



County of Ottawa

12220 Fillmore Street
West Olive, Michigan 49460
miottawa.org

2010 Budget In Brief

Dear Ottawa County Citizens,

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the County of Ottawa. We pride ourselves for contributing to a high quality of life in Ottawa County, as defined by citizens and by the Board of Commissioners. We continue to strive to be an open and transparent government that is easily accessible to all. In an effort to keep citizens informed, the County is issuing the Budget in Brief for 2010. Additional outreach opportunities, like Citizen Budget Meetings, will be available in the spring.

Visit
miottawa.org
to learn more about
Ottawa County

Decades of prudent financial management by the Board of Commissioners, County Administration, and other leaders, as well as the efficient and effective delivery of services by employees throughout the County has left Ottawa County in a very good financial position, especially when compared to other county and local government organizations. But the County now faces a dilemma because certain financial impacts have resulted in a deficit of operating revenues to meet current operating expenditures.

The 2010 budget realized the continuing decline in taxable value from a historical average growth of 6.52% to 1.21% growth in 2009 and projected 3.9% decline for the 2010 budget. The result of the declining taxable value is a reduction in the revenue that supports operations. We anticipate this decline will continue with the 2011 budget, reducing operating revenue to a 2006 level. We anticipate additional reductions in operating expenditures in 2011. Therefore, we are interested in the priorities citizens put on the services the County provides. The Citizen Budget Meetings are one effort to receive that feedback.

Please check miottawa.org for information about the 2010 Citizen Budget Meetings and for the results from the meetings. If you have any questions, please contact June Hagan, Fiscal Services Director, at jhagan@miottawa.org or me at avanderberg@miottawa.org.

Thank you again for taking the time to learn more about Ottawa County. We look forward to sharing the results of our communication efforts with you in the future.

Sincerely,

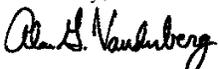

County Administrator

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The Board of Commissioners



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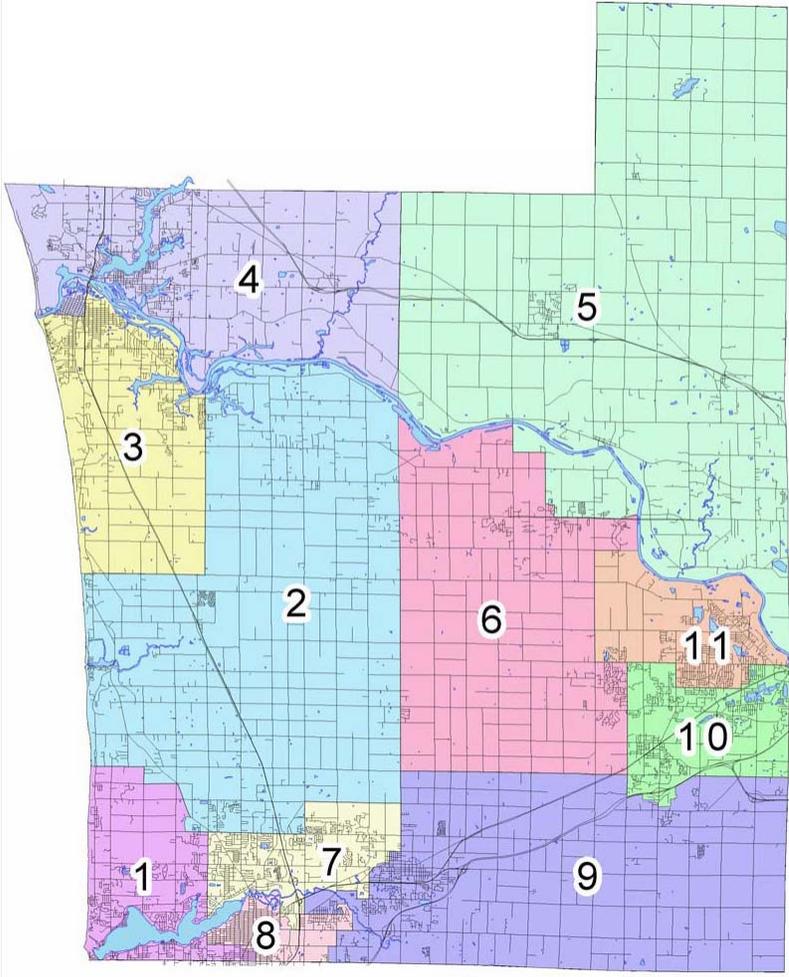
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About Ottawa County

GOVERNANCE

The County's legislative body is an eleven-member Board of Commissioners which is elected from single-member districts, determined by population, on a partisan basis for two-year terms. The Board annually elects from within its ranks a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson by majority vote.

