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2015-2016 Policy Agenda for Hamilton County, Ohio

Agenda Updates - April 12, 2016, by Commissioner Chris Monzel, President
Progress Updates - November 2016, by County Administration

Hamilton County has weathered the worst of the economic downturn over the past five years, and is poised for success over the next several years. The County's balance sheet is stronger now than it has been in over a decade, due in large part to our focus on providing core services to residents in a cost-effective manner, while limiting the burden on taxpayers. The shared sacrifice by the various County elected officials and our workforce has been critical to Hamilton County's rebound and progress.

As we move forward in 2015 and 2016, the County should continue on the path to economic growth by prioritizing key investments in initiatives and policies that are delivering results, while capitalizing on our stabilized budgetary position to prudently invest in new strategies for success. The Board will continue to work with Administration to focus on fiscal management of the General Fund and capital budgets, as well as identify funding priorities within those budgets to foster economic development and address needs within specific County departments and functions.

The next two years will not be without challenges, and it is incumbent upon the Board of Commissioners to also focus on addressing those issues that will affect the County's long-term growth and fiscal health. Additionally, we have a responsibility to the families of Hamilton County to support policies and initiatives that will mitigate the impact of some of our community's most pressing issues.

I look forward to implementing the policy priorities in this document to ensure continued success for Hamilton County in the years ahead.

Strong Fiscal Stewardship

Hands-On Approach to Departmental Budgets

After years of General Fund budgets balanced through large cuts to virtually all County departments, many departments have faced challenges in presenting a balanced budget during the 2015 budget process due to depleted restricted funds and deferred costs that must be funded over the next two years. During the first quarter of 2015 and throughout the year, County Administration and the budget office should work closely with those departments requiring assistance to stay within their approved 2015 General Fund budget allocation.

Of particular focus will be the Sheriff's Department, due to the department's increased spending over its allocated budget in previous years, and the likelihood that its represented personnel will receive employment agreements with compensation increases. The County budget office should work closely with the Sheriff's Department in the first quarter of 2015 to identify operational and capital expenditures that will likely put the department over budget, and develop a plan to address these costs.

Update: The budget office worked closely with the Sheriff's office to monitor expenses and revenues throughout 2016, with expenses over budget tracking closely to those associated with union wage adjustments approved after January 1. The offices continue to collaborate on addressing patrol needs in county subdivisions and capacity issues at the Justice Center.

In addition, supplemental budget appropriations for all general fund departments were limited to quarterly action, following a detailed review by the budget office of projected revenues and expenses. As of Q3 2016, general fund revenues had improved and expenses stabilized to a point where the projected 2016 operating deficit was shrinking, reserves were projected at 15% of operations, and some general fund earmarks were recommended to address facility maintenance issues.

Targeted Capital Investments

Several County departments face significant capital expenditures that have been deferred due to the challenging budgets over the past five years. In 2015, the County will begin prioritizing and making targeted capital investments to ensure we continue to provide top-notch service to County residents and taxpayers.

Specifically, upgrades of the jail management and records management systems at the Justice Center, referenced as significantly lacking in effectiveness in the Sheriff's independent audit and in the state's inspection of the Justice Center, will be addressed this year, as well as some incremental capital repairs and upgrades at the Courthouse, Public Defender's office, Recorder's office, County Facilities, and the Communications Center; and planned Board of Elections technology upgrades (including e-poll books) in preparation for the 2016 presidential election.

Update: The issue of critical deferred maintenance to infrastructure and systems will continue to face the County over the next several years. During 2016, the County continued to provide funding to address numerous targeted capital needs in the county including, but not limited to:

- Roof repairs at 800 Broadway
- Roof replacement at the County Courthouse

- Masonry repairs at the County Records Center
- Access bridge replacement at 250 William Howard Taft
- Replacement of the security matrix system at the Juvenile Youth Detention Center
- HVAC control repairs at the County Administration Building
- Cooling tower and chiller replacement at the County Administration Building

Funding for many of these projects was not included in the 2016 Operating Budget or CIP. However, the County has been prudent in earmarking, or holding back, funding in the reserve to address project needs as they arise. As earmarks are released and utilized, however, this flexibility will not be available in perpetuity.

Shared Services

Local governments have a responsibility to ensure the delivery of services to residents is as cost-effective and efficient as possible. Hamilton County currently collaborates and shares services with the local municipalities and townships within the County, as well as neighboring counties and the state. However, the identification of opportunities to partner with other jurisdictions for the delivery of services should continue to be a priority in 2015 and 2016.

