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Morton County Commission Approves Preliminary 2026 Budget Featuring \$3.2 Million Reduction in Property Tax Levy

Mandan, ND — The Morton County Commission has approved its preliminary 2026 budget, introducing a substantial reduction in the county’s property tax levy—down by \$3.2 million from the 2025 budget. This marks the county’s most significant levy cut in recent years and reflects a strategic shift in its funding model following the successful adoption of a countywide sales tax.

“This budget reflects not just conservative management—it’s forward-looking,” said Nathan Boehm, Chair of the Morton County Commission. “We’re meeting increased service demands without passing additional burden onto property taxpayers, and that’s thanks to a broader, more balanced revenue structure.”

Key Budget Highlights:

- **\$3.2 Million Decrease in Property Tax Levy**
The preliminary budget reduces property tax dependency while sustaining service levels across public safety, infrastructure, and general government operations.
- **Countywide Sales Tax Effective April 1, 2025**
The tax levy reduction is primarily made possible by the **countywide 1% sales tax**, approved by voters through a Home Rule Charter amendment in 2024 and implemented on **April 1, 2025**. This new revenue stream is projected to generate approximately \$4.8 million annually, replacing a significant portion of property tax funding.
- **Introduction of a 3% Property Tax Revenue Cap**
Morton County is now subject to a **3% annual cap on the property tax as levied**, effective for the 2026 budget cycle. The cap, enacted by the North Dakota Legislature, applies to all local governments as a measure to promote fiscal responsibility and to limit the growth of local budgets. Local governments may carry over unused increases for up to five years, providing flexibility for future planning.
- **Important Clarification:**
The 3% cap **does not limit individual property value assessments or the taxes on individual properties**. Instead, it caps the overall growth in property tax levies from all properties combined.
- **Responsible, Long-Term Fiscal Planning**
The Commission’s approach emphasizes long-term sustainability and tax equity, ensuring that the cost of services is shared by residents, visitors, and businesses alike.

This preliminary budget reflects Morton County’s commitment to efficient governance, strategic foresight, and taxpayer accountability. As demand for county services continues to rise, the 2026 budget leverages the newly implemented sales tax to stabilize revenues without resorting to levy increases or service cuts.

Next Steps

A public hearing on the 2026 budget will be held on September 23, 2025. At that time, the Commission will consider public input before adopting the final budget property tax levies. Details will be published at www.mortonnd.org/budget and shared via the County's official channels.

Residents with questions are encouraged to contact the Morton County Auditor's Office at (701) 667-3300.

About the Morton County Sales Tax Ordinance

In April 2024, the Morton County Commission adopted Resolution No. 30-2024-04, amending the Home Rule Charter to authorize a 1% countywide sales tax to support public safety functions. The measure was approved by voters later that year and took effect on April 1, 2025. The tax applies to all taxable sales and purchases within the county and is administered by the North Dakota Office of State Tax Commissioner.

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