

Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Nicholson: Omnibus amendment to enhance racial equity efforts and invest in communities adopted by board

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MILWAUKEE, WI – The Board of Supervisors approved (17-1, Weishan) an [amendment](#) to the 2021 budget from Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson that makes additional investments in racial equity efforts and in improving the health of Milwaukee County residents from all walks of life.

Chairwoman Nicholson’s amendment estimates about \$2 million more in sales tax revenue for 2021 and reduces various costs by about \$1 million to lower the tax burden on Milwaukee County property owners by about \$725,000 and allow for greater investments in essential services and programming, as well as in urgent repairs to crumbling infrastructure.

“This budget is the first in Milwaukee County history to be guided by a plan for achieving racial equity and improving the health of all Milwaukee County residents,” said Nicholson. “My amendment builds on this foundational and historic budget from County Executive Crowley by boosting our efforts to achieve racial equity and serve our most vulnerable neighbors, especially those affected by the pandemic. We can make even greater progress towards improving the health of everyone who lives in Milwaukee County by investing nearly \$2.5 million in our parks and cultural amenities, in services for youth justice system-involved youth and for senior

citizens, in combatting homelessness, and our public libraries, as well as our best resource, our County employees," she added.

Nicholson's amendment anticipates less revenue in 2021 due to the Coronavirus pandemic by adding \$494,000 in funding for the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture (Parks) and \$250,000 for the Zoo to avoid potential cuts that could be necessary if estimated revenues are not achieved due to lower usage and attendance caused by the pandemic.

The amendment also provides \$65,000 in seasonal funding to allow the Mitchell Park Domes and Boerner Botanical Gardens to operate for all of 2021, plus \$75,000 to seek out possible sources of revenue to restore and repair the Mitchell Park Domes.

"Milwaukee's Mitchell Park Domes and Boerner Botanical Gardens are unique green spaces that impress visitors and serve as affordable getaways for families and children of all ages. The Domes and Botanical Gardens are sources of pride for many who treasure these shining jewels of our Parks system. With my amendment, we will ensure that these facilities remain open in accordance with Coronavirus public safety restrictions and explore ways to restore and repair the Domes, so they can continue to bring joy and peace to those who visit," said Nicholson.

Additionally, \$282,059 is allocated to supplement seasonal Parks staffing (which may include reopening local aquatic centers that are scheduled to be closed), \$80,000 is set aside for urgent Parks maintenance needs, and \$10,000 is provided for a safety study at McKinley Beach.

Chairwoman Nicholson's amendment adds to the County Executive's commitment to our youth by setting aside an additional \$500,000 for the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) to expand upon programming for youth, and asks DYFS to submit a plan to the Board of Supervisors on the recommended use of those funds.

"We can confront systemic racism head-on by investing in our youth instead of

prisons, and show those youth who are disproportionately impacted by racism that we believe in them, and that their future matters, by putting more resources into services that address their underlying needs.” said Nicholson.

Lastly, Chairwoman Nicholson’s amendment allocates \$400,000 to supplement services that are in greater need due to the Coronavirus pandemic, including \$250,000 to the Housing Division to combat homelessness and housing insecurity, \$100,000 to provide services to seniors that depend on County senior centers, and \$50,000 to the County Federated Library System to expand digital resource materials.

“In the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, it’s imperative that we put the needs of our most vulnerable residents first and help provide dignity to those who are struggling, including those families living on the edge of economic insecurity and homelessness, and our beloved elders who have been disproportionately affected,” said Nicholson.

The Adopted Budget next goes to County Executive Crowley for his approval, who has until Friday, November 13, to issue vetoes. If the County Executive issues any vetoes, the Board will convene on November 16.