



County Of Dane
Office Of The County Executive

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County Executive

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Dane County Executive Parisi Announces Historic Partnership with MGE to Create One of the Largest Solar Projects in Wisconsin, Unveils 2019 County Budget Proposal

Budget Advances Dane County's Leadership in Renewables, Cuts Property Taxes, Makes \$42 Million Investment in Infrastructure, Including Terminal Expansion at Airport

MADISON – Dane County Executive Joe Parisi, joined by Madison Gas and Electric (MGE) Chairman, President and CEO Jeff Keebler, announced a historic partnership with the investor-owned utility that will create the largest solar farm in Dane County, and one of the largest solar projects in the State of Wisconsin.

The solar farm project will feature the installation of over 20,000 solar panels on 41 acres of land located at the Dane County Regional Airport (DCRA). The project is anticipated to generate approximately 8 megawatts (MW) of renewable power – one-quarter of the energy demand from all county-owned facilities – and three times more MW than the largest solar project currently operating in the region, a 2.25 MW facility in Rock County.

The project was made possible through a historic partnership with MGE, made official through a signed memorandum of understanding. MGE will own the solar infrastructure that is installed on DCRA land leased by MGE from the County. The development is a key component in achieving Dane County government's 100% renewable electricity goal.

“Dane County is a nationally-recognized leader in renewable energy adoption and innovation. From the hardest-working landfill in the state, to what will be one of the largest solar farms in the state, I'm proud of the progress we've made,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “This historic solar farm will help increase local clean energy jobs, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce the tax burden on Dane County residents through lower energy bills.”

“MGE welcomes the opportunity to partner at the County's request on this solar project and supports its efforts to achieve 100% renewable energy for its facilities,” said MGE Chairman, President and CEO Jeff Keebler. “MGE has the goal of reducing carbon emissions at least 80% by 2050, which is an internationally recognized benchmark. This partnership is a model for advancing clean energy solutions. By working together, we can reach our respective goals for those we serve.”

This project is being proposed under MGE's new Renewable Energy Rider, which gives MGE and large energy users the opportunity to partner to tailor a renewable energy solution to meet a customer's needs. The innovative model is one way to grow renewable energy in our community. This project builds upon our long-standing partnership, purchasing electricity generated at the Dane County Landfill and from a manure digester.

Under MGE's Energy 2030 framework for a more sustainable future, the company is targeting carbon dioxide emissions reductions of at least 40% by 2030 from 2005 levels, which is consistent with U.S. emissions targets established as part of the Paris Agreement on climate change. Beyond 2030, MGE is committed to at least an 80% reduction in carbon by 2050. To reach these goals, MGE is growing its use of renewable energy, engaging customers around energy efficiency and facilitating the electrification of transportation, all of which are key strategies identified by the United States for deep decarbonization.

Overhead video and photos of the future solar farm parcel are available for download at this link: bit.ly/msnsolar

Dane County currently owns more solar than any other public entity in the state with nearly 600 kW at 15 facilities across the county. The solar farm project will be the third solar installation at the Dane County Regional Airport. It will also double as a boost to pollinator habitat for dwindling monarch and honey-bee populations.

Before construction can begin approvals are needed from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC). If approved, construction of the project is expected to begin in 2019. The project will employ local electricians and construction workers. Dane County is second only to Milwaukee County in the number of solar jobs in Wisconsin, with more than 460 people employed in the solar industry.

The announcement coincided with the unveiling of the County Executive's 2019 Dane County Budget proposal, which contains the smallest levy increase in Parisi's tenure as County Executive, lowers property taxes for Dane County residents, further advances the County's leadership in the adoption and use of renewable energy, makes historic investments in the county's infrastructure, including a significant expansion at the Dane County Regional Airport, and continues Dane County's robust support for human services.

Continued Commitment to Renewable Energy

Parisi's budget will include \$435,000 for the creation of Dane County's first "Clean, Green Park," investing in solar enhancements to Lake Farm County Park that will completely power the Lussier Family Heritage Center and campsites, and heat water for showers. A separate, \$30,000 solar installation, is proposed for Dane County's parks offices on Robertson Road.

In addition, the County's Climate Change Director, Keith Reopelle, is in ongoing conversations with both Alliant Energy and Madison Gas and Electric to partner on installing electric car charging stations at county parks such as Lake Farm, Token Creek, Indian Lake, and McCarthy County Parks.

The County Executive's 2019 budget continues the county's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and confronting the reality of climate change as well. The budget includes \$50,000 for the Dane County Office on Climate Change to complete its modeling work and final report on how our community can best reduce carbon emissions, in partnership with its Dane County Climate Change Council. When finished, this roadmap to sustainability will be a guide not just for county government but also the business community, homeowners, and other local governments.

