### **The Five-Year Financial Plan Process**

PICA has consistently emphasized its firm belief that the City's continuing fiscal rehabilitation is dependent upon its continuing success in addressing both financial and managerial issues; that the process is less one dealing with finance than assessing the financial results of managerial decisions. Effective strategic planning and the institutionalization of change are matters which the City must continue to focus upon in order to assure that its considerable assets continue to be applied intelligently and consistently. The Plan process helps to document the City's intentions and the results of its actions.

As mandated in the PICA Act (and as further refined by the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement), the Plan is required to include:

- Projected revenues and expenditures of the principal operating funds of the City for five fiscal years (the current fiscal year and the next four); and
- Components to (i) eliminate any projected deficit for the current fiscal year; (ii) restore to special fund accounts money from those accounts used for purposes other than those specifically authorized; (iii) balance the current fiscal year budget and subsequent budgets in the Plan through sound budgetary practices, including, but not limited to, reductions in expenditures, improvements in productivity, increases in revenues, or a combination of such steps; (iv) provide procedures to avoid a fiscal emergency condition in the future; and (v) enhance the ability of the City to regain access to the short- and long-term credit markets.

There also are statutorily mandated standards for development of the Plan (and the manner in which it is to be evaluated by PICA):

- all projections of revenues and expenditures are to be based upon consistently applied reasonable and appropriate assumptions and methods of estimation;
- revenues are to be recognized in the accounting period in which they become both measurable and available; and

- cash flow projections are to be made based upon reasonable and appropriate assumptions as to sources and uses of cash, including factors intended to provide a complete picture of cash demands.

The PICA Act also mandates standards for the basis for estimation of City revenues:

City Sources - current or proposed tax rates, historical collection patterns, and generally recognized econometric models;

State sources - historical patterns, currently available levels, or on levels proposed in a budget by the Governor;

Federal sources - historical patterns, currently available levels, or levels proposed in a budget by the President or in a Congressional budget resolution; and

Non-tax sources - current or proposed rates, charges or fees, historical patterns and generally recognized econometric models.

Deviations from such standards for estimation of revenues and appropriations which are proposed to be used by the City are to be disclosed specifically to the Authority and approved by a "qualified majority" of the Authority (four of its five appointed members). The Authority's Board generally has required that conservative criteria be used, and the result of the PICA process has been credible budget and Plan-making.

The Plan is also required to include a schedule of projected City capital commitments (and proposed sources of funding), debt service projections for existing and anticipated City obligations, a schedule of payments for legally-mandated services projected to be due during the term of the Plan and a schedule showing the number of authorized employee positions (filled and unfilled), inclusive of estimates of wage and benefit levels for various groups of employees.

The PICA Act requires that the Authority solicit an opinion or certification from the City Controller, prepared in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, with respect to the reasonableness of the assumptions and estimates in the Plan. The PICA Act does not, however, require that the Controller's determinations bind the Authority in its evaluation of a proposed Plan.

The PICA Act (§209) and the Cooperation Agreement (§409(b)) require submission of quarterly reports by the City concerning its compliance with the current Plan within 45 days of the end of a fiscal quarter. If a quarterly report indicates that the City is unable to project a balanced Plan and budget for its current fiscal year, the Authority may by the vote of a qualified majority declare the occurrence of a "variance", which is defined in §4.10 of the Cooperation Agreement as follows:

- (i) a net adverse change in the fund balance of a Covered Fund of more than one percent (1%) of the revenues budgeted for such Covered Fund for that fiscal year is reasonably projected to occur, such projection to be calculated from the beginning of the fiscal year for the entire fiscal year, or

(ii) the actual net cash flows of the City for a Covered Fund are reasonably projected to be less than ninety-five percent (95%) of the net cash flows of the City for such Covered Fund for that fiscal year originally forecast at the time of adoption of the budget, such projection to be calculated from the beginning of the fiscal year for the entire fiscal year.

As defined in §1.01 of the Cooperation Agreement, the City's "Covered Funds" are the General Fund, General Capital Fund, Grants Revenue Fund and any other principal operating funds of the City which become part of the City's Consolidated Cash Account.

### **The Effect of a "Variance"**

The statute mandates the submission of monthly reports to PICA by the City in the event of a determination by the Authority of the occurrence of a variance. That situation occurred once in PICA's history. In November of 1992, the City projected a variance of \$57 million (2.5%) for the 1993 fiscal year, and the Authority agreed with that assessment on December 9, 1992. Thereafter, until May of 1993, the City filed required monthly reports. The City was relieved of its burden to make monthly reports when the Authority approved the City's plan of correction in conjunction with its approval of the City's Five-Year Financial Plan for FY93-FY98 in May of 1993.

