

County Budget Provides Positive Vision for Future

Wisconsin finally has a state budget, so now it is time to focus on the county budget. Here is an overview of the budget we presented to the county board:

Safety: We gave the Sheriff the resources he needs to protect our parks and buses and to address violent crime in the City of Milwaukee and throughout the county. This was built off of the success of enhanced patrols on the lakefront this summer.

We also put more into programs to keep our young kids out of a cycle of crime, increase supervision of offenders in the community and improve one of the best paramedic programs in the country. Public Safety is a priority in my budget.

Affordability: If taxes continued to grow at the same rate as before I got here, we'd be paying **\$43.9 million more** in taxes this year. Instead, for the 6th budget in a row, there is a 0% increase in the tax levy from the previous year. Sure, the members of the county board keep adding more levy, but I use my veto pen to get it back to zero and keep pushing for them to hold the line on taxes.

This budget was built to protect the retired couple living on Social Security, the new homeowners with a baby and the entrepreneur just branching out to start a new business. These people need to be able to afford to live, work, grow and retire in Milwaukee County.

Pride: Our budget includes a significant investment in our roads, highways, parkways and airport. We restore the transit routes that were to be eliminated and keep ParaTransit service. We push new construction and housing opportunities. We continue our health care for low-income individuals, increase long-term care for our seniors, expand FamilyCare to people with disabilities and improve care for those suffering from mental illness.

We continue our investments in the zoo, our cultural institutions and the parks. Besides adding more than \$1.1 million in new equipment and \$12.9 million in new capital improvements to the parks, we actually INCREASE the number of hours of work in the parks. My plan to replace year-round, full-time employees with seasonal employees actually increases the total work hours in the parks by nearly 20,000.

Do you pay the kid who mows your lawn to work in December? No. Our plan just makes common sense as we allow the parks system to hire and use staff at the times when they need it most. Our plan protects the parks while protecting the taxpayer.

Despite the comments of a County Board Supervisor in these pages a few weeks ago, our budget shows that one can balance the need to control taxes with the need to provide core services. We will continue to look out for the interests of the people – and not just the special interests – in our 2008 budget.

Scott Walker
Milwaukee County Executive