



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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St. Louis County Board approves 1.5 percent as maximum levy for 2014

The St. Louis County Board has set its maximum property tax levy at \$113,344,211 for 2014, a 1.5 percent increase over last year. The levy increase of \$1,675,038 is specifically dedicated to funding long term debt associated with the renovations of the Government Services Center (GSC). All other increased costs, have been absorbed with no levy impact to taxpayers. This is the fifth consecutive year the Board has kept the levy increase below the rate of inflation.

Two key strategic investments, the costs of which have been absorbed by the county, are uniform assessment services, and new fraud and prevention initiatives. Beginning in 2014, all cities and townships choosing to work with the County will not have to pay for these services, resulting in significant local property tax relief. Also, the County plans to invest in new Public Health and Human Services programs to ensure public assistance accountability, and to recognize and treat some of the underlying causes that put people in need of assistance.

“This levy amount represents a harmonious balance of responsible taxation and cost effective service delivery,” said Commissioner Steve Raukar who chairs the Board’s Finance Committee. “It’s a good recommendation the entire board can support without reservation. Certainly we have more work to do before approving a final budget at the end of the year, but this takes into account both the revenue offsets we received from the legislature, as well as the increased costs such as for personnel contract settlements and benefits issues, as well as inflation that we were able to absorb.”

Helping the county balance its budget for 2014 are new state revenues and a sales tax exemption approved during the last legislative session. Equally important, the county continues to examine its processes to find ways to be more efficient while continuing to deliver core services to citizens.

“We’ve worked hard, with guidance from the Board, throughout the budget process to minimize any levy impact on our citizens,” said County Administrator Kevin Gray. “More good news for the people of St. Louis County is the growth in new construction activity – it’s the first time we’ve seen growth in five years. This expands the tax base and helps all of our citizens by reducing the levy impact.”

State law requires counties to certify their maximum preliminary levy for the 2014 budget this week. The adoption of the final capital and operating budget will take place at the December 17, board meeting, at which point the county may reduce, but not increase, its levy.

St. Louis County serves more than 200,000 residents spread across 7,000 square miles. To learn more, visit stlouiscountymn.gov.

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