Balanced Budget Presented to County Council Includes Merit Raises

ST. LOUIS COUNTY (October 2, 2020) County Executive Dr. Sam Page on Friday submitted his recommended 2021 budget to the County Council.

It includes $4.3 million to resume an annual merit pay program for employees. Many of St. Louis County’s non-public safety employees have gone without a pay increase in eight of the last 12 years, receiving only small cost of living adjustments in the other four years.

The budget also reflects an increase of $877,000 to implement the second of a three-year program to establish a $15 per hour minimum wage in County government. Also included in the budget is $5.7 million in additional Public Safety Sales Tax (Prop P) funds to pay for Police pay increases per commitments made in collective bargaining agreements and an additional $273,350 for the ShotSpotters contract.

“Fair compensation for our employees is essential to retaining and recruiting top workers for St. Louis County,” said Dr. Page. “I am proud of our workforce and how our employees have risen to the challenges this pandemic has brought. Their dedication has allowed us to continue providing the services our residents depend on. I also appreciate the work of our department heads who made cuts to their departments to help offset the loss of revenue caused by this pandemic.”

The proposed annual budget for the fiscal year beginning January 1 totals $848,536,417 and will allow the County to maintain existing programs, service levels and property tax rates. Overall, it represents a 2 percent reduction from the 2020 budget. The estimates included in the recommended budget assume that most revenue sources will experience a partial recovery in 2021, although it will take several years to reach pre-pandemic levels.

“The budget I proposed is a starting point for what must be a much larger conversation about the County’s future,” said County Executive Page in a letter to council members. “I’m proud of St.
Louis County and the quality of life it offers for our residents and businesses. Continuing to provide our current level of service and meet our goals to do even better will be difficult within our current revenue parameters. There are few places left to cut that will not require layoffs and service cuts. We are running out of time to make the tough decisions that will define our future.”