



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jan H. Gardner
County Executive

April 15, 2019

Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Message

Dear Frederick County Citizens:

I am pleased to present the Fiscal Year 2020 annual operating and capital budgets for Frederick County. The budget tells the story of Frederick County – who we are, what we value and who we want to be in the future.

We live in a special place – we have stunning farmland and scenic vistas, rich natural resources, outstanding schools, beautiful parks, a vibrant downtown, a safe community, a growing economy, and something for everyone to enjoy. Our good fortune does not happen by accident. It takes a coordinated effort to make life better for people.

We balance the needs of our growing community with fiscal discipline, we pay our bills and are careful not to create bills we cannot afford. We balance our budget, and we live within our means. The proposed FY 2020 budget is based on existing tax rates. There are no tax rate increases for either property taxes or income taxes.

Financial Highlights

- The budget reflects steady, modest growth in revenues, indicating a strong and vibrant local economy and property values.
- Pension and Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) obligations are funded at the actuarially determined contribution levels. Our pension and retiree health benefits are among the best funded in the State of Maryland.
- Tax equity is provided to our municipalities to avoid duplication and to ensure residents that they are not being double taxed.

Budget Priorities

The budget is a tool to help maintain our high quality of life. Like a large jigsaw puzzle, each piece of the budget fits together to create the full picture, which is our high quality of life.

Maintain Assets

Maintaining our assets means being responsible to protect the significant investment Frederick County taxpayers have made in our public buildings, roads, bridges, water quality, sewer system and other critical public infrastructure. Assets and infrastructure support services, take care of people, and move goods and services.

Division of Public Works

The County's Division of Public Works maintains 1,300 miles of roads, over 400 bridge structures, more than 140 county-owned buildings, and more than 600 vehicles. The budget allocates about \$18 million annually to maintain a rigorous pavement management system, including paving and overlay, sealing, striping and other major maintenance to keep our road network in good shape.

The budget includes the addition of a "strike team" to respond to critical needs that arise in the case of emergencies, such as downed trees, ice damage, road flooding, and more. This team will work primarily in the Urbana area, helping the County keep our road network in great shape in one of the fastest-growing areas of Frederick County.

The capital budget will improve road geometrics and add shoulders to the southern portion of Boyer's Mill Road, from the bridge over Lake Linganore south to Old National Pike. The County will also fund design and construction to improve Gas House Pike from the City of Frederick limits to Boyer's Mill Road. This is a \$10.3 million project that will improve geometrics, drainage and add shoulders. The Gas House Pike Bridge project over Linganore Creek, located east of Boyer's Mill Road near West Winds, will begin as soon as the City's bridge over the Monocacy River opens for traffic.

Division of Utilities and Solid Waste Management

The Division of Utilities and Solid Waste Management maintains 344 miles of water main and 3,117 fire hydrants. These numbers are up from 186 miles and 1,320 fire hydrants in 2000. Staffing levels have remained the same since 2000, so the proposed budget adds 2 additional distribution operators. Similarly, we have over 400 miles of wastewater collection and piping systems and will add a project manager to oversee inspection, maintenance, and operation.

Value Workers

Frederick County's budget supports over 8,000 public servants – with 5,500 employees in the school system, 2,100 employees in Frederick County Government, and 400 employees at the community college. The budget supports funding for the fourth year of the implementation of a new pay scale for teachers and school staff, the first year of a new three-year contract for sheriff deputies and corrections, and a merit or step improvement for all general county workers, which is an average of 3.5% of the midpoint on the county pay scale. I have also included a 2% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for our regular part-time employees.

Safe Communities

An important piece of our quality of life is living in safe communities. A number of puzzle pieces must fit together to deliver public safety. Safe communities exist thanks to the men and women who work in law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services, corrections, 9-1-1 communications and emergency management.

Fire & Rescue Services

Fire and Rescue is an area of significant growth in the county budget as we transition from a fully volunteer fire service to more paid staffing. In the past year alone, the call volume increased nearly 5%. Over the past four years, I have added more than 100 firefighter positions.

The proposed budget includes:

- Applying for a federal Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant to hire an additional 38 firefighter/EMTs;
- Adding 4 battalion chiefs to address the supervisory needs of more people in the field; and
- Funding for a health and wellness program.