The creation of the joint City-County Shared Services Committee with the City of Cincinnati in November 2014 will facilitate ongoing discussion between City and County leadership on opportunities to collaborate on services for residents. In 2015, Commissioners and County Administration will engage City leadership on small-scale partnerships, such as shared management of the County and City's dual 800MHz radio and computer-aided dispatching systems, an agreement for County fire hydrant maintenance within the City, and an agreement for Hamilton County Public Health to administer medical gas permitting and inspection for facilities within the City.

The County will also engage City leadership on the issue of consolidation of County and City municipal prosecution functions as allowed by the Ohio Revised Code, which could save taxpayer money by eliminating duplicate jobs.

Update: In 2016, the County continued work with the City of Cincinnati on a joint shared services task force which vetted various ideas for improved cooperation and efficiencies amongst the two largest local governments in the region. During the past year, several advances have been made in this area including the following:

The County and City cooperated on installation of a new 9-1-1 Computer Aided Dispatch system which, as it will exist on the same technology platform, will allow the County and City to share resources and dispatch for each other more seamlessly in the event one operation is disabled or experiences problems.

As the County upgraded its 800 MHz radio system, it did so in cooperation with the City of Cincinnati and State of Ohio. In coordinating with the State's MARCS network, the County enhanced its ability to communicate with surrounding counties as well as the State Highway Patrol. The zone controller for the County's radio system is now located in Butler County, as part of the State's radio network system, which eliminated the need for additional capital purchases and also saves on annual maintenance costs.

During 2016, the County and City agreed to have County Public Health assume non-flammable medical gas inspections within the City of Cincinnati. These services had previously been operated by State personnel. Switching to the County will add efficiencies while also costing less to the ultimate customer.

County staff will continue to support the Board's efforts with the City as it relates to current and future shared services opportunities including the concept of continuing to explore efficiencies relating to fire hydrant maintenance.

911 Emergency Communications

The 911 Emergency Communications System is a critical public safety function here in Hamilton County. The County Communications Center provides exemplary service to 105 Police, Fire and EMS agencies. The current funding model is no longer sustainable.

Efforts will continue in 2015 to evaluate the funding mechanism(s) for this function, turning from just a charge to jurisdictions and general fund subsidy, to a more equitable hybrid of funding solutions that can help limit the burden on local municipalities. In 2015, the County was forced to increase the detail rate to local municipalities by 5%, and in the next two years the County is facing a necessary capital upgrade in order to keep our public safety radio system in working order.

Update: Hamilton County has been searching for an appropriate funding solution for its 9-1-1 operations for the past several years. The consortium nature of the system has spurred a user model which spreads the cost to participating jurisdictions – but which, in doing so, consumes the public safety budgets of those communities. Within the context of the 2016 Budget, the County had initially opted to implement a utility service fee, as allowed by the Ohio Revised Code, to fund a significant portion of 9-1-1 operations for the County. Additionally, the Board chose to reduce the detail rate to \$15.00. Following public comment, however, it was decided not to implement the Utility Service Fee and to examine other options for 2017. In April of 2016, County Administration presented several intermediate and long term options, to the Board, for funding 9-1-1 services. Inherent within that presentation was the idea that 2017 would represent a transition year during which time the Administration would recommend adding a mil to the Property Transfer Tax to generate additional funding for offsetting additional County subsidy to the Communications Center in that year. Following the completion of an efficiency study, to be conducted in 2016, the Administration would recommend additional conversations with the County's State legislative delegation to assess the possibility of obtaining permissive fee authority, on land line and cellular devices, as has been requested from the State in the past. If such authority is not granted, the Administration would recommend proceeding with a parcel fee for 2018 as initially recommended by the 9-1-1 Preservation Task Force in 2015.

Investing in Our County Workforce

The County will continue to prioritize the development and support of its workforce. In 2013, the County began the process of instituting wellness programming and transparency initiatives to aid County employees in their healthcare decisions and to improve the delivery of health benefits to the workforce. These efforts will continue in 2015 to implement wellness incentives based on the results of the voluntary employee health screenings.

