

HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MAYOR
WESTON WAMP

For Immediate Release

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**Mayor Wamp Proposes Balanced Budget
Without Property Tax Increase for FY2024**

Mayor's first budget includes property tax relief, bonuses for new career and technical education teachers, 13 percent average pay increase for EMS employees, and new investments in county parks.

County Mayor Weston Wamp presented his proposed budget for fiscal year 2024 to county commissioners Wednesday with significant new investments in public safety, workforce development, and initiatives to enhance the quality of life for the county's youngest and oldest citizens.

"My office has been working closely with our finance team and the county's department heads since late last year to thoughtfully fund services and projects that will have the greatest impact on the citizens of Hamilton County," said Mayor Wamp. "I have been communicating with county commissioners throughout the budget process on the best possible use of tax dollars, and I look forward to working with them to see this balanced budget be put into action."

The key initiatives proposed in the budget include:

- **Career and technical education (CTE) support program:** As the County Mayor's office pursues bold investments in public education, \$750,000 has been allocated to cover the cost of certification and to provide \$7,000 sign-on bonuses for new career and technical instructors in Hamilton County Schools.
- **Property tax relief:** The county will fully match the state's Property Tax Relief Program, primarily supporting fully disabled veterans and low-income senior citizens. This initiative will alleviate property taxes for fully disabled veterans and their widows on residential property assessed at up to \$350,000, and will lower the burden of property taxes amid record inflation for more than 4,000 low-income seniors.
- **County's First Senior Center:** The old Harrison Elementary School will be repurposed into the county's first community and senior center, providing services and activities to improve the quality of life for the county's increasingly aging population and large veteran community.
- **Road improvements:** As many county roads experience unprecedented usage, the county's road and paving budget will significantly increase in the new fiscal year and the mayor has set aside money for enhanced road safety measures, including reflectors and guardrails.
- **Volunteer Fire Departments:** In addition to 10 percent increases in the amount allocated to each of the eight volunteer fire departments in Hamilton County, \$500,000 has been included in the budget for new equipment. Overall, funding for volunteer fire increased 30 percent in the FY2024 budget.

- **Parks & Recreation:** \$1 million in new funding has been allocated to county parks, which will enable the opening of a park at McDonald Farm, improved access to fishing opportunities at Chester Frost Park, and to expanded investments in youth sports leagues at the county's community parks.
- **EMS Pay Increase:** Following the historic pay raise to sheriff's deputies, the county has budgeted an average of a 13 percent pay increase for employees in Hamilton County Emergency Services aimed at fully staffing EMS in order to bring on line the county's seventeenth ambulance, which would help reduce response times.
- **Increase in pay for county employees:** All Hamilton County employees will receive a four percent pay increase to adjust for the increased cost of living.
- **Bolster re-entry program at the county jail:** \$250,000 to renovate a former Highway Department facility to expand the re-entry program at the county jail to include electrical, carpentry, and welding training opportunities for inmates.
- **Funding for new drug prosecutor:** As the county continues to fight the opioid epidemic, funding has been included in the District Attorney's budget for a drug prosecutor to focus exclusively on holding the dealers of deadly drugs accountable.

The County Commission will vote **Wednesday, June 21st** on the proposed budget. Fiscal year 2024 begins on July 1, 2023 and runs through June 30, 2024.

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