

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

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Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi signed the 2023 County Budget: Opportunity Out of Adversity. The \$853 million dollar spending plan works to prioritize life's basic needs, housing, mental health supports, restorative justice, conservation initiatives, and more.

"The past few years of a pandemic, and more recently poverty exacerbated by inflation, serve as frank reminders of the need to always plan for tomorrow," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "The 2023 Dane County budget builds upon the work we've done over the past decade and offers a roadmap to further improve the care and well-being of our most vulnerable, accelerate efforts to combat climate change, advance new reforms to address disparities, and protect our incredibly valuable land and water resources."

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. Parisi's budget continues the Farm to Foodbank program through 2023 with \$6 million. 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. 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.

When it comes to investments in mental health services, Parisi's budget adds over \$484,000 in new money to further increase staff at the Behavioral Health Resource Center. This funding will enhance excellent response times and customer service standards and increase the Center's presence in the community. Additionally, the

Crisis Triage Center will provide around the clock, short-term observation, assessment, treatment, and planning for those experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Parisi's budget includes over \$1.3 million to inform next steps once Dane County completes a request for proposals to evaluate different models for how the Crisis Triage Center could operate.

Other highlights of Dane County's 2023 budget include:

Housing/Life's Basics—

- \$10 million for the Dane County Affordable Housing Development Fund.
- \$91,700 for an additional housing specialist within Dane County's Joining Forces for Families.
- \$4.82 million to raise the county's funding support to purchase of service agencies with an across the board 9% inflationary increase.
- 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.

Mental Health/Addiction Services—

- \$185,000 to expand the "Building Bridges" school-based mental health teams program in the Sun Prairie and Madison school districts.
- \$135,000 to support Anesis Therapy and Journey Mental Health's new BIPOC Mental Health Coalition.
- \$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.
- \$283,500 for the Harm Reduction and Prevention Act, including funding a new full-time position at OutReach and a new prevention specialist within Dane County Emergency Management.

Restorative Justice—

- creating the new Dane County Department of Justice Reform and Equity. 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.

- \$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.
- Building on the successes of the Community Restorative Court (CRC), Parisi is also jumpstarting creation of a new Dane County Community Court.

Climate Change—

- \$4.5 million for the development and installation of carbon capture technologies and a new position in the Department of Waste & Renewables to work on accelerating Dane County's path to carbon neutrality.
- 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.
- \$900,000 to start work on three energy saving projects at county facilities next year. Parisi's budget also has millions for energy conservation and air quality improvements at the Alliant Energy Center.

Conservation—

- \$2 million in the budget so Dane County can carry out its "Suck the Muck" initiative at Door Creek and its surrounding wetlands.
- \$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.
- \$2 million to continue Dane County's Continuous Cover Program.
- \$10 million to the Dane County Conservation Fund for further acquisitions that help improve water quality and allow opportunities for prairie and wildlife restoration.
- \$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.

General Government—

- \$15.6 million for the county's share of road improvement projects.
- an inflationary adjustment for the Dane County workforce, sized near the most recent data available on the federal consumer price index.

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