

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Franklin County Commissioners Approve 2013 County Budget

Emphasizing how Franklin County's investments serve children and vulnerable residents, protect communities and the environment, and foster job creation and economic growth, County Commissioners unanimously approved the 2013 Franklin County Budget at their last meeting -- and last vote -- of the 2012 calendar year.

Totaling \$1.28 billion and covering the County's 36 agencies and departments, the overall budget represents approximately 3-percent less in county investments from the previous year, fully realizing the impact of nearly \$41 million in state funding reductions.

The County is expecting modest gains in the collection of sales tax, estimated at more than \$146 million (7 percent more than in the 2012 budget), and a minor boost in conveyance fees, estimated at \$7.5 million (32 percent more than the 2012 budget). Both are signs of increasing consumer confidence and a rebound in the housing market.

Despite the challenges, the 2013 Franklin County Budget advances the Commissioners' investment priorities of safety and security, job creation and workforce development, vital health and social safety net services, and responsible budgeting.

Nearly sixty-nine cents of every General Fund dollar is allocated to support the County's public safety and criminal justice efforts. The budget also builds on the Commissioners' "Investing in our Next Generation" initiative with more than \$300 million in proposed investments by County agencies in youth and child-oriented programs.

Funding for health and human services remains the largest portion of the overall budget, comprising 49.3% of the total. And the proposed investment in the County's Water Quality Partnership will provide an additional 200 homes with access to sanitary sewers by year's end.

At the same time, sufficient cash reserves in the budget will ensure the County maintains and protects its double triple-A bond rating, one of the best in the nation.

"The fact that our budget will be tighter next year does not change the results Franklin County residents and businesses expect: keeping our communities safe and secure, ensuring no family slips through the cracks, and partnering with business to create jobs," said County Commissioner President Paula Brooks. "Stretched dollars only give so much until they break, but there are simply too many people -- especially children -- who rely on the safety net provided by our social service agencies for us to fall short."

"Significant cuts in local government funding by the state, combined with Congressional cuts in federal programs and reimbursement practices, make it nearly impossible to sustain the vital programs that our residents deserve," said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "This budget delivers essential services to the public with the most cost-effective government possible, but we have reached a point where we cannot absorb further reductions, and doing less with less is not an option. Our fiscal belt is on its last notch and we must recommit ourselves to ensure our safety net is not compromised."

“Franklin County may be the nation’s 33rd largest county in population, but we lead the country in a number of ways. Our residents, businesses and visitors expect more than just the basics from county government,” added Commissioner John O’Grady. “While we have trimmed and tightened, this year’s budget avoids any layoffs and furloughs that would hinder our public service. Without a doubt, though, this budget is the most austere I have seen as a County Commissioner.”

The Commissioners’ vote today follows nearly a month of budget deliberations and a series of public hearings by elected offices, county agencies, and several boards and commissions appointed by the County Commissioners.

Minor modifications were made to the 2013 Recommended Budget provided to the Commissioners by County Administrator Don Brown in November, including a reallocation of reserve funding to cover recently-approved employee bargaining unit contracts, the addition of staff attorneys in the Public Defender’s Office, and the purchase of replacement vehicles for the Sheriff’s Office.

Ending with the vote on the 2013 budget, Tuesday’s General Session marked the last meeting of the year for the County Commissioner. The Board will reconvene in January, with the first voting General Session scheduled for January 8.

Complete information on the 2013 Franklin County Budget is available at <http://budget.franklincountyohio.gov/budget/2013>.

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