

State of the County

By: Adam Payne, County Administrator

Sheboygan County is a leader of providing responsive and cost-effective local government. We have healthy fiscal reserves, an excellent bond rating, and a hard-working, caring staff providing quality services in a fiscally responsible manner.

The County has approximately **825 employees** working in **19 Departments** administering **over 200 programs and services** with an overall budget of **\$149 million**.

The Health and Human Services Department (\$34 million), Sheriff's Department (\$24 million), Transportation Department (\$19 million), and Rocky Knoll Health Care Center (\$13 million) are the four largest departments and comprise nearly 2/3rds of the entire County budget. The remaining Departments include: Building Services, Clerk of Courts, Corporation Counsel, County Clerk, Court Commissioner, District Attorney, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Medical Examiner, Planning and Conservation, Register of Deeds, Treasurer/Real Property Listing, University of Wisconsin-Extension, and Veterans Service.

The most important public policy document developed is the annual budget. Out of the \$149 million budget, the County's property tax levy is \$48 million. The balance is primarily state and federal revenue, private pay, and fee or service charges.

What's New?

Top 10 list of 2017 accomplishments, working our way to number one...

10. Pennsylvania Avenue Property Sale – Sheboygan County plays a role in supporting economic development and proactively took steps to further improve our community last year. Three dilapidated houses adjacent to an underutilized County-owned surface parking lot on Pennsylvania Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets were purchased, demolished, and subsequently sold to make way for a redevelopment opportunity. The parking lot showed an average vacancy rate of over 80%. As a result, the entire area was cleaned up and an offer has been accepted to help meet community housing needs. The planned development is estimated to be over \$10 million, which will increase the tax-base over \$200,000 per year. The developer is currently in their due diligence period (i.e. environmental reviews, financing, permits, etc.). Expected closing for the property is summer of 2018 with construction anticipated next fall.

9. Information Technology Disaster Recovery System – With the completion of the Sheboygan Ring of Fiber network project, Sheboygan County established a disaster recovery data center located at the Adult Detention Center (ADC) that provides for continuation of operations in the event of the destruction of the primary data center located in the Courthouse. The new data center at the ADC is not only geographically separated from the Courthouse (important in the event of a natural disaster), but it is also much more secure given the highly restricted access to the ADC. The new data center features its own separate firewall and internet connection allowing it to function completely independently of the Courthouse data center if needed. This significant enhancement to the County's network means that data is much better protected and the recovery time from a data center disaster is significantly reduced.

8. Employee Engagement Survey – Sheboygan County completed an All Employee Engagement Survey managed by an independent third party named Leading Edge. The goal was to provide a confidential means for employees to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement to help Sheboygan County reinforce our culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. Over 500 employees provided input and results have been shared. Action plans are in place and are a component of each Department Head performance evaluation. Though there is always room for improvement the employee's survey results were favorable overall. In fact, the Leading Edge consultants shared that of all the public organizations they have surveyed to date (approximately two dozen), Sheboygan County had the strongest or most favorable collective results.

7. 31.7 Miles of Road Work Completed Due to 1/2 Percent County Sales Tax Revenue – You don't have to travel far to see results of implementing the County's ½ percent sales tax that is dedicated to transportation. We achieved our goal by resurfacing over 31 miles of County roads this past year. The towns, villages, and cities were able to complete more road work as well. By implementing the ½ percent County sales tax, the Sheboygan County Board established a sustainable revenue source to help maintain a safe and reliable transportation system, be fiscally responsible, reduce borrowing, reduce debt service, provide direct property tax relief, and share sales tax revenue with our local municipalities to help support their transportation needs.

6. The District Attorney and HHS Department Partner to Promote Child Permanency – The District Attorney's Office partnered with the Health and Human Services Department in 2017 to establish an assistant district attorney position dedicated to child welfare. The position is charged with filing court petitions to terminate parental rights on behalf of children

in long term foster care when reunification with natural families is not possible. The County's foster care caseload, fueled by the opioid epidemic and other factors in recent years, has more than doubled since 2010. These circumstances are creating trauma for the children involved and significant costs for the community. The partnership between the two agencies means long awaited permanence for children and opens the door to adoption.

5. Courthouse Security – The County Administrator appointed an ad hoc committee charged with evaluating the Courthouse security and suggesting opportunities for improvement. Courthouse employees were surveyed and 90% responded that they favored having a centralized secured entrance. As a result of the ad hoc committee's work and review of other courthouse security measures, the County Board authorized funding for one secured entrance equipped with scanning and x-ray equipment, video, and personnel. Additional renovations will include a circle driveway off North 6th street, repairs to the front courthouse steps, and a wheel chair ramp to accommodate handicapped access. For the past year, the Courthouse Security Committee comprised of 20 active participants representing 10 departments have been developing plans, policies, and procedures for implementation, which is now scheduled for summer 2018.

4. Emergency Medical Dispatch Training – The Sheriff's Department partnered with the Aurora Foundation and Acuity Insurance to launch Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD) in 2017. EMD allows 911 dispatchers to triage medical calls and provide pre-arrival and post-dispatch instructions to callers. These potentially life-saving instructions may include anything from administering CPR, assisting someone who is choking, severe bleeding, childbirth, and a variety of other medical emergencies. A grant provided by Acuity Insurance enabled the Sheriff's Department to purchase software to aid in medical dispatching. Each dispatcher was required to be CPR certified, received a minimum of 28 hours of training in medical dispatching and use of the software, and completed 60 practice scenarios prior to going live in October.

3. Opioid Detox Services Established – As part of a comprehensive and collaborative effort to combat opioid abuse, related deaths, and the impact of addiction on individuals, families, and our community, Sheboygan County established an Opioid Detoxification and Treatment Program. The program represents a strong partnership between the Health and Human Services Department's Divisions of Behavioral Health, Public Health, and Social Services and is being delivered under the guidance of the Healthy Sheboygan County 2020 initiative and key community stakeholders. In an effort to achieve the greatest impact, priority is being given to addicted parents of children currently in foster care. The goal of the program is to promote recovery, achieve family reunification, and reverse the growing trend of out of home placements associated with child safety concerns. In addition to this initiative, we are entering our 2nd year of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court and recently celebrated the 5th anniversary of the Veterans Treatment Court.

2. Strong Fiscal Track Record and Collaborative Budget Process – Sheboygan County has an impressive fiscal track record. We have healthy fiscal reserves, an excellent bond rating, and are effectively meeting the demands of providing high quality services in a fiscally responsible manner. In November 2017 the County Board enacted a 1.38% levy increase. Due to ongoing streamlining, consolidation, establishing priorities, and employees' hard work, our total payroll is less today than it was ten years ago. In addition, for the 4th consecutive year, the County received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

1. Transportation Complex Underway – The Transportation Department staff prepared the site and the new Transportation Complex is well underway. Construction began in May 2017 and will continue until the complex is completed in spring of 2018. The complex will consolidate the Plymouth Highway Shed, Elkhart Lake Highway Shed, and the Department Headquarters into one facility centrally located in the County. All of the vacated buildings have accepted offers at their appraised values and the project is proceeding on time and under budget.

What is the State of the County?

Strong. Though there is always room for improvement, ongoing challenges associated with State unfunded mandates, and escalating costs associated with providing services and maintaining our transportation infrastructure, Sheboygan County continues to be a leader of providing responsive and cost-effective local government. We have a team and track record we can take pride in.

Challenges Ahead

If the State continues to erode local control, dictate rigid one-size-fits-all property tax levy caps, and does not adequately fund state mandated programs, Sheboygan County will not be able to sustain its present level of programs, services, and staffing.