



COUNTY OF KENOSHA COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jim Kreuser, County Executive

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Kreuser's 2020 budget plan zeroes in on law enforcement, infrastructure

KENOSHA – Law Enforcement and infrastructure are the themes of the 2020 proposed budget that Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser presented to the County Board of Supervisors Tuesday evening.

Included in the proposed budget is the contract settlement with the Kenosha County Deputy Sheriff's Association.

The contract, along with the subsequent impact on command staff wages as a result, accounts for nearly 1% of the 2020 tax levy increase. The proposed contract settlement attempts to make up the wage disparity between Kenosha County's deputies and other area law enforcement agencies, including City of Kenosha Police officers.

"The people with the shield put their very lives on the line to keep us safe," Kreuser said. "I can tell you, through thorough analysis, their wages had fallen behind."

Kreuser said it costs more than \$80,000 to train a new deputy before he or she can go on patrol alone. Kenosha County has lost about three deputies in the past year.

The budget also includes a 2% across-the-board wage increase for Joint Services employees. The wage increase was approved unanimously by the Kenosha Joint Services Board, including representatives from the City of Kenosha, which shares in the costs of the service. Wages for Joint Services employees have also been falling behind, and 911 dispatchers have been difficult to attract and retain, Kreuser said.

Other law enforcement impacts on the budget include:

- An increase for the services provided by the western Kenosha County Fire/Rescue Safety Association for Technical Rescue, Recovery and Hazardous Materials Incident Mitigation Services.
- Completion of the Simulcast Project, which will strengthen communications capabilities throughout the county for Sheriff's deputies and county fire and rescue services.
- An additional full-time Victim-Witness specialist in the District Attorney's Office for advocacy of children in need of protective services, child sex trafficking cases and to take on the Restitution and Diversion programs that were shed by the State of Wisconsin.
- Renovation of the District Attorney's Offices to make room for an additional assistant district attorney position granted by the State of Wisconsin and to resolve other space needs in the office area.
- One-time increases to speed up the judicial processing for children who would be available for adoption.

For infrastructure costs, the county's work on expanding County Highway S is a major capital project, and the county will also continue to keep up-to-date on repaving and maintaining county roads. The budget also includes replacing aging highway department equipment.

Kreuser is also proposing officially naming what has been known as KD Park, located on County Highway KD, to honor all Kenosha County residents who have served in the military.

"The Kenosha County Veterans Memorial Park will stand as a tribute for the service and sacrifices of those who are serving and those who have served," Kreuser said. "It is important to memorialize the combat wars, actions and conflicts in a complementary way with the serene, natural sanctuary of the current KD Park. The sustainable nature of the park is in harmony with how our veterans have sustained our nation."

Kreuser is recommending an ad hoc committee of 9-12 people, including local veterans, work in conjunction with the county Public Works Committee, to advance the Kenosha County Veterans Memorial Park plan with a \$150,000 budget.

Causing pressure on the 2020 budget were the following factors, which are costs that the county does not control:

- Mandated increase to DHS Children & Families Residential Treatment Center Institutes (Winnebago, Southern Center): \$500,000.
- Reduction/discontinuation of State funding to DHS Children & Families (Intergovernmental Aids): \$480,648.
- Mandated increase to DHS Children & Families Kinship/Foster Care: \$445,800.
- Mandated increase to DHS Aging & Disability Institutes (Mendota, Winnebago): \$405,840.

- Mandated increase to DHS Children & Families Corrections (State Dept. of Corrections-Lincoln Hills): \$204,400.
- Increase to DHS Aging & Disability Residential Placements: \$176,747.

For a median home, valued at \$188,950, up from \$179,196 last year, taxes for county services would increase by \$8.68, under the proposed 2020 budget.

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