



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Jim Kreuser, County Executive

1010 – 56th Street, Third Floor
Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140
(262) 653-2600
Fax: (262) 653-2817

October 4, 2016
For Immediate Release

2017 Kenosha County Budget Address by County Executive Jim Kreuser:

Thank you, Chairwoman Breunig, Vice-chairman Esposito, members of the County Board, circuit court judges, elected officials, distinguished guests and fellow citizens of Kenosha County.

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2017 Kenosha County budget.

This budget ensures that we are meeting our obligations to the people we represent and as mandated by the state and federal government. We are responsibly addressing immediate issues as well as planning for the long-term needs with a clear vision for Kenosha County.

The challenge of County Government is to manage those mandates in the most cost-effective and efficient way possible so that its citizens receive the services they need at the lowest cost to taxpayers.

Our ability to effectively balance those mandates with frugality is evidenced by the county's tax rate, which have been the lowest tax rates in the past 25 years in Kenosha County. This budget, as expected, stays on that trend.

After working several years together, we have achieved another upgrade to our bond rating to AA+, which is just one click below AAA. Thanks to all the County Board members, past and present, and, especially to our CFO Dave Geertsen. Also, our reserves are the highest they have been in many, many years and they will remain that way in this budget.

Our financial position is strong, economic development in our county is the hottest in the state and region. Building permits at our Planning & Development Office are the highest they've been since before 2008. We are solidly poised for continued growth.

The 2017 budget before you tonight focuses on three critical areas: This is a mental health, law enforcement and infrastructure budget.

You are well aware that our recent budgets were hard-hit by changes outside of our control in mental health services. Many of you were at the community public meeting we hosted regarding mental health, which led to ongoing discussions that are still detailing progress on issues; developing time lines and cost estimates for implementation, most of which will come before this board.

This budget provides for a new KARE Center, operated by our partner, Kenosha Human Development Services.

The current KARE Center was built in the Civil War era. It is not handicapped accessible and is limited in size as an 11-bed community based residential facility.

Increasing the number of beds will reduce some costs in out of county placements and transportation by all the law enforcement entities.

The reduction of behavioral health beds at St. Luke's in Racine has resulted in rising costs of mental health commitments.

Last year, we engaged in a study of our community's systems of care for persons with mental illness to see what we, as a community, could do to really examine what was within our power to change and to make sure that people who need mental health treatment can get it. Much has already been accomplished as a result of that study.

We have also spent the past 10 months meeting with local stakeholders – people like Alderman Jack Rose and his organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness-Kenosha County – and working on plans to reduce the number of mental health commitments by helping people get support so that they can avoid exacerbation of their symptoms, achieve recovery and avoid commitment.

There is funding in this budget for expanded night and weekend hours at the Bridges Community Center program. My thanks to Mary Jane Landry, president of the Bridges board, for her support.

It is estimated that, over the course of a year, one in five adults will experience a mental illness such as depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia or post-traumatic stress disorder. By us doing our part by investing in prevention and treatment, we can help people find paths to recovery and avoid the pain, stigma and cost of hospitalization or incarceration.

I want to thank Ron Frederick, who retired as the director of the Kenosha County Division of Disability Services, but who remains a strong community advocate. He has previously urged expansion of the KARE Center and the time is right to do it now.

The KARE Center provides services in the least restrictive environment and has been very successful at diverting people from inpatient hospitalization. This will, among other things:

- Provide additional community beds to assist more people upfront and divert them from inpatient hospital care
- Provide a 24-hour meeting place for people in crisis to resolve the immediate issues and potentially avoid hospitalization, and

- Better connect people with ongoing services

I urge you to approve this community-based solution that will serve our needs well into the future.

In 2016, we saw great success with our pilot project with the Health Department, the Sheriff's Department and Professional Services Group for a Comprehensive Alcohol and Drug Treatment program that uses the medication—Vivitrol to help people addicted to opiates and alcohol.

It is a program that has mainly helped people who had, unfortunately, already got through the front door of our jail. I would like to show you a brief news clip about this program. (Video Clip of program shown here)

Isn't Danielle a courageous young woman?

