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ISSUER COMMENT
22 July 2016

RATING

General Obligation (or GO Related)[1]	
Aa1	No Outlook

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Township of Chatham, NJ

Annual Comment on Chatham Township

Issuer Profile

Chatham Township is located in Morris County in north central New Jersey, approximately 20 miles west of New York City. Morris County has a population of 499,727 and a population density of 1,086 people per square mile. The county's per capita personal income is $82,810 (1st quartile) and the February 2016 unemployment rate was 3.7% (1st quartile).[2] The largest industry sectors that drive the local economy are professional/scientific/technical services, health services, and retail trade.

Credit Overview

The credit position for Chatham Township is very high quality, and its Aa1 rating is stronger than the median rating of Aa3 for cities nationwide. Key credit drivers include a robust financial position, a superior socioeconomic profile, and a solid tax base. It also incorporates an exceptionally light debt burden with a somewhat elevated pension liability.

Finances: The township has a very healthy financial position, which is slightly favorable relative to its Aa1 rating. The cash balance as a percent of revenues (50.5%) is materially higher than the US median and grew markedly between 2012 and 2015. Also, the fund balance as a percent of operating revenues (44.8%) is stronger than other Moody's-rated cities nationwide.

Moody's makes certain adjustments to New Jersey local governments' fund balances to include receivables and reserves that would be eligible to be included in fund balance under GAAP accounting but are excluded as a result of state statutory accounting regulations.

Economy and Tax Base: Chatham Township has an exceptionally strong economy and tax base overall, which are a modest credit strength relative to its Aa1 rating. The median family income equates to a robust 299.8% of the US level. Additionally, the full value per capita ($320,804) is much stronger than the US median, and this figure increased slightly between 2012 and 2015. Lastly, the total full value ($3.4 billion) exceeds other Moody's-rated cities nationwide.

Debt and Pensions: The debt and pension liabilities of the township are manageable yet weaker relative to the assigned Aa1 rating. The net direct debt to full value (0.6%) is under the US median. However, the Moody's-adjusted net pension liability to operating revenues (1.8x) unfavorably is slightly above the US median, and this metric rose modestly from 2012 to 2015.

Management and Governance: The ability to generate surplus operating margins is a component of strong financial management. On average, Chatham Township ran surpluses over the past several years.

New Jersey cities have an institutional framework score [3] of "Aa," or strong. Revenues are moderately predictable and mostly consist of property taxes; however, cities are required to make county and school district tax levies whole in the event of tax appeals. Revenue-raising ability is moderate as cities are constrained by a 2% cap on the property tax levy. Cities can raise the levy above the cap for debt service, pensions and certain qualified expenses. Expenditures, which primarily consist of personnel and public safety, are highly predictable given a 2% arbitration award cap for disputes with police and fire employees. Cities have a moderate ability to adjust costs given the presence of collective bargaining and high fixed costs.

Sector Trends - New Jersey Cities

New Jersey cities remain stable given improved financial management practices and highly predictable expenditures under the state-wide arbitration award cap. Most cities have implemented more frequent revaluation processes that limit tax appeals and an improving housing market reduces the risk in the first place. While the expanding state economy lags the nation, regions within close proximity of New York City will continue to benefit from the spill-over effect of residential and commercial development. Large cities with weak economic profiles and a high dependence on state aid remain vulnerable.

Exhibit 1

Key Indicators[4] [5]

Chatham Township, NJ

	2012	2013	2014	2015	US Median	Credit Trend
Economy / Tax Base						
Total Full Value	$3,215M	$3,242M	$3,318M	$3,398M	$1,722M	Improved
Full Value Per Capita	$306,075	$307,098	$313,254	$320,804	$85,195	Stable
Median Family Income (% of US Median)	295.0%	300.9%	299.8%	299.8%	115.2%	Stable
Finances						
Fund Balance as % of Operating Revenues	33.9%	38.1%	44.1%	44.8%	32.1%	Improved
Cash Balance as % of Operating Revenues	36.4%	40.1%	48.6%	50.5%	34.4%	Improved
Debt / Pensions						
Net Direct Debt / Full Value	0.32%	0.39%	0.37%	0.60%	1.2%	Stable
Net Direct Debt / Operating Revenues	0.79x	0.92x	0.89x	1.55x	0.94x	Weakened
Moody's-adjusted Net Pension Liability (3-yr average) to Full Value	0.55%	0.60%	0.64%	0.69%	1.7%	Stable
Moody's-adjusted Net Pension Liability (3-yr average) to Operating Revenues	1.37x	1.44x	1.53x	1.79x	1.35x	Stable

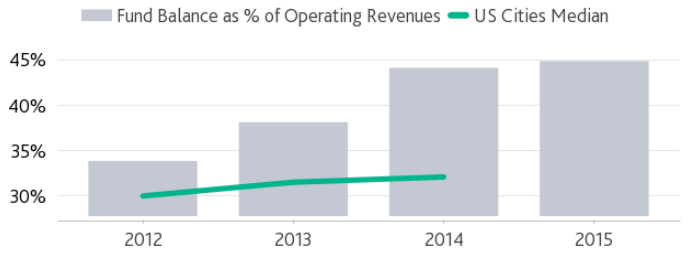
Source: Moody's

This publication does not announce a credit rating action. For any credit ratings referenced in this publication, please see the ratings tab on the issuer/entity page on www.moodys.com for the most updated credit rating action information and rating history.

