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Joint news release

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Kenosha County, City of Kenosha adopt agreement on Health Department funding, road transfers, other issues

KENOSHA — The City and County of Kenosha have adopted a wide-ranging intergovernmental agreement that will be of long-term benefit of both units of government, County Executive Jim Kreuser and Mayor John Antaramian announced today.

The pact, negotiated over the course of several months and adopted by the City Council and County Board last week, settles concerns over funding of the Kenosha County Division of Health, control of county trunk highways within city limits and ownership of certain properties.

County Board supervisors approved the agreement on a 21-0 vote on April 6. The City Council followed with a 13-0 vote on April 7.

“This is truly a win-win for taxpayers in the city and county,” Kreuser said. “It resolves the mayor’s concerns about the longstanding financing structure of the Health Department and continues our program of improving county trunk roads within the city, and then turning them over to the city. I’m pleased that the mayor and I were able to come together and get this done.”

Antaramian said the agreement addressed several issues facing city taxpayers.

“My goal was to achieve a path forward that ensures financial fairness and accountability as we work together,” Antaramian said. “The city is committed to working with the county and other municipalities to provide services that affect the residents in the City of Kenosha. County Executive Kreuser and I have pledged to work together to ensure the successful implementation of the agreement. I commend the Common Council and County Board in approving this agreement.”

Specifically, the agreement:

- Amends the 1992 agreement, struck when the city and county Health Departments merged into what would become the county Division of Health. Under the new agreement, the city's annual payment for public health services — presently \$700,000 — will taper down \$100,000 per year through 2029, after which the agreement will be terminated and the city will no longer make an annual payment. Public health services will continue to be provided by the county, with city taxpayers paying their share through the county tax levy, the same way taxpayers do in all of the county's other municipalities.
- Establishes a framework in which the county will expand Highway K (60th Street) into a four-lane roadway with an urban, curb-and-gutter profile from the Union Pacific Railroad tracks west of Indian Trail High School and Academy to 128th Avenue. After this has occurred, on Jan. 1, 2035, the county shall grant ownership and jurisdiction of this stretch of road to the City of Kenosha, establishing 60th Street as a city street on its entire run east of 128th Avenue.
- Provides for a transfer of Highway H (88th Avenue), which the county will maintain between Highway S (38th Street) and Highway 158 (52nd Street) before turning it over to city ownership and jurisdiction on Jan. 1, 2035.
- Outlines a cost-sharing agreement in which the county will contribute \$500,000 to the city's repair of a revetment wall along the Lake Michigan shoreline adjacent to First Avenue between 71st and 75th streets. The city will assume ownership of five partially submerged parcels that the county acquired over the years through the tax deed process.
- Requires the city to grant a temporary easement to the county for establishment of a bike path on city-owned land along the west wall of the harbor channel behind the Wyndham Garden Kenosha Harborside Hotel, 5125 Sixth Ave. The county is to work with Route of the Badger consultants and staff to construct a path that would link to that regional trail network.
- Transfers to the city a county-owned retention basin located in the Forest Park neighborhood, in roughly the 5600 block of 65th Street.

“This agreement transfers roads and properties that are more appropriately owned by the city rather than the county,” said County Board Chairman John O’Day. “And while the county will lose revenue from the city for health services, the savings from transferring the highways to the city will offset those losses. I commend the county executive and the mayor for their work on this.”

Kreuser credited City Council President David Bogdala for his work on the agreement, along with Mayor Antaramian.

“While these negotiations were long and tough, knowing how much these two men cared about our community, I knew we could get to a consensus that was mutually beneficial to both parties if we kept talking, said City Council President David Bogdala. “This agreement now allows for several major infrastructure projects to move forward that benefit both the City of Kenosha and Kenosha County. I’m also grateful to both our respective legislative bodies for their thorough review and timely approval of this agreement.”

The full agreement is available online, at <https://bit.ly/2022KenoshaIGA>.

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