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KANE COUNTY BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE

Spending cuts to help trim budget gap

By Molly Morrow
Beacon-News

As a multimillion-dollar shortfall for the county's 2026 budget looms, the Kane County Board's Finance Committee has begun to consider how to cut spending — and where it can find some additional revenue. Most recently, the Finance Committee is recommending cuts across the county's elected offices — like the sheriff's and state's attorney's offices — and departments, based on what each of those entities spent in 2024. This is meant to help the county close its budget deficit for the new fiscal year, which begins on Dec. 1. The county is also set to consider revenue-related measures in the coming months, among them a property tax levy increase and the



The Kane County Board Finance Committee has begun to consider ways to cut spending and perhaps find some additional revenue. R. CHRISTIAN SMITH/BEACON-NEWS

reallocation of certain funds, to help balance the budget. The Kane County Board has long been facing an impending county budget shortfall. Last year, the county used roughly \$27 million in general fund reserves to balance the budget, according to past reporting, a practice that has

been going on since 2023. Now, the county is on pace to dip below the required 90-day reserves by 2027 if revenue and spending remains level, county officials have said. Given the impending shortfall, the county has been grappling with how to close the gap without relying on reserves. One solution was an additional revenue stream, most notably a proposed 0.75% sales tax that voters overwhelmingly shot down in the April 1 election. Since the failure of the referendum question, the county board has been discussing how to cut costs — and potentially bring in some more revenue to the county's general fund. To handle its budget woes, the county put together a working

group, which included board members Bill Lenert and Vern Tepe, Finance Director Kathleen Hopkinson, Executive Director of Information Technologies and Buildings Management Roger Fahnestock and Executive Director of Human Resources Jamie Lobrillo. The group presented its cost-cutting and revenue-finding suggestions at a Kane County Board Finance Committee meeting on July 23. Finance Director Kathleen Hopkinson said that the county's 90-day reserves, assuming a \$140 million budget, amount to \$35 million. If the county puts together a budget for 2026 using a similar amount in fund balances as it did last year, she said, the county would be below its 90-day reserves and will have started digging into

its general fund special reserves balance. The working group's findings suggest that — without some potential reallocation of revenue the county board is considering — the county is anticipating revenue of about \$112 million. And, according to its presentation, the preliminary budgets submitted by the county's elected offices and departments sit at roughly \$140 million, far outpacing expected revenue.

Cutting costs

To begin to close the gap, the working group's proposal is to recommend that all of the county's offices and departments reduce their budgets to what was spent in 2024.

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City welcomes a delegation from Mexico on Monday

Beacon-News

The city of Aurora and Mayor John Laesch are set to host on Monday a delegation from Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico that includes Morelia Mayor Alfonso Martinez Alcazar. Aurora city officials said in a news release Friday that the meeting set for 4 p.m. is planned to strengthen cultural ties, open lines of communication and spark discussions on how to build a stronger relationship between Aurora and Morelia. Leaders of both cities are expected to promote future collaboration and support a shared vision of greater connection, according to the city news release. The meeting will be an opportunity for Aurora to “expand its international footprint, participate in a valuable exchange of ideas, and increase the opportunity for collaboration between Morelia and Aurora in the future,” Laesch said in the news release. Morelia is the Mexican state of Michoacan's capital and most populous city, with over 740,000 residents according to Mexico's 2020 census, Aurora's news release said. Plus, Morelia is also known for being a UNESCO World Heritage Site with its well-preserved historical buildings and layout of its historic center, Aurora officials said in the news release. The meeting, which was planned in partnership with El Club Morelia de Illinois, is set to take place at Aurora City Hall at 44 E. Downer Place. The event will be open to the public, and Aurora officials are encouraging residents who have ties to Michoacan to attend.

Input sought on how auto insurance rates are set

By Jeremy Gorner
Chicago Tribune

Just weeks after Gov. JB Pritzker called for action following State Farm's 27.2% rate hike for homeowners insurance, some state lawmakers and officials said they are renewing efforts to address the steady rise in auto insurance rates. Curbing the cost of auto insurance has been the subject of several legislative proposals in the last couple of years, but those measures have yet to go anywhere. The Illinois secretary of state's office, which has unsuccessfully promoted a measure that would eliminate factors such as credit scores and advanced age from being used as metrics to set car insurance rates, is set to launch a campaign to highlight why it thinks employing those factors is unfair to consumers.

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People begin to enter North Aurora Days along the path at North Aurora's Riverfront Park on Friday, the opening day of this year's two-day festival. DAVID SHAROS/PHOTOS FOR BEACON-NEWS

NORTH AURORA DAYS

Riverfront Park festival's music, kids activities bring good times

By David Sharos
Chicago Tribune

North Aurora's Riverfront Park had a noticeable buzz over the weekend as the village offered its annual North Aurora Days celebration. An annual event dating back to 1990, the festival has continued to offer music, food and entertainment as well as community interaction, including a village-wide garage sale, activities at the local library and more. The two-day event kicked off formally at 5 p.m. Friday with food and beer tents, face painting and balloon art, inflatables for kids to play on, a petting zoo and live music. Saturday offered a fishing derby at Willow Lake Park and a softball tournament at Fearn Park, followed by a Touch-A-Truck opportunity and plenty of food and entertainment. North Aurora community relations coordinator Natalie Stevens said the event has been held the last four years at Riverfront Park along the Fox River after formerly being held at Clock Tower Plaza at 19 S. Randall Road. “We’ve had a two-day event for years. We see this as a way for the community to come out and have a good time,” Stevens said Friday before the opening of the event. “North Aurora Days is our largest festival and we pull out all the stops. The biggest thing about



Wilson Morales, right, and his wife, Lisa, of Montgomery, stand outside an inflatable barrier as their grandson Tristen, 7, rides a mechanical bull.

“I’m looking forward to listening to some music and taking in the air and partake in all the fun activities they have for the kids. It’s beautiful here by the river.”
— Lisa Morales

our event that’s unique is everything here is free for everyone to check out except obviously the food and drinks. “We have everything from a mechanical bull to a petting zoo and we partnered with the

library to do an art program for a community puzzle which subscribes to our idea of community and also their idea of their program of ‘Color Our World’ so it’s fitting to have a colorful puzzle that’s being made,” she

said. “We have fireworks Saturday night and it’s going to be a great event.” An ice cream eating contest was added this year on Saturday, thanks to a sponsorship from Oberweis Dairy. Richard Newell said he has lived in North Aurora for 31 years and has attended many local festivals in town. “People keep coming back because of the sense of community and being united as one and the common cause which is to have a good time and enjoy the outdoors and music and some interesting food and just community,” Newell said Friday night. “After so many times here, my feeling is North Aurora is a vibrant, growing community and there’s a lot of life and enthusiasm and diversity.” Guests arrived early Friday night to find a place to listen to the music, grab something to eat or avoid long lines for attractions for the kids. Stacey Torres of North Aurora brought her niece to the event on Friday. “To me, this is family-friendly and they (families) get to have a lot of fun. We always have a good time here,” Torres said. “We’re going to do the bounce castle, face painting and then funnel cakes. I think we’ll be back tomorrow

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