

December 3, 2019

Douglas County residents,

The annual operating budget for any local government integrates organizational policies and priorities with public services and facilities on behalf its citizens. Douglas County's FY 2020 budget has been designed to represent a fiscally and socially responsible policy and public service framework that responds to the Board of County Commissioner's desire to balance our core statutory obligations with the desires of our community.

Developing the FY 2020 budget was different than previous in how budget requests were presented to the Board of County Commissioners. County departments, agencies, and community partners had the opportunity to present and provide context to their budget requests. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the budgeting process for both the Board of County Commissioners and requesting entities. The Board of County Commissioners continue to work to address alternatives to incarceration and improvements to the criminal justice system, behavioral health, and other human services for our most vulnerable residents. From this process, the budget raises the mill levy from 46.015 to 46.394, an increase of 0.379 mill, which maintains Douglas County's commitment to addressing a wide array of and community services and county infrastructure needs.

Budget Reductions and Fee Increases

The County Commission worked to restore previous budget reductions from the FY 2019 Budget for Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Lawrence Chamber of the EDC of Lawrence-Douglas County, and Heritage Conservation. There are some reductions in the FY 2020 Budget from the Ambulance Capital Reserve fund, Special Building fund, and Special Parks and Recreation fund.

In addition, the County Commission authorized fee increases to Motor Vehicles Operations for antiques, commercial motor vehicles, and tag pickup. These fee increases have an estimated annual revenue of \$16,000.

Expanded Initiatives

The FY 2020 budget reflects a continued focus on advancing Douglas County's efforts to address human services, public safety, and workforce development, including:

- \$181,000 in additional funding for the Lawrence Community Shelter to maintain shelter operations.
- \$430,724 to Criminal Justice Services and the District Attorney to establish a Drug Court Diversion Program to provide a needed service to reduce incarceration rates.
- \$200,000 to Peaslee Technical Center to support the mortgage principal payment and further Douglas County's support for workforce development.
- \$268,991 in additional public safety positions for the Sheriff's Office to supplement the separation of the Douglas County Sheriff and the Lawrence Police Department.
- \$20,000 increase to Emergency Service Council for community rental assistance which allows the agency to serve an additional 35 to 45 families.
- \$50,000 increase for Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority New Horizons housing program to provide 24 months of rental assistance for additional families.

Future Outlook

The 2020 budget maintains a fiscally responsible plan and positions Douglas County to provide continued and additional services to citizens, all within the State of Kansas' Property Tax Lid for the third year in a row. In addition, sufficient authority is still available under the tax lid to accommodate any future budget increases if needed without requiring an election.

Douglas County Board of County Commissioners

Michelle Derousseau, Chair

Patrick Kelly, Commissioner

Nancy Thellman, Commissioner