

Dane County Exec Parisi: Introduces 2023 budget: Opportunity Out of Adversity

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Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi introduced his 2023 budget proposal at Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin, where he laid out Dane County's plans to prioritize investments in life's basic needs, housing, mental health supports, restorative justice, conservation initiatives, addressing climate change, and more. The \$834 million dollar spending plan builds on successful county initiatives while exploring new opportunities to make a substantive difference for individuals and families in the Dane County community.

"The past few years have taught us the importance of planning, flexibility, and resiliency. We will continue to respond to the moment and do all we can for the well-being of all in our community," said County Executive Parisi. "My 2023 budget continues progressive investments in our quality of life and pairs them with visionary approaches to confronting our challenges. It builds upon the years of work we've done and advances our approach of putting people and this special place we call home first."

Parisi was joined at today's event by Second Harvest President and CEO Michelle Orge. Initially created to help families meet basic needs during the pandemic, Dane County and Second Harvest's "Farm to Foodbank" program has opened new doors to what is possible when local growers connect with agencies who keep people fed. Since its debut, the partnership has brought in and boxed over \$20 million in food for families across the area. This provides economic security for local agricultural producers and healthy meals for those struggling to meet the cost of filling a grocery cart. Parisi's budget continues the Farm to Foodbank program through 2023 with \$6 million.

“We are grateful for the trust Dane County Executive Parisi has placed in Second Harvest and our partners to support neighbors who are facing hunger,” said Orge. “This initiative demonstrates a true commitment to both supporting local growers and producers and ensuring that everyone in our community has enough nutritious food to thrive.”

Parisi is also including \$1.5 million in his budget for The River Food Pantry to help Dane County’s largest pantry grow and meet increasing needs. The River serves well over 2,000 people each week through its various programs. All of this takes room for staff and volunteers to work, and The River is on the lookout for a new facility. It has started a capital campaign to acquire land and construct a building that can host the wide variety of food systems work The River does. Parisi’s budget provides funds to jumpstart fundraising for a new home to coordinate the basic needs it helps meet in the community.

“The River Food Pantry has been in desperate need of a larger facility for years,” said Rhonda Adams, Executive Director of The River Food Pantry. “This generous investment from Dane County will enable us to extend services to more underserved communities confronting food insecurity. We are incredibly grateful for this support as we continue to pursue our vision of a fully nourished community.”

This \$7.5 million in the budget to help eliminate food insecurity among low income and underserved communities is the single largest area of new dollars infused into the community in Parisi’s operating budget.

Other highlight’s of Parisi’s 2023 budget include:

Housing/Life’s Basics -

- Dane County was recently notified the rental assistance program it established with the City of Madison and other community partners during the Covid-19 pandemic, **Dane CORE 2.0**, will receive an additional infusion of nearly \$27 million in federal support. This means the work helping families stay in their homes will continue into 2023.
- **The Heart Room** helps families find housing stability with case management and rental support. The project came together through the efforts of a local congregation, Orchard Ridge Church, in partnership with Dane County’s Joining Forces for Families (JFF) program and non-profit housing provider The Road Home. Parisi’s budget invests \$20,000 to expand this successful initiative to

serve more families.

- The 2023 county budget has a \$6 million investment for a new **permanent shelter for men experiencing homelessness**, increasing the county's share for a new shelter to a total of \$9 million. That figure matches the contribution to the project by the City of Madison.
- Parisi's capital budget includes \$6 million for the **Dane County Affordable Housing Development Fund**. Over the last 8 years, the fund has invested over \$31 million dollars in projects to support the creation of 2,429 housing units, including more than 2,201 units of affordable housing across Dane County.
- Housing is the number one issue Dane County's **Joining Forces for Families** (JFF) face. The work staff do is time intensive and tailored to each individual family they work with. Parisi's budget adds an additional housing specialist within Dane County's JFF at a cost of \$91,700.
- Parisi is including \$4.82 million in his budget to raise the county's funding support to **purchase of service agencies** with an across the board 9% inflationary increase. He is hopeful this increase—likely the most substantial one-year jump in funding in the county's history—will help these agencies fill vacant positions, retain existing workers, and enhance core service delivery.
- The Boys and Girls Club of Dane County has pulled together a partnership to develop a new **Skilled Trades Training Center**, creating a new pipeline in the Dane County community to connect and train young people with jobs in the trades. Parisi is including \$1.5 million in the capital budget as Dane County's contribution to the success of the work that is underway.
- Parisi is also including \$1.5 dollars for Mount Zion Church to develop a new **Community Life Center** that will include a food pantry, mental health services, areas for youth programming, and senior services. \$1.2 million will go toward Dr. Alex Gee's ongoing work to develop **The Center for Black Excellence and Culture**. Both projects are located on Madison's southside.

