



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Milwaukee County

CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DATE: June 22, 2012

TO: The Honorable Milwaukee Board of Supervisors

FROM: Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive

RE: Veto of County Board File No. 12-255 to accept and adopt the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture's 5-year Capital Development Plan

I am vetoing County Board File No. 12-255 pursuant to the authority granted to me by Article IV, Section 23(a) of the Wisconsin Constitution and Section 59.17(6) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

The County Board adopted a resolution on May 24, 2012 to accept and adopt the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture's 5-year Capital Development Plan.

While I fully support Milwaukee County Parks and will continue moving forward on addressing the long-term maintenance needs of Milwaukee County, this plan is not the best way to prioritize the county's capital investments. For starters, the County is in no position to dedicate \$75 million dollars over 5 years to fix problems that go back decades.

Based on current County Board policy, only \$34.6 million is available for capital projects in 2013. This plan approved by the County Board would force us to spend nearly half of that on one department. In our current economic climate, it is not reasonable or responsible to commit such a large portion of taxpayer money without regard for other capital needs. This is exactly the type of isolated decision making that can quickly snowball and create real fiscal problems.

Adopting this resolution locks the County into these decisions regardless of the County's fiscal situation or consideration of other capital investment needs. Milwaukee County Corporation Counsel has advised that the fiscal note mention of this not obligating the funds to carry out the objectives of this resolution is not policy; the resolution is policy. This absolutely would bind the County in making capital improvement decisions.

The proposal itself is also less than ideal in aiding decision-making. While it is grand in scope, 250 pages, it does not lay out in any prioritized or meaningful manner what projects have already been completed nor what factors should be considered in prioritizing our decision-making.

What we should be focusing on is a thoughtful capital process that allows for the prioritization of all County capital projects. That is what the normal budget process calls for and there is no reason to deviate from that plan.

I fear this veto will cause some to spew rhetoric about my commitment to Parks. To be clear, this is not about Parks or any other department. This is about fair and responsible budgeting.

For anyone who will question my dedication to Parks, it should be noted I personally supported Parks financially and with my time long before I took office and I will continue to look for ways to support our parks both in my current position and into the future. Moving forward we're working as hard as we can to improve the long-term fiscal health of the County and put ourselves into a position to deal with deferred maintenance at Parks that goes back years.

As a father, I understand parks' important role in young people's lives. As a resident, I appreciate their beauty, functionality and role in the great quality of life we all enjoy. As an elected leader, I believe it's important we pass along a sustainable county government and a sustainable parks system to future generations.

I encourage the board to sustain this veto and let's move forward on thoughtful, appropriate capital planning process for all of Milwaukee County.