



Joe Sanfelippo



Milwaukee County Supervisor ~17th District

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December 2009

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Parks, Energy and Environment (Vice-Chair)

Judiciary, Safety and General Services

Transportation, Public Works and Transit

Dear Friends,

As we move beyond the Thanksgiving holiday and head toward Christmas it is important for us all to pause for a moment to ponder what this season means to us as Americans.

There is no denying that these are trying times. Our economy has lost more than three million jobs over the past twelve months. Our federal government is spending money faster than they can borrow it, racking up more than **\$1.4 trillion** in debt for just one year. In Madison, they raised every tax and fee they could, and when that wasn't enough to satisfy their appetite for spending they created a few new taxes and fees. As if all of this weren't bad enough, our constitution is under assault from our own government who seems determined to ignore "We the People" by bailing out banks, turning private businesses into government run entities and forcing us to become wards of the state by making us all dependent on the government for our health care. It would be easy to have a bleak outlook for our future, but we need only look to Christmases past to see there is always hope.

For me, the first Christmas past I think about happened slightly more than two thousand years ago, when our savior was born in a manger. Although our country was founded on a Judeo-Christian belief, no matter whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanzaa, or any other religious holiday this time of year, we can all be comforted by our ability as Americans to practice our faith freely, knowing that God is there to help in our time of need.

The second Christmas I like to consider happened just over two hundred years ago, when a brave general gathered his hungry, under-dressed and low-in-morale troops on the bank of an icy-cold river in the middle of a sleet and hail storm and prepared them for what was seemingly an insurmountable task. Just after sunset on December 25, 1776, General George Washington loaded his men, artillery and supplies into boats and crossed the Delaware River to launch a surprise attack in what is known as the Battle of Trenton. For the next six years, George Washington as Commander in Chief would lead the armies and militias of the newly formed and self-declared independent country that we are blessed to live in today.

Rather than allowing ourselves to feel overwhelmed by focusing on all the bad news heaped upon us over the past twelve months, let us pause for a moment this Christmas and remember all the blessings and gifts we have in our lives. The "certain unalienable Rights" described in our Declaration of Independence and bestowed upon us by our Creator are gifts that we can only today enjoy thanks to the selfless acts of bravery and sheer determination of the men and women of our armed forces beginning with General George Washington and continuing right on up to this very moment.

I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas, and my sincere hope for many continued blessings in the New Year.

2010 Budget

As you most likely have heard by now, while we did not manage to sustain all of County Executive Scott Walker's vetoes, we were successful in cutting out roughly \$6 million of extra spending that the County Board had added to the proposed budget, resulting in one of the smallest tax levy increases in years. This accomplishment would not have been possible were it not for concerned citizens such as you who took the time to contact me and the other Supervisors on the Board asking us to support the County Executive's budget. You deserve a great deal of credit. Thank you.

Milwaukee County is in a real financial crisis caused by what is called a structural deficit. A structural deficit is when your expenses are greater than your revenues on a recurring basis. We had an \$80 million hole to fill in preparing the 2010 budget and that problem is projected to grow to a \$153 million shortfall by 2014. It is absolutely critical that we take permanent, corrective measures to eliminate this structural deficit and put the County back on a sound financial footing. For the past several years, we have just bandaged up a budget to get by from year to year while keeping the County on life support. I am happy to report that the budget passed for 2010 begins to take some of those important steps needed to get us back to fiscal solvency. This is just the beginning, however, and we have a long way to go to achieve those permanent corrections I mentioned earlier, but this is a good start.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to make your voice heard and please keep up the good work. Remember, you are not accountable to your government; your government is accountable to you. The best way to ensure accountability is to stay involved and let your views be known.

Proposal to Extend Health Benefits to Domestic Partners

Back in October, a resolution to extend health insurance benefits to domestic partners of eligible Milwaukee County employees was narrowly passed by the Board of Supervisors on a 13-6 vote. I did not support this resolution because the County simply cannot afford to add unnecessary costs to our benefit expenses.

Last March, the Public Policy Forum, a well respected local non partisan group, issued a report on the state of the County's financial condition concluding that the financial outlook is "grim." The report went on to say, "The County has a structural deficit that is largely related to employee/retiree costs for wages and benefits." A September report issued by the County's own Financial Forecasting Workgroup claimed, "The largest driver of expenditures, particularly for the past 5 years and in the first several years of the financial forecast are fringe benefits. In 2003 fringe benefits made up 11% of total expenditures. By 2014, those costs will have increased nearly 100%, when adjusted for inflation, and make up 20% of expenditures." Based

on these two reports, and knowing that in 2010, for every dollar we spend on payroll, we will pay ninety-three cents for benefits. It is inconceivable to me that we would even consider increasing benefit costs when that is clearly the primary root of our financial problems.

Furthermore, I find this resolution especially troubling because it comes at a time when we are mandating unpaid furlough days for active County employees and asking them to make benefit concessions. We are sending mixed messages to our employees by telling them on the one hand we cannot afford to pay them, but on the other hand offering to extend benefits to people that are not eligible for them.

