

**Safety, affordability and pride.** These are the three themes that I used to prepare our 2008 county budget and these are the guidelines I used to make final recommendations on the budget.

## **Safety**

Thankfully, the County Board returned to me a budget that largely retains the public safety improvements I made for the coming year.

- Sheriff will have more tools to fight crime through the Targeted Enforcement Unit, drug enforcement and expressway patrol units and new equipment.
- District Attorney will have staff needed to prosecute and monitor criminals.
- Move forward on a plan to provide monitoring of Huber offenders on a 24-hour basis and not just when they check in to sleep at night.
- Increase support for programs that work keeping juveniles out of a cycle of crime.
- Add Parks Patrols to broaden our ability to monitor what is going on in the parks.
- Improve our nationally recognized EMS system with new equipment that will save more lives.

Public safety is a priority in this budget.

## **Affordability**

So is making it affordable to live, work, learn and retire in Milwaukee County. Recently it was noted that the costs of electricity, fuel, gas, groceries and medicine had gone up. The conclusion was that the amount government collects from the taxpayers should go up too. I agree with the assessment of costs, but disagree with the outcome. Costs are going up and that is all the more reason why we have to be mindful of what our residents and employers can afford.

The reaction of taxpayers at the MPS budget meeting should remind us that most people in Milwaukee County feel we already pay too much to the government. The budget I return to the County Board today not only avoids an increase; *it actually provides a slight decrease in the property tax levy.*

Keeping residents here in their homes and attracting new ones is good. So is keeping and attracting jobs to our county. Recent census estimates show that even the City of Milwaukee is adding more residents.

Economic growth is important. Last year, we saw more than \$1.1 billion in new construction throughout Milwaukee County. To further that growth – and to make the case for businesses like Miller Brewing to stay here – we must hold the line on taxes, which will lower their cost of doing business in our region.

## **Pride**

Controlling the tax burden can be done while also insuring that we continue to provide core services – the kinds of services that make us proud to live in Milwaukee County. Our budget (and these vetoes) seeks to provide these services in new and innovative ways that are more cost effective.

Parks: A good example is the in the parks. My original budget would replace a wave of entry-level, year-round parks workers with funding for new seasonal employees. This plan would protect the taxpayers by saving money but also protect the parks by adding nearly 20,000 more hours of labor. My vetoes include a return to this money-saving way to get more work done in the parks.

We maintain the new funding for parks maintenance included in the budget and add it to the \$12.9 million I included to improve our parks system. We begin work on a new aquatics center at Lincoln Park, install new playground equipment, improve our parkways, build new splash pads, upgrade trails and fix areas of the lakefront.

Our budget also maintains funding for the cultural institutions and provides infrastructure improvements at the zoo.

Transportation: Our budget maintains all of our bus and ParaTransit routes. It includes no increase in the cost of ParaTransit rides or in the costs of passes for frequent users of the transit system. While the state is still providing considerably less than the historical level of support, there was some help in the latest budget. We used that funding to support our bus system.

Major improvements continue at General Mitchell International Airport. In September, the airport broke the monthly record for passengers and is on pace to (once again) break the annual passenger record. A national travel magazine recently named our airport as the 4<sup>th</sup> best in the country. Our improvements are working.

And this budget includes a major investment in infrastructure. We improve county roadways and bridges. We also include funding to resurface a number of parkways.

Human Services: Finally, our budget includes major support for those in need in our community. These items include:

- Continuation of senior centers and senior meal programs.
- Long-term care needs for older adults continue to be met under FamilyCare.
- Seek to expand the benefits of FamilyCare to those under 60 with developmental or physical disabilities.
- Major improvements in staffing and resources for mental health services.
- A new imitative to address the housing needs of those with mental illness.
- Managed care coverage for those with no source of healthcare.
- New childcare fraud unit to protect children.

These are the things that make us proud to live in Milwaukee County and they continue to be priorities in this budget.

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The budget passed by the County Board is good because it includes the majority of the strong initiatives that I included in my original budget to make this county safer and to reflect the pride we have in our people and assets. Now, I call on the members of the County Board to finish the job and make this budget affordable for the people of Milwaukee County. This will make a good budget great.