On the capital side, people will see work beginning on a new Hayward Road Fire Station. This station is critically needed to handle increased calls on the west side of U.S.15 in response to growth in the City of Frederick. Following Hayward Road, the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) includes the Green Valley Fire Station in Monrovia and the Carroll Manor Fire Station in Adamstown, both replacement stations.

Emergency Communications (9-1-1)

The County's Emergency Communications (9-1-1) call takers are on the front line of almost every emergency. The proposed budget includes an additional 6 call-takers to meet growing call volume and to make progress toward industry staffing standards. The proposed budget also includes new software that will assist with emergency communications between our schools and the County, adds a Director of Training position dedicated to training, which is currently part of another position, and adds a grants position that will be shared with the Division of Fire & Rescue Services. We will also be making a \$400,000 investment toward the transition to Next Generation 9-1-1.

Sheriff's Office

The proposed budget supports law enforcement and corrections by funding the first of three years of a newly negotiated pay scale. Due to a growing number of calls for service, the budget authorizes 6 new sheriff deputy positions. The capital budget also supports additional protective gear and upgrades to mobile data terminals. To support positive outcomes for individuals in corrections, the budget funds a new position to coordinate and facilitate case management for inmates to improve successful re-entry into society. The CIP includes a new and expanded medical unit at the adult detention center to provide needed space and to meet current needs for mental health and medical treatment.

Animal Control

Numerous citizens and shelter volunteers turned up at budget meetings to advocate for our hard-working staff and the animals for which they care. The budget supports the growing need for veterinary care and pet food, as well as funds for an additional animal control officer. Animal control officers are available day or night every day of the week, and this is the first additional officer in more than 10 years.

Exceptional Education

The biggest piece of our quality-of-life puzzle is outstanding public education. Everyone wants great schools and educational opportunities for their children and grandchildren, and our businesses and employers want a well-educated workforce.

Frederick County Public Schools

The proposed budget provides \$12.2 million to our K-12 public schools, including \$4.2 million for enrollment growth, \$500,000 for technology, and an additional \$7.6 million above the legally required Maintenance of Effort to support the final year of transition to a new pay scale for teachers and school system employees. My intention is that County funds will be used to provide the best teachers and staff in our classrooms and to make sure all our children have access to the programs, materials, and curriculum they need to be prepared for the workforce or for higher education.

We know that school facilities matter to educational outcomes and are an important puzzle piece in the delivery of a high quality education. A new Urbana Elementary School will open for students in September 2020. Construction will begin in the coming year on a new Rock Creek School to meet the needs of students with special needs. A new and much larger Waverley Elementary School is under design and construction is on the horizon.

In September of 2018, I announced a supplemental budget to speed up the design of two desperately needed projects in the Oakdale/Linganore area: a new East County Area Elementary School one year earlier than planned and a 300-seat addition for Oakdale Middle School two years earlier than planned. The County is ready to do our part, but we are awaiting State planning approval for both of these projects. We have funding in our capital budget to begin construction in the upcoming year.

There are a number of other important projects in the “out years” of the CIP, including the modernization of Liberty Elementary School, a modernization/addition project for Brunswick High School, and a new Northwest Frederick Area Elementary School. A new elementary school in Brunswick also will be needed.

Frederick Community College

To support the good work of Frederick Community College, the proposed budget provides over \$1 million for a 3% COLA for employees. This investment also helps to keep college affordable by minimizing the need to increase tuition.

On the capital budget side, work will begin on the renovation of the Conference Center/Classroom Building (Building E), which will add flexible classroom space and consolidate the Continuing Education programs that are spread out across the campus. Building L – Langanore Hall is next in the queue with design in the coming year.

Frederick County Public Libraries

Frederick County Public Libraries provide a quality-of-life piece of the puzzle for lifelong learning and fun. The Myersville Library branch is the latest addition to our library system. This branch library is currently under construction and should open to patrons in the summer. The budget supports the staff and funding needed to operate this new library.

Seniors

Seniors are the fastest growing age group of citizens in Frederick County. We all look forward to enjoying the good life in our retirement. This piece of our budget puzzle reflects the County's priority of taking care of our seniors and providing meaningful opportunities to enhance their quality of life. The budget provides for additional staff to expand hours at the senior center in Urbana. We heard loud and clear from Urbana seniors and received a petition asking for more space and more services.