The County Executive vetoed this resolution in November and the issue will come back to the full Board on December 17, 2009 at our next scheduled meeting. I will vote to sustain the veto and kill this very bad idea.

#35 Bus Route through Greendale to be Eliminated

Effective January 1, 2010 the portion of route #35 that runs through the Village of Greendale is going to be eliminated as part of the 2010 budget.

When I first heard this news, I considered offering a budget amendment to restore funding for the route. However, upon investigating the idea further with MCTS officials I discovered that it would cost \$135,000 per year to add the route segment back in. While this may not seem to be a lot of money compared to a \$1.5 billion total County budget, when I learned that an average of only seven riders per day used the route, I could not in good conscience propose an amendment to spend that much money for seven rides per day. In this bad economy, and considering the County's very poor financial condition, I had to make many difficult budget sacrifices, and this was one of them.

Route #64 which travels down 60th Street, through Northway over to Southridge and back will continue to provide service.

Capital Improvements for District #17 for 2010

As part of the 2010 budget, the following capital improvements have been approved and will be completed next year:

W. College Ave. Loomis Rd. to S. 51st St.: This section of roadway will be repaved in 2010 using funds the County received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

W. College Ave. S. 51st to S. 27th: \$2.1 million has been budgeted for basic planning, design and right-of-way acquisition.

W. Oklahoma Ave. S. 108th St to S. 76th St.: \$913,000 has been budgeted for the basic design phase.

Whitnall Park Bridge over the Branch of Root River in Greendale: \$950,000 is appropriated for replacement of the bridge which is located just south of W. College Ave.

S. 76th St. Bridge over the Root River in Greendale: \$302,000 has been budgeted for the design phase.

Scout Lake Park: A total of \$1.8 million is budgeted to replace playground equipment throughout the county. The playground equipment in Scout Lake Park will be replaced as part of this program.

Greenfield Park Baseball Field: \$52,000 has been budgeted to refurbish a baseball field in Greenfield Park.

Greenfield Park Golf Course: \$43,000 is budgeted to replace the restroom facility on the 15th tee.

West Layton Avenue Traffic Hazard

If you have ever traveled down Layton Ave. in the area between S. 76th St. and S. 84th St. you no doubt have witnessed the traffic backups and hazards that can occur at certain times of the day in this area. Since the new Sendik's grocery store opened last year, things have been getting progressively worse.

I have been working with County highway and engineering officials as well as area business property owners to come up with a solution to the traffic problems in this location. I am happy to report that a traffic signal will be going up to help control the flow of traffic. This signal will greatly improve the safety in this area by controlling and directing the flow of cross traffic entering and exiting the businesses located on this stretch of street. The signalization improvements are going to require some driveway realignments and because of this, the work will happen when weather permits in 2010.

The City of Greenfield has been very cooperative and instrumental in getting this done and I would like to thank Mayor Nietzke and others who have helped along the way, along with County staff and local business and property owners. Without everyone's cooperation, this badly needed improvement would not be possible.

Milwaukee Justice Center

The Milwaukee Justice Center (MJC) is the result of a three-way partnership between Milwaukee County, The Milwaukee Bar Association, and Marquette University Law School. The Milwaukee Justice Center provides services that are available free of charge. Unrepresented persons are provided free legal self-help clinics in cases involving family law and small claims issues. The MJC also provides through its relationship with Marquette University Law School a free Brief Legal Advice and Referral Clinic in Room 106 of the Courthouse where walk-in clients are able to come in for a one time free legal consultation in 20-30 minute increments.

For more information, please visit the Milwaukee Justice Center [website](#) or the

MJC INFORMATION LINE: 414-278-2910 (recorded message)

MJC APPOINTMENT LINE: 414-278-2912(to make appointments only)

Email: ctimail@wicourts.gov (to make appointments only)

Milwaukee County Parks Win Gold!

The Milwaukee County Parks Department has been named the winner of the **National Recreation and Park Association's Gold Medal Award in the Park and Recreation Management Program**. The Gold Medal honors communities throughout the United States that demonstrate excellence in long-range planning, resource management, and agency recognition. The Milwaukee County Park system has been deserving of this award, and I am very pleased to have it come to Milwaukee County in 2009!



Free Day at the Milwaukee County Zoo

Saturday, December 5, 2009

9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

10001 West Blue Mound Road, Milwaukee

Information: (414) 256-5412 | Main Office: (414) 771-3040

Visit the Milwaukee County Zoo [website](#) for more information

Ice Skating at Red Arrow Park Opens

Thursday, December 17, 2009

Grand Opening from 4 p.m. to 5:00p.m.

1000 North Water Street, Milwaukee



Skates can be rented for \$6 or bring your own and skate for free! Starbucks café will provide hot snacks and beverages throughout the skating season.

Open hours are Monday through Thursday 11am to 8:00pm, Friday and Saturday 11am to 11pm and Sunday 11am to 6pm.

For more information, please visit www.countyparks.com or call 289-8791