Exhibit 2

Fund balance as a percent of operating revenues grew from 2012 to 2015

Fund Balance as a Percent of Operating Revenues

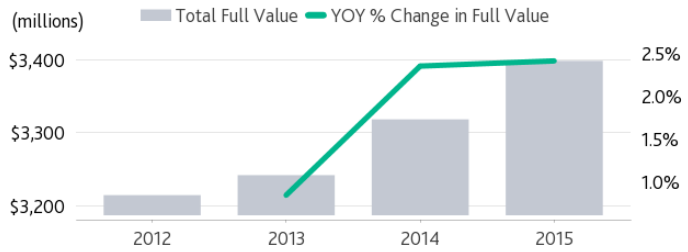


Source: Issuer financial statements; Moody's

Exhibit 3

Full value of the property tax base increased between 2012 and 2015

Total Full Value

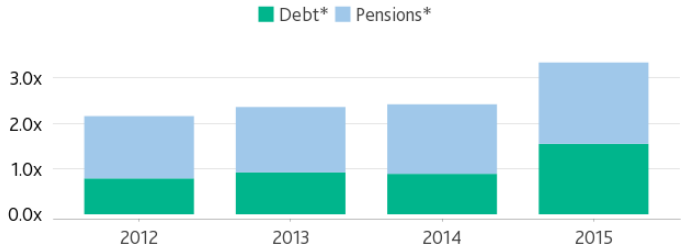


Source: Issuer financial statements; Government data sources; Offering statements; Moody's

Exhibit 4

Moody's-adjusted net pension liability to operating revenues grew from 2012 to 2015

Net Direct Debt and Adjusted Net Pension Liability / Operating Revenues



*Debt is represented as Net Direct Debt / Operating Revenues. Net Direct Debt is defined as gross debt minus self supporting debt. Pensions are represented as ANPL / Operating Revenues. ANPL is defined as the average of Moody's-adjusted Net Pension Liability in each of the past three years.
Source: Issuer financial statements; Government data sources; Offering statements; Moody's

Endnotes

1 The rating referenced in this report is the government's General Obligation (GO) rating or its highest public rating that is GO-related. A GO bond is generally a security backed by the full faith and credit pledge and total taxing power of the local government. See Local Government GO Pledges Vary Across States. for more details. GO-related ratings include issuer ratings, which are GO-equivalent ratings for governments that do not issue GO debt. GO-related ratings also include ratings on other securities that are notched or otherwise related to what the government's GO rating would be, such as annual appropriation, lease revenue, non-ad valorem, and moral obligation debt. The referenced ratings reflect the government's underlying credit quality without regard to state guarantee or enhancement programs or bond insurance.

2 The per capita personal income data and unemployment data for all counties in the US census are allocated to quartiles. The quartiles are ordered from strongest-to-weakest from a credit perspective: the highest per capita personal income quartile is first quartile, and the lowest unemployment rate is first quartile. The first quartile consists of the top 25% of observations in the dataset, the second quartile consists of the next 25%, and so on. The median per capita personal income for US counties is $46,049 for 2014. The median unemployment rate for US counties is 4.9% for February 2016.

3 The institutional framework score measures a municipality's legal ability to match revenues with expenditures based on its constitutionally and legislatively conferred powers and responsibilities. See US Local Government General Obligation Debt (January 2014) for more details.

4 For definitions of the metrics in the Key Indicators Table, US Local Government General Obligation Methodology and Scorecard User Guide (July 2014). The population figure used in the Full Value Per Capita ratio is the most recently available, most often sourced from either the US Census or the American Community Survey. Similarly, the Median Family Income data reported as of 2012 and later is always the most recently available data and is sourced from the American Community Survey. The Median Family Income data prior to 2012 is sourced from the 2010 US Census. The Full Value figure used in the Net Direct Debt and Moody's-adjusted Net Pension Liability (3-year average ANPL) ratios is matched to the same year as audited financial data, or if not available, lags by one or two years. Certain state-specific rules also apply to Full Value. For example, in California and Washington, assessed value is the best available proxy for Full Value. Certain state specific rules also apply to individual data points and ratios. Moody's makes adjustments to New Jersey local governments' reported financial statements to make it more comparable to GAAP. Additionally, Moody's ANPLs reflect analyst adjustments, if any, for pension contribution support from non-operating funds and self-supporting enterprises. Many local government pension liabilities are associated with its participation in the statewide multiple-employer cost-sharing plans. Metrics represented as N/A indicate the data were not available at the time of publication.

5 The medians come from our most recently published local government medians report, Medians – Growing Tax Bases and Stable Fund Balances Support Sector's Stability (March 2016). The medians conform to our US Local Government General Obligation Debt rating methodology published in January 2014. As such, the medians presented here are based on the key metrics outlined in the methodology and the associated scorecard. The appendix of this report provides additional metrics broken out by sector, rating category, and population. We use data from a variety of sources to calculate the medians, many of which have differing reporting schedules. Whenever possible, we calculated these medians using available data for fiscal year 2014. However, there are some exceptions. Population data is based on the 2010 Census and Median Family Income is derived from the 2012 American Community Survey. Medians for some rating levels are based on relatively small sample sizes. These medians, therefore, may be subject to potentially substantial year-over-year variation. Our ratings reflect our forward looking opinion derived from forecasts of financial performance and qualitative factors, as opposed to strictly historical quantitative data used for the medians. Our expectation of future performance combined with the relative importance of certain metrics on individual local government ratings account for the range of values that can be found within each rating category. Median data for prior years published in this report may not match last year's publication due to data refinement and changes in the sample sets used, as well as rating changes, initial ratings, and rating withdrawals.

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