Mental Health/Addiction Services -

- Next year will mark 10 years since County Executive Parisi announced **"Building Bridges"** - the creation of a partnership to imbed school-based mental health teams in area schools. Today, Dane County supports these teams in 10 Dane County school districts, with an investment of over \$1 million a year. The Sun Prairie and Madison school districts have interest in adding more teams of mental health professionals. Parisi's budget

includes \$185,000 to expand the partnership.

“We appreciate our relationship with Dane County and are grateful for County Executive Parisi’s enthusiastic support for mental health services in our schools,” said Shawn Carney, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Madison. “This additional funding will expand our ability to address immediate mental health needs for students in Madison and Sun Prairie, and at no cost for the families being served. There is a growing need for emotional support services, especially among youth. In addition to addressing immediate needs, Building Bridges seeks to connect schools, families, and students with resources to promote ongoing emotional wellness, including offering counsel for school staff on mental health and trauma-related issues.”

- Parisi is adding over \$484,000 in new money to further increase staff at the **Behavioral Health Resource Center**. This investment will enhance excellent response times and customer service standards and increase the Center’s presence in the community.
- **The Crisis Triage Center** will provide around the clock, short-term observation, assessment, treatment, and planning for those experiencing a behavioral health crisis as a result of their mental health, substance use, and/or disability. Parisi’s budget includes over \$1.3 million to inform next steps once Dane County completes a request for proposals this fall to evaluate different models for how the Crisis Triage Center could operate.
- Anesis Therapy and Journey Mental Health have come together to create a new **BIPOC Mental Health Coalition**. Parisi’s budget invests \$135,000 for the agencies to team together to address mental health needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and advocate for systemic changes needed to reduce disparities and improve care.
- Parisi’s budget includes \$500,000 for the Sheriff’s Office to expand its team of **mobile crisis workers** and an additional \$190,000 for civilian vehicles and equipment so staff can directly respond to incidents where a mental health professional, not a law enforcement officer alone, is what’s needed to defuse a situation.
- Additionally, Sheriff Barrett has agreed to reassign more **community deputies** to work exclusively on mental health. These deputies will work in tandem with the new mobile crisis workers, allowing for teams of professionals trained in this subject matter to improve outcomes of calls involving behavioral health.

- In September, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi joined community advocates to announce the **Harm Reduction and Prevention Act**. Parisi's 2023 budget includes \$283,500 to support these efforts, including funding a new full-time position at OutReach and a new prevention specialist within Dane County Emergency Management.

"The solution to dire mental health provider shortages needs to be at the top of the list of the national health care conversation," County Executive Parisi said. "While county government alone can't resolve this, we can continue our decade of consistent leadership on behavioral health."

Restorative Justice -

- Parisi's budget creates the new **Dane County Department of Justice Reform and Equity**. Through a combination of new staff positions and realigning existing capacity, this new department will be a dedicated, independent resource to bridge agencies within the criminal justice system and lead Dane County's next steps on data driven reforms. The budget includes funds for the agency to administer a micro-grant program to support community-based reforms.
- This budget also allocates \$85,000 for a **new re-entry partnership** with Dane County and Project Big Step to help those leaving jail with job training that can lead to careers in the trades.
- Several new members of the County Board brought new energy, vision, and ideas to **criminal justice reform**. Parisi has set aside \$500,000 in this budget to help bring some of those visions to reality and implement the next phase of Dane County's criminal justice reform work.
- Building on the successes of the Community Restorative Court (CRC), Parisi is also jumpstarting creation of a new **Dane County Community Court** pilot in his budget. Community Court is intended to address underlying issues that contribute to criminal behavior. For the pilot start-up phase, this court will operate a couple of afternoons a month and serve around 60 individuals in its first year. The budget has funds to help Dane County set up a new Community Court, including hiring a full-time coordinator within the new Department of Criminal Justice Reform and Equity.

