

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RECOMMENDED BUDGET PROVIDES FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE  
APPROACH TO ADDRESSING NEEDS IN FRANKLIN COUNTY'S  
GROWING COMMUNITY**

Kicking off Franklin County's hearings on the 2016 budget, today, County Administrator Kenneth Wilson introduced a Recommended Budget which focuses on the future of the County and laying the foundation for the provision of effective and efficient government services to meet the growing demands for service.

The **2016 Recommended General Revenue Fund Budget is \$420 million**. Sales tax collections are expected to increase by \$11.4 million or 4.0% more than the projections for 2015. The **County's Recommended All Funds Budget is \$1.47 billion**, representing a \$35.9 million or 2.5% increase from 2015 projected actuals.

Franklin County is home to 1.3 million residents, is the fastest growing County in the state and ranked the 30th largest county in the nation. Franklin County is also continually recognized as one of the best managed counties in America, maintaining double-Triple A bond ratings from the two leading credit rating agencies, placing the County among the top 1.8% percent nationwide.

The greatest and most basic priority in the 2016 Recommended Budget remains the Commissioners' commitment to Community Safety and Effective Justice. The 2016 Recommended All Funds Budget includes a total of \$261 million in support of the Courts, Prosecutor, Public Defender, Sheriff's Office, and other County justice and safety agencies, \$68 million from the General Fund for operations of the courts and \$30 million for criminal and civil prosecution and legal defense services.

While a majority of the General Fund provides for Public Safety, Justice and Security, the Social and Human Services category is the largest in the Recommended All Funds Budget, comprising 46.7% of the total 2016 Recommended Budget.

Since 2005, Franklin County's population has grown 15.3%. In addition, the County continues to see a large number of individuals and families living in poverty. The poverty rate is 17.2%, which is 2.7 percentage points more than 2005 and while certain segments of the community have seen improvements in their finances, almost one in four children in the County continue to live in poverty.

These challenges place an increasing pressure on the need to address job creation through

economic development efforts; ensure the physical safety of residents; and plan for future infrastructure needs. In 2013, facing the reality of declining revenue and trying to meet the needs of a growing community, a permanent increase in the County's sales tax rate by one quarter of one percent was approved along with a one quarter of one percent temporary increase which will expire on December 31, 2018.

As part of the 2016 Recommended Budget, the temporary sales tax is expected to yield \$59.1 million to support various investments in the Commissioners' core principles to address the challenges faced by our growing community, including \$44 million for the Public Safety Center, \$4.8 million for the Smart Works suite of economic development programs, \$4.9 million for community partnerships to improve the quality of life for residents, \$2.5 million to provide clean water and sanitary sewer systems and, in addition to this \$56.2 million investment, the balance of annual revenue received from the temporary sales tax will be added to cash reserves to meet any unanticipated needs in furtherance of the County's Fiscal Sustainability principles.

As a result of the increased sales tax collection in 2014, the County has restored the balance between operating revenues and expenses without reliance on General Fund cash reserves for the past several years.

In 2014, the County added \$15.7 million to its General Fund cash reserves. The 2015 Projection indicates the County will add \$9.7 million to its reserves, while the 2016 Recommended Budget shows an additional \$10.7 million contribution. This aligns with the County's long-term financial forecast, and will allow for the County to continue to make contributions to its Economic Stabilization Reserve or "Rainy Day Fund", allocate funds for the County's next 27th pay which will occur in 2020, as well as meet the commitments to set aside dollars to provide the back stop for the Convention Center Hotel.

**"While Franklin County celebrates its successes, there are a number of challenges that require our attention, such as reducing the number of mentally ill in the County jail, improving early childhood education readiness, and addressing the unacceptably high infant mortality rate," said Administrator Wilson. "Under the Commissioners' leadership, County agencies will be proactively and collaboratively addressing these over the next year."**

Budget hearings have been scheduled so that an open public discussion may take place concerning these 2016 Budget Recommendations. County Administration looks forward to working with the Board of Commissioners as it deliberates and takes action to finalize the 2016 budget in mid-December.

The hearing schedule, as well as the entire 2016 Recommended Budget, is available online at <http://commissioners.franklincountyohio.gov/>

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