

Ramsey County prepares for potential state shutdown

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The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners has authorized County Manager Julie Kleinschmidt, in the event of a state government shutdown on July 1, to pay for services already included in the 2011 Ramsey County budget, based on the estimated revenue that is likely to be received from the state when a state budget is adopted.

The board adopted a resolution at its meeting Tuesday that read in part: "It is not the intent of the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners to assume financial responsibility for the State in the event of a State shutdown."

"We have looked closely at funding of essential services, potential financial exposure for County taxpayers in the event of a shutdown, and how to best ensure that safety net services continue for the people who depend on them," Kleinschmidt said. "At all times, the Board and county management team have been focused on protecting the health, safety and welfare of all Ramsey County residents."

A complicating factor for local governments is the intricately connected nature of local, state and federal funding sources for the delivery of local services. A good example is highway projects, such as the Rice Street/Highway 36 interchange work now under way in Ramsey County. This vitally important project is funded by a mixture of state, federal and county money, with the work performed by private contractors. If the county were to continue the project in contradiction to MnDOT's notice to suspend work, it could jeopardize the county's eligibility for federal and state funds. Unfinished construction projects also create greater congestion, inconvenience and reduced access to property and local businesses, and generally create greater potential for safety issues.

The County does not believe that it is fiscally wise to terminate or reduce services over and above the major disruption in services that the residents will already experience if there is a State shutdown.