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## **FRANKLIN COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDS AUSTERE BUDGET FOR 2013**

Fully realizing the impact of \$41 million in state funding reductions in Franklin County next year along with flat revenues compared with 2012, continued unfunded mandates and no growth in real estate property tax revenues, Franklin County Administrator Don Brown presented commissioners with a 2013 Budget today which provides for essential public safety and safety net services for the County's 36 agencies and departments.

The Recommended 2013 General Revenue Fund Budget is \$304 million. Compared to the 2012 Approved Budget, the 2013 Recommended Budget for the General Fund represents a \$3.2 million or a 1.1% increase.

The total amount of budget appropriations recommended for all county funds in 2013 is \$1.28 billion, which represents a \$38 million (2.9%) decrease from the 2012 Approved Budget.

"In response to the Commissioners' direction, we are presenting a budget that is balanced and maintains fiscally sustainable government operations for the upcoming year," said Administrator Brown.

He continued, "The Recommended Budget for 2013, like the 2012 budget, has been very challenging as the national economy continues its modest recovery. These challenges include the lingering impact from the 2008 recession, which included the loss of jobs, a rise in home mortgage foreclosures, increased energy costs, and global competition for growth and development."

Franklin County's unemployment recently fell to 5.8% after peaking at 9.5% in January 2010. While increased employment has improved the county's sales tax base, this improvement has been mitigated by the continued impact of the slump in the real estate market. In 2012, Franklin County experienced a 5.6% decrease in property tax revenue after the six-year reappraisal in 2011, \$2.3 million less than the 2012 Approved Budget.

While some revenue sources have improved, others are still being negatively affected by the recent economic recession. The forecast for 2013 General Fund revenue is virtually no increase compared to the 2012 Approved Budget.

The forecast for 2013 General Fund revenue is for a \$275.5 million, which is approximately \$45,000 more than the 2012 Approved Budget. Revenue for non-general funds is projected to be \$937.5 million, approximately \$39.7 million less than the 2012 Approved Budget.

In addition to revenue sources remaining stagnant, county agencies have had to absorb over \$41 million dollars in funding reductions on account of the policy changes contained in the current State operating budget. This includes \$13.8 million from the accelerated phase-out of the tangible personal property tax replacement, \$11.4 million in the Local Government Fund, and \$10.1 million in the operation and administration of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and other assistance programs.

These reductions will begin to limit the county's ability to provide services next year including the elimination of TANF funded afterschool programming and summer camps for vulnerable and at-risk youth. The County's General Revenue Fund will bear the burden of providing a \$1.7 million subsidy to simply maintain the current level of support provided to families and children served by the County's Child Support Enforcement Agency.

And, while the 2013 recommended budget avoids layoffs and furloughs, residents may experience slower service and response times in agencies which may be unable to fill staffing vacancies.

Despite these challenges, the 2013 Recommended Budget continues a solid commitment to the County Commissioners' goal to advance the priorities of our community established in the Commissioners' CORE Principles, the top priorities being to provide for public safety and criminal justice and job creation and economic development.

Nearly sixty-nine cents of every General Fund dollar is allocated to support public safety and criminal justice. To that end, the 2013 Recommended Budget includes a contingency reserve in the Sheriff's Office budget that will allow for the hiring of a new class of 40 deputies to replace retiring officers. The budget also provides for an expansion of the Sheriff's training academy and a continuation of the County's Reentry program.

The 2013 Recommended budget also includes increased support for the region's \$7.8 billion travel and tourism industry which supports 61,000 jobs as well as continues funding for other job creation partnerships with Tech Columbus, Columbus 2020 and the Columbus-Franklin County Finance Authority.

In 2013, Franklin County will continue to realize the incredible returns on our past investments in Sid Tool Company and MSC Industrial Supply, Discover Financial, Quantum Health and the new downtown Hilton Hotel which employ hundreds of people and make Central Ohio a true economic engine.

The 2013 Recommended Budget also continues to support a wide variety of unfunded yet mandated services required by state law. This includes \$7.8 million for the administration of elections, \$5.3 million for the mandated share of support for federal human services programs, \$4.9 million for support of veterans through the Veterans Service Commission, and \$1.8 million for the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis.

At the same time, the 2013 Recommended Budget ensures that sufficient cash reserves are in place to meet contingent needs and protect the County's triple-A bond ratings. These credit ratings place Franklin County in the top 2% of all counties in the nation, and minimize the interest expense paid to finance various construction and other capital projects.

Franklin County's Budget Hearings began this week and include representatives from each county office coming before the Board of Commissioners during the next two weeks to address their spending needs for the upcoming year.

The entire 2013 Recommended Budget message as well as the 2013 Recommended Budget, hearing schedule, agency results, efficiencies and total expenditures planned for the upcoming year, are available on-line at: <http://budget.franklincountyohio.gov/budget/2013/>

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