HISTORY

Ottawa County was established in 1837, named for the Ottawa Indians who hunted and fished the area's forests and streams. The County began operation in December of 1837, and the U.S. Census of 1840 listed only 208 people in all of Ottawa County. Ottawa County, encompassing an area of approximately 565 square miles, is located in the southwestern portion of Michigan's lower peninsula, having 30 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline. The County is comprised of six cities, one village, and seventeen townships.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

In 2004 the Board of Commissioners began collecting information needed to develop a strategic plan, including biennial employee (conducted in odd-numbered years) and citizen (conducted in even-numbered years) surveys, a study of mandated services, employee input, program and organizational studies of several departments, a wage and classification study, the United Way Community Needs Assessment, and evaluations of the County's financial tools.

The Board began work on developing the vision, mission, and goals of the strategic plan in 2006. These are the cornerstones of the County's strategic plan and remain unchanged from year to year. The Board meets annually to review the business plan and complete a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). The business plan specifies the objectives and outcomes that the Board and staff focus on achieving annually. The 2010 strategic plan and business plan are available on miottawa.org.

Vision

Ottawa County strives to be the location of choice for living, working, and recreation

Mission

Ottawa County is committed to excellence and the delivery of cost-effective public services

Goals of the Board of Commissioners

1. To maintain and improve the strong financial position of the County
2. To maintain and enhance communication with citizens, employees, and other stakeholders
3. To contribute to a healthy physical, economic, and community environment
4. To continually improve the County's organization and services

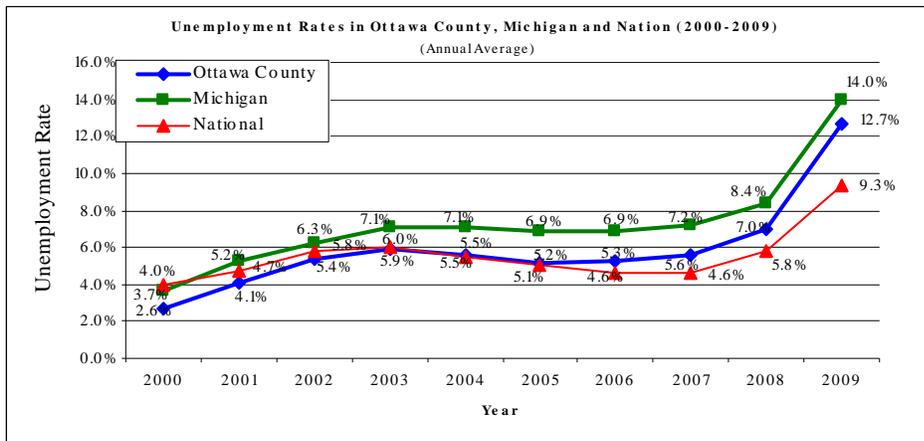
Selected Demographics

POPULATION

Ottawa County has seen rapid growth over the last eleven years, from 229,401 residents in 1998 to 260,364 in 2008. Ottawa County is the eighth-largest County in Michigan and is the third-fastest growing County in the state and the fastest growing County of the ten largest counties in the State.

UNEMPLOYMENT

In the past, Ottawa County's unemployment rate has mirrored the national unemployment rate and been consistently lower than the state's unemployment rate. The graph below looks at the unemployment rates of the County, the state, and the nation for January of each year. The national economic crisis affected Ottawa County, the State of Michigan and the nation equally, with Ottawa County's unemployment rate standing at 12.7% for December 2009.



Source: Michigan Labor Market Information (Department of Labor and Economic Growth)

10 Largest Counties in Michigan (2008)

1. Wayne
2. Oakland
3. Macomb
4. Kent
5. Genesee
6. Washtenaw
7. Ingham
8. Ottawa
9. Kalamazoo
10. Saginaw

10 Fastest Growing Counties in Michigan (2007-2008)

1. Keweenaw
2. Grand Traverse
3. Ottawa
4. Houghton
5. Kalamazoo
6. Emmet
7. Kent
8. Allegan
9. Marquette
10. Macomb

LARGEST EMPLOYERS

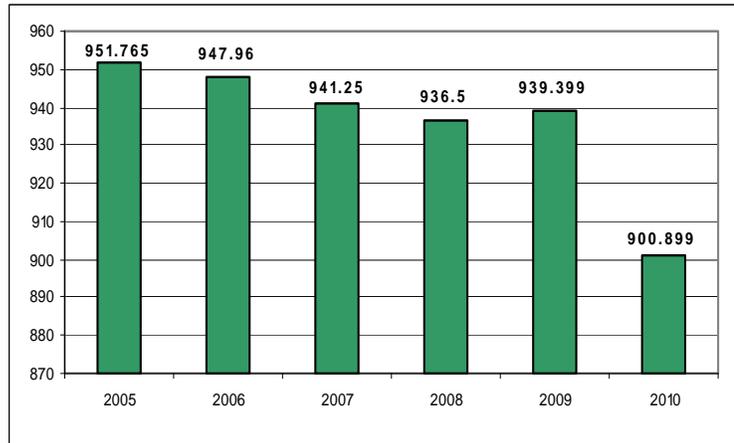
The following are the nine largest employers in Ottawa County as of January 4, 2010. The number of employees includes full-time, part-time, and temporary workers.

