



JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION

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PRESIDENT

Pasha Majdi

March 11, 2025

COMMISSIONER

Jack Hefestay

Pasha Majdi, president

Mike Mood, vice president

COMMISSIONER

Cara Keys

Jack Hefestay, commissioner

Cara Keys, commissioner

COMMISSIONER

Mike Mood

Steve Stolipher, commissioner

124 E. Washington Street

Charles Town, WV 25414

COMMISSIONER

Steve Stolipher

Dear Commissioners:

We are pleased to present the **Fiscal Year 2026 Budget for Jefferson County**. This year's budget encapsulates our collective resolve, embodying the spirit of resilience that defines our community. The past year was marked by unprecedented challenges, yet, through it all, Jefferson County has not only prevailed but also thrived.

A year ago, as we embarked on the budget process, we faced significant confusion. Discrepancies between the Commission's approved budget, State documents, and our own accounting system presented substantial hurdles. Furthermore, during this critical period, we operated with only an interim county administrator—the fourth in a single year—and without a chief financial officer. Despite these obstacles, and the extraordinary circumstances of two commissioners being arrested and later removed, our determination never wavered. The budget director's exceptional efforts were instrumental in navigating these turbulent times, enabling us to pass a balanced budget.

In the wake of these challenges, Jefferson County has demonstrated unwavering resilience and a capacity to innovate and adapt. Key successes include:

- Signing a purchase and sale agreement that paves the way for what we anticipate will be the future home of Commission operations;
- Establishing our first-ever Office of Human Resources to support approximately 300 employees;
- Initiating a career fire department;
- Strategically designating the future location of the Public Safety Center—co-locating the Jefferson County Sheriff Office with Emergency Services Agency;
- Transitioning to Next Gen 911 Cloud operations;
- Creating our first Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district;
- Reassessing impact fees;
- Collaborating with Jefferson County Schools to develop a high school program to certify graduating seniors in 911 call-taking protocols; and
- Approving strategic priorities at the local, state, and federal levels.

FY 26 should continue building on these successes. We are first presenting you with a "flat" budget. After reviewing a flat budget, we suggest that you consider how to use the additional projected FY26 revenues to move the County forward. Our recommendations are:

COLA: To remain competitive within the region, it is imperative that salaries increase. The Commission continually loses employees to municipalities and local governments in the region because our salaries are becoming less competitive. *(Estimated cost: \$500,000)*

Merit: There is a saying that thoroughbreds run with thoroughbreds. In order to foster the most impactful staff, the Commission approved a merit rubric in 2024 to quantify employee growth. Budgeting pay for merit encourages those growing in the county to stay. *(Estimated cost: \$650,000)*

IT Transition to Cloud Computing: Moving from "on-prem" to cloud computing will enhance security, allow the Commission to be nimble as changes occur, and drastically improve professionalism and the impact the IT staff can make—akin to moving from a rotary phone to a cell phone. *(Estimated cost: \$175,000)*

Moving forward, the Commission should prioritize three missions: professionalism, constituent relations, and engagement—encouraging pride in oneself, the Commission, and Jefferson County.

It is with great enthusiasm that we submit this budget. Our staff has diligently collaborated with each department and elected office to ensure that the proposed budget is flat. While we have been adept at reallocating resources to remain within budget, it is clear that reallocation is not a sustainable solution over multiple fiscal years. In future years, the Commission must consider methods to ensure competitive wages as well as fund additions to the workforce, particularly in public safety.

Thank you for your leadership and continued support as we work together to advance the interests of our community.

Sincerely,



Edwina Benites-LM
County Administrator



Roger Goodwin
Deputy County Administrator



Jessica James
Chief Human Resources Officer



David Bound
Chief Financial Officer