There's growing evidence of the impact bio-digesters have on not only improving water quality but also reducing carbon emissions. Digesters in the Mendota watershed are an integral part of work underway to clean the Yahara Lakes. An analysis is currently underway to recommend where additional digesters could be located to best manage manure run-off. To support the findings of this study, Parisi's 2019 budget includes \$200,000 to help prepare design specifications for additional digesters shared by farms in sensitive watersheds.

Combined with Dane County's construction of a new bio-gas plant at its landfill, the day is nearing where gas generated from manure will be turned into millions of dollars a year in revenue for Dane County and its digester partners. These are the most exciting times yet for the role technology can play at reducing run-off, while preserving multi-generational dairy farms, a livelihood that is facing the greatest economic challenges it has experienced in decades.

Pioneering CNG use in Dane County government is supported in the 2019 budget proposal as well. By this time next year, half the county's fleet of highway trucks (plows) will run on compressed natural gas. \$1 million in system upgrades included in the budget will enable the county's CNG fleet vehicles to fuel up at more county highway facilities, including an expansion of the bio-gas CNG storage and filling capabilities at the East District Campus. The upgrades will mean quicker turn-arounds for county trucks fueling up and working hard in the midst of extreme weather events.

To help support Dane County's growth in renewable energy, the County Executive's budget will create a new county department – The Department of Waste and Renewables. The County Executive recommends that the new department be led by John Welch, the county's current Solid Waste Division Manager.

Historic Investments in Infrastructure

Dane County is the fastest-growing county in the state, with a robust economy and excellent quality of life that bring more people here every year. While it places an increased strain on county infrastructure that must be addressed, it also increases opportunity at the Dane County Regional Airport.

Parisi's 2019 budget includes record amounts of funding for road construction, repair and maintenance, more clean air powered trucks that run on renewable fuel, and an additional 7 highway staff. The 2019 highway capital budget totals \$27.7 million, with an additional \$28.3 million for day-to-day operations. Over \$22 million of this total is for new projects next year – a record high for Dane County.

Most notably, the budget includes the county's share of funds (\$6 million) pending an agreement with the City of Fitchburg) to begin the redo of Fish Hatchery Road. Pending a similar agreement with the City of Madison, the budget includes \$1.6 for the reconstruction of Buckeye Road. Additional significant projects are planned for Highway S (Mineral Point Road) and Highway P outside of Cross Plains.

One of the county's greatest areas of growth is the Dane County Regional Airport. As passenger numbers increase (up 20% in the month of July, over 8% year to date) so too do the number of direct flights and overall air service to what is the county's, and the region's economic gateway. The County Executive's 2019 budget includes \$20 million for a bold modernization and expansion project of the Dane County Regional Airport's Terminal.

At an estimated total cost that could exceed \$50 million, this project will expand the main terminal, add new gates to bring in additional flights, and replace the airport's jet bridges along with adding a new bridge. It will also upgrade security, lighting, bathrooms, and plumbing, and add more space to the airport concourse.

Continued Dedication to Human Services

The County Executive's \$219 million human services' budget continues the county's commitment to providing support to residents in need across all walks of life, with a focus on mental health services and vulnerable youth.

In addition to previously announced initiatives to increase funding to mobile emergency mental health crisis response and de-escalation training for law enforcement and community partners, Parisi's budget includes the creation of another school-based mental health team in the Monona Grove School District. Known as "Building Bridges," this new investment brings the total number of school districts with a mental health team to 11, and expands the important work being done to improve the emotional, mental, and behavioral health of Dane County's youth.

The County Executive's budget also includes additional support for youth exposed to, and struggling to cope with trauma, as well as new staff to help stabilize families and prevent future traumatic events.

\$175,000 will create two new social worker positions to work with families with preschool-aged children who have been referred to the department for child neglect, but may not meet the legal threshold of "abuse." The social workers will connect families to stabilizing community resources, including employment, housing, and other enhancement services in the Early Childhood Zones (ECZ) and Dane County's Joining Forces for Families (JFF) service areas.

\$93,500 will create a new Youth Trauma Coordinator who, in coordination with Dane County's Neighborhood Intervention Program staff, will be able to identify young people who have experienced trauma, and work with them at a critical juncture in their development so they can better understand the underlying cause of the emotional or behavioral challenges they are facing.

An additional \$87,900 will create another new position within the Neighborhood Intervention Program to help intervene with young women who have been victims of, or are susceptible to, sex trafficking.