Climate Change -

- Parisi's budget includes \$4.5 million for the development and installation

of **carbon capture technologies**, along with a new position in the Department of Waste and Renewables to work on accelerating our path toward carbon neutrality.

- Parisi is including funds in his budget to register the carbon reduction and sequestration work Dane County does on a **national registry**.
- Parisi is also bolstering resources for the **Office of Energy and Climate Change** (\$92,600 in new funding) to further ramp up Dane County's focus on becoming carbon neutral, and track emissions and energy data.
- The 2023 capital budget includes \$900,000 to start work on **three energy saving projects at county facilities** next year. These dollars will help design campus-wide geothermal systems for the East District Campus (Medical Examiner and Highway Garage) along with the Badger Prairie campus in Verona. Additional dollars will upgrade the heating and air flow systems and cooking equipment at Dane County's Consolidated Foods Services building. When complete, this work will further reduce Dane County's natural gas usage and emissions.
- Parisi's budget also has millions for energy conservation and air quality improvements at the **Alliant Energy Center**. This will make lighting, control, and mechanical upgrades possible that conserve energy.

Conservation -

- Parisi is including \$2 million in the budget so Dane County can carry out its **"Suck the Muck"** initiative at Door Creek and its surrounding wetlands. Planning for the project will occur next year, with construction slated for 2024. This project will increase flood storage - allowing Dane County to further its ability to better manage lake levels during periods of high water - trap runoff and sediment, and improve fish and wildlife habitat.
- The capital budget allocates \$3 million for the **Yahara Chain of Lakes Sediment Removal Project** to continue in the coming year. Parisi is also adding two more fulltime dredging positions to ensure Dane County has the bodies necessary to continue prioritizing this work.
- In 2019, Parisi started the Dane County **Continuous Cover Program**. To date, Dane County has converted nearly 2,000 acres into perennial vegetative cover. Those lands alone have helped trap 800 tons of carbon dioxide and stopped the flow of over 15 million gallons of rain run-off from racing toward area lakes and rivers. Parisi's budget includes \$2 million to continue Dane County's Continuous Cover Program.

- Parisi is allocating \$10 million to the **Dane County Conservation Fund** for further acquisitions that help improve water quality and allow opportunities for prairie and wildlife restoration.
- The budget includes \$75,000 for the Department of Land and Water Resources to build upon its **carbon trapping and tracking** work in 2023.
- The Department of Land and Water Resources recently secured a \$1 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish what's called a "**demonstration farm network**" in Dane County. The federal grant funding will start next year and pay for an agronomist, research, education, and outreach activities focused on conservation practices that reduce erosion, sediment build up, and nonpoint runoff.
- Parisi's budget allocates \$2.5 million to construct phase two of the **Lower Yahara River Trail**, a section from Fish Camp County Park through Lake Kegonsa State Park. Construction is slated to start in July of 2023 and be complete sometime late fall of 2024. The Dane County community is nearing the day when residents can get a bike in Madison and pedal along the water to Stoughton.
- Parisi is also adding \$500,000 for what's known as the **Waucheeta Connector Trail**, a connector to the Lower Yahara River Trail that will serve as an alternative to riding along Lake Farm Road.
- The 2023 budget includes \$500,000 for the **PARC and Ride bike trail grant program**, which helps local governments and non-profits develop trail projects throughout Dane County.

"Our leadership on water quality, conservation, and outdoor recreation are exemplary and should be the standard bearer for any community that prioritizes clean air to breathe and clean water to drink and recreate in. This budget raises the bar even further," County Executive Parisi added.

