



Waukesha County

Office of the County Executive

To: Honorable County Board Members
From: Paul Farrow, County Executive
Date: December 8, 2022

Dear Honorable County Board Supervisors:

This 2023 Adopted Budget is an example of what is possible when local government utilizes creative solutions to tackle complex community issues. The budget includes multiple examples of the County addressing important priorities while improving services and keeping taxes low. Thank you for responsibly representing your constituents throughout the budget development process.

Residents have said public safety, and low taxes, and high-quality services are what matters most to them. My goal is to always create a budget that reflects those concerns. Over half of the new tax levy in this budget is dedicated to the areas of Justice and Law Enforcement, with the Sheriff's Department receiving the most new levy of any county department, continuing a many-years long trend. We remain committed to tackling the backlog in the courts created by closures during the COVID-19 pandemic and are investing in a safer courthouse facility that can meet residents' needs for decades to come. These initiatives will improve the safety, health, and quality of life of residents while maintaining our conservative fiscal values and conforming to the state's statutory limits.

We are making long-term investments to make communities safer, ensuring our infrastructure is accessible and well maintained, and improving our economic outlook by supporting local businesses via our county's revolving loan program. Our hard work, innovation, collaboration, strategic planning, and partnership with you, members of the County Board of Supervisors, has made it all possible.

The 2023 County general property tax levy totals \$112.3 million, an increase of 2.55% or \$2,795,860. The increase includes a factor for tax increment district closures, prior-year unused levy capacity, debt service on infrastructure investments and a net new construction growth rate of 1.75% as compared to 1.57% in the prior year. This growth in levy is against an equalized property tax base of \$73.5 billion, which experienced a 13.0% increase. Once again, we are holding tax levy growth within statutory limits to minimize impacts to homeowners and businesses in order to sustain services required in a county with increased development and a growing population.

The Justice and Law Enforcement program areas remain a priority, requiring increased tax levy of \$1,531,000 or over half of the new tax levy in total, and 70% of new levy for operations.

- The Sheriff's Department tax levy will increase \$845,000, helping phase-in tax levy support for a \$3.00/hour pay increase provided during 2022 to all sheriff deputies, detectives, and other sworn officers to help improve recruitment and retention.
- Emergency Preparedness, which includes emergency dispatch operations for the Sheriff's Department and 32 municipalities, includes a tax levy increase of \$330,000, helping cover the costs of existing staff and pay adjustments for telecommunicators and their supervisors to promote recruitment and retention.
- Tax levy increases totaling \$280,000 will fund the cost to continue for Circuit Courts and the District Attorney's Office, helping cover increasing jury trial and interpreter expenses in the Courts, and offsetting minimal or decreasing ongoing state revenue growth for both operations.
- Tax levy for the Medical Examiner's Office increases \$76,000, which partially supports a new Deputy Medical Examiner Supervisor and increasing an Administrative Assistant from part-time to full-time to provide additional coverage and support for an increasing caseload.

SERVICE LEVEL ADJUSTMENTS:

The 2023 budget includes changes in service levels in several areas.

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is budgeting additional resources to help meet the state-mandated elimination of the waitlist for participation in the Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) program. The

budget increases contract case management support by \$900,000 and adds 1.00 FTE human services supervisor position to help manage increasing caseloads and establish continuous enrollment. This expanded capacity, along with the continuation of base program caseloads, is funded with \$1.7 million in additional state revenues. The budget also includes an additional \$2.5 million in pass-through state revenues for payments to the state's third-party administrator to cover additional services provided to CLTS clients, due to higher enrollment.

- HHS will build upon an initiative started in 2022 to provide greater mental health treatment services to youths. During 2022, the County Board approved the creation of 10.00 FTE additional positions to double the treatment capacity up to 150 youths. This expansion is continued in 2023 and is funded with an additional \$1.2 million of Medicaid funding provided through the state's Comprehensive Community Services program and \$386,000 of temporary ARPA funds to cover start-up costs to hire and train staff, until Medicaid reimbursements kick-in and cover most program costs.
- This year, the county began receiving payments from two opioid lawsuit settlements, and this budget includes nearly \$730,000 of that funding to fight the opioid crisis by addressing substance use addiction and the underlying mental health issues that contribute to it. This includes \$316,000 for treatment and testing for youth and adult patients, \$225,000 to expand existing correctional treatment programs to reduce relapses and recidivism, and \$188,000 to fund the pre-trial diversion program that targets low- to moderate-risk defendants, primarily with opioid use disorders. The county will receive ongoing payments from this settlement through 2038.
- This budget includes \$346,000 to continue an expansion of the Crisis Law Enforcement Collaboration project that was approved mid-year 2022. This ARPA-funded initiative deploys 3.00 FTE crisis clinicians to embed with law enforcement and has been successful in mitigating the amount of time law enforcement remains on scene as well as referring individuals to appropriate care.
- The 2023 budget includes \$100,000 to create a new 1.00 FTE Assistant Veteran Services Office position, to provide additional coverage and help ensure veterans receive timely service amid increasing client workload that results from recent federal legislation expanding benefit eligibility for Vietnam and Gulf War veterans. This position will be funded through ARPA, with tax levy support phased in over time through attrition of other positions.
- This budget also supports economic development by investing an additional \$4.5 million in the GROW Fund, which is a revolving loan program designed to retain, expand, and attract businesses, as well as increase workforce housing stock to help meet the growing demand for employment in the County. The expansion will be funded with \$3.0 million of ARPA revenues and \$1.5 million in prior-year Professional Baseball District (i.e., Miller Park) taxes received after the tax sunset during 2020—returning those funds back to the community.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The 2023 capital budget, with total expenditures of \$45.6 million, increases by \$17.1 million from the 2022 budget, and includes \$20.4 million for the 2023 construction phase for the Courthouse Project Step II: Renovate 1959 Courthouse. The project will improve security, address aging and out-of-date facility systems, and ensure that facilities can support the next fifty years of growth in the County. The 2023 budget also includes \$4.3 million for construction on Moorland Road, from Beloit Road to National Avenue in the City of New Berlin, as part of a multi-year effort to rehabilitate and improve major segments along one of the County's busiest highways. The capital budget appropriates \$2.9 million to complete the Lake County Trail Underpass beneath State Highway 67 in the City of Oconomowoc. This project is largely funded through federal, state, and local partnerships, and has been moved up from 2025 to 2023 to enhance safety and alleviate traffic delays for both trail users and motorists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Waukesha County staff that helped prepare the 2023 Waukesha County Budget and the County Board Supervisors who worked hard to deliver a budget that will continue our commitment to the taxpayers of Waukesha County to remain a low-tax leader.

Sincerely,



PAUL FARROW
County Executive