Consistent with the previous two years, County Administration will closely monitor the budget throughout the year to evaluate the ability to provide mid-year compensation adjustments to employees. Administration should also engage in a process to evaluate pay ranges of departments with key job classes that have fallen behind market, or that face issues with attracting or retaining high-quality employees.

Update: The County will continue to prioritize the development and support of its workforce. In 2015 the County's wellness program, Empower a Healthy You, added incentives for participation. This was expanded in 2016; providing employees additional ways to meet the participation requirements. Additionally, more wellness classes on broader topics were added. Most of these were provided at no cost to the County through partnerships with our vendors and community partners. In its first year the wellness program helped increase HRA participants Average Wellness Score by 3%, and the enhanced outreach efforts resulted in a nearly 5% increase in the number of employees earning the incentive.

Request for Proposals (RFP) were completed for employee benefit plans including medical insurance, life insurance, supplemental life insurance, long-term disability insurance, wellness and the employee assistance plan in 2016. This resulted in reduced costs for many benefits providing savings for both the employer and employee in 2017. For medical insurance this means a change in providers for 2017 and a resulting positive influence on the County's costs for this important employee benefit program.

A one and one-half percent salary increase was provided to employees on the first pay period of 2016. Based on review of a variety of factors, the Board was able to provide a second increase of one and one-half percent effective September 8, 2016. Additionally, HR has continued to assess current employee compensation and compensation practices in relation to the relevant job market. Information was shared with the Board for their consideration depending on budget expectations and outcomes.

Economic Development

Investments in Partners Delivering Results

Continued investment of County resources into our economic development partners is critical to the economic growth of Hamilton County. In 2015 and 2016, the County will maintain its funding of partners Port Authority, the Hamilton County Development Company (HCDC) and REDI Cincinnati, as well as evaluate the need and ability to increase these investments based on results generated. Specifically, in 2015, the County will fulfill its commitment to the Port Authority to seed a Bond Fund to leverage other resources for larger-scale economic development in the County.

The County will also continue its commitment in 2015 and 2016 to the Land Bank, an innovative solution to help redevelop and revitalize neighborhoods across the County under the management of the Port Authority. Utilizing Moving Ohio Forward funding, the Land Bank has demolished 725 blighted properties since 2013, and is also engaged in a targeted neighborhood strategy for the focused revitalization of communities in the County.

Update: Over the past two years the County has continued to support its economic development partners and renewed contracts with HCDC and REDI in early 2016. In addition, in 2015 Hamilton County made a one-time contribution to the Port Authority in order to seed a Bond Fund that could be used for large scale economic development projects.

The various economic development agencies have also been diligent in meeting their annual goals for the County. During 2015 HCDC Economic Development Office facilitated \$72 million in new private business investments which will retain or create approximately 1,790 jobs. HCDC also approved 38 SBA 504 loans for \$23.7 million with a total project investment of \$69 million. In 2015, REDI invested approximately \$1.22 billion on a total of 65 separate projects. These projects helped to bring an additional 7,647 new jobs and retain 8,206 current jobs in the region. The Port, through the County Land Bank, has obtained and administered \$11 million in state demolition grant funding (2012-14), and \$5 million in Neighborhood Initiative Program funding (2014-16) for the demolition of vacant and blighted homes in county neighborhoods. The Port has also developed a new industrial revitalization and neighborhood reinvestment strategy.

Supporting Economic Growth in the County's Municipalities

This year the County will prioritize funding to assist communities in the 49 various townships, cities and villages in Hamilton County. HCDC will begin work on the implementation of the County's Five-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The approved budget includes funding for business mentoring to entrepreneurs and assistance with commercial district marketing and infrastructure enhancements that will help businesses thrive and grow. In 2015, several municipalities in the County will also receive approximately \$2.1 million in community development block grants to improve and maintain their streets, landscape, public facilities and critical services.

2015 will be the first year the County will begin providing funding support to grow tourism and visitors in Hamilton County, outside of the Sharonville Convention Center and the downtown Cincinnati USA CVB. In addition to the funding the County provides to these entities for marketing and promotion of our region through the Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT), the County will also allocate up to \$300,000 in capital support from TOT proceeds to eligible projects in communities that improve the attraction of conventions, events and visitors.

