



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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County Executive Kreuser presents 2015 Budget

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

It is an honor to serve as Kenosha County Executive and to present to you the 2015 County Budget.

Kenosha County is hottest spot in the region, state and possibly the nation.

This budget keeps our foot on the gas for economic development, and further refines our smooth running departments and divisions

Additionally, this budget plans for future growth for our community and the mandates that face County government.

The budget is among the most important work we do in County Government – to ensure we are good stewards of the public resources, to plan ahead and to be good executors for the services County Government provides.

As you are aware, County Government is an arm of state and federal government and provides the services that you and your neighbor cannot provide for yourselves: Road enhancements and repair, incarceration, court services, child protective services, assistance for our senior citizens and to help those with mental health issues, just to name a few.

The decisions we make here, together, in this chamber and during the budget process, will set the tone not only for a sustainable county government this coming year, but for the years ahead.

This budget strengthens our financial health and job creation ability; to ensure the brightest future for all of Kenosha County residents.

As you know, this is a process of constantly evaluating and re-evaluating what we need to do, in County Government, to maintain and improve our infrastructure and delivery of our many state and federal mandated services, and to strategically plan for future needs in the most fiscally responsible way.

We know that good infrastructure leads to economic development, which leads to jobs – 4,000 jobs that were created in the past 18 months.

Without the reconstruction of Highway 165, we would not have WisPark. Without the reconstruction of County Trunk Highway N, we would not have had Gordon Foods locating here and we would not now have Amazon being constructed.

That visionary project, which was adopted by the County Board, has already led to Uline announcing another major development west of I-94 off of County Highway N and it will lead to more development around that area. It is because of forward-thinking projects like that—the important work done by you, the County Board, with the Administration – that Kenosha County is the hottest development spot in the Midwest.

You built it – they came – and are still coming to Kenosha County as long as we remain determined and plan strategically. The budget before you contains funds for maintaining and improving highways, which makes up nearly 3% of county levy in the 2015 budget proposal.

This budget maintains about 13 miles of repaving, repairs and the much needed crack-filling we do every year.

This budget includes a long term major project that will begin in 2015 for County Trunk Highway S. This again will be a visionary project – it will be a smaller version to the north side of Kenosha County of what Highway 165 has been to the south side of Kenosha County. It is needed for quicker access to downtown Kenosha and of course Amazon, Uline and the other businesses that will choose Kenosha County – this is a project that safeguards Kenosha County's economic future.

Not only do businesses and the public want safe roads, they also want a safe community. Law enforcement is a critical duty of county government. Sworn men and woman patrol our county roads and work to keep crime low – safe streets and safe communities are an important factor for economic development. Sheriff Beth does that well and maintains the third largest jail in the state. Today, there are 797 inmates in-house and 40 on electronic monitoring.

Law Enforcement, which includes the Sheriff's Department, Circuit Court and the District Attorney's Office, accounts for 45% of the 2015 proposed levy. The Sheriff's Department is 34% of the total levy. Patrol, prosecution and lock up makes up a big part of our budget.

The hallmark of a great community like Kenosha County is how we care for those in need. A veteran comes home from serving her country and needs assistance finding a job. Derrell Greene and our Veterans Services office will help connect that person with the right services.

A senior citizen is having difficulty remaining in his home and needs to find out if assisted living arrangements are an option. Foster care, child support, health needs – these are the important areas our Human Services Department manages every day.

Human Services makes up about 17% of the levy budget and is matched by millions of state and federal dollars.

The rest of the county departments make up the remaining levy in the budget. This includes services like Finance, Information Technology, Purchasing, County Clerk, the Register of Deeds, County Executive and other internally and externally critical areas and debt service.

Let's take a look at the average city tax bill based on last year's tax bill. City services are 41.1%, Kenosha Unified is 35.2%, County Government is 17.6%, Gateway Technical College is 5.6% and the State of Wisconsin is .6%.

