



Joe Sanfelippo



Milwaukee County Supervisor - 17th District

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October/ November
2009

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Parks, Energy
and Environment
(Vice-Chair)

Judiciary, Safety
and General
Services

Transportation,
Public Works
and Transit



Dear Friends and Constituents:

Thank you for taking the time to read my October/November E-Newsletter. This month, I am devoting the entire issue to budget related matters that the County Board will be working on over the next 6 weeks.

2010 is going to be the toughest and most challenging budget the County has faced in recent years. Difficult choices are going to have to be made and sacrifices from County employees and residents alike will be needed in order for us to be able to continue providing core services to the citizens of Milwaukee County.

If you have any questions or comments after reading the information I have provided, I would greatly appreciate hearing from you. I urge all citizens of Milwaukee County to pay close attention to the budget this year and do not hesitate at making your opinions known to the entire County Board. Remember, *it's your money!!!*

NO TAX LEVY INCREASE

Once again, the budget proposed by County Executive Scott Walker does not include a property tax levy increase. Although this has been common practice for the County Executive since taking office, the County Board generally reworks the budget in a way that has increased the levy regularly. It is important to note, however, that the seven budgets passed by the County Board prior to Scott Walker becoming County Executive averaged a 4.9% tax levy increase, while the seven budgets passed by the Board since Walker's election have only averaged a 2.3% increase.

Unfortunately, thanks to Governor Doyle and our state legislature, the cap has been raised on the amount of increase the county can pass on to taxpayers. Milwaukee County can legally increase the property tax levy for 2010 by a whopping \$73 million, a 28% increase! This would be financially devastating to residents, especially senior citizens and others living on fixed incomes. We cannot let this happen.

2010 Budget Analysis



STRUCTURAL DEFICIT

The County's finances are plagued by what is called a structural deficit. A structural deficit is a recurring problem that causes expenses each year to be higher than revenue. When budgets are patched up each year just to get by and structural deficits are ignored, the problems do not just magically disappear, they just get bigger and come right back again the next year.

The County is facing a \$90 million dollar structural deficit for 2010 that is projected to grow to a \$153 million dollar annual shortfall by 2014. The Public Policy Forum, a nonpartisan group, has declared, "The day of reckoning for Milwaukee County is here." If allowed to go uncorrected, this structural deficit will lead to an eventual bankruptcy for Milwaukee County.

It is absolutely critical that we take the permanent corrective steps needed to get the County back on sound financial footing so we can continue to provide the essential services that our citizens require and deserve at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer.

MODERNIZATION OF SWIMMING POOL FACILITIES

The budget proposes closing four old deep well swimming pools and two indoor pools and replacing them with the new south side aquatics center mentioned above. The old pools, some of which were built more than 50 years ago, are very inefficient to operate and in need of many repairs. They are also sparsely utilized because kids these days prefer to use newer, more modern water parks such as Cool Waters in Greenfield Park and the David F. Schultz Aquatic Center in Lincoln Park. The six pools proposed for closing lose more than \$1 million dollars each year while facilities like Cool Waters and Schultz produce excess revenue that can be used for other purposes.

While closing the old facilities will be a sacrifice for people living near them, this proposal will save the County \$1 million per year and provide a new state of the art swimming facility for our kids to enjoy. This is an excellent proposal by the County Executive and should be a no-brainer for the Board to support. We continue to provide swimming pool services by offering a new aquatic center complete with all the bells and whistles, and we save \$1 million per year in the process. Just think of what our parks department could do with an extra million dollars every year. I am hopeful that my colleagues on the Board will see the wisdom and common sense in this idea and approve it.

BUS RAPID TRANSIT

County Executive Walker has proposed the creation of a new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line in the 2010 budget.

BRT uses modern buses that are more fuel efficient and comfortable to ride, and use special dedicated lanes that allow them to travel faster down major streets. Stops for BRT buses are spaced farther apart than traditional bus routes as well. It's kind of like a Freeway Flyer, but on local streets.

The combination of faster speeds and less frequent stops drastically shortens ride times from point A to point B, making a BRT bus much more convenient. You may not want to take the bus to work knowing that it would take you one hour to get there, but if you had the option of taking a BRT bus and getting there in only twenty minutes....that's a different story.

The introduction of BRT service will move our County into the 21st century, strengthen our transit system, and ensure continued service well into the future. Other areas around the country that have begun BRT service have seen ridership increase by more than 20%. Similar results here will produce much needed revenue for our MCTS system. In future years, the number of BRT lines will be increased to further enhance our public transportation system in Milwaukee County.

