

# **GOP Building Commission members signal they may send capital budget to JFC without recommendation**

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The GOP members of the Building Commission are signaling they'll move at today's meeting to send Gov. Tony Evers' capital budget to the Joint Finance Committee without a recommendation.

Republican lawmakers on the commission tried a similar tactic two years ago as their GOP colleagues objected to the \$2.5 billion capital budget Evers originally proposed. The Legislature eventually pared that back to more than \$1.8 billion.

Then, the commission deadlocked on both the GOP motion and each project Evers had proposed.

This time, Evers has proposed a \$2.4 billion capital budget, which includes just shy of \$2 billion in new borrowing. The rest of the projects would be covered with \$86.1 million in existing borrowing and a combination of gifts, cash and other revenue sources.

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The four GOP lawmakers who serve on the commission told WisPolitics.com they want the proposal considered in the context of the federal money the state will receive in the latest federal stimulus bill.

For the GOP motion to be successful, it would have to obtain the backing of at least one of the two Dem lawmakers on the committee, the gov or Evers' citizen appointee to the commission.

Rep. Rob Swearingen, R-Rhineland, said he'd like to see \$1 billion cut from Evers'

proposal. The other members didn't commit to a specific reduction.

Swearingen called the capital budget a "Christmas tree for both UW System and administrative affairs." Of the \$2.5 billion in the latest capital budget, \$1 billion would go to projects at the UW System. Evers also wants to build a new state office building in Milwaukee.

"Government isn't even back to work," Swearingen said. "He can't make up his mind when to open up the Capitol, let alone send office workers back to work."

Sen. Jerry Petrowski, R-Marathon, said he wants the Joint Finance Committee to get a memo from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau to look at how the state can use the coming \$3.2 billion in federal funds to see if it can go toward some building projects.

"They'll have a much clearer picture," Petrowski said.

Evers earlier this week urged lawmakers to support the capital budget, arguing the projects he proposed were strategic investments to help the economy recover from the pandemic.

"Our proposal not only invests in our students at our UW campuses, our veterans at our veterans homes across the state, and our public lands and more renewable projects, but it invests in the future we want to build for our state," Evers said. "As our state faces urgent challenges due to COVID-19, it's never been more important for our capital budget investments to receive bipartisan support."

Watch the hearing on [WisconsinEye](#).