I do want to offer an opportunity for the City of Kenosha to save money in 2015.

Taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for two IT service organizations. We have a highly professional, highly skilled team already in place.

It's my understanding that the Mayor proposed the city hire its own Information Technology staff starting in midyear 2015.

They have previously contracted that service. I urge the city to consider using the County IT services and to at least price it out.

Again, taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for two IT service organizations.

This would be a start, but we should be looking at other ways we could save money by combining services.

Every year, we examine what we do, whether we need to keep doing it and if so, what we can do better. I conducted strategic planning meetings with each county division in the first quarter of this year so that we could take a critical look at every aspect of our services.

As part of that deep level review process, we heard about space needs for the District Attorney's Office and the Circuit Court. The DA's office can't have a staff meeting because there is no place to do it in the office. The courts are concerned about where the 9th and 10th branches will go – it's a matter of when, not if, as caseloads keep increasing.

Our circuit court judges, District Attorney Bob Zapf and Clerk of Courts Rebecca Matoska-Mentink have provided me their comments and concerns on the present and future space crunch

we will have on our downtown campus. I will provide those comments and an implementation plan for this budget to address the current and inevitable space crunch on our downtown campus.

I talked last year about the need for Kenosha County to attract and retain employees and, for the 2014 budget; you approved a Classification and Compensation study. This budget provides those funds to begin to peg wages and benefits to the market sometime in mid-2015. Also sometime in 2015, a 1 1/2 percent general wage increase is included in this budget for those employees who continue to exceed expectations on annual reviews.

For a number of years, this board has heard from our Corrections staff that overtime has been excessive and it has had an impact on retention. In working with the Sheriff, this budget provides for a study of wages, benefits and working conditions, including overtime, and its impact on our jail staff.

We have seen over the past several years an increase in our costs for Mental Health Services, in both our county Department of Corrections cost and for the county at large. This budget proposes an increase in mental health services in the jail, and launches a pilot program to increase mental health services in the community.

For the jail, we will boost mental health services to provide coverage for 80 hours a week. This will help address the growing need for mental health services in the jail. This budget funds either a nurse practitioner or a Physician's Assistant to double the caseload of those currently receiving mental health services as a result of a general shortage of psychiatric services in Kenosha County, particularly those who accept Medicaid patients.

This will begin to address the high backend costs of delaying services to those in need who otherwise will end up in the state institutions, which can cost up to \$1,250 per day. This is more progress toward addressing this community need.

County Clerk Mary Krebs has requested, and I am recommending, new election equipment be purchased next year. It is vital that the election process remain up to date with technological changes and improvements to ensure a smooth and fair voting process and the change should take place in a year of lighter turnout.

Of course, the major project in the 2015 budget is the Brookside Care Center expansion and renovation. We had a presentation on the details of that project in August. This project makes good management and fiscal sense and I look forward to discussing this project with each and every one of you.

So, tonight, I submit to you a 2015 budget proposal with a general purpose levy request less than the County Board advisory recommendation. For a home valued at \$100,000, it would be less than 33-cents a month or about \$3.90 for the year.

We here in County Government perform our statutory and federally mandated services, and seek to enhance the quality of life and ability to do business in Kenosha County.

We work together to plan strategically to keep our county vibrant, our infrastructure solid and our services sustainable and fiscally strong.

What we do here sends a clear message to businesses and potential residents.

What we do here helps our economic development partners, Kenosha Area Business Alliance, city of Kenosha, Pleasant Prairie, Somers, Paris, Bristol, Salem, Paddock Lake, Silver Lake, Twin Lakes, Brighton and Randall attract and retain companies like Amazon, Uline, Hanna Cylinders, InSinkEerator, Kenall Manufacturing, Niagara Bottling, and the next businesses that will come.

Again, I thank you for the time you will spend reviewing this proposed budget and I look forward to our continued dialogue and collective visioning for Kenosha County now and in the future.

Thank you all and may God Bless Kenosha County.

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