

State of the County

By: Adam Payne, County Administrator

Sheboygan County has **850 employees** working in **19 Departments** administering **over 200 programs and services** with an overall budget of **\$158 million**.

The Health and Human Services Department (\$39 million), Sheriff's Department (\$22 million), Transportation Department (\$22 million), and Rocky Knoll Health Care Center (\$14 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 \$158 million budget, the County's property tax levy is \$51 million. The balance of the budget is primarily state and federal revenue, private pay, and fee or service charges.

Key Accomplishments and Milestones of 2019

Strong Fiscal Track Record – Sheboygan County has an impressive fiscal track record, healthy fiscal reserves, an excellent bond rating, and provides quality services in a fiscally responsible manner. In November the County Board enacted a 2.41% property tax levy increase; though to put this in perspective, for the last decade, the average annual levy increase has been just over 1%. Collaboration, responding to community needs, and establishing priorities are key to our success.

Rocky Knoll Maintains Five-Star Rating and Adding Child Care – Rocky Knoll continued its stellar Five-Star rating from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. In addition to providing high quality care, Rocky Knoll improved its campus by adding a paved resident path, enhanced landscaping, and refurbished the historic arches. Plans are underway to partner with Growing Generations to become the first nursing home in the County to offer onsite child care to help attract and retain staff. We are also entering into a partnership with New Horizon Foods to enhance the quality of food and dining services for our residents. Finally, \$1.6 million in building renovations and improvements have been approved for the year ahead.

Construction Begins on U.S. Customs Facility and Airport Terminal – Construction is underway on the U.S. Customs and Terminal facility at the Sheboygan County Memorial Airport. This \$5 million project is scheduled to be complete by July 2020, and a \$2.5 million grant has been secured from the State to help cover the cost. The County is also partnering with the Kohler Company, who will cover the U.S. Customs personnel and equipment expenses until user fees and fuel sales sustain the operation. The new facility will further support our local economy, spur economic development, and attract more visitors.

31 Miles of County Road Work Completed and Highway 23 Expansion Underway – For the third consecutive year since the ½ percent county sales tax was enacted, we achieved our goal of resurfacing 30 miles of county roads, and 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, and provide direct property tax relief. We are the only county that shares sales tax revenue with local municipalities to help support their transportation needs. The County also strongly advocated for the long overdue State Highway 23 expansion, which broke ground in May.

Behavioral Health, Youth Justice, and Child Welfare Services Enhanced – Sheboygan County took significant steps to improve and expand our Behavioral Health, Youth Justice, and Child Welfare Services in 2019, including:

- **Behavioral Health:** Opioid and substance abuse programs were expanded with the addition of Vivitrol medication, a therapist for support, and incarceration discharge planning. In addition,

comprehensive community services for youth and adults with mental health and/or substance abuse challenges continued to be improved, with broader in-home and community support services available.

- **Youth Justice:** A state youth justice grant resulted in staff training, enhanced assessments, and increased options for youth to complete community service.
- **Child Welfare:** Sadly, there has been a strong demand for new in-home safety services to better monitor child welfare cases where children are at risk. These services provide safety checks at various times of the day including weekends, and offer parenting support and mentoring programs that helps reduce risk factors in families. In addition, child welfare legal services were moved to Corporation Counsel to help streamline and expand legal services that support and process child welfare cases. Due to this growing crisis, the County lobbied the State for more funding and reallocated local resources, which resulted in an additional \$1.5 million for child welfare services in 2020.

Alternatives to Incarceration – Inmate levels are near capacity at the Detention Center, and a \$21 million addition to the facility has been proposed and included in the County’s Five-Year Capital Plan. However, even if the addition is constructed, the ongoing staffing and operational costs will exceed our State imposed levy limit. Last year, an Ad Hoc Committee was formed and charged with decreasing the average daily population of the County’s correctional facilities. The Ad Hoc Committee examined alternatives to incarceration as well as the growing need to improve upon substance abuse and mental health services provided in an effort to reduce recidivism. This will be an area of focus in the year ahead.

Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation Reaches 10-year Milestone – 2019 marked the ten-year anniversary of Sheboygan County being a founding member of the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC), a non-profit organization with a mission to grow the local economy. In addition to serving on the Board of Directors and providing financial support, the County provides meeting and office space for the SCEDC in the County Administration Building. Since its inception, this public/private organization has supported entrepreneurs and 150 companies impacting 4,800 jobs. In just the last five years, Sheboygan County successfully obtained \$1 million in USEPA Brownfield Assessment Grants leading to over \$100 million in redevelopment projects, and during this same time period, the SCEDC spearheaded efforts to construct over 1,200 apartment units to help address our housing shortage.

Veteran Services Department Co-located with Aging & Disability Resource Center – The Veterans Service Department moved from the Courthouse Annex to the Aging and Disability Resource Center in Sheboygan Falls, and the response from veterans has been very positive. This change resulted in stronger collaboration with the ADRC to better serve veterans and their family needs, including enhanced transportation services for medical appointments.

2019 Accolades

Salute to Local Government – The County received the Wisconsin Policy Forum Salute to Local Government Award for its innovative approach to problem-solving for establishing the Amsterdam Dunes Preservation Area and Wetland Mitigation Bank.

Achievement of Excellence in Financial Reporting – This award by the Government Finance Officers Association is the highest form of recognition in the area of government accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a spirit of transparency and full disclosure.

Lake Michigan Champion of Conservation – The County was the recipient of the Land Use Protection and Habitat Restoration Award for our efforts to protect and enhance the resources of Lake Michigan.

National Association of Counties Achievement Award – This was awarded for Sheboygan County’s leadership in the Clean-up and Restoration of the Sheboygan River and Harbor.