Emerging Needs -

- In 2020, the Dane County Regional Airport (DCRA) helped fund an innovative pilot project to address PFAS at the airport site resulting from use of the FAA-mandated fire-fighting foam. Before this pilot project, research into PFAS remediation was severely lacking, and that's why the DCRA backed pilot project testing a new removal strategy was so important. The recently released initial results of that pilot are very promising, and the 2023 airport budget includes funding to expand the **pilot remediation program** to more areas of the airport property. Airports across the country are looking for solutions on

PFAS, and the DCRA team took a leadership role in finding a solution that could benefit the entire country.

- The Dane County community needs to determine the scope of PFAS in private well drinking water. Parisi's budget creates a new **PFAS private well testing program** within the Department of Public Health. With around \$186,000, Dane County can help test wells countywide and get a better sense of the prevalence of PFAS in private drinking water supply. That information will provide homeowners with valuable information about the safety of their water. The primary testing phase of this work will occur in 2023.
- The PACT Act has created a new surge of calls, emails, and walk-in visitors to the **Dane County Veterans Service Office** (CVSO) and its counterparts across the state and country. Parisi's 2023 budget adds 1.5 staff to CVSO (at a cost of over \$144,000), so staff can meet this surge in service demand.
- The staffing levels, working conditions, and morale of **nurses at local health care providers** were the focus of work by the County Board this year. The Health and Human Needs Committee received a report in recent weeks by a sub-committee created to examine potential solutions to the challenges raised. Out of respect to the Board's leadership on this issue, Parisi is funding a \$120,000 position in the County Board Office to continue this work next year. He is also allocating \$500,000 that could be paired with funds from health providers who employ nurses to maximize impact on work that improves nursing retention, recruitment, and the mental health and well-being of nurse caregivers.

General Government -

- Parisi is adding \$60,000 in his budget for a full-time **career specialist at Centro Hispano** to expand the organization's "Caminos Progreso" training program into more county departments. Two graduates of "Caminos Progreso" are among those working full time now in our 911 Center. Having a dedicated career specialist at Centro who focuses on recruitment for county openings will accelerate Dane County's ability to diversify its workforce, creating opportunity for more in the community.
- Parisi is also funding a new **language access coordinator** position in the Department of Human Services to ensure all of the work the agency does across this community is looked at through a culturally sensitive lens. This will enhance communication and connectivity to available services.
- Parisi's 2023 budget creates a new **Dane County Caregiver Leave**

program. Many in the workforce find themselves as primary caregivers for aging parents, running to appointments and other obligations to help meet basic needs. This new Caregiver Leave will give employees caring for loved ones 80 hours of paid leave, allowing them to focus on family without worrying about their economic security.

- In response to inflation, Parisi's budget provides an **inflationary adjustment for the Dane County workforce**, sized near the most recent data available on the federal consumer price index. This 9% increase is substantial. It is also consistent with what has been seen by countless employers across many sectors to remain competitive with employee recruitment and retention efforts.
- This budget includes a brand new policy that sets Dane County's **reserve fund** balance to be no lower than 10% of the county's operating budget. Dane County has come a long way in the decade since it had a negative fund balance. It's important to protect the investment Dane County government has made in sound budgeting, to protect the budgets of tomorrow from the continued uncertain world.
- This budget also funds a series of new positions at the Dane County **Alliant Energy Center (AEC)**. The event and trade industry continues to undergo a recalibration after the Covid-19 pandemic. While a number of event venues have seen a return in business, the future of this industry remains an unknown. Adding these new positions is a substantial investment but gives the Alliant Energy Center the best possible chance at building back from the fallout of Covid.
- Parisi is including \$15.6 million for the county's share of **road improvement projects**. The most sizeable individual project is for the reconstruction and widening of Highway M in the Town of Westport.

2023 Budget by the Numbers

The 2023 budget County Executive Parisi is proposing totals \$834 million. The operating budget is \$712.6 million while the capital spending plan totals \$121.4 million, with substantial new investments in housing, services for the homeless, and conservation. The budget raises taxes on the average Madison home by \$30.05, a levy increase of 5.97%.