Update: This year the County will prioritize funding to assist communities in the 49 various townships, cities and villages in Hamilton County. HCDC will begin work on the implementation of the County's Five-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The approved budget includes funding for business mentoring to entrepreneurs and assistance with commercial district marketing and infrastructure enhancements that will help businesses thrive and grow. In 2017, the 38 jurisdictions that participate in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will also benefit from approximately \$3.0 million in CDBG funds to improve and maintain public infrastructure and public facilities, eliminate blighted properties, create economic opportunities, provide social services and assist with emergency housing repairs.

2015 was the first year the County began providing funding support to grow tourism and visitors in Hamilton County, outside of the Sharonville Convention Center and the downtown Cincinnati USA CVB. This continued in 2016. In addition to the funding the County provides to these entities for Marketing and promotion of our region through the Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT), the County allocated \$577,000 in capital support from TOT proceeds to the Duke Energy Center for an expansion study, the Sharonville Convention Center for planning study, and the City of Blue Ash for renovations to Cooper Creek. These projects should help grow future hotel/motel lodging taxes in the County and provide direct enhancements to the County's overall convention center and hotel/motel infrastructure.

The Community Development department has continued to provide support to local jurisdictions and awarded \$1.6 million in federal funds in 2016 for affordable housing projects. In 2016, the County provided \$300,000 in CDBG and \$50,000 in TOT funds to assist with the demolition of the former Sheraton North hotel in Springdale with plans to locate a new hotel, office buildings and a restaurant on the 8 acre site. In 2017, the Administration proposes utilizing CDBG funds for one or more similar large projects to provide gap financing or grants for impactful and transformative community and economic development in our communities. \$75,000 in CDBG funds are being provided through the Urban Land Assistance Program to demolish three commercial buildings in Deer Park, the former community center in Forest Park, and one commercial garage in Mt. Healthy to make these sites marketable for end users. The County is also providing technical assistance to Silverton, Montgomery and Delhi Township through a CDBG funded contract with underwriting experts to determine the most advantageous financing tools for development projects in these jurisdictions. In addition to the work conducted by Community Development, Hamilton County has also set aside and contributed \$2 million to the Port Authority for a site readiness project in Amberley Village.

Continued Success at the Banks

The Banks Project, a joint City-County development project on the riverfront, has seen more and more success over the past few years. Last year, the City and the County celebrated the announcement that GE's new Global Operations Center will be located at The Banks, a \$90 million investment that will land 1,800 jobs in Hamilton County and Cincinnati.

Since 2005, the County has invested \$33.5 million with the City in building the parking garages and infrastructure at The Banks, resulting in \$255 million in private infrastructure investment – not to mention the economic impact by turning the undeveloped riverfront into a thriving development for residential, retail, dining and office tenants. Work will continue at The Banks over the next two years, including preparation for the 2015 All Star Game, the start of a hotel development and the partnership with the Cincinnati Parks Board to continue the growth of the Smale Riverfront Park.

Update: The Banks project, a joint County-City development project along the Ohio River, is currently the largest economic development project in Hamilton County (and the Greater Cincinnati region). GE's new \$90M US Global Operations Center opened its doors with 1800 employees (at least 1200 new jobs) in September 2016 and will provide our area with new tax revenue streams. In addition, the new \$70M Radius Apartment Building opened in March 2016 offering 300 new luxury apartments and sidewalk-level retail space next door to the GE office building. The \$29M Phase IIIA of the Banks project (the next block of two-story public parking facility with elevated streetgrid) was completed in September 2016 and ready for private development to be built on top. Meanwhile, work continues on the new \$30M 8 -story Marriott AC Hotel, which will open by summer 2017.

Current Project Status:

Phase I

- 1284-space public parking facility & elevated street grid - Completed
- 300 apartments & 100 sf retail - Completed
- 171 key Marriot AC hotel - Construction (complete 2017)
- 300k sf office space - Ready for development

Phase II

- 733-space public parking facility & elevated street grid - Completed

- 292 apartments & 20k sf retail - Completed
- 338k sf office space for GE US Global Operations - Completed

Phase IIIA

- 710-space public parking facility & elevated street grid - Completed

Future Phases

- In planning, budget & design stages for anticipated project completion in the next 10 years.

Addressing Long-Term Strategic Issues

Facilities Planning

Over the past year, the County has conducted a Master Space Study to determine our facilities needs. Since 2008, the County has decreased 1,500 employee positions, requiring less space for the County workforce. At the same time, we have specific facilities needs that we must address, including increased space for:

- the County’s crime lab functions,
- the operations and storage for the County Board of Elections,
- the Public Defender’s office, and more.