TransIT

The budget expands TransIT-Plus, the paratransit service, to eliminate the wait list and assist seniors and people with disabilities who need to get to medical appointments, including dialysis. In the upcoming year, TransIT looks to acquire a new bus entirely through a Smart Energy Grant. And we will be using bus advertising revenue to add 10 bus shelters and an automatic bus wash – all a good deal for residents!

Good Health

The Frederick County Health Department works with our community partners to support a wide variety of health services to improve public health outcomes. The proposed budget strengthens the school health program and supports the transition to more registered nurses. Our school health staff meet a wide variety of student daily needs and allow students with chronic health issues to access the full array of educational opportunities. Our goal is to provide more nurses, reduce turnover, and make sure our students are healthy and supported.

The Health Department is also an important part of the county's Heroin Consortium. The Health Department has expanded our peer recovery program, trained first responders and others on Narcan, increased awareness, expanded education in our schools, and so much more. The budget also includes start-up funding for the recently announced detox center. This will be a public private partnership, but it does require a one-time commitment on the part of the county to convert the space for this purpose. This is important to law enforcement and health care providers because

they need a place for people to go to get help other than the emergency room at the hospital. It is most important to those individuals and their families in the fight for recovery.

Parks and Recreation

This year we are excited to be opening two new parks! Another phase of the Utica District Park will open this year with new ball fields, pavilions, playgrounds and a trail. Next spring we will celebrate the opening of Othello Park, a new regional park located near Brunswick. This park will provide greatly needed ball fields, programs, and even a turf field with lights, to this part of the county that has not been served by a regional park. The budget includes funding for staffing, maintenance, and equipment to support the opening of these two new parks.

People & Partnerships

One of the things that is special about Frederick County is our ability to work together to get things done. The next piece in our puzzle is how Frederick County serves our citizens. It's about people and partnerships and building community.

Our Division of Citizens Services supports people of all ages, from young children and their families, to those trying secure housing, to adults with developmental disabilities. Modest investments will help to expand services and meet a federal mandate.

The County also partners with our human service non-profit agencies to leverage resources through Community Partnership Grants to make sure all of our residents benefit from our community's prosperity.

Preserve Culture & Heritage

The natural scenic beauty of Frederick County balances our life and makes us proud to call this community home. And we love our rich history and our agricultural heritage. Preserving large areas of farmland supports the long-term viability of our agricultural community, and is also important to how we manage growth in our county. Agriculture directly accounts for more than \$150 million in sales each year in Frederick County. The industry generates an economic impact of nearly \$1.5 billion.

We will continue our investment in agriculture preservation. The budget supports a \$250,000 one-time matching grant for the state's Rural Legacy program, in addition to our dedicated stream of revenue from recordation taxes.

New Initiatives

The budget includes \$300,000 in the solid waste enterprise fund to initiate a composting demonstration project and to support or incentivize composting in our schools. The goal is to encourage the private sector to offer composting by demonstrating that it works.

Having a job is fundamental to having a high quality of life and is an important piece of the puzzle. Our economy is thriving and Frederick County is a great place to do business. To implement the next step of the Office of Economic Development's Growth Opportunities Strategy, the budget funds the development of a branding and marketing plan to support our emerging businesses and our incubator, and to help retain existing employers.

It is important that the people who work here can afford to live here. Last year, I dedicated a portion of the existing recordation tax revenue to our Housing Initiative Fund to support the creation of affordable housing. I will be submitting a bill to the County Council to codify this funding commitment to affordable housing.

Telling Our Story

Life is good in Frederick County. Our quality of life is comprised of a wide variety of puzzle pieces including outstanding schools, safe communities, exceptional employees, beautiful parks and libraries, a top-notch health department, excellent roads, water and sewer, and citizen services. Our economy is vibrant and Frederick County is a great place to do business.

While revenue growth is modest, we remain fiscally strong and in a positive trend. I am proud that Frederick County lives within our means while providing outstanding services. There is plenty of good news to share.

The budget is lean, sensible, balanced and fiscally responsible. The budget tells our story. It highlights our community priorities and values. It delivers results – exceptional schools, safe communities, effective and efficient services, a vibrant economy, and a high quality of life.

Working together, county government provides effective and efficient services and ensures Frederick County remains the best place in the country to live, work and raise a family. The future of Frederick County is bright.

Sincerely,



Jan H. Gardner
County Executive