



COUNTY OF KENOSHA COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2020 Kenosha County Budget Address by County Executive Jim Kreuser:

Thank you, Chairman Esposito, Vice-Chairman O’Day, members of the County Board, elected officials, distinguished guests and citizens of Kenosha County.

Since last year’s budget address, we’ve had another member of the County Board pass away, Supervisor Mike Goebel. I was also notified last week, a former supervisor, Dave Holtze, passed away. Dave Holtze served four terms on the County Board. He was the head of the golf courses and parks director for a short time before he went back to his hometown of La Crosse with his wife and family.

Please join me in a moment of silence for our friends, Mike Goebel and Dave Holtze. Thank you.

I welcome Laura Belsky and Amy Maurer as our newest County Board Supervisors. Welcome to you both, these are certainly interesting and exciting times for our community.

That Kenosha County has undergone a wholesale transformation since 2008 is undisputable. Our status as a leader in the state, the region, the nation and many would say, internationally, is unprecedented.

This year’s budget is about continuing our movement forward and making the necessary investment in our infrastructure, in our human capital – especially those who serve in our Sheriff’s Department – and continuously increasing the quality and ways we deliver our county services.

The role of County Government is to do those things you and your neighbors can’t do for yourselves, and what is mandated by state and federal government. We are the conduit for tens of millions of state and federal dollars that we have the fiduciary responsibility for.

The jobs of the Sheriff’s Department and sheriff’s deputies have become more complex in the last decade than almost any other public-sector position. We need to thank them for their passion to serve and protect, so that our citizens can sleep easy at night.

As I indicated in my State of the County address in May, this is significantly a law enforcement and infrastructure budget.

This budget contains the contract settlement with the Deputy Sheriff's Association – our brave women and men who are there, day and night, for our county residents. As you all heard during the Active Shooter training from Supervisor Jeffrey Wamboldt, who is himself a Kenosha Police Officer, our deputy sheriffs run in to buildings or difficult situations, while the public is running out and looking for assistance.

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

We have lost some well-trained deputies to other departments and I urge your support of the reasonable and workable terms of our negotiated agreement.

You might wonder why I put this contract in the budget. The reason is the financial impact. When we add in the necessary lift for command staff to guard against wage compression, it is nearly ONE percent of the total overall proposed tax levy increase for 2020.

This contract, which was approved unanimously by the Deputy Sheriff's Association, starts our new hires at a more competitive salary with a pay progression aiming to retain these fine men and women.

It should be noted that it costs more than \$80,000 to train a deputy before they hit the road alone. Over the past year, we lost about 3 newly trained deputies to other departments. I need your help to stop that from happening.

Dovetailing right into law enforcement is communications.

A robust, flexible and expandable public safety communications system is critical to County Fire, Rescue and Law Enforcement operations.

This budget completes the Simulcast Project, which will strengthen communication capabilities throughout the entire County, specifically targeting the geographically challenged areas for the Sheriff and County Fire agencies in the west and east ends of our community.

This system is the culmination of nearly 5 years of work, partnering with our community's Public Safety agencies to develop and implement a cost-effective, public safety communications backbone designed to accommodate our community's growth well into the future.

We are nearing the end of this project and special thanks to Sheriff Dave Beth and Ray Arbet and their teams on working on this significant public safety infrastructure project.

Additionally, some extra dollars are included in this budget to boost training for the Kenosha County Fire/Rescue Association for Technical Rescue, Recovery and Hazardous Materials Incident Mitigation Services.

The western Kenosha County Fire and Rescue Departments do an excellent job in their response to all Kenosha County municipalities.

This budget includes an increase for Joint Services, in concurrence with the city administration, to keep pace with compensation needs. This is necessary to retain personnel because when people call or text 911, you can't put them on hold.

It is worth noting how cost-efficient Joint Services is for the taxpayers. Thank you to Supervisors Jeffrey Gentz and Monica Yuhas for your service on the Joint Services Board and commitment to our public safety.

And, on a side note, our EOC Emergency Operations Center was used by the Sheriff for pursuing Racine Police Officer Hetland's shooter. There were multiple local, state, and Federal agencies working in the Center nearly around the clock. The room configuration and ease of technology use effectively accommodated this complex, multi-agency investigation. I was informed that the FBI folks were particularly impressed. This is just another area where Kenosha County is leading the way.

This budget provides significant funds for County Highway construction and resurfacing to keep us on pace with increased business development, especially in Bristol, Pleasant Prairie and Somers.

This budget continues to attempt to get us more caught up on our highway equipment needs, which ensures when a snowmagedden hits our community, Kenosha county trucks are there keeping the roads open especially for emergency and protective services.

In this budget, we are working on our long-range needs and plans here on the downtown campus. We know, in the future, we will be getting an additional judge or two.

District Attorney Michael Graveley will be getting an additional assistant district attorney from the State of Wisconsin in the near future. He could use several, given the recent uptick in caseload. This budget addresses his tight quarters and will improve working conditions in that area.

