INVESTMENT COUNSEL AND MANAGEMENT

FOMC Meeting Update

. . . as summarized by Smith Shellnut Wilson

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Although the FOMC left the fed funds target rate at between 2.25% and 2.50% today, as expected, it unveiled a slightly unexpected 5 basis point cut in the interest on excess reserves (IOER) rate for operational reasons that do not represent a change in policy stance - - namely, to bring the effective fed funds rate closer to the midpoint of the Fed's target range.

With headline first-quarter GDP above 3%, the accompanying statement once again described growth as "solid", but at the same time, with the recent drop in core P/E inflation, the Fed noted that core in inflation was now "running below" rather than "remaining near" their 2% target.

Fed funds futures continue to indicate a 65-70% chance of a Fed rate cut by the end of this year or early 2020.

Attached is a side-by-side comparison of the U.S. Federal Open Market Committee statements from May 1, 2019 and March 20, 2019.

Source for the information in this update is Bloomberg News

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FOMC STATEMENTS: SIDE-BY-SIDE

May 1, 2019

Information received since the Federal Open Market Committee met in March indicates that the labor market remains strong and that economic activity rose at a solid rate. Job gains have been solid, on average, in recent months, and the unemployment rate has remained low. Growth of household spending and business fixed investment slowed in the first quarter. On a 12-month basis, overall inflation and inflation for items other than food and energy have declined and are running below 2 percent. On balance, market-based measures of inflation compensation have remained low in recent months, and survey-based measures of longer-term inflation expectations are little changed.

Consistent with its statutory mandate, the Committee seeks to foster maximum employment and price stability. In support of these goals, the Committee decided to maintain the target range for the federal funds rate at 2-1/4 to 2-1/2 percent. The Committee continues to view sustained expansion of economic activity, strong labor market conditions, and inflation near the Committee's symmetric 2 percent objective as the most likely outcomes. In light of global economic and financial developments and muted inflation pressures, the Committee will be patient as it determines what future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate may be appropriate to support these outcomes.

In determining the timing and size of future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the Committee will assess realized and expected economic conditions relative to its maximum employment objective and its symmetric 2 percent inflation objective. This assessment will take into account a wide range of information, including measures of labor market conditions, indicators of inflation pressures and inflation expectations, and readings on financial and international developments.

Voting for the FOMC monetary policy action were: Jerome H. Powell, Chair; John C. Williams, Vice Chair; Michelle W. Bowman; Lael Brainard; James Bullard; Richard H. Clarida; Charles L. Evans; Esther L. George; Randal K. Quarles; and Eric S. Rosengren.

March 20, 2019

Information received since the Federal Open Market Committee met in January indicates that the labor market remains strong but that growth of economic activity has slowed from its solid rate in the fourth quarter. Payroll employment was little changed in February, but job gains have been solid, on average, in recent months, and the unemployment rate has remained low. Recent indicators point to slower growth of household spending and business fixed investment in the first quarter. On a 12-month basis, overall inflation has declined, largely as a result of lower energy prices; inflation for items other than food and energy remains near 2 percent. On balance, market-based measures of inflation compensation have remained low in recent months, and survey-based measures of longer-term inflation expectations are little changed.

Consistent with its statutory mandate, the Committee seeks to foster maximum employment and price stability. In support of these goals, the Committee decided to maintain the target range for the federal funds rate at 2-1/4 to 2-1/2 percent. The Committee continues to view sustained expansion of economic activity, strong labor market conditions, and inflation near the Committee's symmetric 2 percent objective as the most likely outcomes. In light of global economic and financial developments and muted inflation pressures, the Committee will be patient as it determines what future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate may be appropriate to support these outcomes.

In determining the timing and size of future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the Committee will assess realized and expected economic conditions relative to its maximum employment objective and its symmetric 2 percent inflation objective. This assessment will take into account a wide range of information, including measures of labor market conditions, indicators of inflation pressures and inflation expectations, and readings on financial and international developments.

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