



Budgeting in Challenging Times

Much of the work the County performs is mandated by state or federal law

e.g. administration of SNAP, Medical Assistance (Medicaid), and other programs, provision of law enforcement, veterans' services, assessment of property values, etc.

Much of the work that is not mandated is done to enhance and protect the community or reduce the cost associated with mandated work

e.g. operation and maintenance of parks, economic development, building inspections, preventative services, etc.

Counties have limited options to raise revenue outside of the property tax levy and Meeker County has used many of its budgetary tools over the years to minimize levy adjustments. Non-levy revenue sources, largely coming from the State and Federal governments, have been, on average, flat or declining and have not kept up with expenses, leaving the County with few tools to address new costs or revenue cuts. Through the development of the budget, the County Board made several very difficult decisions, including the reduction of contributions to several of its long-term partners. Additionally, several projects and priorities were removed from the budget in order to minimize the levy and prepare for challenges in the coming years.

State and Federal changes are negatively affecting our property tax levy

- Recent legislative changes have added new unfunded mandates and reduced funding for existing mandates, changes that the County cannot absorb without increasing the property tax levy
- Implementation of these new laws have different timelines, adding a lasting impact to the County's budget over the next three years

New laws with unfunded mandates or cost shifts and their implementation dates

⇒ Paid Family Medical Leave – Jan. 1, 2026 (State of MN)

⇒ SNAP administrative cost share reduction – Oct. 1, 2026 (Federal)

⇒ Changes to Medicaid administrative requirements – Jan. 1, 2027 (Federal)

⇒ Changes to child protection processes – Jan. 1, 2027 (State of MN)

⇒ SNAP benefit cost shift – Oct. 1, 2027 (Federal)

New Costs or Revenue Cuts

2026: \$160,000

2027: \$1.1 million

2028: \$275,000

Meeker County strives to provide excellent public services, which requires skilled and talented individuals. Personnel costs make up 57% of the County's operating budget and are the largest driver of structural costs. The County desires to remain a competitive employer in order to retain and attract talented individuals to be able to meet the levels of service expected by the community.

The County is working to proactively address the anticipated revenue shortfall. This problem was not created by Meeker County, but we are committed to responding in a way that continues to ensure high quality public services while minimizing adjustments to the levy by:

- 1) Evaluating existing programs, services, and partnerships
- 2) Seeking opportunities to fully recoup costs
- 3) Embracing opportunities for efficiency to minimize the impact of new mandates
- 4) Pursuing legislative advocacy to ensure thoughtful implementation of new policies

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the County Administrator's Office at 320-693-5200.