



County Manager's Guiding Principles

Sedgwick County's long-term view is to commit to the core functions of county government that will be funded by local county property taxes, limiting the growth of county debt on taxpayers, and maintaining the tax rate.

In developing budget requests, departments should focus on living within a budget that is flat with their 2016 funding allocations. Any requests for funding beyond those levels should be developed in line with the County Manager's guiding principles, outlined below.

1. Continued emphasis on core services

Tier 1 – functions inherent to government (subject to revision based on the discretion of the budgetary process)

Public Safety, including: District Court, District Attorney, Sheriff, Emergency Communications & Management, Emergency Medical Services, Department of Corrections, Metropolitan Area Building & Construction Department; County Commission; Elections; Highway infrastructure and operations; existing debt service; statutory/contractual obligation to Wichita State University

2. Reduced government funding to services that can be provided by non-governmental entities or through private sector other funding support

Tier 2 – functions needed to support “tier 1” functions or mandated by a federal or state governmental entity (subject to revision based on the discretion of the budgetary process)

County Manager; County Counselor; County Clerk; Register of Deeds; County Treasurer; Financial administration; Metropolitan Area Planning Department; Appraiser; Public Safety Director's Office; Emergency Medical Service System; Regional Forensic Science Center; Developmental Disabilities Organization; Health Department – communicable disease and disaster response functions; Facilities and Fleet; Information Technology; Human Resources; State-mandated human service “safety net” function; Public Works operations other than highway infrastructure and operations

Tier 3 – most opportunity for service provision through non-governmental entity (subject to revision based on the discretion of the budgetary process)

Culture & Recreation functions; Sedgwick County Zoo; Exploration Place; Environmental Resources; Health Department – functions other than communicable disease and disaster response; non-mandated human service functions; community development functions

3. Reduce debt and reliance on bonding

Current total debt is \$125,845,000 at the beginning of 2016. Current debt payments are for bonds issued since 1997, and types of debt-funded projects within this \$20.0 million include: roads and bridges; courthouse improvements; Public Safety Center; Exploration Place; NCAT; Juvenile Justice complex; 911 radio system; special assessments. Of this \$20.0 million, \$5.4 million is for roads and bridge debt. Changing the philosophy to reduce the use of debt requires using cash, deferring projects, bonding only for large projects and planning ahead.

The use of bonding should be reserved to use in isolated situations for large capital projects. Conversely, bonding should not be used for small-cost projects or those that are considered routine occurrences.

4. Maintain mill levy tax rate at 2010 level

The target tax rate for the 2017 budget is 29.359 mills, based on maintaining the 2010 tax rate. The budget calendar is such that the Commission adopts a budget in August for the “total dollars” to fund the services and programs for the next budget year, with an “estimated mill levy tax rate” based on the assessed valuation at that time. However, the actual assessed valuation is not finalized until October (after taxpayers may have appealed their property values). Technical adjustments to the mill levy rate will likely be applied when final valuations are set.