



COUNTY OF KENOSHA COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jim Kreuser, County Executive

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For Immediate Release
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Kreuser proposes 2013 budget with a zero tax levy increase

Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser on Tuesday night (Oct. 2) presented to the Kenosha County Board of Supervisors a proposed 2013 budget with no tax levy increase.

Last year, at a 1.88% tax levy increase, Kreuser's 2012 budget was the lowest county tax increase in 25 years. The proposed zero levy increase is lower yet.

The average Kenosha County homeowner will see a tax decrease for County tax purposes of between \$6 and nearly \$7 for 2013, Kreuser said. The tax decrease is due, in part, to a slight increase in new construction in Kenosha County, Kreuser said, noting that many other counties had no boost in new construction.

“You are not going to see a lot of new initiatives in this budget,” Kreuser said. “We have plenty to finish up. This is a budget that maintains high quality services at a fiscally responsible level and at zero increase.”

Projects being wrapped up include:

- Completion of County Highway G next year to four lanes and then transferring the road from Washington Road to 15th Street to the City of Kenosha;
- Continued work on County Highway K, east of County Highway H, will be delayed, due in part to drainage issues. However, the bike trail will be completed on County Highway K to County Highway H, then south on County Highway H and to the State Line, where it will meet the Des Plaines River Bike Path System in Illinois. Federal grant dollars are paying for 90% of the project from State Highway 50 to the south;
- Completion of the Silver Lake Icehouse Trail, most of which will be done this year;
- Completion of the Petrifying Springs Park road improvements and dam replacement that will also be nearly done by the end of this year;
- And continued annual county highway maintenance.

Kreuser said there will be decreased borrowing for projects in 2013 over 2012. Among the projects he is proposing to delay is the continued irrigation replacement at Brighton Dale Golf Course.

2013 will also be a time of planning as the County awaits the results of key events, including the outcome of the November 6 Elections, the proposals in Governor Scott Walker's State Budget in February, and approval of the State Biennial Budget in June or July.

"We will need to stay very tuned in to what those changes might bring for our county," Kreuser said.

Among the key changes in Kreuser's proposed 2013 budget are changes to employee health care and Other Post Employment Benefits (retiree health care for those who retire before reaching the age of 65).

Health care changes include:

- Five percent (5%) annual contribution of the budgeted rate
- Wellness incentive program
- Dental coverage offered at employee's expense (currently provided)
- Vision program offered at employees expense (not currently provided)
- Eliminate the following covered services:
 - Coverage for morbid obesity
 - Private Duty Nursing
 - Limited coverage for ambulance and time in a skilled nursing facility

The changes will bring the total employee contribution to health care coverage to 32%, up from 21% for half of the county employees and up from 12% for employees who had union contracts that will expire at the end of the year. The changes also reduce the county budget by \$2 million.

"These changes are not made lightly and not without concern for the potential impact on employees and their families," Kreuser said. "It is a fiscally responsible plan that is responsive to the market factors in Kenosha County and responsive to taxpayers, while encouraging employees to make healthy choices and to use consumerism to make the plan more effective for them and their families."

OPEB changes include four key points:

- Those employees who have earned it, have it;
- Those under 10 years won't get it (until reaching the age of 65 and qualifying for supplemental coverage);
- Those employees with over 15 years of service at retirement will get what active employees receive; and
- Our long term obligation declines by \$18 million dollars in this budget and declined a total of \$62 million dollars over the past 4 years.

“When I was elected four years ago, this liability had grown to \$132 million and might have affected our bond rating had we not taken action to reduce our OPEB,” Kreuser said.

Kreuser’s proposed 2013 will go to County Board committees for review and then to the Finance & Administration Committee. A public hearing will be held on Nov. 7 and the County Board is expected to approve the budget on Nov. 8.

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