

BUDGET MESSAGE

Fiscal Year 1999-2000 and FY 2000-01

As I submit my first multi-year budget, I am very proud and enthusiastic about the opportunities that lie ahead and feel that we are well positioned to have a real and lasting impact on our community.

This budget captures the message I have heard from the people of Orange County and meets the promises I have made to them.

You have told me:

“Give us a government that understands its role. That taxes fairly, runs efficiently and returns a good value for what we pay. Take care of the basics first, and help us maintain our quality of life.”

This budget cuts tax rates, and reduces government spending while it also reinvests in our future by focusing on public safety and building our infrastructure.

Neighborhoods will be cleaned up and zoning complaints followed up more quickly.

After school programs will triple in number.

\$10 million dollars in environmental land will be purchased and 10 new parks will be built.

Through this budget we are building a foundation that will prepare us to meet the challenges of the next century.

FISCAL HEALTH

Our local economy and the overall fiscal health of the county is extremely strong. Unemployment is at record lows and property values are on the rise and are estimated to grow countywide by 6.9% this year. The outlook for the county's other major revenue sources is also encouraging. The property value growth in Unincorporated Orange County is estimated at 7.8% for FY 99-00 and we are experiencing

growth in both sales tax and the public service tax.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

It is extremely important, however, that we don't develop an appetite for growth during these good times that cannot be sustained during leaner times. It is for this reason that all departments were asked to take a hard look at their proposed budgets and reduce operating expenses by 3% for the first year and restrict growth to no more than 3.5% for the second year. In addition, all departments were asked to reduce out of county travel expenses by 10%. Almost all the departments were able to meet these guidelines and come up with innovative and creative ways to improve the level of service while reducing costs.

My countywide reorganization that took place in February 1999 is one example of our commitment to examine and streamline our operations. This change flattened the organization and reduced the number of departments from 10 to 8. These changes not only saved \$1.2 million in executive salaries, but also improved internal communication, management and responsiveness to our citizens.

Another example is the “shared facility” concept for our Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the Utilities Water Division laboratories. While still maintaining autonomy, these entities will utilize the same facility thereby eliminating the need to construct or lease space for a separate EPD facility. The two divisions will also be able to share a Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS). These efforts are reducing duplication and resulting in savings of approximately \$500,000 to the citizens of Orange County.

In our Risk Management Division, we took a hard look at how this operation was funded. The result is that we are implementing the use of a present value method for funding our claim reserves. The present value method is a financially sound and accepted way to fund claim reserves without tying up cash unnecessarily. This move will reduce the self-insurance charges to county departments by approximately \$8.7 million in FY 99-00, which means more services to the citizens of Orange County.

As a result of these and other cost reduction efforts, I am able to present a budget that reduces the countywide millage by .0625 for FY 99-00 and by an additional .0625 for FY 00-01. This will bring the countywide millage rate to 5.2264 and 5.1639, respectively. The savings generated are approximately \$8.8 million over the next two years. These decreases are the first steps toward reaching the \$28 million countywide tax reduction over my term that I promised the taxpayers when I took office.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Office of Public Safety: The top priority of my administration is to have the safest urban county in the United States with an emphasis on reducing drug usage and youth violence. To help accomplish this goal, I have created the Office of Public Safety, which is tasked with ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of public safety services. This office works directly with the Sheriff's Office, Corrections, Fire Rescue, courts and law enforcement agencies to provide strategic direction to improve the safety in our community. In addition, the Office of Public Safety is working on a comprehensive anti-drug strategy. I am alarmed at the number of heroin deaths that occur right here in Central Florida. This is simply unacceptable. If we are going to have a quality community, we must step up to the plate and find solutions to this tough problem.

Sheriff's Office: The war on crime has to be a multi-faceted approach. When I took office, I promised to help put more deputies on the streets. I am very pleased that since December 1998, the Board of County Commissioners has approved 100 new deputy positions. Nineteen of these new positions are being devoted directly to our public school system to help ensure our children have a safe environment to learn. We are very pleased that we were able to obtain a federal grant to pay for most of the costs associated with these new deputies for a three-year period. We have developed a long-range financial plan so that we will be prepared to fund these deputies at the local level when the grant expires.

Corrections: The Corrections Department has experienced unprecedented growth in its inmate population. After 7 years of small percentage increases in the population, jail administrators are having to accommodate an increase

expected to reach 23% (in one year) by the end of FY 98-99. To illustrate, in FY 97-98 our average daily population was approximately 3,400 compared to today's which is in excess of 4,200 and is projected to grow to more than 4,700 in FY 99-00. Our current facilities are only designed to hold 3,310 inmates. In order to deal with this rapidly expanding population in the short-term, the department is proposing to expand the number of jail beds in existing facilities on a temporary basis, leasing additional bed space from other jurisdictions, and plans are under review to convert on-site warehouse space into an inmate housing facility. Additional staff have been proposed in this multi-year budget to manage the additional beds and new facility.

