

## OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

## Milwaukee County

## CHRIS ABELE . COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DATE: November 11, 2016

TO: The Honorable County Board of Supervisors FROM: Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive

SUBJECT: PARTIAL VETO OF FILE NUMBER 16-567 (2017 BUDGET)

Thank you for the care and diligence you have shown in considering 2017 budget. In reviewing the Board's amendments to the proposed 2017 budget, we have worked hard to find areas of compromise and to clarify our thinking in areas where we do not agree. The County Board made 44 amendments to the 2017 Recommended Budget. Similar to last year when I accepted 66 of 68 amendments, this year I am accepting 43 of 44 amendments and asking you to reconsider only one amendment that makes significant cuts to the County Executive's staff. This amendment would mean losing 3 of the 8 staff in the County Executive Office.

We have all acknowledged that this was a tough budget. We were faced with the dire reality that the County needs new sources of revenue if it is to sustain itself into the future. Of the 44 amendments, I am accepting a compromise to the vehicle registration fee (VRF) because I believe the \$30 fee will put the County in a stronger, more sustainable position than we would be without it. Please note, though, that I continue to agree with the Comptroller that the fee needs to rise to at least \$60 or we will face the serious cuts and dire choices that he and the Public Policy Forum warn about. I am accepting the referendum on the VRF but ask that you consider a different phrasing to make sure the public we serve has a transparent view of what is at stake with their vote and understands the consequences of not supporting a VRF. We owe our constituents the same candor that the Comptroller and Public Policy Forum are offering them. I believe the Board's suggestion to put together a taskforce to examine ways to make the VRF more progressive is a good one and think this will be a great opportunity for us to partner.

I hope this will be the beginning of a true dialogue and partnership about how we can put the County on a more sustainable path through the use of a VRF, as well as by lobbying for other options not currently available to the County. With cuts to state and federal funding, the only way we can accomplish this is by working together.

I am accepting the over \$2 million of new parks projects because I understand how important they are to your districts. However, if we want to continue to invest in our parks, we have to be laser focused on how to do this sustainably. That is why I appreciated the dialogue the Finance Committee had about creatively looking for new sources of revenue such as lakefront parking and municipal commitment fees. While no one wants to add new fees, unfortunately the County has to ask the questions if we want to maintain service levels.

Again, I'd like to thank Supervisors for their thoughtful deliberations of the 2017 budget. I believe the 2017 adopted budget will place Milwaukee County in a stronger, more sustainable position.

## **VETO MESSAGE**

Veto #1 to Amendment 1A063 that cuts the County Executive's Office staff by \$188,150 or approximately 3 staff members.

Sustaining this veto would have no fiscal impact on the 2017 Adopted Budget.

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The County Executive's Office currently has 9 FTEs, including myself. This is the same number as in 2011 and, based on my review of budgets going back to 1995, the lowest FTE count the Office has seen. Because departments like the County Executive's Office are small and the budget is made up almost exclusively of salary dollars (ie. few services/commodities/other expenses), maintaining a flat budget is not possible without cuts to employees. That is why my proposed budgets for such small departments (including the treasurer, register of deeds, corporation counsel, county clerk, etc...) have been cost-to-continue budgets: they are not able to absorb year-to-year inflationary increases like larger departments can.

I have worked hard over the last 5 years to freeze my budget and get rid of any unnecessary costs. All departments have had to make difficult decisions in light of our fiscal constraints -- and so has the County Executive's Office. Just a few examples include getting rid of the office vehicle, County cell phones and our color printer. I have also kept the number of FTEs frozen.

I am compromising on changes that the Chairman has requested to the County Board's office budget, including changes to fringe benefits, crosscharges and the transfer of a position to the County Clerk. I have accepted every amendment that the County Board has requested for its own budget. I am asking for the same consideration of my office budget.

I have made it a priority for my staff to engage with Supervisors on issues important to you. I have heard from many of you that you have noticed a significant difference the outreach you receive from our office. I hope this can continue and we can build on what we've started. However, if I am forced to lay off three of my eight staff members, it will be difficult to continue to build our relationship and work together on the issues and opportunities facing Milwaukee County.

I ask you to sustain this veto.