

Executive Update

Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker's Weekly Newsletter

September 26, 2008

Walker presents 2009 recommended budget



Link to Budget, Budget Highlights and Budget Address:

<http://www.county.milwaukee.gov/Budget7826.htm>

County Executive Walker presented a budget to the county board that maintains and even improves services – his 7th straight budget with NO increase in the property tax levy from the previous year.

Public Safety and Law Enforcement: A unified correctional system will result from his proposal to transfer management and operations of the House of Correction facilities and programs to the Office of the Sheriff. The aging Community Correctional Center would be closed, and the successful Park Patrols program would continue. Funding is included for creation of a **Witness Protection Program** to protect crime victims and witnesses and punish those who intimidate or harm them.

Parks, Recreation and Culture: Construction of the **Lincoln Park David F. Schulz Aquatic Center** will be completed, playgrounds and restrooms replaced or

renovated in the system, and plans to fund lifeguards at Bradford Beach are in place. The budget will maintain full operation of the **King and Kosciusko** Community Centers. And a plan to restructure parks maintenance staff based on seasonal needs will achieve about 26,000 additional workforce hours each year. Cultural institutions that add to our quality of life continue receiving county support, along with capital improvement projects to ensure their continued community value.

Transportation and Transit: No cuts were made to the Milwaukee County Transit System routes. A slight fare increase to minimally offset the increased fuel costs is included. A new program, “**New Freedom**” would be created to provide free bus rides to Paratransit-eligible riders through our Office of Persons with Disabilities. The Budget plan moves forward with **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** to upgrade our current system. The first new BRT line would benefit the most transit-dependent population in the county. And an alternative to a sales tax is proposed through the potential leasing of the airport, which would provide a long-term funding stream to support the transit system.

Health and Human Services: To preserve core patient services and maintain high standards of care, the recommended budget achieves savings through outsourcing support services such as facilities maintenance, housekeeping, meal preparation and delivery, billing services and case management. Additional Crisis Group Home Beds are included along with dedicated funding to the Crisis Resource Center.

Special Needs Housing initiatives receive funding, along with continuation of **GAMP**, and an expanded

Family Care program to eliminate the waiting list for long-term support services for adults with physical and developmental disabilities. The **Senior Meal Program** is fully funded at the 31 senior meal sites throughout the county.

County Government Operations: Financial accountability in government operations is derived from a new contract for employee health care to result in about \$13 million lower costs, along with an employee wellness program and the issuance of **Pension Obligation Bonds** to reduce the county's unfunded pension liability. Collaborative information technology projects with other municipal governments in the Milwaukee area will generate revenue. Restructuring the County's fleet operations through vehicle maintenance contracts, funding vehicle repairs in departmental budgets, and reducing the fleet by 10% will decrease expenditures. And a **newly created Property Management Division** will be comprised of the former Economic and Community Development Real Estate Services section, the former DTPW Facilities Management Division, and parts of the former Department of Health and Human Services Operations.



Community Events

County Executive Walker participated in the National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims at the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center. He also welcomed the new Medical Examiner, Dr. Christopher Happy, at a reception hosted by the Medical Society.

Facts on Wage Adjustments

Some interesting facts about the Wage Adjustments that were covered in a front page story on Wednesday:

Seven department heads at the county received raises at the start of their terms back at the beginning of the summer. Each of these individuals was appointed to a new term and was confirmed by the members of the County Board.

Five of the seven were appointed by the County Executive. They each received an increase of 3 or 4% (the first increase in six years).

Two others received a slightly higher increase. One is the airport director. His salary is covered entirely by fees at the airport and NOT by the property tax levy. Numerous airports have tried to recruit him because the airport is experiencing such success (16-months of record-breaking growth). Even with an increase, he still makes less than the airport director in Madison.

The other department head took on additional duties from another position that was eliminated in a previous merger.

There was also talk about the Chief of Staff for the County Executive receiving a raise (within his current pay range). He did not receive an increase, but it is worth nothing that the suggested change would have still put the position nearly \$15,000 below the Chief of Staff to the County Board and nearly \$20,000 under the previous administrations' Chief of Staff.

Ironically, the handful of Supervisors who were worked up about the matter did not object to their own Chief of Staff getting another bump next week.

Many of these Supervisors are likely to vote to add millions of dollars to the property tax levy we all pay while the County Executive and his cabinet prepared and presented the **7th straight budget with NO increase in the property tax levy.**