Last year, the County was offered a unique opportunity to take ownership of the former Mercy Health Mt. Airy hospital, a 500,000 square foot facility, to address some of these pressing space needs. The County has spent the last year evaluating this opportunity, as well as identifying the costs of operating our facilities and the future long-term maintenance needs.

While the Board has ultimately decided against the acquisition of the Mt. Airy property due to the large expense of renovation and build out, this discussion has opened up other opportunities for addressing the space needs of the County. In 2015, identifying a solution to the County’s cramped and outdated crime lab facility will be a priority, with the Board considering several options. Solutions may include an alternative facility for the crime lab, a regional partnership with the state Bureau of Criminal Investigation to share some of these crime lab functions, or even a creative solution utilizing our existing County facilities.

The County will enter Phase III of the Master Space Study in 2015 to evaluate the opportunities for renovation, consolidation and capital investment in our existing County facilities.

Update: The County recently completed a Facility Master Plan effort which provided needed information on how and where to fund critical infrastructure improvements in order to enhance County operations and avoid future deferred maintenance costs. During 2016, focus was applied to the following strategic facility needs:

- Siting of a new County Crime Lab (see below),
- Operations and storage for the County Board of Elections,
- Completion of the renovation project for the County Public Defender.

Progress on each of these critical areas is detailed below.

Also an exterior building assessment at 800 Broadway has identified the need for a significant capital investment in the building's exterior in the near future.

In 2016, identifying a solution to the County's cramped and outdated Crime lab facility continued to be a top priority, with the Board considering several options. Solutions evaluated included an alternative facility for the crime lab, a regional partnership with the state Bureau of Criminal Investigation to share some of these crime lab functions, or even a creative solution utilizing our existing County facilities. The Board has determined that a "new" crime facility would be the idea solution.

A "Letter of Intent" to secure land for a new crime lab facility resulted in approximately 30 sites being evaluated. A firm was hired to evaluate the sites and to provide project management services for County Facilities. The plan is to secure a site by the end of 2016 with design starting in early 2017 and the target date for move in by late 2019.

The Board of Elections entered into a 15-year lease agreement to relocate their daily operations and warehousing to a single location in a renovated facility in Norwood, with the move-in scheduled for mid-January 2017.

The \$1.6 million renovation of the second and third floors for the Public Defender at 230 East Ninth (William Howard Taft Law Center) has been completed. This fulfills a significant element of the MOU agreement with the State Public Defender's Commission.

Transportation

The County will continue through the work of the Transportation Improvement District (TID) and partners OKI and SORTA to serve as a convener for regional discussions on transportation and infrastructure needs, as well as transit opportunities that have broad community support. Regional priorities include the replacement of the Brent Spence Bridge and the Western Hills Viaduct, which is already receiving support from the County Engineer's office.

Over the past several years, the County has partnered with the state to study and plan for the Eastern Corridor program of projects. The state has indicated its plans to provide additional guidance to the County in the first half of 2015 as it relates to specific segments of the project and the County will continue efforts through the TID on this project based on the state's funding and support.

Update: Hamilton County has continued to engage the Transportation Improvement District (TID), as well as OKI and SORTA, in discussions directly tied to regional transportation infrastructure needs. Over the past couple of years the County has continued to vocalize their support and need for the replacement of the Brent Spence Bridge to local, state, and federal representatives. Hamilton County has also worked collaboratively with the City of Cincinnati to start the conversation on how to finance the rehabilitation of the Western Hill Viaduct. While a final funding source has not been completely identified, both parties are confident that a solution will be in place within the next couple of years. Throughout 2015 and 2016 the County Engineer has directly contributed over \$12.7 million to municipal and township infrastructure projects.

The Hamilton County TID has also worked with the state of Ohio to study the Eastern Corridor program. The state has expressed their support of the initiative and is willing to consider funding portions of the project. The TID is continuing to develop community and residential support for the project as the TID evaluates the next steps associated with this project.

Metropolitan Sewer District

MSD is underway implementing a \$3 billion program of projects over the next few decades, due to a federal consent decree from the U.S. EPA to upgrade our sewer system, improve water quality and reduce sewer overflows. In 2015 alone, MSD will embark on 35 projects within the consent decree, costing \$211 million.

