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## **Common Council finds opportunities for efficiencies in 2015 approved budget**

The Milwaukee Common Council today gave its approval to a 2015 city budget that maintains city services, creates efficiencies and expands support for successful programs, all while holding the line on property taxes.

The 2015 budget levies \$256,767,059 million in property taxes, an increase of 1.2 percent from last year that will cost \$4.10 more in taxes for the owner of home valued at \$103,000—the median home value in the city. The approved levy comes in \$103,561 below the mayor’s initial proposed levy as a result of amendments made and efficiencies created by the Common Council. The total budget approved by the council is \$1.51 billion, a decrease of \$2.84 million from the budget proposed by the mayor.

“Council members worked hard to ensure that this budget protects taxpayers while reflecting the priorities of our constituents,” said **Alderman Nik Kovac**, chair of the budget-shaping Finance and Personnel Committee. “Without increasing the burden on residents, we were able to find a way to channel additional support to combat the foreclosure crisis head-on while also piloting some innovative public safety initiatives.”

The Common Council signed off on an increase in transitional jobs positions that will be offered by the Department of Public Works in the year ahead. Focused on providing work and fostering jobs skills for unemployed residents, the transitional jobs

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## 2015 budget/ADD ONE

program will put 130 people to work on landscaping, road repair and other areas next year—an expansion from the initial group of 100 participants in 2014.

Over the course of six weeks, council members offered more than 40 amendments to the mayor’s budget, of which 13 were adopted today. These include:

- Transferring \$3.5 million from the local streets program to the High-Impact paving program. The popular repaving initiative creates a new surface on high-traffic roads in the span of several days, extending their useful life and addressing residents’ pothole complaints.
- Eliminating plans to build a Fire Department Repair Shop for \$2.9 million and remodel the eighth floor of City Hall for \$3.1 million. These cuts will reduce new borrowing by \$3.1 million, while channeling **an additional \$1.5 million** to the High-Impact paving program, increasing funding for the STRONG Homes loan program by \$500,000 and adding \$1 million to the Rental Rehabilitation Program capital account.
- Establishing a recruitment class of 10 “community service officers.” These civilian law enforcement assistants will respond to non-emergency police calls, freeing up officers for higher-priority matters.
- Setting aside a special purpose account of \$250,000 intended to fund the creation of a Crisis Response and Trauma-Informed Care Counselling program which will augment responses to violent crime.
- Redirecting \$175,000 in funding to challenge grants for inner-city parks. The grant money is intended to help raise additional private funds to renovate 12 central city parks that have fallen into disrepair.
- Adding two fire rescue trucks to the fire department fleet by shifting \$130,000 from the fire department’s energy account. Much smaller than a standard fire rig, these trucks would be used in a pilot program to respond to non-fire calls that still warrant an emergency response.
- Creating 10 auxiliary 911 calltaker positions that will receive job training and then wait until a vacancy occurs—an effort to reduce hiring delays.

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## **2015 budget/ADD TWO**

On a 6 to 9 vote, the council defeated a measure that would have eliminated funding for 12 additional police officer positions proposed by the mayor. As a result, all 85 of the new police officers the mayor proposed will be hired in the 2015 budget year, increasing the average sworn strength to 1,880 when attrition is factored in.

**Common Council President Michael J. Murphy** thanked council members for their thoughtful work and deliberation on the 2015 budget.

“Striking the balance between maintaining services and fiscal responsibility is as challenging as it’s ever been under the current budget constraints that the state places on the city,” President Murphy said. “I commend Alderman Kovac and the Finance and Personnel Committee for ably handling the task.”

The council also approved an amendment sponsored by President Murphy that makes it easier for food dealers to do business in the City of Milwaukee.

Previously, the city’s ordinance pertaining to licensing of food dealers required that a temporary food dealer license be obtained for \$100 for the first day and \$35 for each subsequent day up to 20 days. President Murphy’s amendment repealed, for restaurants, the \$35 additional day fee and establishes a flat-rate fee in lieu thereof. In addition, the amendment creates a temporary food dealer license fee structure in which an operator holding a City of Milwaukee food dealer license pays a reduced fee for a temporary food dealer license.

“Changes were needed to make sure these food-related businesses were not being hurt or discouraged from doing business in the city, especially during special events and the warmer months,” President Murphy said.

The amendment also increases the temporary food dealer licenses fee per temporary event for:

- Restaurants that do not hold a City of Milwaukee food dealer license from \$100 to \$170. For restaurants that hold a City of Milwaukee food dealer license, the temporary food dealer license fee shall be \$100.

**-More-**

## **2015 budget/ADD THREE**

- Retail establishments which process food at a temporary event and do not hold a city food dealer license from \$100 to \$170. The license fee for retail establishments that process food at a temporary event and hold a city food dealer license shall be \$100.
- Retail establishments that do not process food at a temporary event and do not hold a city of Milwaukee food dealer license from \$75 to \$150. The fee for retail establishments that do not process food at a temporary event and hold a City of Milwaukee food dealer license shall be \$75.

Also included in the budget is a modest \$16.18 increase in the fees homeowners pay for services including solid waste, snow and ice control, sewer and storm sewer.