



# Waukesha County

## Office of the County Executive

To: Honorable County Board Members  
From: Paul Farrow, County Executive  
Date: December 14, 2018

Dear Honorable County Board Supervisors:

After months of hard work, the 2019 Waukesha County Adopted Budget has passed as part of a cooperative effort through the hard work and dedication of members of the County Board, the budget team, and department heads. Their commitment and collaborative spirit is evident in the final product: a budget that continues Waukesha County's legacy as a low-tax leader while maintaining outstanding services to our citizens.

This budget optimizes every tax dollar while enhancing the processes and services that make Waukesha County stand out as a leader in the state and across the nation. Furthermore, it remains under the conservative revenue cap set by Governor Scott Walker and the state legislature, a target that we were able to reach through innovation, strategic planning and collaboration.

Throughout this process, input from the County Board members was invaluable. The opportunity to work directly with other elected officials to create a budget that best serves our constituents is unique among local governments, and I am proud of the strong relationship that exists between our legislative and executive branches in Waukesha County.

The 2019 County general property tax levy totals \$104.4 million, an increase of 0.9% or \$940,700. This levy growth is net of the new State revenue of \$744,073 to offset the new personal property exemption for machinery and tools. The gross tax levy growth of \$1,684,744 (before new State revenues) includes a net new construction growth rate of 1.57% as compared to 1.81% in the prior year. This growth in levy is against an equalized property tax base of \$55.2 billion, which experienced a 4.2% increase, even after reductions for personal property exemptions. Once again, we are holding tax levy growth below statutory limits to minimize impacts to homeowners and businesses in order to sustain services required in a growing county with increased development and a growing population.

The Justice and Law Enforcement program areas remain a priority and include increased expenditures of \$2.2 million, requiring increased tax levy of \$800,000, or approximately half of new tax levy (including state personal property aid).

- The Sheriff's Department will add six FTE correctional officers as a result of staffing plans for prisoner transports during and after construction of the new court tower. One position is tax levy funded at \$74,245, with the remaining five positions funded with fund balance. Two of these five positions will be phased in with tax levy support in the next two years and the remaining three positions (necessary only during the interim construction period) will sunset when the court tower is operational in 2021.

- The Medical Examiner budget will handle increased caseloads and costs associated with more toxicology tests from drug-related death investigations resulting in expenditure increases of \$156,600 or almost 7%. Tax levy increases \$30,000 and revenues increase \$127,000 from contract partners, fee increases, and revenue restructuring of the tissue contracts.
- A tax levy increase of \$190,000 will fund increased costs for Courts and the District Attorney along with limited revenue increases. In addition, a \$78,600 Criminal Justice Collaborating Council (CJCC) grant will fund a new paralegal position to coordinate pre-trial diversion programming.

## **INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The 2019 Capital budget, with total expenditures of \$25.0 million, emphasizes one major project: the expansion, renovation, and operations of the Waukesha County Courthouse. The kickoff of the Courthouse Project construction is the culmination of years of strategic planning and budgeting by Waukesha County.

The main purposes of the Courthouse Project are to improve security and address aging and out-of-date facility systems in the current courthouse, some of which are original to the 1959 structure. Upgraded systems and streamlined operations are expected to offset some of the costs of the project in the long term. The Courthouse Project is also expected to alleviate a number of security concerns impacting current operations through improved surveillance, emergency response systems, and greater separation of court participants to avoid potential confrontations.

In order to perform the necessary upgrades to the existing courthouse, the new court tower must first be built to allow portions of the current courthouse to be vacated.

- Construction is expected to begin in 2019 by demolishing approximately 52,000 square feet of old jail space and building a new 62,000 square foot, four-story, eight-courtroom tower. Completion is anticipated in 2021.
- The new secure courtroom facility will be located adjacent to jail facilities, and will feature improved security, prisoner transport, and public access.
- The second phase will renovate the existing courthouse. It will replace aging mechanical systems, enhance business operations through a more efficient office layout, and will improve public access. Design is planned to begin in 2021, with construction 2022-2025

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the Waukesha County staff that helped prepare the 2019 Waukesha County Budget and the County Board Supervisors who sat beside me in countless meetings in preparation of this budget. Thank you for continuing to support our commitment to the taxpayers of Waukesha County to remain a low-tax leader.

Sincerely,



PAUL FARROW  
County Executive