Implementing the consent decree program of projects has resulted in sewer rate increases year over year. This year, the County will continue efforts to minimize the impact of these increases to ratepayers through the County monitoring team and the empaneling of an Affordability Committee, made up of community stakeholders, sewer ratepayers and the business community.

Discussions will continue with the City of Cincinnati leadership to encourage collaboration and partnership to provide oversight and governance of MSD as we near the termination of the 50-year operating agreement between the County and the City.

Update: MSD is approaching the 1/3rd point in the implementation of the \$3.2 billion program of projects to comply with a federal consent decree from the U.S. EPA. The Consent Decree requires upgrades to our sewer system to reduce the impact of the sewer system impact on water quality by reducing or eliminating sewer overflows. The program is projected to continue for as much as the next two decades. In 2016 alone, MSD plans to initiate or continue work on 40 projects within the consent decree, costing approximately \$220 million. The plan for the work for the next two decades will be negotiated with the Regulators starting in 2017 for implementation in 2019.

The County has continued to monitor and oversee the activity of the District to ensure rate payer dollars are being used effectively. Since inception, these oversight efforts have resulted in over \$600 million in reduced capital expenditures and over \$50 million in reduced operational expenditures. All told, these figures translate to the avoidance of significant levels of rate increases to the MSD customer base.

Serving Those In Need

Impact Health Outcomes

The County serves an important role, through partnerships with local nonprofits and health entities, to impact local health outcomes. This work will continue in 2015 with support for Cradle Cincinnati to reduce the high infant mortality rate in Hamilton County and Cincinnati.

The County will also continue the efforts approved in 2014 to strategically address the issue of homelessness. A strong indicator of Hamilton County's economic health and the well-being of our residents is the level of poverty and homelessness in our community. With over 7,000 homeless individuals in Hamilton County in 2013 – including 750 veterans – it's critical we address the issue of

homelessness in our communities through a comprehensive approach that addresses its root causes and supports homeless individuals as they transition to stable living.

Over the past year, the County has made significant commitments to help combat homelessness through a partnership with the supporters of the Homeless to Homes plan, including Strategies to End Homelessness (STEH). STEH, along with 3CDC and several other partners in the community, have been instrumental in the opening of four new shelters in downtown and Queensgate, including the new Drop Inn Center.

In 2014 the Board approved funding commitments within the County's Indigent Care Levy to provide healthcare services and case management to individuals' right at the shelters – helping to diagnose and treat the underlying issues for homelessness in a safe setting. In addition, the Board will approve a funding plan this year for our federal community development dollars that will include significant support for housing assistance to help homeless individuals with transitioning to independent living after treatment.

Update: The County serves an important role, through partnerships with local nonprofits and health entities, to impact local health outcomes. This work will continue in 2017 with support for Cradle Cincinnati to reduce the high infant mortality rate in Hamilton County and Cincinnati.

The County will also continue the efforts approved in 2014 to strategically address the issue of homelessness. A strong indicator of Hamilton County's economic health and the well-being of our residents is the level of poverty and homelessness in our community. With 7,900 homeless individuals in Hamilton County in 2015 — including 2,100 children and 710 veterans — it's critical we address the issue of homelessness in our communities through a comprehensive approach that addresses its root causes and supports homeless individuals as they transition to stable living.

The Indigent Care levy provided for \$2 million toward coordinated homeless health care in 2016. The levy provides case management services, daytime healthcare services and programming, direct client charges and facility operating expenses for the five new shelters in Cincinnati. This care is provided through a contract with Strategies to End Homelessness. Through July 2016, this funding provided over 76,000 bed nights for homeless individuals in Hamilton County and increased the level of case management and day services that all participants receive at the emergency shelters. This also signifies the first time that all shelters serving homeless individuals offer onsite medical care to treat illness and make referrals as necessary. This care is being provided at all five STEH shelters: David and Rebecca Barron Center, Esther Marie Hatton Center for Women, Lighthouse-Sheakley Center for Youth, Talbert House – Parkway Center, and City Gospel Mission. The County will continue to support the current efforts to support homeless individuals in our community, as well as the evolving efforts to address the issue of family homelessness in Hamilton County.

