



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Oct. 1, 2013

County Executive Kreuser presents 2014 Budget

Chairman Gentz, Vice-chairman Kubicki, members of the County Board, circuit court judges, elected officials, distinguished guests and fellow citizens of Kenosha County.

It is an honor to be here tonight to present to you the 2014 Kenosha County budget in which I will propose the smallest increase this county has seen in the past 25 years except for our 0 budget adopted for 2013.

It is a privilege to serve as Kenosha County Executive.

I am proud of the work that we – the County Board, this Administration, our top notch employees – do together on behalf of the citizens every day.

What truly makes this county great is its residents – hardworking, neighborly, and caring. They are the people we work for.

Our commitment to the citizens of this great county is to provide efficient services in the most cost effective manner while we continue to work toward our collective vision to create a stronger, sustainable Kenosha County.

This budget continues our excellent services many mandated with some increases based on fixed costs, things like asphalt and gasoline, and we continue to aggressively reduce fraud, waste and abuse.

This budget identifies the opportunity to improve the efficiencies and cost effectiveness of our printers and copiers.

This was accomplished through the implementation of a Managed Print program.

By consolidating suppliers and centralizing device management, this will save approximately \$35,000 a year.

This is an example of a string of instances that we are doing more with less, and spending the taxpayers' money more wisely.

And we are not stopping there.

In this budget, we continue our stewardship of our county buildings and infrastructure.

This building – the Administration building – will receive waterproofing and tuck pointing in 2014 so that it can remain, like the Courthouse, for future generations.

We will remain on our paving schedule of about 13 miles of county highways next year and we have a vision for widening CTH S and down the road CTH H, both of which are key arteries to keep our economic heart pounding by moving commerce and people smoothly about.

We can learn a lot from the mistakes to the south of us, and I'm not talking about the Cubs. I'm talking about the attention to detail, like road maintenance and bridge repair – evidenced by the fact that none of our county bridges made the federal watch list. We continue to be proactive within our infrastructure.

This budget requests we bond less than we did in 2012 and at the same level requested in the 2013 budget.

Our good infrastructure leads to economic development, which leads to jobs.

Economic development remains a high priority in this budget and in this administration.

Working with our partners, the Kenosha Area Business Alliance and its president Todd Battle, we have been part of and are seeing new development across the county.

If you total the jobs announced from the beginning of the year, that number exceeds 1,550 jobs:

Meijer 486 jobs;

EMCO Chemical Distributors 145 jobs;

Good Foods Group LLC 50 jobs;

Ta Chen International 63 jobs;

L&M Corrugated Containers 44 jobs;

Konecranes 43 jobs;

Hanna Cylinders 105 jobs; and

Kenall Manufacturing 621 jobs.

Again, that's over 1,550 total new jobs announced since the start of this year.

KABA, with some assistance from the county, is in active discussions with Project Onyx, which is expected to result in an additional 1,100 full time jobs once developed.

I can tell you that KABA, and the County are in other talks with other developers with more new job prospects for our County.

Majestic Realty Company, a large privately-owned real estate development company based in California, has acquired an 88-acre industrial site in Pleasant Prairie, immediately adjacent to LakeView Corporate Park. Majestic is planning to build up to 1.2 million SF of industrial/distribution center space at the site. Majestic subsequently announced plans to acquire and build an additional business/industrial park in the Town of Somers on a 300-acre site they have under contract.

Venture One Real Estate, an Illinois-based real estate investment and development firm, has announced plans to acquire a 250-acre site in Pleasant Prairie upon which it plans to develop a new business and industrial park. The site is able to accommodate multiple buildings and companies and could ultimately contain upwards of 1,000 employees per the initial conceptual plan.

At this point we shouldn't let up on our commitment to our collective vision of good living wage jobs. As a result, this budget continues the funding of the high impact fund with an additional \$500,000 to do our part in keeping the job creation ball rolling.

I think this headline from yesterday's Milwaukee Biz Times says it all: "Kenosha County is a Red Hot Development Spot." And, we play a role in that.

Infrastructure in our community includes things like roads, bike trails, and various outdoor quality recreation opportunities, but also comes in the form of communication.

Our broadband infrastructure, built for public safety purposes, and extended for commercial and residential use, has made high speed internet services available to 30% of our population where it was not available before.

This is an economic development and educational tool for which the benefits are very significant for our young talent whom we want to live, work and stay right here in our community.

Building on that success, I am proposing we make an additional investment in Downtown Kenosha beyond our annual ongoing support of KABA, which helps to fund the Downtown Kenosha Main Street Project.

I am proposing tonight that Kenosha County provide the infrastructure for an outdoor WiFi network, from 35th Street to the north, and Anderson Arts Center on the south. It will encompass the downtown businesses, parks and harbor areas.

There will also be the opportunity for downtown businesses and residents to bring the service seamlessly inside the buildings.

The Lakota study spoke of this as an important issue to get done and not just talked about. This budget gets it done.

We appreciate our partnership and encouragement of Violet Ricker, executive director of Downtown Kenosha Inc., and Todd Battle of KABA, to move this project forward and work with our partners, the city, to fund the modest ongoing expense.

We will also be establishing various WiFi hotspots in our parks throughout Kenosha County.

While the plans are still being formalized, you'll likely be able to watch Fido play in the Carlisle Dog Park at Petrifying Springs Park while looking up dog training tips.

In Human Services, we must continue to keep our commitment to provide good service to our most vulnerable citizens. This budget does that.

You will see in this budget an increase for Mental Health Commitments. We have an obligation to care for those who need our help in our community.

We also need to continue to be committed to educate and be proactive on the front end of mental health services.

I want to thank Sheriff Beth and Police Chief John Morrissey– I appreciate their efforts to educate their teams on mental health issues in our community.

I also want to thank Jack Rose and NAMI Kenosha County for all the advocacy and education about mental health issues in our community.

We have had opportunities.

We stayed in the proactive course.

We reduced costs and continue to implement efficiencies, preventing fraud, while still making critical investments in our community.

As a result of us doing our part, we are seeing evidence of recovery here.

We have made appropriate infrastructure investments and improvements that result in an improved quality of place that gives us an advantage over other many communities.

The last three adopted budgets were the lowest three tax levies in the past 25 years. We have been responsible.

We have been proactive regarding economic development.

We want our children and grandchildren to be able to choose Kenosha County. By turning on WiFi downtown, we are providing an environment to retain and attract people younger than many of us here in this room. It is all about the next generation.

We prepared our community for the recovery, we have a vision of creating a strong sense of place for the young and the young at heart and we will stay on the positive course as we get ready for the coming economic recovery – because we all worked together and made difficult choices during the recession, we are now poised for great success in our community.

Thank you all and may God bless Kenosha County.

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