

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 **850 employees** working in **19 Departments** administering **over 200 programs and services** with an overall budget of **\$144 million**.

The Health and Human Services Department (\$35 million), Sheriff's Department (\$21 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 \$144 million budget, the County's property tax levy is \$49 million. The balance is primarily state and federal revenue, private pay, and fee or service charges.

What's New?

Top 10 list of 2018 accomplishments, working our way to number one...

Pennsylvania Avenue Redevelopment and Construction of New Garage – It was not too long ago that across from the County's Law Enforcement Center there were three dilapidated homes and an under-utilized county parking lot. With the support of the County Board, the homes were purchased, torn down, and three lots combined into a one acre site for redevelopment. Our staff then began working with interested developers and ultimately agreed to terms that would recoup the County's original investment, and the land was sold. The project has commenced and is projected to be upwards of a \$13 million redevelopment. The project will consist of a five story mixed-use apartment building that will house a commercial tenant on the ground floor. It is estimated the tax benefit for the school district, City, and County will be in excess of \$200,000 per year. A new storage garage is being constructed for the Building Services Department in closer proximity to the courthouse that will replace the former garage that was located on the current development site.

Road Diet and Two Roundabouts Constructed in Kohler – A vision by our Planning & Conservation Department staff came to fruition this past summer with the reconstruction project completed on County Highway PP between the City of Sheboygan and Village of Kohler. The project was a great partnership between various County departments, the Village of Kohler, the Kohler Company, the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, and the affected neighborhood. A road diet shrinks the travel lanes of a road corridor to reflect current traffic volumes. Though at one time the road may have warranted four travel lanes, this was no longer the case. Highway PP was originally overbuilt for the traffic volumes it handled and rather than invest more money into something that was no longer needed, the County and the aforementioned partners worked together to design and build an alternative that saved County taxpayers money, will be a safer road especially at the intersections, and provides a much more pleasing corridor to traverse. The Transportation Department did a terrific job completing the project.

Rocky Knoll Maintains Five-Star Rating and Makes Numerous Improvements – Rocky Knoll continued its stellar five-star quality rating from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. The past year, in addition to providing quality service and care, Rocky Knoll enhanced its emergency response plans and conducted a partial evacuation drill of the facility in coordination with Sheboygan County Emergency Management and various local emergency response agencies. Rocky Knoll was the first long-term care facility in the region to conduct such a drill. In addition, Rocky Knoll made a number of building improvements, including installation of a new resident call light system, upgraded sinks and vanities, replaced appliances and made energy efficient improvements in the kitchen, and also made improvements to the heating and cooling systems. The exterior of the building was enhanced with new decorative panels and windows.

Planning Begins for U.S. Customs Facility at Airport – In an effort to make enhancements to our airport, further support our local economy, spur economic development, and attract more visitors, planning has begun to build a customs facility at the Sheboygan County Memorial Airport. There is strong support from local businesses for this initiative, and the County has hired Omni Associates as the consultant to help design the facility. The project is scheduled to be complete by July 2020. A \$2.5 million grant has been secured from the State to help cover the cost of the project.

Amsterdam Dunes Preservation Area Investment Recouped – In July 2015, Sheboygan County purchased the Amsterdam Dunes Preservation Area for \$4.2 million with the goal to ultimately restore the investment with other funding mechanisms. Sheboygan County subsequently received a substantial DNR Stewardship award and other grants, and in 2018 we finalized an

agreement to receive \$1.295 million in Natural Resource Damage Assessment payments associated with the clean-up and dredging of the Sheboygan River from the Tecumseh Corporation. Recently, the County sold one of three Amsterdam Dunes residential lots and has now successfully recouped all of its costs for the acquisition of this 333 acre property.

Upgrading and Replacing Email, Phone Systems and Voting Equipment – The Information Technology department replaced the County’s aging Microsoft Outlook email and calendaring system with Google’s G Suite, a Cloud-based application that includes Gmail, Google Calendar, and Google Contacts. Google’s web-based email is more secure than Microsoft and has proven to be more stable. The Information Technology department also replaced the County’s aging AT&T Centrex phone system with a Shoretel/Mitel Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone system, which is anticipated to reduce the County’s phone expenses by nearly 50%. In addition, at the request of the County Clerk the County Board invested in new election equipment, and also replaced the County Board room’s antiquated voting system. Although there was a learning curve and a few bumps in the road, all of these enhancements replaced systems that were nearly two decades old and in some cases no longer supported.

Opioid Detox Services Expanded – The past year we sought and invested additional resources to help address the growing issues surrounding the opioid crisis and other drug abuse. The Health & Human Services Department expanded opportunities for opioid treatment. We also provided more resources to the District Attorney’s Office dedicated to helping children get permanent homes when their parents can no longer care for them. In addition, we recently were awarded a federal grant to enhance and expand our Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court, now it its 3rd year. The County is also providing new treatment options to inmates in our county jail, and plans are underway to establish a local residential treatment facility so we have alternatives to incarceration that are more effective and help reduce our jail population. Finally, we recently celebrated the 6th anniversary of the Veterans Treatment Court, another alternative to incarceration that helps change lives for the better.

Strong Fiscal Track Record and Collaborative Budget Process – Sheboygan County has an impressive fiscal track record, healthy fiscal reserves, an excellent bond rating, and is effectively meeting the demands of providing high quality services in a fiscally responsible manner. In November the County Board enacted a 1.83% 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, the County received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 5th consecutive year. It is critical our fiscal house be in order so we can maintain quality programs and services to help people in need.

Courthouse Secured Entrance Completed – As of November 2018 the Sheboygan County Courthouse is far more safe and secure. After just one week of implementation, 28 contraband items were confiscated after being concealed during screening (including hunting knives, switch blades, credit card and key knives, brass knuckles, box cutters and pepper spray). In addition to the security enhancements, the courthouse also needed repairs to the front steps and to be made more accessible. Building Services, Information Technology and the Transportation Department all played a key role in working on the improvements, including the new front circle drive, steps, ramp, flag poles and bases, lighting, security cameras, signage and improvements to the interior of the Courthouse. The new secured entrance implementation went very smoothly thanks to all the planning, thoughtful input of staff, and the excellent work of the Sheriff’s Department.

Transportation Facility Completed – Construction of the new transportation facility began in May 2017 and was completed this spring. The complex consolidated the Plymouth Shed, Elkhart Lake Shed, and Department Headquarters into one facility centrally located in the County. The new facility is 163,000 square feet, cost \$23.1 million, and should serve the community for the next 75 - 100 years. Additionally, the facility tied into utilities that service Rocky Knoll which saved hundreds of thousands of dollars. The project was completed on time, under budget, and an Open House was held in June with over 750 people in attendance. The Transportation Department staff did an outstanding job helping with the planning and preparation, while still meeting the County’s goal of resurfacing a minimum of 30 miles of county roads this past year.

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, 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.