FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 12, 2021

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Fitzgerald Proposes 2022 Budget with No Tax Increase

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald today presented his tenth proposed budget to County Council along with the 2022 Comprehensive Fiscal Plan (CFP). The $990.6 million operating budget reflects a 3.2% increase from pre-pandemic budget year 2020, following a year in which the global pandemic impacted county revenues and the overall budget was reduced by nearly 2%. The overall increase brings the county back into line with where it would have been and ensures a return to pre-pandemic workforce levels and operations. The budget also proposes no increase in the property tax millage rate for the 20th time in 21 years.

"These past 18 months have been unprecedented as the pandemic impacted the health of county residents, but also the county’s finances," said Fitzgerald. "We are fortunate that we had a reserve fund at adequate levels to be able to continue operations without a need to reduce our workforce or make other cuts. The loss of revenue to the county was substantial during this time and I am grateful for the efforts of President Biden, and our Congressional delegation including Senator Casey and Congressmen Doyle and Lamb for their support of the American Rescue Plan. The fiscal recovery funds that have allowed the county to replace lost revenues have been integral to allow us to recover financially from the pandemic while also continuing to invest in our community and its residents."

The proposed capital budget totals $182.5 million and includes 73 different infrastructure and capital improvement projects. The budget includes increased funding for road reconstruction and paving, supports the continuation of the rehabilitation of the county’s third “Sister Bridge” – the Roberto Clemente Bridge – and provides continued funding for landslide and lateral support repairs. In recognition of the need for continued sustainable infrastructure, projects such as green parking solutions, the addition of more electric cars to the county fleet, and continued funding for the net-zero parks project are also part of the budget. The capital budget also includes funding for an increased investment in the county’s information technology infrastructure.

The proposed grants and special accounts budget totals $1.7 billion, an increase of $335.7 million or 24%. A significant amount of the budget is due to American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding, but the grants budget also includes funding to address the needs of the county’s most vulnerable populations. Human Services, Health and Kane Community Living Centers have all successfully secured significant grants that will support those in our community most hard hit by the pandemic. The substantial federal funding allowing the county to safely respond to the pandemic’s effects without significant financial burden. Funding is being used to help balance this budget, but also invests in technology, facilities, parks and infrastructure. The county relied heavily upon our partnerships within the community to help curb the challenges brought on by the pandemic and this proposal continues this approach.

"I am grateful to the administrative team, including Chief of Staff Jennifer Liptak, County Manager William D. McKain CPA, Budget Director Mary Soroka, and all of our directors for the work they’ve done over the past year to keep the county open and operating while we have struggled with the
impact of the pandemic on our workforce, our resources, and our finances,” added Fitzgerald. “During my tenure, we have presented responsible budgets that have served our residents well without sacrificing needed investments in infrastructure and parks, our workforce, and our residents.”

Some of the highlights include:

- The county continues to be committed to providing learning opportunities, from cradle to career, for those who call Allegheny County home. The proposed budget commits dedicated resources for the Children Initiatives Department to meet its broad mission. Funding is also being committed to the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) for its Educational Foundation scholarship program which addresses the gaps in need for students who need assistance for that final portion of tuition, books, or other costs.

- The need for advanced technology has been underscored by the pandemic, with greater demand. The budget focuses heavily upon supporting technology that maximizes the expertise of employees and existing resources. Emergency Services, Information Technology and Health are just a few examples of departments which plan to invest in critical infrastructure that will enable better data gathering, communication and remote access to services for residents.

- Recognizing the resources of the Health Department through a pandemic, the 2022 budget includes funding to support the transformation of the department’s public health laboratory into a regional public health laboratory center which can provide services throughout western Pennsylvania. The transformed facility would meet present and future needs of the region while also committing to public health laboratory research and teaching. The envisioned center would support all bureaus of the Health Department as well as other public health agencies, law enforcement and other partners.

County Council will hold budget hearings on the proposed capital and operating budgets in the coming weeks. The county’s Home Rule Charter requires that Council must adopt balanced annual operating and capital budgets 25 days before the end of the fiscal year.

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