In 2016 and 2017, the County will continue to work with Strategies to End Homelessness to provide funding for shelter diversion/homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing programs. These funds help families for a short period of time, between 6 months and 2 years, to regain self-sufficiency. In 2015, the County provided \$240,000 to assist approximately 1,400 individuals and families received services through the Rapid Rehousing program and 800 through Shelter Diversion programs. Funding for 2016 and 2017 is projected to be level or slightly higher levels through the County's HUD funding

for the Emergency Solutions Grant program. In 2016 and 2017, \$120,000 in CDBG funds will provide 75 veterans who were formerly homeless to pay their first month of rent, security deposits and other related expenses.

Address the Heroin Epidemic

In response to scourge of heroin abuse that has dramatically increased regionally in the past two years, the County should engage in efforts to put a laser focus on addressing this community health issue in 2015 by setting impactful, actionable goals to achieve this year. Initial specific actions should include:

- Working with the state Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections to institute best practices that can be implemented under Sheriff Neil's leadership in the Hamilton County Justice Center. Over 10,000 heroin addicts came through the Justice Center in 2014, including two heroin-related inmate deaths last year. New policies can help keep drugs out of the jail, and help treat inmates while they're within the walls of the Justice Center.
- Working with the existing treatment service providers within County levies to identify opportunities for funding changes or reprogramming to more specifically target and address treatment for heroin addiction. The County funds treatment and addiction services through the Mental Health Levy, in partnership with the Mental Health & Recovery Services Board, as well as the Family Services and Treatment Levy, and also funds healthcare services to residents through partners within the indigent care levy.

This effort will require collaboration and partnership across multiple stakeholder groups, including social services, education, law enforcement and public health entities. These targeted partnerships can help combat the pressing community issue of heroin abuse in Hamilton County.

The County's rebound from the economic downturn means we can continue taking a strategic, long-term perspective on several issues that will affect the future fiscal health of the County. Our plans in 2015 represent an opportunity to grow our investments in innovative and effective strategies for improving our local climate for job creation, while serving the taxpayers and residents in the 49 townships, cities and villages in Hamilton County.

Through continued policies that keep our fiscal house in order, grow our local economy, address the long-term issues affecting the County and support the most at-risk in our community, Hamilton County is poised for success in the years to come.

Update: The Hamilton County Heroin Coalition (HCHC) was created in May 2015. Since that time, the HCHC has dedicated itself to addressing the opioid addiction crisis through collaboration between public health officials, law enforcement, prevention experts and treatment providers. The HCHC has worked toward the following efforts:

Boosting prevention and public education efforts – In 2016, Hamilton County led the effort to link the entire region's resources to address heroin through the injecthope.com website. The Inject Hope Regional Collaborative brings together efforts across Southwest Ohio, Northern Kentucky and Southeast Indiana to address the heroin and opiate epidemic. This collaborative creates a unified foundation that is able to coordinate and leverage local resources to address this crisis. The BOCC approved \$152,000 in 2016 for several prevention initiatives, including a teen empowerment program, prescription drug education and other evidence-based in-school programming.

Increasing and improving access to treatment – a collaborative treatment approach was presented to and approved by the Commissioners in 2016. These services include medication assisted treatment (MAT), detox, residential beds and outpatient services. Funding for the program comes from the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board (\$952,000), Commissioners (\$1,000,000) and a Memorandum of Understanding with UCHHealth (\$300,000). The HCHC, in partnership with the Mental Health Board and treatment providers, will closely track outcomes for opiate detox, treatment and recovery to pinpoint best practices and effective treatment.

Reducing the number of fatal overdoses/reducing harm and consequences – Naloxone (the overdose recovery drug) is now available across the entire patrol division of the Sheriff's office and available through Public Health to every law enforcement agency in Hamilton County. The County Health Commissioner has worked with the chief medical officers from the region's hospital systems to develop and standardize treatment protocols. The HCHC is also monitoring the innovative efforts in Colerain Township concerning their Quick Response Team (QRT) that proactively engages overdose victims, shares data between departments and coordinates with the social service providers to connect individuals to treatment.

Controlling the supply – The Hamilton County Heroin Task Force has been created with law enforcement agencies from across the region to focus on heroin drug abuse and trafficking. The task force has been operational since June 2015 and investigates all heroin-related deaths, arrests and seizures. The Task Force and other law enforcement partners utilize the Greater Cincinnati Fusion Center to collate and analyze heroin-related data.

The Heroin Coalition is working in partnership with the Hamilton County Sheriff and the treatment experts within the Coalition to evaluate the appropriate methods to assist individuals housed in the Justice Center with addiction, which may include medical detox and/or counseling and treatment programs.



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