

The background features a large white circle in the center, partially overlapping a light blue area on the left and a light pink area on the right. A dark blue shape is at the bottom, also overlapping the white circle. The text is centered within the white circle.

# **2026 BUDGET PROCESS**

# AGENDA

What is the Dane County Budget

Engagement in the Budget Process

What Factors May Influence 2026 Budget Process

Questions



# WHAT IS THE COUNTY BUDGET?

**The Dane County Budget, as defined by County Ordinance Chapter 29 is the County's financial plan for the calendar year. Ultimately, the budget as approved by the County Board determines the tax level for the next fiscal year.**

**Changes to the budget once passed require reopening the entire budget upon the approval of the county board.**



# 2026 BUDGET TIMELINE:

5

## MARCH – APRIL 2025

Every year for at least the last 13, the budget instruction from the County Executive had been to present a budget showing no levy increase. It is unknown until early May what the instructions will be for the 2026 process. Once these instructions are given, it becomes a closed internal process.

The internal Human Services department budget is a closed process until the Department Head releases it to the public on or about August 30<sup>th</sup>. It cannot be discussed outside of the department by staff with anyone during this time.

What is being proposed, what remains in or out, what has been requested can not be discussed. After soliciting needs from the public, line staff, and others, no one will know exactly what has been included until the Department releases the budget.

# 2026 BUDGET TIMELINE:

6

## MARCH – APRIL 2025

- Units review current budget utilization, existing budget lines and staffing to determine changes among these lines to be requested by unit Managers in unit budget.
- Any request for new positions, new initiatives of any kind, or an increase in any budget line requires a budget paper, not to exceed 2 pages as decision items for the Department Head.
  - Budget paper should include what has been done outside of hiring, or an increase, to mitigate the need for additional staff or resources and for how long, specific data to demonstrate need, e.g., waitlists, unable to meet court mandates, what is precipitating the need, how positions or new initiatives or increases will be paid (moving existing money in other lines). Anything requesting levy would need be approved by Department Head as a recommendation for the County Executive Budget, not the Department Budget.
  - Whatever is put forward must align with Department priorities.
  - COLA requests cannot be made by Departments, they are the sole decision of the County Executive and County Board.

# MAY 2025

May 1: Budget Papers Due to Division Administrator

May 15: Unit Budget Templates due to Division Administrator.

May 30: Division Administrator Budget Briefing Paper completed for Department Head Briefing in Early June.



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# JUNE

Division Administrator meets as scheduled for Division Budget Briefing with Department Director/FMS about what moves forward in the Department budget, as decided by Department head and which requests for County Exec of issues needing levy funding move forward.

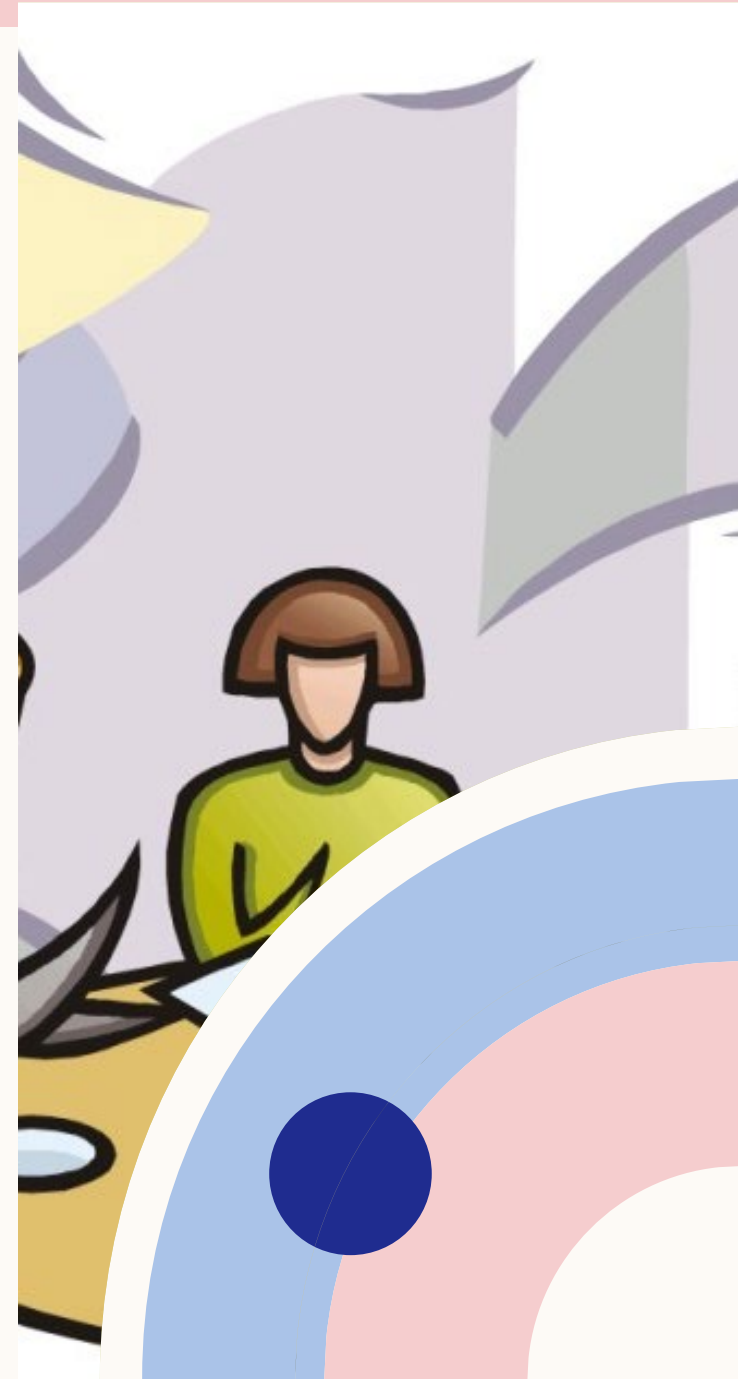
This occurred in mid-June last year. Any unresolved issues from this meeting must be resolved by early July.

# JULY/AUG 2025

Department Head/FMS prepare budget for submission to County Board on 8/30.

This involves several briefings/meetings with Department of Administration, Comptroller, and others.

Managers are often asked to review draft budgets to their areas for errors/personnel in right budgets etc.





# SEPTEMBER

Department Budget Hearing: September 2025. Date to be determined. Unknown if Hybrid. DHS will have it's own night and it will be held at Alliant Energy Center.

County Executive Schedules listening sessions for residents. Dates not known at this time.

# OCT/NOV 2025

October 1, 2025 County Executive Releases Budget/Budget Summary of what's in, what they have added, and what's out.

Health & Human Needs Committee has at least 2 budget hearings regarding Human Services Budget

Personnel & Finance have at least one budget hearing.

November – County Board passes budget, usually by Thanksgiving.



# ENGAGEMENT IN BUDGET PROCESS

- Craft and submit what is needed by writing a compelling, thoughtful, data-driven case for support that is succinct.
- Bring forward the needs you see early in the process.

# FACTORS INFLUENCING 2026

- New Human Services Department Head
- New County Executive
- Federal Funding Levels
- Local Tax Revenue Projections





**QUESTIONS?**