



SHELDON A. WASSERMAN

MILWAUKEE COUNTY SUPERVISOR - 3RD DISTRICT

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

October 2017

Dear Neighbors,

Tuesday morning, Chairman Lipscomb introduced a super amendment which made cuts to departments across the County, with some being hit harder than others. The amendment is a response to the \$60 wheel tax in the County Executive's original budget. When faced with raising the wheel tax from \$30 to \$60, many on the Board felt they could not approve an increase due to the April 2017 referendum vote, in which 72% of County residents voted against a \$60 wheel tax. Our district was the only district to vote in favor of the referendum with 55% voting for the tax. Across the Board there was a strong sentiment to stick with the \$30 wheel tax and make cuts to the budget to make up for the \$15 million revenue loss.

I voted no to this amendment. The Chairman's amendment was released yesterday at 10 AM, while I was still in a Parks, Energy, and Environment committee meeting. I was given an hour to read the amendment before I was expected to discuss and vote. No matter the merits of the amendment, when a 21 page document with sweeping changes to the budget is released with a limited amount of time to critically analyze and discuss, I cannot in good faith vote for it. Government needs to be transparent. The way the super amendment was released allowed no time for public input. While the committee ultimately decided to approve the amendment, it will still need to be approved by the full Board at the next Board meeting on November 2nd. If you are interested in our budgetary process, please attend our public hearing on October 30th at 6:30 PM at the Marcus Center for Performing Arts so you can provide feedback on this amendment and the others that will be proposed later this week, as well as the overall budget.

Milwaukee County faces continued budgetary pressures due to dramatic decreases in shared revenue from the state of Wisconsin. Shared revenue is the money the state of Wisconsin receives from incomes taxes. During the creation of shared revenue in 1972, the intention was to send money back to the individual counties and municipalities to use. However, each year the state cuts more and more of our shared revenue, forcing us to make cuts to our departments. We are losing out on millions of dollars of shared revenue, not adjusted for inflation. This becomes the state balancing its budget on the backs of Milwaukee County because we are contributing much more than we get back and it violates the sacred contract of shared revenue and the purpose of the state income tax. The loss drives us to either come up with millions in lost revenue or make difficult cuts to essential programs. The County is forced to then raise property taxes, the wheel tax, and other fees in order to find a way to balance our own budget. Shared revenue is intended to enable communities to provide services and programs for its citizens and by cutting funds to Milwaukee County, the state is forcing us to make cuts in our budget. Yes, we will be making cuts in the budget this year, but we will be working diligently to find mutually beneficial solutions with all of our departments.

For more frequent updates about our district, please follow me at www.facebook.com/3rddistrictmilw and www.twitter.com/supvwasserman.

Sincerely,

MILWAUKEE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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