
Appendix 1: Glossary

Annexation – The incorporation of a land area into an existing city or village with a resulting change in the boundaries of that unit of local government.

Bond – A certificate or instrument certifying the existence of a debt. Local units of government only have those powers to borrow monies expressly granted by law. Municipal obligations are generally classified as either general obligation or special obligation bonds. A special obligation bond is payable from a specially identified source; a general obligation bond is payable without reference to a specific source.

Charter – The basic laws of a municipal corporation describing the powers, rights, and privileges which may be exercised within a political or geographic area by that municipal corporation and its officers. A charter is similar to a constitution on the state and federal levels of government.

Budget – Under the Michigan Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act (MCL 141.421 et. seq.), *budget* means a plan of financial operation for a given period of time, including an estimate of all proposed expenditures from the funds of a local unit and the proposed means of financing the expenditures. It does not include a fund for which the local unit acts as a trustee or agent, an intragovernmental service fund, an enterprise fund, a public improvement or building fund or a special assessment fund.

Conditional Transfers of Land – A potential alternative to annexation. Public Act 425 of 1984 (MCL 124.21 et seq.) allows the conditional transfers of land from one local unit of government to another for a period of not more than 50 years for the purpose of economic development. The conditional transfer must be evidenced by a written contract which must include certain

conditions including the manner and extent to which taxes and revenues are shared, the duration of the agreement, methods by which a participating unit may enforce the contract and designation of which local unit has jurisdiction upon the expiration or termination of the contract.

Consolidation – The formation of a new city boundary through consolidation of any of the following:

- a. two or more cities or villages;
- b. a city and one or more villages; or
- c. one or more cities or villages together with additional territory not included in any incorporated city or village.

A new village boundary may be created by the consolidation of two or more villages.

Council – A legislative, executive, advisory, or administrative governmental body whose elected or appointed members are assigned certain duties and responsibilities by law such as a city/village council or a citizens advisory council.

Enterprise Fund – A fund established to finance and account for the acquisition, operation and maintenance of governmental facilities and services which are entirely or predominantly self-supporting by user charges. Examples of enterprise funds are those for water, gas and electric utilities, sports facilities, airports, parking garages and transit systems.

Franchise Agreement – As used in local government, it is a negotiated contractual agreement between a utility provider and a government agency authorizing the provider to build and operate a utility system or conduct business within a given geographical area.

Franchise Ordinance – Unilateral action taken by the legislative body of a local unit of government to establish the non-negotiable terms of obtaining the permission to transmit and distribute a public utility system or to conduct business of a public utility within a given geographical area.

General Fund – A fund used to account for all transactions of a governmental unit which are not accounted for in another fund. The general fund is used to account for the ordinary operations of a governmental unit which are financed from taxes and other general revenues.

General Law Village – Villages incorporated under the General Law Village Act, MCL 61.1 et seq. General law villages are subject to legislative amendments to the General Law Village Act, including the major re-write of the Act in 1998. Under provisions of the Home Rule Village Act (MCL 78.1 et seq.), all villages incorporated after 1909 must be incorporated as home rule villages.

Governmental Immunity – Doctrine, the basis of which may be statute or court decision, that protects or insulates a governmental agency from tort liability when engaged in a governmental function, subject to certain exceptions. Governmental agency employees also enjoy broad immunity protection when the agency is engaged in a governmental function.

Home Rule – The authority of local governments to frame, adopt or change their own charter and to manage their own affairs with minimal state interference.

Incorporation – The formation of a new village or city governed by the State Boundary Commission Act, the Home Rule Village Act and the Home Rule City Act, from:

- a. unincorporated territory; or
- b. one village or city and contiguous unincorporated territory; or

- c. an incorporated village without change of boundaries

Mayor – An elected official who serves as chief executive, chair or nominal head of a city council or commission. Under the “weak mayor” form of government, the mayor’s administrative powers are limited and the mayor is chief executive in name only. Under the “strong mayor” form of government, the mayor does not hold membership on council, but exercises veto power. The “strong mayor” holds executive power while council holds legislative power.

Municipal Bond – A security issued by, or on behalf of, a political subdivision, the interest on which is generally exempt from federal income tax.

