

Information from
BARNSTABLE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Barnstable County, Massachusetts

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COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SUBMIT FY2010 BUDGET

Funded priorities include municipal regionalization efforts, children's protective services, expanded economic development grants, wastewater management, and more

County department budgets cut, payroll steps frozen, deeds tax proposed to increase

BARNSTABLE, MA – The Barnstable County Commissioners today submitted the Fiscal Year 2010 budget proposal for next year's programs and the operations of Cape Cod's regional government. The proposal will be considered by the county legislative body, the Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates, which will hold public hearings and meetings during the next several months before the budget is finalized by the end of June.

"As is true for our nation and state, Barnstable County must respond to current economic pressures and conditions," says County Commissioner Chair Sheila Lyons. "The proposed budget for 2010 identifies priority programs for funding, preserves vital ongoing programs and services, and makes difficult adjustments elsewhere."

Key priority programs proposed to be funded include:

- Establishment of an Office of Regional Coordination: \$150,000 and the use of existing resources of Barnstable County departments to fund analyses and assist towns with efforts to regionalize services.
- Preservation of full staffing and services of Children's Cove: \$108,660 to restore funding lost through an anticipated grant cut from the Massachusetts Department of Social Services.
- Continued funding for important regional service agencies such as the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod (\$25,000), public safety training (\$5,000), and Cape and Islands Elder Services (\$75,000) for the Meals on Wheels Program.

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- Expansion of Barnstable County's Cape Cod Economic Development Council's grant program: \$150,000 increase from specialty license plate revenues.
- Continued funding for the Cape Cod Water Protection Collaborative: \$225,000 for regional wastewater management planning.

In creating the Barnstable County Office of Regional Coordination, the Commissioners announced that the office will report directly to the Commissioners and be staffed with existing county and Cape Cod Commission personnel. The Commissioners have included the \$150,000 as part of the FY2010 budget request to match \$155,000 in Direct Local Technical Assistance grants available through the Cape Cod Commission.

Together, these funding streams will support efforts across Cape Cod aimed at determining appropriate economies of scale for the provision of regional services. The goal is to provide the highest quality of service for the revenue available. County Commission Chair Sheila Lyons remarked, "Just the act of creating this office shows unprecedented coordination of county departments and the ability of the county to react in a timely manner to the needs of the 15 towns."

County Commissioner Bill Doherty noted, "The county's work on wastewater has produced significant savings for the towns' capital wastewater infrastructure." Notably, the county's creation of the Cape Cod Water Protection Collaborative has increased awareness of the wastewater issue, resulting in legislation passed last year making State Revolving Loan Funds available at a zero-interest rate.

"The budget proposes several new measures to help respond to reduced revenues from the county real estate deeds excise tax," County Commissioner Vice Chair Mary Pat Flynn adds. The budget-stabilization proposals include:

- An increase in the Barnstable County deeds excise tax by \$0.43 per \$1,000 valuation (from \$2.28 to \$2.71 per \$1,000): The impact on the sale of a \$300,000 property under this proposal would be a \$129 increase in the excise tax charge. If approved, this proposal will produce additional county revenues of approximately \$1 million.
- A "step freeze" on county employees' pay for the fiscal year: This measure, if approved, will produce savings of approximately \$100,000. The budget does include a proposed one percent cost-of-living adjustment for half the year, depending on revenue collections for the first six months of the fiscal year.
- Departmental budget cuts of about 8 percent from current levels: Services and programs considered vital, however, are retained.

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Commissioner Doherty notes the budget proposal provides reassurance to employees on at least one important item. “Although health insurance premiums for next year are estimated to be 10 percent higher, the budget proposes no changes at the current time to existing health plans or contribution rates,” he says.

The complete budget proposal and information related to it are available from the Barnstable County web site, www.barnstablecounty.org. The Assembly of Delegates will provide public notice of its hearings and meetings on the proposal.

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