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Local Finance Notice

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Distribution

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Secondary Bond Market Continuing Disclosure Commitments

This Notice is intended to give fair warning to local government officials, including Certified Municipal Finance Officers and comparable staff of authorities and other local governments, that there will be consequences for failing to have identified past noncompliance (where applicable) with continuing financial disclosure requirements related to outstanding bonds and other securities and determining by September 10, 2014 whether to take advantage of a compliance initiative offered by the Securities Exchange Commission's (SEC). While this notice is important for all local governments that have outstanding bonds, bond anticipation notes, and other securities, it is critically important where local governments anticipate a need to access financial markets in the near future - as with the need to "roll over" Bond Anticipation Notes or to issue bonds.

Continuing disclosure requirements are indirectly required pursuant to federal law. The CFO, or another local official, was generally required in one or more documents authorizing the issuance of debt (commonly called "Continuing Disclosure Agreements") to annually, or more frequently, publicly disclose certain information. Consequences of failing to live up to requirements will likely include future difficulty accessing credit markets. Consequences could include, among other things: (1) enforcement actions being brought by the SEC that will result in more severe penalties otherwise available pursuant to "the SEC's "Municipalities Continuing Disclosure Cooperation Initiative" (see below for discussion); (2) denial or deferral of applications made to the Local Finance Board or Director of the Division for various approvals; (3) actions against State licensures in the event of fraudulent attestations of compliance; and/or (4) decreased scores on future "Best Practices Questionnaires" (which will contain questions as to past compliance) that could trigger a withholding of a portion of State Aid.

It is important that you read this notice in its entirety and consult your public finance professionals so you understand your continuing disclosure obligations and what must be done to achieve compliance.

Local government access to capital is critical for advancing needed local infrastructure projects and meeting local cash flow needs. As a condition of providing access to capital in the form of debt, the financial community - at the time of buying debt and while debt remains outstanding - expects to be kept abreast of key financial information that could impact the value of securities in the secondary market. Legally, local governments have an obligation to provide certain information. They are obligated under federal law to issue certain information at the time of issuing new debt, and they are frequently contractually obligated to continue providing certain information while their debt remains outstanding.

Recently, the SEC and the financial community have focused attention on what is alleged to be a widespread failure of local government issuers across the nation to meet their continuing disclosure obligations. They maintain that local government issuers of debt frequently fail to meet their continuing disclosure obligations and misrepresent (sometimes innocently or inadvertently and other times fraudulently) their past compliance when issuing new debt.

Earlier this year, the SEC adopted a program to encourage local government issuers to self-identify past noncompliance and improve timely continuing disclosure in the future. Their program, known as the "Municipalities Continuing Disclosure Cooperation Initiative" essentially establishes lesser enforcement actions provided local government issuers (and others) self-identify past noncompliance and agree to a plan designed to prevent future noncompliance. You can read more about this program by visiting: <http://www.sec.gov/divisions/enforce/municipalities-continuing-disclosure-cooperation-initiative.shtml>). It is strongly recommended that local government officials proactively take steps to self-identify their own levels of compliance with Continuing Disclosure Agreements if they have outstanding debt and consult their public finance officials during this process to, among other things, determine if it is advisable to participate in the SEC's program.

The private marketplace is also taking steps to improve disclosure by more closely reviewing past compliance and, as appropriate, refraining from underwriting or buying new debt unless compliance has been achieved. It is critically important that local governments anticipating a need to access financial markets conduct a self-assessment of past continuing disclosure compliance and correct deficiencies. Failure to do so could bar, or delay, access to capital markets.

As part of your self-assessment, it is recommended that you first identify your continuing disclosure contractual obligations with respect to past issuances of debt while it remained (or remains) outstanding. These obligations generally include filing audits, budgets, and certain operating data with various depositories.

Continuing Disclosure Agreements generally specify what information must be filed and where it must be filed. It is critically important that each local government understand the commitments it has made and live up to them. However, the Division recommends, as a best practice, that local governments with continuing disclosure requirements file the following information through the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board's Electronic Municipal Marketplace Access (EMMA) website (www.emma.msrb.org) in addition to any information they had previously agreed to provide:

- a) As soon as available: The issuer's Annual Financial Statement -- or a variation thereof where an Annual Financial Statement is not statutorily required; and
- b) As soon as available: The Issuer's Audited Financial Statements; and
- c) As soon as available: The Issuer's adopted budgets; and
- d) Within 180 days of the end of the fiscal year: Annual Operating Data, consisting of:
 - (i) Debt Statistics
 - (ii) Property Tax Information and tax statistics where the issuer relies on property tax collections as a major source of revenue;
 - Net Assessed Valuation
 - Real Property Classifications
 - Ratio of Assessed Valuation to True Value
 - Percentage of Collection
 - Delinquent Tax and Tax Title Lien Information
 - Property Acquired By Tax Title Lien Liquidation
 - Tax Rates
 - Tax Levies
 - Largest Taxpayers
 - (iii) Other major revenue data and statistics where the issuer relies on revenues other than property tax collections;
 - Sewer and water billings;
 - Parking rents and collections;
 - Etc.
 - (iv) Capital Budget
 - (v) New Construction Permits
- e) Within 10 business days of the occurrence of any material events consisting of the following:
 - (i) Principal and interest payment delinquencies;
 - (ii) Non-payment related defaults, if material;
 - (iii) Unscheduled draws on debt service reserves reflecting financial difficulties;
 - (iv) Unscheduled draws on credit enhancements reflecting financial difficulties;
 - (v) Substitution of credit or liquidity providers, or their failure to perform;
 - (vi) Adverse tax opinions, the issuance by the Internal Revenue Service of proposed or final determinations of taxability, Notices of Proposed Issue (IRS Form 5701-TEB) or other material notices or determinations with respect to the tax status of the security, or other material events affecting the tax status of the security;
 - (vii) Modifications to rights of security holders, if material;
 - (viii) Bond calls, if material, and tender offers;
 - (ix) Defeasances;
 - (x) Release, substitution, or sale of property securing repayment of the Securities, if material;
 - (xi) Rating changes;

- (xii) Bankruptcy, insolvency, receivership or similar event of the obligated person;
 - (xiii) The consummation of a merger, consolidation, or acquisition involving an obligated person or the sale of all or substantially all of the assets of the obligated person, other than in the ordinary course of business, the entry into a definitive agreement to undertake such an action or the termination of a definitive agreement relating to any such actions, other than pursuant to its terms, if material; and
 - (xiv) Appointment of a successor or additional trustee or the change of name of a trustee, if material.
- f) Any and all additional or other information or documents required by the specific continuing disclosure obligations of such Issuer, for any particular series of Securities outstanding.

You should also ensure that past official statements -- or similar documents issued with respect to new issuances of debt -- have accurately reported your past compliance with continuing disclosure requirements.

While not required, the Chief Financial Officer is encouraged to seek the assistance of an experienced professional to assist or undertake such self-assessment.

As a final matter, the Division will be drafting a proposed Local Finance Notice -- or other appropriate action -- to require: (1) CFOs to attest as part of budget submissions to the Division that appropriate steps are being taken to ensure compliance with continuing disclosure requirements; and (2) auditors to treat non-compliance with continuing disclosure requirements as an instance of non-compliance with prevailing laws, statutes, regulations, contracts and agreements that is required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Approved: Thomas H. Neff, Director