

Dear,

On Monday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, I was attending the Wisconsin County Association (WCA) annual convention and was unable to join you for the Intergovernmental Cooperation Council of Milwaukee County (ICC) meeting. Darlene Wink passed on some of your comments and I want to share some thoughts about the 2008 county budget and some other items of concern.

First, my budget includes full support for the EMS system in Milwaukee County. It also includes funding for 30 new deliberators and monitors to be put on each of the paramedic rigs in the county.

Next, it includes \$12.9 million worth of maintenance and improvements for the parks system. The pools remain open, the golf courses are improved, new playground equipment will be added and we begin a parkway maintenance program.

In addition, our budget transfers many of our entry-level, year-round parks positions to seasonal employees. While the move certainly saves money, the real benefit is nearly 20,000 additional hours of labor – and a concentration of that labor in the spring and summer.

This should be an improvement over 2007. Last fall, the county board restored a number of full-time, year-round positions in the parks, but only provided 25% of the funding needed for the positions. This was one of the major reasons I vetoed the budget. Now, we need to lobby that they don't make that same mistake again for 2008.

On another topic, the capital budget includes more than \$11 million for infrastructure improvements like roads and bridges. It also restores the transit routes that once were proposed to be eliminated and maintains ParaTransit service areas.

FamilyCare continues to grow in this budget and we push to expand the program to people with developmental and physical disabilities. Our senior centers and meal programs continue to grow and prosper.

Finally, we make a significant investment in mental health services with a \$1.7 million increase in tax levy support. The budget increases security staff; adds to the Crisis Resource Center; adds a psychologist to the Mobile Crisis Team; and fully funds community mental health programs.

We also include the creation of a new Housing Division for special needs in the county. This will help the county – and the cities and villages within Milwaukee

County – partner with state and federal sources and the private sector to create more housing opportunities for people with mental illness.

Our Behavioral Health Division (BHD) is implementing the expansion of the Psychiatric Crisis Service observation beds. This expansion will cost Milwaukee County \$1.1 million, which I have included in my budget proposal.

Also, the county signed an agreement on Monday that will establish a partnership with Aurora Health Care's Psychiatric Hospital, Roger's Memorial Hospital and Columbia St. Mary's Hospital to serve clinically appropriate, insured voluntary and Chapter 51 patients. BHD is also working on negotiating the same agreement to gain access to St. Luke's South and St. Francis Hospital.

Please keep in mind that the BHD is moving forward with the Crisis Diversion Action Plan in order to address the concerns raised by police chiefs and others in the community. The BHD Administrator will establish a Diversion Task Force that is charged with the development of strategies for the improvement, coordination and procedures necessary for the community to manage the capacity of individuals seeking crises and inpatient Chapter 51 services. If you or members of your police departments would like to participate on this Task Force, please contact John Chianelli Administrator of BHD at 414-257-5202 with names.

Also, as you know the State of Wisconsin mandates that Milwaukee County take the Chapter 51 patients, however, the money to address this mandate does not come close to covering the costs. You may also wish to share your concerns with the Governor and the state lawmakers from your area.

Thank you for your patience as we work to resolve this issue.

Sincerely,

Scott Walker  
Milwaukee County Executive