In the long-term, plans are being finalized to construct a new central intake and housing facility. This facility will be used as an entry point for arrestees and will be able to house up to 1,600 inmates. Current construction estimates for this facility range as high as \$120 million. The new facility will also create demands on our operating budget when it opens. Current estimates project that operational and maintenance costs could run as high as \$33 million annually. We are still in the process of evaluating options to reduce these costs while meeting the long-term demands of the projected inmate population.

Code Enforcement: The aesthetics of our community has an important role in deterring crime. The "broken window syndrome" is well documented. Neighborhoods that are not well groomed have a higher incidence of crime. To ensure we maintain the beauty of our community, we will be pursuing a vigorous, holistic expansion of our code enforcement program during the next fiscal year. In order to place a concentrated emphasis on effective code enforcement and to increase operational efficiencies, a new Code Enforcement Division is being created. Staff involved in code enforcement functions and activities currently provided in Zoning and Environmental Protection are being reassigned to this new autonomous division. Furthermore, additional staff and fiscal resources are being allocated in the budget to significantly increase the total overall level of code enforcement activities. These additional resources will be used in coordination and cooperation with other agencies, organizations, divisions and the

citizens of Orange County to institute a holistic, community based approach to code enforcement.

Through the use of new communication technologies, a modern complaint tracking system is being developed and more aggressive enforcement policies, practices and procedures are being implemented. This new division will significantly increase the number of code enforcement inspections, reduce the length of time it takes to bring violations into compliance, and visibly improve the physical appearance and quality of life in our neighborhoods. These improvements will reduce crime, protect and increase property values and encourage new growth and development in our established older neighborhoods.

Fire Rescue Department: The Fire Rescue Department is continuing to enhance its services to the community by partnering with cities to provide the most effective and cost efficient fire and emergency protection services. To compliment this initiative the Fire Department is implementing a computer aided dispatch system that provides faster and better information to firefighters and medical personnel regarding incidents and it also provides the ability to store the records for future reference. We are planning on building three new stations and acquiring land for three future stations over the next two years to provide greater coverage to areas experiencing rapid growth. Two of the new stations will be located in the Ocoee area and one is located on International Drive. Land is being acquired in East and West Orange County to meet future growth. **I am also very pleased that the Fire Department is reducing their millage by .0625.** Part of this savings will be used to help pay for the enhanced code enforcement efforts by increasing the unincorporated area millage (which supports code enforcement and the Sheriff's Office) by .05. The overall result to Unincorporated Orange County is a net reduction of .0125 in these two millage rates.

Health and Family Services: A subject related to safety that is equally important is the concern for the welfare of our youth in the community. Included in the multi-year budget are innovative programs designed to give our children opportunities to succeed. For example, I have asked the Health and Family Services Department to include funding to expand the

After-School program and summer programs for our children. These programs are proven to be an alternative that will deter delinquent behavior and assist with scholastic achievement. In today's families, economic pressures often result in latchkey kids being left to manage their own time at an age where peer pressure can force the wrong decisions. Partnerships with the Orange County School Board, the various municipalities, the family, faith community, and not-for-profit providers are critical to developing our children for the future.

In addition, to help fight crime among youth, the Human Services Division is focusing on early intervention services directed towards juvenile offenders. One such program is the Juvenile Alternative Sanction Program, which provides the State Attorney an option not to file on certain youth, mostly first time non-violent offenders. This allows us the opportunity to work with the juveniles by providing case management, treatment referrals, community service and restitution to victims. The juveniles have to follow through with the program or the case is referred back to the State Attorney. This program has done extremely well and statistics show that 70% of these youths do not re-offend.

ENVIRONMENT

It is extremely important that we take a sensible approach to managing the growth in our community. I am committed to preserving our natural environment and have made it a priority in the budget to acquire at least \$10 million in environmental sensitive lands over the next four years. County staff will be exploring grant and partnering opportunities that will allow for a wide variety of educational and recreational activities on lands that are newly acquired. We are also planning to increase access and improve maintenance on those lands already owned by the County. We will demonstrate that nature, education and recreation can co-exist, provided care and thought is given throughout the planning and design process. This new direction falls directly in line with Governor Bush's Florida Forever Program, a successor to the P2000 program which recognizes the need of entertaining compatible uses of recreation while still affording protection to the wildlife and natural resources on these same lands.

PARKS

Another priority in the budget is expanding, enhancing and improving our county parks. The Parks and Recreation Division will be expanding grounds and facilities with baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts and covered pavilions that will be geographically and strategically located throughout Orange County. I have dedicated over \$21 million for the new construction and improvements of our parks. In addition, we are currently in the process of finalizing a comprehensive study of our Parks Division to determine how we can more effectively and efficiently build and maintain parks in our community.