As provided in §210(e) of the PICA Act, legal consequences flow from a determination by the Authority of the existence of a variance. In addition to the City's additional reporting responsibilities, it also is required to develop revisions to the Plan necessary to cure the variance. The remedies which PICA has available to deal with a continuing variance are to direct the withholding of both specific Commonwealth funds due the City and that portion of the 1.50% tax levied on the wages and income of residents of the City in excess of the amounts necessary to pay debt service on PICA's bonds. Any amounts withheld would be paid over to the City after correction of the variance.

### **PICA "Threshold" Policies**

From its inception, PICA has held to the following policies in its evaluation of Philadelphia's Plans, initiatives, proposals and performance:

Emphasis on Structural Change - Consistent City failure to deal effectively with a long list of areas of government operations and service delivery contributed to the need for PICA. The City shall continually be encouraged to rethink existing policies and practices and to avoid sacrificing long-term progress for short-term gain.

Focus on Long-Term Progress - Meaningful strategic planning, institutionalization of appropriate change, focus on attaining long-term structural balance and on implementing pragmatic economic stimulus policies and procedures are matters of paramount importance and are to be emphasized in the PICA oversight process.

Infrastructure Programs - A meaningful capital program is a visible and tangible element of a City's social contract with its residents. The capital program, including proper maintenance of capital assets, is a key element to long-term fiscal stability. A consistent policy to adequately fund and staff infrastructure maintenance shall be continually encouraged.

Consistent Application of Stated Assumptions - Inconsistent application of unstated assumptions frequently caused pre-PICA City budgets to lack credibility, and made reliable assessment of prospects of attaining the results of such budgets impossible. PICA's Plan review process shall focus on assumptions utilized being both visible and consistent in their application.

Use of Credible Revenue Estimates - Realistic revenue estimates are a vital component of the City's budgeting and Plan preparation process and shall be a matter of primary concern in PICA's Annual Plan review process.

While it would be incorrect to claim that PICA threshold policies have resulted in all desired effects coming to fruition, they have contributed substantially to City procedural improvements.

### **Philadelphia City Controller**

An unforeseen benefit of the PICA Act's requirement that PICA solicit an opinion from the City Controller as to the reasonableness of Plan assumptions and estimates has been the extensive cooperative professional relationship which has developed between PICA Staff and the Controller's Office. The mutually beneficial professional relationship includes ongoing cooperation on matters of common concern; joint reviews of Plan components including appropriate joint meetings with City department heads and chief operating personnel pertinent thereto; cooperation on capital project reviews and reviews of PICA funded special purpose grants to the City; PICA assistance for Controller special situation studies; and specific Office of the Controller personnel assigned responsibility for effective ongoing liaison with PICA Staff. The assistance provided to PICA by the City Controller is sincerely appreciated. Cooperation between its "oversight" and "watchdog" entities has substantially benefited the City.

### **Providing Comment on Pending Legislation**

In accordance with its oversight duties, PICA continues to provide comments and fiscal analysis on City legislation which impacts the City's fiscal situation. Further, PICA upholds its responsibility to provide analysis on appropriate legislation before the General Assembly, in accordance with the PICA Act § 203 (c) (5), which empowers the Authority "to make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding legislation or resolutions that affect Commonwealth aid or mandates to an assisted city or that concern an assisted city's taxing power or relate to an assisted city's fiscal stability."

### **Corporate Entities and The School District of Philadelphia**

"Corporate Entities" are defined in §1.01 of the Cooperation Agreement as "an authority or other corporate entity, now existing or hereafter created, of which one or more members of its governing board are appointed by the Mayor and which performs governmental functions for the City". The Agreement provides that the City shall cooperate with PICA in any PICA request to look into the operations of either the Corporate Entities or the School District of Philadelphia.

To date, PICA has not devoted any substantial attention to the operations of such City related institutions, but it has offered its expertise to the School Reform Commission, the CEO of the School District of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth's Secretary of the Budget, and has provided informal assistance where appropriate.

In accordance with legislation passed by the General Assembly, PICA Staff has had initial discussions with the Pennsylvania Convention Center and representative of the Commonwealth regarding development of a Financial Plan for expansion. PICA Staff is ready to prepare an analysis of the plan and risks once it has been completed. PICA Staff also remains prepared to play any appropriate role in regard to developments at the Philadelphia Gas Works.

