



2026/2027 Budget Discussion

Mar 5, 2026

Budget Officer

County Administrator

BUDGET CHALLENGE FOR 2026 & 2027



- The purpose of this discussion is to begin a deliberate, transparent conversation about balancing the County's 2027 budget under challenging fiscal constraints.
- No decisions are being made today; this is about setting expectations and identifying guiding principles.



CURRENT FISCAL CONSTRAINTS

- Limited revenue environment.
 - Sales tax has probably leveled off
 - Not practical to exceed property tax cap for third year in a row
- The County is experiencing rising expenditures that are largely beyond local control, including Medicaid, SNAP, HEAP, other social services, employee healthcare, and NYS retirement costs
- Road project costs will continue to increase as will electricity and fuel costs

SHIFTING STATE AND FEDERAL PRESSURES



- Reductions in federal and state programs such as SNAP, HEAP, and other social services do not eliminate demand
- Warren County has minimal control over who is eligible for social programs
- These pressures are shifted to counties, increasing service demand without a corresponding increase in funding.
- We could possibly face \$1.8 million to absorb loss of Federal funds in fourth quarter 2026
- We must acknowledge these pressures earlier in the budget process



CLARIFYING COUNTY PRIORITIES

- As we prepare for the 2027 budget, we will need the Board's help to revisit:
 - Which services are mandated versus discretionary
 - Are there alternative service models we can implement through shared or regional means
- Note: This is not about service elimination, but about aligning services with fiscal capacity

The County Administrator will work with Department Heads to identify mandatory and discretionary services



PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS

- Personnel costs represent 35% of the county budget
- Warren County must continue to be a competitive employer, particularly in public safety, healthcare, and professional services.
- At the same time, future budgets may require:
 - Careful vacancy management
 - Position prioritization
 - Consideration of restructuring or service redesign
- Focus on long-term sustainability, not short-term fixes

The County Administrator will be asking the Department Heads to carefully consider filling vacant positions as we move through the year and determine a reasonable way to discuss and fill vacancies without impacting services.

CAPITAL/ROAD PROJECT MANAGEMENT



- Capital and road project infrastructure investments should be evaluated based on:
 - Public safety needs
 - Long-term operating cost impacts
 - Overall affordability within future tax cap constraints
 - Viability of extending estimated service life of road projects

Public Works Committee and County Administrator will partner with DPW to assess scheduled projects to look for potential savings



USE OF FUND BALANCE

- Fund balance is a useful tool to smooth short-term disruptions
- It should not be relied upon to resolve ongoing structural cost increases
- Any use of fund balance should be paired with a clear understanding of one-time versus recurring impacts

Budget Officer will pay close attention to requests to use unappropriated fund balance to offset costs this year



CLOSING STATEMENT

- The decisions surrounding the 2027 budget will require discipline, transparency, and collaboration
- This discussion is intended to help ensure that Warren County remains:
 - Fiscally stable
 - Tax Cap-compliant
 - Able to deliver key and essential services

The overall goal is for the Board to make informed decisions that are fair to taxpayers, employees, and future Boards



QUESTIONS ?