Municipal Corporation – A voluntary public corporation which is established by state law as a result of the incorporation of an aggregate of citizens residing within a certain area, place or district. Historically, a municipal corporation in Michigan has been limited, in definition, to cities and villages. The 1963 Michigan Constitution eliminated the phrase *municipal corporation* as it appeared in article X of the 1908 Constitution and replaced it in article IX with *city, village, charter county, charter township, charter authority or other authority, the tax limitations of which are provided by general law*. Generally, a municipal corporation operates for the express purpose of promoting public health, safety, and welfare.

Ordinance – A law or an order enacted by the legislative body of a local unit of government, usually pertaining to a specific subject. An **ordinance code** is a systematic integration of all municipal ordinances into a single book, organized by subject matter, tied together by a common numbering system and indexed.

President – The chief executive officer of a village. The president is elected and is a voting member of the council.

Property Tax – A tax based on the assessed value of a property, either real or personal. Tax liability falls on the owner of record as of tax day. Real property includes all lands, buildings, and fixtures on the land. Personal property is generally movable and not affixed to land. It includes equipment, furniture, electric and gas transmission, and distribution equipment, etc.

Public Act (PA) – Legislation passed by both the state House and Senate and signed by the Governor. When legislation is signed into law, it becomes a public act, assigned a number and is denoted by PA and the year it became law.

Resolution – Official action of a legislative body, primarily administrative or ministerial in nature.

Request for Proposal (RFP) – Document issued outlining the format of bids, deadlines, minimum requirements, and general guidelines for potential purchase of products or services.

Revenue – For revenues recorded on the accrual basis, the term designates additions to assets which:

1. do not increase any liability;
2. do not represent the recovery of an expenditure;
3. do not represent the cancellation of certain liabilities without a corresponding increase in other liabilities or a decrease in assets; and
4. do not represent contributions of fund capital in enterprise and intragovernmental service funds.

The same definition applies to those cases where revenues are recorded on the modified accrual or cash basis, except that additions would be limited partially or entirely to cash.

Revenue Bond – A bond payable from revenues secured from a project which is financed by charging use or service charges. The primary authority for revenue bonds is the Revenue Bond Act of 1933 (MCL

141.101 et seq.) The bonds may be used for a variety of public improvements including airports, bridges, electric and gas utilities, garbage facilities, hospitals, housing, parking facilities, pollution control, recreation facilities, sewer and water facilities, etc.

Revenue Sharing – A state program to share tax revenues with all eligible units of government, but particularly local government in accordance with a method of distribution, as by formula or per capita. The term refers to revenues collected by the state and shared with municipalities. These include revenues from the sales tax.

Site Plan – A plan, prepared to scale, showing accurately and with complete dimensions, the boundaries of a site and the location of all buildings, structures, uses and principal site development features proposed for a specific parcel of land.

Special Assessment – A method of raising funds for special purposes available to municipalities as an alternative to imposing a tax. A special assessment may only be levied on land and may only be imposed to pay the cost of an improvement or service by which the assessed land is specially (as opposed to generally) benefited. To impose a special assessment, a municipality must first have the statutory authority to make the improvement or provide the service for which the assessment will be imposed and, second, the statutory authority to assess for that type of improvement or service.

Special Permit or Use – Authorization allowing a use of property if specific conditions are met as permitted by a zoning ordinance or regulation.

Tax Exemption – The exclusion from the tax base of certain types of transactions or objects. Property which is exempt or free from taxation is usually the property of a charitable, public service, educational or other governmental institution.

Tax Rate – The amount of tax applied to the tax base. The rate may be a percentage of the tax base, as in the case of the sales and income taxes. In the case of the property tax, rates are expressed in cents (such as \$.45 per \$100 of taxable value) or as a millage rate (such as 30 mills) where one mill equals one-tenth of a cent.

Tax Roll – The end product of the assessment phase that lists the owners of each property, each property’s legal description as well as its taxable value and the liability of each owner.

Taxing Powers – The basis for levying taxes. Local governments rely on taxing

powers granted by state law to levy property and other taxes.

Variance – Authorization for the construction of a structure or for the establishment of a use which is prohibited by a zoning ordinance. Generally, a variance may not be granted unless the literal enforcement of the zoning ordinance would cause a property owner “practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship.”

Zoning – Division of a municipality into districts, the regulation of structures according to their construction, nature, and extent of use, and the regulation of land according to use.