

Dane County Exec. Parisi: Signs 2022 Meeting the Challenge budget

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Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi signed the 2022 Dane County Budget: Meeting the Challenge. The \$754.9 million dollar spending plan works to address the impacts of COVID-19, while also prioritizing investments in mental health, public safety, conservation, human services, quality of life, efforts to combat climate change, and more.

“The 2022 Dane County budget puts a strategic focus on the health and well-being of our people and protection of the resources and places that define us,” said Parisi. “This budget builds on successful county initiatives while exploring new opportunities to make a difference in Dane County residents’ lives. We continue to operate in difficult and uncertain times, but by working together and fostering partnerships, we are making investments to meet the needs of our communities and our people.”

The budget allocates \$10 million for site acquisition, planning, and development of the Crisis Triage Center. This one stop facility will help keep individuals out of the criminal justice system and directly link them with services customized to address the barriers they face. Parisi is dedicating an additional \$1 million to help meet service and operational needs when the Triage Center opens.

“The improvements made to mental and behavioral health are really the centerpieces of this budget and build upon our progressive leadership at meeting these needs,” Parisi said. He noted Dane County opened the Behavioral Health Resource Center (BHRC) last November, a facility that connects people with resources to address barriers in mental health care and those seeking treatment for substance abuse. Given increasing workloads, \$440,000 was added in this budget to increase staff at the BHRC. This will bring county government’s annual

commitment to this project to over \$1.2 million.

The budget also sets aside \$4.7 million in American Rescue and Recovery Funds for the unknown pandemic related expenses that will no doubt emerge in the year ahead. This safety net is critical to county government maintaining its ability to respond to acute, sometimes unexpected needs from the pandemic as they arise. The 2022 Dane County budget also:

- *Extends housing protections for those at risk of homelessness and adds funds to Dane County's popular Emergency Food Pandemic Response partnership with Second Harvest, which bolsters the production and distribution of locally grown foods. To date, Dane County has allocated over \$23 million to stock the shelves of local food pantries with locally sourced products, and this budget adds another \$1 million to that effort.
- *Includes \$8.2 million for Dane County's "Hotels to Housing" program, a multi-agency partnership that helps nearly 300 households experiencing homelessness search for and obtain housing, assist with case management, and help pay housing costs for up to two years.
- *Debuts a new mobile, virtual \$250,000 mental health program with the Dane County Sheriff's Office, so when deputies come upon a crisis situation they have the support they need to assist families.
- *Addresses climate change with \$5 million to purchase trailers that haul renewable compressed natural gas (CNG) to help convert more Dane County highway trucks away from diesel. The budget also has \$2 million for installation of a new CNG filling station at the Fish Hatchery Road Highway garage and \$3.2 million for the purchase of eight more CNG powered snowplows.
- *Improves conservation and water quality by increasing Dane County's popular "Continuous Cover Program" to \$2.5 million next year. This first of its kind effort helps maintain the rural character and landscape of the fastest growing county in the state. The program helps reduce runoff and erosion, keep farmers and growers on the land, and helps trap carbon.
- *Sets aside \$3 million for the next phase of flood risk reduction dredging in the Yahara River from Lake Kegonsa to County Highway B. Dredging between Lakes Monona and Waubesa in 2020 removed 40,000 cubic yards of sediment, deepening

the Yahara River by as much as four feet. Next year's phase is projected to start in the spring and will remove an estimated 65,000 cubic yards of run-off from the river bottom.

*Funds \$15.6 million in highway projects, including \$2 million for the reconstruction of Highway M north of Lake Mendota. The county is competing for federal dollars for a series of projects, continuing its commitment to rural infrastructure.

Parisi did exercise one partial veto on the budget adopted by the County Board. Information regarding that veto is outlined in a memo to the County Board attached to this news release.