

Executive Update

Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker's Weekly Newsletter

April 16, 2010

Message from County Executive Walker

On Monday, we announced that Milwaukee County finished 2009 with an \$8.9 million surplus. While this figure still has to be audited by an outside firm, we are pleased that the county ended with a significant surplus that can be applied to the 2011 budget.

Changes in health care accounted for a significant part of the turnaround. Years ago, County Board Chairman Lee Holloway suggested a new benefits division and we supported it in the budget. The staff of that division helped the county negotiate a better deal on health care.

Still, the health care savings alone would not have kept the county from a deficit. Thankfully, we organized a series of changes through our department heads – along with other improvements like the savings from combined jail and House of Corrections operations and two furlough days – that saved \$12.6 million.

The \$8.9 million surplus will be used to balance the 2011 budget and to fulfill my pledge to cut the property tax for homeowners and small businesses in 2011.

Scott



Strong county bond ratings

County Executive Walker cited the 2009 surplus for helping to maintain strong county bond ratings that were released this week. The three ratings agencies assigned highly favorable ratings for Milwaukee County – Aa3 from Moody's Investors Service, AA from Fitch Ratings, and AA from Standard & Poor's.

"My administration, working together with the County Board, met the challenges head on to bring the 2009 budget into balance," said Walker. "Our steadfast commitment to end our fiscal years in balance consistently contributes to our strong bond rating and illustrates the importance of managing the 2010 budget very carefully."



Walker held a news conference (photo above) to highlight the 2009 budget surplus estimated at \$8.9 million.

Moody's Investors Service reported that 'financial operations have stabilized as a result of critical budgetary actions.'

The Fitch Ratings report noted that the county's 'fiscal 2009 ended with a sizeable budget gap and revenue performance that has been challenging, but the county eliminated its deficit by year end through implementing expenditure cuts.'

While the favorable ratings are good news for the county, the ratings agencies noted that the favorable outlook going forward hinges on the county's continued ability to take corrective actions to maintain the fiscal structural balance.

State of Downtown



County Executive Walker addressed the Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 annual meeting for their "State of Downtown Economic Forum." Walker and Mayor Barrett were the featured speakers at the event. Beth Nicols, Executive Director of the group, gave a presentation on downtown's strengths and resiliency in tough economic times.

Walker, at right, with one of the Downtown Public Service Ambassadors on hand to greet the attendees at the annual meeting. The ambassadors inform visitors about downtown attractions.



BHD meets Medicare program requirements

County Executive Walker and Board Chairman Lee Holloway jointly announced that the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division's Mental Health Complex will continue to meet the requirements for participation in the Medicare program (Title XVII of the Social Security Act.)

The county received a letter from the Federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) detailing the decision.

"The BHD administration diligently worked to address all of the concerns presented by CMS," said Walker. "We are pleased with the follow-up and successful conclusion to this important matter."

"This is good news for our clients and their families," Chairman Holloway said. "The Medicare certification was necessary for Milwaukee County to continue providing this safety net service for individuals in our community that have nowhere else to turn."

Mr. Opicka Day



County Executive Walker addressed the students and staff at the Wisconsin Career Academy (WCA) in honor of the anniversary of the death of one of their teachers, Dean Opicka, who died during combat operations in Iraq in 2008 while serving with the Marine Reserves 2nd Battalion, 24th Regiment, 4th Marine Division.

Mr. Opicka inspired many students to pursue college degrees.