TRANSPORTATION

The tremendous growth in our population and tourism has created a strain on our highways and roads. One example is the road system in the International Drive area, which serves our Convention Center. This area is in desperate need of some improvements. There are many other examples. As you may be aware, staff is developing a comprehensive multi-modal transportation plan for all of Orange County to help relieve some our traffic problems. We are currently planning to spend approximately \$620 million dollars on transportation programs over the next 10 years which will provide 300 lane miles of road improvements, 100 intersection improvements, and 250 miles of road paving. But this only touches the surface of the transportation needs this county faces, so we must actively pursue public and private partnerships to leverage our resources for future projects and improvements.

We must also look for creative and innovative solutions to our problems. A wonderful example is the Alternative Surface Program. This program offers an environmentally sensitive and more efficient approach to paving unpaved roads within Unincorporated Orange County. The goal of the program is to pave all county maintained unpaved roads in a 4-year period. In FY 99-00, the Public Works Department plans to complete 285 projects consisting of 56 miles of road at an estimated cost of \$2.7 million or approximately \$48,200 per mile. In FY 00-01 the plans are to complete another 285 projects consisting of 56 miles of road at an estimated cost of \$3 million or approximately \$53,600 per mile.

STORMWATER

Stormwater is an important issue facing our county that is often overlooked during dry times. This multi-year budget demonstrates a proactive approach to stormwater issues by allocating approximately \$5.4 million and \$6.1 million in stormwater projects for FY 99-00 and FY 00-01, respectively. This only begins to address the needs that our community has, but it demonstrates the commitment to deal with this issue before it becomes a problem. We are also actively looking for partners such as the Water Management Districts and the Federal Government to help leverage our resources.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As Orange County continues to grow, we must manage this growth responsibly by creating an environment that promotes high wage jobs. Therefore, we are committed to a vibrant and diversified economy that can compete aggressively in the global marketplace, provide good jobs for our citizens, and preserve our natural resources and amenities. The strategy is to support organizations, programs, and projects that result in high-value jobs, improvements in community infrastructure, and the growth in the tax base necessary to meet the needs of our community. Toward this goal, we have put a greater emphasis on economic development by creating the Office of Economic and International Trade.

OTHER INITIATIVES

One item that is not included in this multi-year budget proposal is funding for community challenge funds or district discretionary funds. While I am aware that these programs in the past have been used for some worthwhile initiatives, I believe it is important that all funding requests be considered and prioritized as part of the budget process. Toward this end, staff have met with each District Commissioner to obtain a listing of budget priorities. These priorities were distributed to all county departments and to the extent possible included in the budget.

Also, for the first time, county departments are paying for central services provided by the general fund. This change will enable us to capture the true cost of operations and to eventually benchmark ourselves against other governments and the private sector. We will

continue to evaluate our operations to ensure that we are operating in the most effective and efficient manner possible in delivering services to this community.

Funding is included in this multi-year budget for the build-out of several floors in the County Courthouse. As the county continues to grow, we are faced with increasing demands for facility space. Rather than lease or buy additional space, I have instructed staff to ensure that we are effectively utilizing our current space.

There are many other initiatives that are being funded that contribute to the overall success of the county and provide enjoyment for the community.

One such project is the Regional History Center, which is well on its way to be completed by the Fall of 2000. The History Center is designed to give us a historic look at ourselves, how we got here and how we function as a community. The History Center has worked diligently over the past year to prepare for the transition, with a menu of over 20 new program offerings, including American Girls Programs, Florida Boys Programs, and other opportunities to explore the past.

Internally we are updating our information technology systems to not only meet the needs for the year 2000, but to further advance our ability to serve citizens. The County's Information Systems and Services Division has been reorganized to deal with constant change in information technology. We will continue to explore ways to integrate technology in our operations to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the services we provide. One such recent proposal is the redefinition, refocusing and reengineering of the geographic information system (GIS) to further serve the diverse organizational needs of the County. Citizens are demanding more access to County data such as land use, roads, and utilities. We are responding by upgrading our current system to provide a user friendly and easy accessible system available 24 hours a day through the World Wide Web.

CONCLUSION

As we prepare to enter a new millennium, we are charting a course that has its foundation rooted in strong fiscal management and a commitment to invest in our community through increased public safety, improved infrastructure, and by providing more parks and green spaces throughout the county. With the investments we are making today, we will be paving the way for future generations, our children, to have a quality of life that is second to none.

Make no mistake, however, we have many challenges that lie ahead. In this budget message I have outlined some of them including relieving traffic congestion on our roads, meeting the community's stormwater needs, dealing with the growing population at our jail and effectively dealing with other public safety issues, especially the drug problem. I believe it is critical that we work together with citizens, neighboring counties, municipalities, the State and Federal Government, the business community and all other key stakeholders to leverage our efforts and resources. Together we can meet these challenges and together we will!

Sincerely,

Mel Martinez
Orange County Chairman