Housing stability can place increased pressure on families with children and young adults as well. The County Executive's budget invests new dollars in this area to create additional support for those in need. At the request of the Homeless Services Consortium, Parisi's budget includes funding for a young adult housing navigator, as well as additional housing navigation resources (\$70,000), a new Joining Forces for Families social worker position, and an increase in JFF eviction prevention funds (A \$50,000 increase, bringing the total available to JFF offices to \$150,000).

The County Executive's budget continues Dane County's commitment to emergency sheltering services for some of the county's most vulnerable residents. The Beacon, a day resource center for individuals experiencing homelessness, will receive an additional \$67,000 to support its ongoing operations. Since the facility opened in October of 2017, the Beacon has assisted an average of nearly 200 people per day, including families with children, in getting their basic needs met.

The Beacon's staff and its partner agencies have also connected guests to critical community supports such as housing assistance, employment and training, health insurance coverage, food assistance, access to alcohol and drug addiction services, mental health services, early childhood supports, and more. The Beacon and its partner agencies have also assisted dozens of individuals in ending their homelessness by helping them find safe, permanent housing.

Two day shelters that focus their services on individuals experiencing homelessness who are also suffering from mental illness will see support in the 2019 budget. Safe Haven, operated by Porchlight, will receive \$210,000 - \$160,000 of county tax dollars along with an additional \$50,000 in outside revenue. Off the Square Club, operated by Lutheran Social Services, will receive \$40,000 to help continue their services in downtown Madison. Both programs experienced a reduction in critical funding from other sources, decreases that put their continued operations in jeopardy.

Shelters are an important part of the system of services that move individuals out of homelessness and into housing. Increasing the availability of housing is integral as well. To help increase affordable housing options and help end homelessness, the County Executive's 2019 budget includes \$3 million in new dollars for Dane County's Affordable Housing Fund.

Housing partnerships Dane County has assisted in funding to this point have created stability for hundreds of Dane County families. Through 2017, funds from the Affordable Housing Fund have aided in the creation of over 460 new permanent housing units. The first large scale budget project funded by the Affordable Housing Fund on Rethke Avenue is receiving \$40,000 in this budget, a partner effort with the City of Madison, to bolster on-site supportive services for individuals living there.

Finally, at the request of Dane County's Area Agency on Aging, Parisi's budget also creates a new senior case manager position. At a cost of \$75,000, the position will work at all of Dane County's senior focal points, improving direct service to seniors and connecting them to critical community resources.

Other Notable Initiatives

- The creation of 9 new pre-hire deputy positions in the Dane County Sheriff's Office.
- \$10,000 in additional funds (now \$40,000 total) to support the Vets Ride With Pride bus pass program.
- \$900,000 to support renovations to the popular Capital City trail.
- \$52,000 to restore a state funding cut that left Dane County without a Dairy and Livestock Educator position.
- The creation of a new Watershed Management unit within the county's Land and Water Resource Department and \$1 million in funding for phosphorus reduction/clean lakes projects
- Money to evaluate feasibility of new recreational trail and bridge across the Wisconsin River north of Mazomanie, joint project with Sauk County

- Hiring an additional Dane County Park Ranger and \$100,000 to fund the first phase of an effort to increase the number of ADA accessible piers in Dane County's parks, with the ultimate goal of making every pier at county parks accessible

The 2019 Budget By the Numbers

The County Executive's 2019 budget increases the operating portion of the county levy by 0.35%, the lowest of any of Parisi's previous budgets. The county share of property taxes on the average Madison home is estimated to decline nearly \$12 under this budget proposal. The operating budget totals \$557,337,626. The capital budget is \$63,228,300, bringing the total budget to \$620,565,926.

Previously Announced Initiatives

Prior to the introduction of his full 2019 budget proposal, the County Executive and Dane County Board Chair, Sharon Corrigan, announced a sweeping package of initiatives totaling \$18 million to help Dane County recover from this summer's devastating flash floods, improve the quality and flow of water through our lakes, and help Dane County become more resilient in the face of future flooding events:

<https://www.countyofdane.com/press/details.aspx?id=4364>

In partnership with local law enforcement and service providers, the County Executive also announced an unprecedented \$325,000 increase in funding for mobile mental health crisis services, additional funds for de-escalation training, and increased support for programs that combat Dane County's opioid epidemic:

<https://www.countyofdane.com/press/details.aspx?id=4366>

Next Steps

The County Executive's budget will be reviewed and considered by the County Board of Supervisors in the coming weeks. The County Board may make changes or additions to the proposal before final passage later on in the fall.

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