

The 2007 budget will be a challenge for everyone in county government. It gives us in the parks system a chance to look at our core mission. Our budget will continue to protect the significant open space in our county.

The challenges we face are not new. In 1980, 45% of the tax levy went to parks. By 2000, that dropped to 10%. Sure, the pension scandal is a drain on our budget, but so are two decades of unfunded state mandates.

The budget also calls for us to become more efficient. That means we have to examine what we do and how we do it.

Madison just opened their first public pool this summer and it completely pays for itself. We have 47 deep well and wading pools. While the County Executive asked us to reexamine the number we close, it does make sense to move to a more reasonable number. In addition, more and more areas are moving to aquatic centers and splash pads. We should too.

Overall, we will keep our focus on what makes a great parks system – open, green space. Our fields and trails will be improved and our courses will continue to be some of the best in the region.

What will change is the use of county employees to provide these services. In the end, it is important to protect this incredible parks system. We are committed to fundamentally changing the system to get it done.