



# Waukesha County

## OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

December 14, 2015

Dear Citizens of Waukesha County:

Participating in the budget process for the first time as your County Executive was an enriching and educational experience. Working together with the County's budget team, department heads, County Board Chairman Paul Decker, Finance Committee Chairman Jim Heinrich and other members of the County Board, the County's budget was created with two key goals in mind, maintain the outstanding services the County provides to the citizens of Waukesha County and hold the line on taxes. Both goals were met. We were able to adequately provide the resources needed to keep county residents safe by funding our fine sheriff's department, district attorney's office, court system and vital public infrastructure, while controlling spending, and cutting the tax rate by almost 2%. **In fact, a County homeowner, with a median valued home estimated at about \$251,000, will see no change from last year on the county portion of their property tax bill.** I am proud of this budget and look forward to the year ahead.

### TAX IMPACT ON HOMEOWNERS

The proposed 2016 County general property tax levy totals \$100.9 million, an increase of \$455,900 or 0.45%. This increase in levy is against an equalized property tax base of \$49.4 billion, which experienced a 2.4% increase. This increase includes a net new construction growth rate of 1.07% with new residential construction value over 20% higher than 2014. This results in a rate reduction of almost 2% or \$0.04 to \$2.04. The median home value in Waukesha County increased by almost 2% from \$246,300 to \$251,000 in 2015. The reduced rate applied to an increased home value results in no change from last year's bill of \$512 for the county portion of the property tax bill.

### ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION OF INITIATIVES

The 2016 budget includes expenditure and revenue adjustments regarding major initiatives begun in prior years. These include:

- Full year operations of the Waukesha County/City of Milwaukee Menomonee Valley single-stream recyclable facility. Increased expenditures include full year depreciation of equipment and increase in dividend payments for potential new municipal program participants offset by full-year revenues as the program grows.
- Staff adjustments in the second-year implementation of the medical examiner contracts with Walworth and Washington Counties include a new pathologist assistant for the third forensic pathologist added in 2015, offset with reductions in use of temporary assistant resources.
- Continued implementation of the on-site health and wellness center to include additional outreach to address individuals with more risk factors and avoid higher long term medical costs.
- The 2016 budget includes the first full year of savings from implementing contracted shelter care services with Lad Lake estimated at \$130,000 on an annual basis.

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- The County Clerk will implement a new election system for the 2016 spring elections. The system will address process improvements as well as automated system enhancements. All municipalities have signed on to standardize equipment to further enhance ballot preparation efficiencies. The County Board office will share an existing position with the Clerk's office to enhance system support and provide back up resources.

New efforts to begin in 2016 include:

- The Federated Library System became a two county library system with the addition of Jefferson County as approved by the County Board in June 2015. This results in increased State revenues of \$258,000 that will fund a new 1.0 FTE librarian position and services expanded to Jefferson County libraries. The merger begins with and is expected to continue to provide costs savings through economies of scale.
- A multi-year business growth initiative, based on specific strategic objectives, will begin implementation in 2016 with additional support of \$55,000 for a new, independent economic development organization.
- The budget include \$50,000 to fund an initial study of different levels of collaboration between independent municipal fire departments.

**INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The 2016 Capital budget, with total expenditures of \$20.8 million, identifies projects that maintain existing infrastructure and facilities which support high quality services and provide for future economic development.

In the 2016 Budget, building infrastructure improvements total about \$2.7 million including about \$1.8 million as part of a project to demolish the former Health and Human Services Building, \$700,000 to continue roofing upgrades on the UW-Waukesha campus and \$200,000 for HVAC upgrades at highway substations.

My proposed 2016 capital budget devotes more than \$13.6 million to maintain Waukesha County's existing County Trunk Highway (CTH) infrastructure. Maintaining our roads is key to providing safe transportation for our constituents as well as offer businesses consistency in their transportation system to foster greater economic development. Maintenance of existing infrastructure continues with more than \$4.2 million for road surface repaving and intersection signal and safety improvements. Bridge maintenance work includes funding of \$400,000 for three area bridges along with federal funds of \$1.8 million. The budget continues work to increase transportation capacity with funding for the Waukesha West Bypass, the widening of CTH M (North Avenue), reconstruction of CTH I and the rehabilitation of CTH NN.

Parks and Land Use capital spending includes \$1.5 million for pavement and trails and facility projects at the parks. County technology projects include \$245,000 to upgrade County Board room technology, study the jail security system and plan for the upgrade of the payroll system/Human Resources information system with new functionality to accommodate new Federal requirements, employee self-service and performance management.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This year, as in years past, we are able to ensure streamlined services and cost-savings to our taxpayers by being innovative and continuing to follow a strategic vision. I would like to thank the Waukesha County staff that helped prepare the 2016 County Executive's Budget and the County Board Supervisors that sat beside me in countless meetings in preparation of this budget. I believe this budget continues our commitment as a low tax leader.

Sincerely,



Paul Farrow  
County Executive

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