



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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Kerkman presents 2024 budget with focus on public safety, fiscal responsibility

Kenosha County Executive Samantha Kerkman presented her 2024 budget to the County Board this evening, emphasizing public safety and the county's strong fiscal health.

Kerkman spoke of the county's recently reaffirmed, top-tier AAA bond rating with S&P Global as a symbol of the county's past success and its outlook for the future.

This year, Kerkman noted, the ratings agency came to Kenosha County for a tour that highlighted the many economic development successes along the bustling Interstate 94 corridor.

"The bond rating tour was a look at the great things we have done as a county," Kerkman said. "Now I'm looking at where we go next, to sustain and enhance the momentum that Kenosha County has enjoyed for several years."

In addition to continuing the county's AAA path, the 2024 budget further enhances a commitment to public safety that began when she took office, Kerkman said.

"Working together with Sheriff David Zoerner, we're looking at broadening our vision," Kerkman said, "so we can reallocate and redeploy resources to enhance crime-fighting efforts."

Coming on the heels of a 2023 budget process that yielded additional detectives and a new data analyst position, the 2024 proposed budget funds an additional detective to support the Sheriff's Department's drug unit, as well as a series of changes in detentions and Joint Services that will also boost the efforts of sworn officers fighting crime on the streets, Kerkman said.

These changes include:

- A civilian administrator position would be added in detentions, freeing up a sworn lieutenant whose duties would shift to managing operations plans for major community

events and working with the villages that contract for law enforcement services with the county.

- A Digital Evidence Technician position is added in the Joint Services budget, which would provide a dedicated person to manage digital evidence such as law enforcement body camera footage. The sworn sergeant who is currently handling this for the Sheriff's Department would transition back to supervising deputies.

“In short, by enhancing the Detentions Division, we’re able to redeploy a sworn position to do other duties,” Kerkman said “We will optimize the sergeants who need to be out there leading deputies, managing scenes, working to make our county safer. It’s a force multiplier.”

Also related to public safety, the budget includes funding to launch a paid internship program for potential sheriff's deputy recruits, and it provides permanent funding for two positions to serve as support staff for the two Assistant District Attorney positions that were added in the state budget.

Under the proposed budget, the owner of a median-value home in Kenosha County — presently \$262,000 — would pay an additional \$1.81 to support county government in 2024.

The majority of that minor increase, Kerkman noted, is attributable to the costs of employee classification and compensation changes that were approved this year, in an effort to maintain the county's competitiveness in the labor market.

“This budget is fiscally responsible, and one that puts us in a position to continue our AAA momentum,” Kerkman said.

Other budget highlights include:

- Focus on maintaining and improving infrastructure.
- Continues commitment to maintaining county trunk roads with 13 budgeted miles of repaving.
- Keeps the county on track to move into the new, centrally located Human Services Building on 52nd Street in 2025.
- A health insurance provider change that will result in little disruption for employees and a fiscally positive outcome for the county.

The budget will now go to County Board committees for review throughout October, with a public hearing to be held Nov. 7 and full board adoption of the budget scheduled for Nov. 8.

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