This program works and is retained in this budget. We will build on that success through the process being advanced by District Attorney Bob Zapf and District Attorney-Elect Michael Graveley, which was presented to this board in September. Their plan is to stop people from getting to the front door of the jail. It, instead, will put people on to a path of treatment. If they are successful, we will never have to host them in our jail. I support that effort and it is included in this budget.

Together, these investments in the people in our community, from all walks in life, who have mental illness and drug addictions, will save lives and, in the long-term, money.

Law enforcement is one of our top priorities, and including courts and the district attorney's office, it is the largest part of our county levy at nearly 56 percent and is one-third of our capital budget. This budget supports law enforcement with additional personnel on the road and in the county jail. Sheriff Dave Beth and I agree that we need to make investments in public safety to ensure the long-term well-being of our county.

I also want to thank Chief Deputy Charles Smith for his dedication and sage advice over the years. He is retiring after more than 42 ½ years with Kenosha County. He is the county's 3rd Chief Deputy and he has served as Chief Deputy for 23 years.

In 2009, the County Board made the right decision when it added the second floor to the Public Safety Building expansion and left it open for future needs. The proposal in this budget is to move the Emergency Operations Center and create adequate space for the Sheriff's detective area, and move the Medical Examiner services to one area.

The current Emergency Operation Center space, in the basement of the Public Safety Building, is inadequate for many types of multi-agency events. What it needs to be is a place where all law enforcement and emergency agencies, as well as municipal officials, gather in the event of a

natural or man-made disaster. The EOC training areas will be designed to be utilized for other appropriate purposes.

This budget proposal also completes our 8 year plan of moving the Medical Examiner into a single professional and secure location. The Public Safety Building provides the best opportunity and safe oversight for the necessary chain of evidence. Thank you to United Hospital Systems for housing our current morgue. We appreciate them very much as a community partner.

The Sheriff will also have adequate storage space at the Detention Center for law enforcement vehicles in this proposal.

Another public safety investment in this budget is a video camera project for the Detention Center, which our Information Technology team has developed in cooperation with the Sheriff. It will improve safety and security for our staff as well as the inmate population and reduce the amount of litigation.

All of these positions our law enforcement community well for the next couple of decades.

This budget also contains the ERP business management-financial software project. Thank you to Dave Geertsen, Mike Bastianelli, and the team, for their work on this project.

This budget continues to fund our local infrastructure – because good infrastructure leads to economic development, which leads to jobs.

We have added significant value to the economic development picture with our strategic investments we have made here in Kenosha County. Kenosha County-funded infrastructure has assisted economic development from the private sector. We have attracted companies such as Amazon, Uline, Gordon Foods, Bradshaw Medical and Good Foods Inc. The investments have led to more than 8,000 jobs and more than one billion dollars of investment in Kenosha County since 2008. And there's more in the pipeline.

Some of the 2017 highway projects, most of which have state and federal financial contributions in varying amounts from 40% to 80%, include:

- Complete the planning and engineering for County Highway S, from Green Bay Road to I-94.
- The intersection of County Highway H at Bain Station Road will be reconstructed as a roundabout, with financial assistance from Majestic Realty, which is putting a business park in that area.
- The engineering phase of a county-wide bicycle wayfinding project will begin next year. We received TAP funds for this cutting-edge, state of the art project that includes benefits for every municipality in our county.

This budget also:

- Continues our commitment to sound succession planning
- Provides appropriate classification and compensation for attracting and retaining employees
- Builds on leadership training
- Continues lean government practices
- Introduces a new tax and land information system project, replacing a 25 year-old system, and
- Proposes over a million dollars in healthcare plan design changes.

This budget:

- Addresses some of the mental health needs for the long-term by investing in proven programs that will keep some people out of expensive inpatient hospitalization, builds on successful treatment options, as well as seeks to keep people out of jail.

This budget:

- Adds the necessary law enforcement personnel and physical plant improvements for public safety, and

This budget:

- Continues to make the infrastructure improvements that will attract and sustain economic development and will grow more jobs in our county.

This budget is within the County Board's advisory tax rate guideline and will be about a penny a day increase for the average taxpayer owning a one-hundred thousand dollar home.

And, finally, this budget provides action to keep Kenosha County strong and the vision to provide efficient and cost-effective solutions for our citizens.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the County Board, and may God Bless Kenosha County!

###