



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors *Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson, 5th District*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 5, 2020
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Chairwoman Nicholson Issues Guiding Principles for Setting County Budget

MILWAUKEE – As the Board of Supervisors begins deliberations on the 2021 Milwaukee County budget, Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson launched a new approach to the budget process with a letter to County Supervisors that lays out a set of “guiding principles.”

“Let’s engage now in a collaborative spirit to adopt a budget for the County that has been evaluated with a racial equity lens and deliberated with the high standards of conduct that are appropriate to our roles as public servants,” said Nicholson.

Nicholson’s guiding principles include “racial equity,” “preparation,” “collaboration,” “sustainability,” and “decorum.”

County Executive Crowley presented his budget proposal to Supervisors on October 1. The process of setting the budget now shifts to Supervisors’ consideration of Crowley’s proposal with several weeks of open hearings and deliberations over amendments.

In her letter, Nicholson encouraged Supervisors to “use a racial equity lens to request amendments to or evaluate proposals in the Recommended Budget”.

Nicholson also asked Supervisors to prepare questions for department heads in advance and save comments and questions that are not about the budget for future meetings.

The Chairwoman invited Supervisors to work together and “Seek common ground, if possible, to develop one amendment that satisfies rather than multiple amendments.”

With the [lack of revenue and structural deficit](#) a major challenge, Nicholson reminded Supervisors that “the use of one-time revenues to fund a program or service will lead to greater cuts in the future unless a new funding source is obtained.”

Nicholson also reminded Supervisors to mind the Board’s [rules of decorum](#), authored by Bernice K. Rose, a political and civil rights activist, who was also the first black woman elected to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors.

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Dear Supervisors and Board staff,

With the release of the 2021 Recommended Budget, and the County Executive's planned presentation to Supervisors at the October 1 Committee of the [Whole](#), we kick off our legislative review.

Guiding Principles

I share with you some principles that I want to guide our review: Racial Equity; Preparation; Collaboration; Sustainability; and Decorum.

Racial Equity. Use a racial equity lens to request amendments or evaluate proposals in the Recommended Budget. Strive to achieve the vision adopted by the County Board in [File No. 20-174](#) of making MKE the healthiest county in WI by achieving racial equity.

Preparation. Take time to read the Recommended Budget and Research Staff's Overview to identify areas to focus legislative oversight. Prepare questions in advance and seek answers from past reports or departmental briefings to efficiently use the limited time to review the spending plan. Make notes of ongoing issues that do not directly affect budget decisions for possible standing committee follow up in a future meeting cycle.

Collaboration. Work with Supervisors on similar ideas or if there is a similar desired outcome. Seek common ground, if possible, to develop one amendment that satisfies rather than multiple amendments that the County Board will have to sort through. Achieve consensus through collaboration and compromise.

Sustainability. Focus on financial impacts of budget decisions in current and subsequent years. Be cognizant that the use of one-time revenues to fund a program or service will lead to greater cuts in the future unless a new funding source is obtained. Take actions that positively impact the ongoing structural budget deficit.

Decorum. Milwaukee County Ordinance Section 1.29, "Decorum of Supervisors in Committee Meetings," was authored by Bernice K. Rose, a political and civil rights activist, who was also the first black woman elected to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. She asked the County Board to respect everyone, be courteous to colleagues, staff and citizens, and not take any actions that degrade the atmosphere of the public meeting.

Finance Committee Schedule

On Tuesday, Finance Chair Haas finalized the timeline for that Committee's Budget review. In addition to that timeline, the Finance Chair will release a detailed schedule with assigned dates for Departmental overviews.

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Printed Copies of the Budget

The Office of Performance, Strategy, & Budget (PSB) dropped off printed copies of the budget at the Board offices Thursday morning.

Budget Binders

To support a paperless work environment, we intend to provide a model binder in OneNote to Supervisors. The goal is to provide this electronic template with district office this week. District offices can decide how to use this tool in a way that meets their workflow needs for budget review.

Let's engage now in a collaborative spirit to adopt a budget for the County that has been evaluated with a racial equity lens and deliberated within the standards of our office as public servants.

Be safe,



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