



FRANK WHITE, JR.
Jackson County Executive

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

TO THE JACKSON COUNTY LEGISLATURE:

As I look back over my time as County Executive I am encouraged by the County's progress and I am committed to continuing to work with each of you to ensure that progress continues. When the Jackson County Legislature selected me to serve as County Executive less than two years ago, approximately 40% of our full-time Associates did not make a living wage.¹ In addition, those Associates that could afford to participate in our health insurance program had seen their health care costs increase dramatically in the previous years. Finally, many of these Associates were working every day in facilities that were in a state of disrepair due to years of deferring necessary maintenance and upkeep. Last year, thanks to your support, we were able to make tremendous progress in improving each of these areas and I am confident that if we work together we can do much more.

If approved, this budget will increase the starting salary for corrections officers to \$15 an hour, while also reducing the number of full-time Associates countywide making below a living wage by approximately 50%. This budget also provides the necessary funds, which would not have been possible without your support, to ensure that no County Associates will see their health care premiums increase in 2018. Finally, this proposal includes the necessary funds to finance approximately \$30,000,000 in essential capital improvements to our jail, courthouses, and to upgrade many of our inefficient and outdated data management systems.

Investing in Public Safety

Jackson County has a long history of supporting programs, departments and offices whose mission is to keep our community safe. This budget recommendation continues that history and increases our investment at an obvious time of need.

State statutes direct that the County shall fund the County Prosecuting Attorney, County Sheriff and the County Jail. When I took office as a County Legislator in 2015, Jackson County budgeted \$44,887,894 for these three offices. If approved, this budget would increase the budgets of those three essential community safety offices to \$57,143,243, an increase of more than 35% when compared to just three years ago.

¹ \$15 an hour



Sheriff

This budget provides a single-year increase to the Sheriff's office budget of almost \$1,000,000, which would be an approximate 10% increase when compared to the Sheriff's 2017 budget. These funds will go toward the purchase and maintenance of equipment, increased health care costs and merit increases for eligible deputies.

Department of Corrections

For the second consecutive year, I am recommending the single largest one-year increase to the Jackson County Department of Corrections operating budget in the history of our County. In 2015, my predecessor convened a task force that determined, in part, that Jackson County was paying our new corrections officers at a rate less than two-thirds of that paid by organizations we compete with for such new hires. There is no question that these disparities have contributed to our inability to fully staff our Corrections Department. I am proud to say that this budget provides the funds to close that pay gap, while also providing additional funds to catch up on years of deferred maintenance.

Prosecuting Attorney

The Jackson County Prosecutor has been a passionate advocate for reducing violence in our community. Through efforts such as KCNoVA, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office has taken a leading role in evidenced-based programs that are aimed at preventing crime before it occurs.

According to the Missouri Highway Patrol, in 2015,² Jackson County experienced a shocking 30% single-year increase in the number of people murdered in our County. In response to this dramatic increase in murders, Jackson County provided an additional \$1,000,000 of anti-drug funds to the Prosecuting Attorney's office in 2016 to support its on-going violence prevention efforts. This funding was continued in 2017 as homicides continued to increase.³

As murders have continued to increase in 2017,⁴ there can be absolutely no question that these funds are desperately needed. Therefore, I have once again recommended that these additional anti-drug funds be provided to the County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.⁵

Capital Improvements

In addition to the increases in the Department of Corrections operating budget, I am also proposing and have identified existing funding sources to finance the issuance of special obligation bonds in the amount of approximately \$30,000,000. First and foremost, I believe that the proceeds of this bond issue should be used to cover the costs of all necessary repairs and improvements to the county's detention center. The improvements include those recently identified by the architecture firm HOK, which are

² 2014: 94; 2015: 122. *Source* Missouri Highway Patrol Uniform Crime Reports.

³ 2016: 146. *Source* Missouri Highway Patrol Uniform Crime Reports.

⁴ As of September 30, 2017: 122 (on pace for approximately 167). *Source* Missouri Highway Patrol Uniform Crime Reports.

⁵ Total Prosecuting Attorney Anti-Drug funds in the FY2018 recommended budget: \$5,590,094.

necessary to continue to operate the facility for the next five years. These improvements are currently estimated to cost between \$15,000,000 and \$20,000,000.

I am proposing that the remaining funds from the bond issuance are used to cover much-needed capital improvements to the County's other facilities, an in-depth performance audit of the County's fiscal and procurement policies, and significant investments in updating our outdated data infrastructure. Improvements include:

- Downtown Courthouse
 - o Immediate safety improvements, such as:
 - Repairing and modernizing the building's elevator
 - Installing a fire suppression system
 - o Conducting a Facility Assessment and creating an Improvement Master Plan:
 - Evaluating and making recommendations on items such as:
 - ADA accessibility
 - Safety and security
 - Efficiency
- Eastern Jackson County Courthouse roof replacement
- Data Infrastructure
 - o Assessment and Collection Software upgrade
 - o Human Resources, Financial and Procurement Software upgrade
 - o Jail Information Management System upgrade

Emergency Funds

While the county has seen a marginal increase in tax revenue, the County's cost of goods, services and staffing continues to grow at or above our current rate of economic growth. In addition, due to the age, condition, and years of deferred maintenance of many of our facilities, the likelihood of a costly building failure continues to increase.

Therefore, I have recommended the inclusion of a three-percent emergency fund in each of our primary budgetary funds. These funds will be essential should we face a major facility failure due to age, neglect or natural causes. With the addition of nearly \$2 million in emergency funds, we will only improve the County's already strong fiscal standing.

On behalf of our team, I am proud to submit to you this structurally-sound balanced budget that includes a 2% merit raise pool for eligible County Associates. We look forward to working with you to complete this budget process through year's end. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Respectfully submitted,



Frank White, Jr.
Jackson County Executive