In recognition of the high caseload for our Victim-Witness staff, we are proposing the addition of a Victim-Witness specialist. This position will help provide much needed advocacy for Children in need of protective services, will work on child sex trafficking cases and will take on the Restitution and Diversion Programs shed by the State of Wisconsin.

Also, we are proposing in this budget some one-time funds to speed up the processing of cases that will get children ready for adoption in to permanent, loving homes.

Costs for state juvenile corrections and local juvenile intake are increasing.

The State mandated daily rate for juvenile corrections went up from \$397 to \$532, or a total estimated increase of almost \$205,000 for 2020.

Be aware that additional costs will be foisted upon the county as the new regional juvenile detention facility starts construction in the next few years.

The local cost of Juvenile intake is increasing next year because Racine County is increasing its daily rate from \$150 to \$175 and the judicial system has been increasing the overall length of stay for juveniles.

For residential treatment centers for juveniles, the rate is increasing from \$380 to \$490 a day, with an increasing number of days, for an estimated increase of \$500,000 for 2020.

The overall state rate increase for the different types of foster care is up 4 percent, along with an increase in the number of days, for an estimated increase of \$446,000 for 2020.

As I'm sure you are well-aware, these institutional costs are out of our local control.

While we are successful, with our great prevention programs and early intervention programs, in keeping these costs down, much is driven by the state of Wisconsin and by the judicial system.

Turning to our judicial system, we took an in-depth look at the historic Ceremonial Courtroom this year. Restoration of that gem is not in the budget for 2020. However, we have proposed an amount to do some work that will get us dialed in on exact expectations for a proper restoration. This also allows us additional time to secure outside grants or donations for this project, which we are confident we can secure.

Kenosha County is blessed with an outstanding park system, but, what Kenosha County is lacking is a place to honor all of our Kenosha County Veterans.

This budget is requesting a call to action, to finally name KD park the "KENOSHA COUNTY VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK." 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.

A place does not exist where all Kenosha County Veterans are remembered and memorialized.

This park, as you recall, was a shuttered gravel pit until 2008. But, with strong advocacy from Supervisor Dennis Elverman, the park was finally opened to the public. And, we have improved it every year since.

This budget recommends that an official ad hoc committee of 9-12 people be formed to draft recommendations to the County Executive, in conjunction with the Public Works Committee and

this body for implementation to recognize and maintain the passive park setting yet remembering those who served from Kenosha County.

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.

Kenosha County is rich in military heritage and our public is very proud of the many sacrifices our veterans have made for Wisconsin and our Nation.

This budget provides \$150,000 to launch the Kenosha County Veterans Memorial Park. I know our community leaders and businesses will make this Kenosha County Veterans Memorial Park possible through their commitment and donations because it's the right thing to do to honor our military veterans sacrifices and to remember those who have gone on before us.

In support of Kenosha County Veterans Memorial Park, you will be taking the first step toward a permanent and sustaining thank you to the many men and women who have worn the uniform that symbolizes freedom around the world, but most important, you will be honoring their sacrifices so that they will never be forgotten.

Also, this budget continues the work on the South and North Branches of the Pike River. This is a critical, long-term environmental project that will enrich this resource for generations to come.

Ladies and gentlemen of the board, we are in one of the hottest economic development corridors in the nation.

Bristol, Pleasant Prairie, and Somers are key hot spots for new businesses, and we continue to assist them with their economic growth. And, we must recognize, address and plan for the necessary supportive infrastructure needs.

- This budget keeps us on track as a AA+ County working toward AAA.
- Our per capita personal income rose from 2016 to 2017 and 2018 is expected to be higher than 2017. This is terrific news for Kenosha County!!
- Our job growth, from 2013-18, has been the highest in the state at 24.4%.
- Our overall long-term obligations have dropped by about \$70 Million dollars from \$216.8 million in 2008, when I took office, to \$146 million in 2019.
- We are extremely responsible with our borrowing. 82% of our principle is RETIRED in 10 years or less. Standard and Poors called this “a positive credit factor,” as did Fitch.

- Our general fund reserve is trending \$8 million over the County Board minimum.
- This budget addresses our current and future infrastructure needs, as laid out in our CIP.
- This budget makes changes to our employee health insurance in response to continuously rising healthcare costs and makes an overall market adjustment for employees to ensure we are keeping pace with our very competitive job market.
- This budget continues to work with every municipality within our borders so look for efficiencies and what will be needed as our growth continues.
- This budget works with our school systems to assist our children – through our summer at risk work program and continued support of the Building Our Future program.
- This budget continues the 7th year in a row of budgeting well below the percentage of growth as shown by this chart.
- This budget continues to be well below the amount of growth by about 5 %.
- This budget assures law enforcement the ability to serve and protect our community better going forward.
- This budget provides the necessary public safety infrastructure our protective services need, what our businesses want and what the public expects.
- This budget positions our most vulnerable people to get the services they need and helps assist job seekers to seize career opportunities opening up all around them.
- And, finally, this budget is fiscally responsible and carefully crafted to sustain the momentum that has made Kenosha County in a category of its own – with the best still yet to come.

I look forward to working with each and every one of you on OUR 2020 Kenosha County budget.

May God bless America, and may God bless Kenosha County.

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