\$38.8 MILLION INVESTMENT IN PARK SYSTEM

As part of the 2010 proposed budget, the Parks Department gets a much-needed infusion of capital for some long overdue improvements. Among the projects are:

- \$19.2 million for construction of new aquatics facilities at Hoyt Park and on the County's south side.
- \$670,000 for golf course improvements.
- \$3.7 million for replacement of playground equipment.
- \$2.4 million for improvements to baseball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts and tennis courts.
- \$1.2 million for improvements to the Oak Leaf Trail System.
- \$740,000 to fund renovation and upgrades at the Mitchell Park Domes.
- \$765,000 for bike trail rehabilitation and walkway replacement.
- \$750,000 for Parks Major Maintenance Improvements program.
- \$1.5 million for the renovation of restrooms located in Park facilities.
- \$1.7 million for the construction of splash pads at Jackson Park, Holler Park, and Kosciuszko Park.
- \$3.4 million for improvements to County parkways.
- \$1.4 million for renovation of parking lots at Parks facilities.

These projects will be funded through special bonding made available to the County through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. By taking advantage of this bonding, the County will save up to \$3 million dollars in financing costs.

WAGE AND BENEFIT REFORMS

Modest wage and benefit concessions are included in the County Executive's proposed 2010 budget. A 3% across the board wage cut along with increasing employee contributions for health care and requiring an employee pension contribution will produce a \$32 million dollar tax levy savings.

While it is never easy to ask employees to give back some of their hard earned money, I can attest through first hand experience that it is even worse to be forced into laying them off. No one wants to be responsible for taking away a person's livelihood, but that is exactly what we will be forced to do without these concessions.

48% of our County budget goes to employee expenses, and our benefit costs are 75% of payroll. That means for every four people we currently employ to perform a service, we are really paying for the equivalent of seven. Or, put another way, it would be like a family of four going to the movies but having to buy seven tickets.

Due to the size of the County's structural deficit, there really is no way to achieve meaningful financial reform without negotiating some type of wage and benefit reductions. However, even if the entire Board of Supervisors agrees with this part of the proposed budget, these savings are not guaranteed.

The vast majority of County employees are covered by collective bargaining agreements. Contracts will have to be negotiated with the various unions representing these employees in order for these savings to be realized. While this may sound like a nearly impossible feat, the reality is the alternative to concessions by the unions will be an increased effort at privatizing more positions and massive layoffs in order to balance the budget. While the union bosses may be a bit stubborn and reluctant to agree to wage and benefit reductions, the rank and file members are dedicated County employees who understand the difficult position the County is in and realize that a job with a reduced wage is better than no job at all.

CONCLUSION

2010 is going to be a watershed year for Milwaukee County government. If we accept the major principles and proposals in the County Executive's budget, we can begin the difficult but critical path to financial solvency. If we do not, we will continue-and most likely accelerate-our downward spiral into financial ruin. As for me, I am ready to make the difficult decisions. After all, you did not elect me to take the easy way out.

Thank you for taking the time to read my budget analysis, I hope you have found it to be informative.





County Clerk's Office Update



Marriage license fee increase as of
September 28, 2009 to **\$105.00**.

Cash only accepted for Marriage licenses.

For more information, please visit the County Clerks [Website](#)

Halloween Haunt at the Wehr Nature Center

Saturday, October 17, 2009

6:30-8:30pm rain or shine

9701 W. College Avenue, Franklin, Wisconsin 53132

Follow guides throughout an enchanted forest for an educational, slightly
spooky and humorous adventure.

\$8 for ages 13 and up, \$6 for 12 and under, \$3 parking

All proceeds will benefit the Friends of Wehr and assist the needs of the
Wehr Nature Center. For more information go to www.friendsofwehr.org or
call the Wehr Nature Center at (414) 425-8550

Halloween-Trick or-Treat Dates and Times

Greendale- Sunday, October 25, 2009 1:00-4:00pm

Greenfield- Saturday, October 31, 2009 4:00-7:00pm

West Allis Meet 'n Treat- Saturday, October 31, 2009 1:00-3:00pm

Free Day at the Milwaukee County Zoo



Saturday, November 7, 2009

9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

10001 West Blue Mound Road, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53226

Information: (414) 256-5412 | Main Office: (414) 771-3040

Visit the Milwaukee County Zoo [website](#) for more information

Music Under Glass

Live music at The Domes

Tuesdays and Thursdays through November from 6:30-8:30pm

November 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19, 24 and 26

Regular admission applies

Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory (The Domes)

524 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53215

Information: (414) 649-9830

Visit The Domes [website](#) for more information on dates and times