Organization	Industry	# of Employees
1. Herman Miller	Office Furniture	3,613
2. Johnson Controls	Automotive Interior Parts	2,493
3. Gentex Corporation	Automotive Mirrors	2,425
4. Grand Valley State University	Higher Education	1,843
5. Holland Hospital	Healthcare	1,780
6. Haworth	Office Furniture	1,637
7. Meijer	Retailer	1,256
8. Magna Optera	Automotive Mirrors/Windows	1,238
9. County of Ottawa	Government	1,166
10. Shape Corporation	Metal Roll Forming	1,040

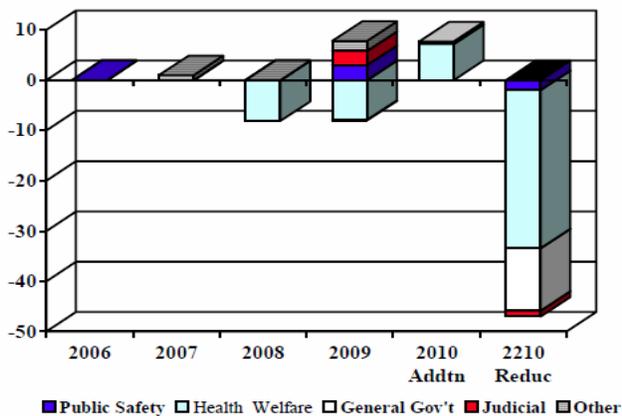
County Employment Information

EMPLOYEES BY YEAR

Ottawa County has worked to reduce our largest expenditure, personnel costs, over the last five years while maintaining a high level of service throughout the County. The chart at the right shows that the County has seen a total reduction in the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) since 2005, when a hiring freeze on new positions that would increase the General Fund cost was implemented, with the exception of critically needed customer service and contractually required positions. As the graph shows, 38.5 FTEs were removed from the budget in 2010.



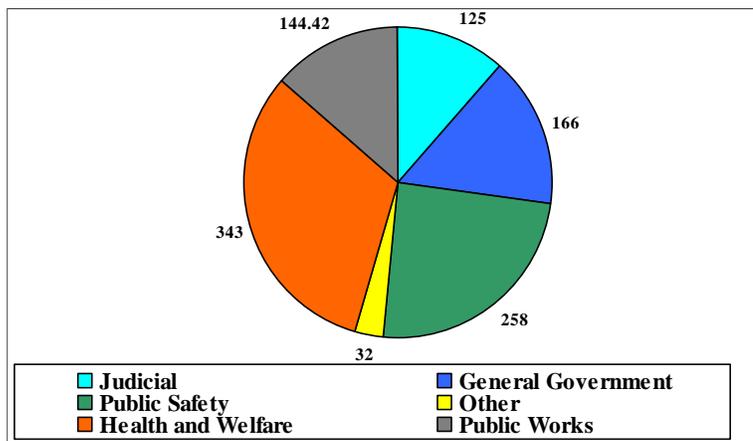
Positions Added by Function 2006-2010



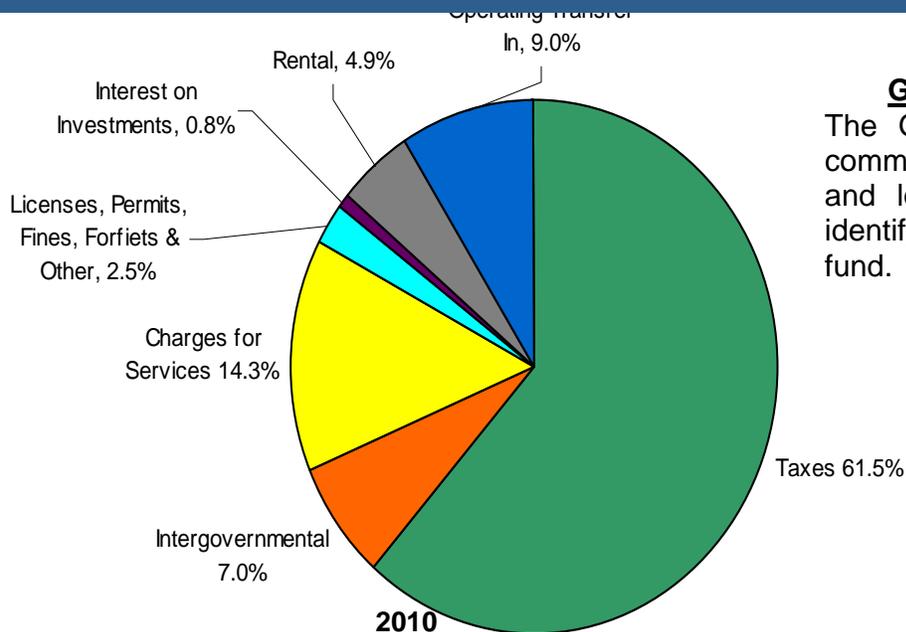
The graph to the left shows this history of positions that have been added or reduced by function. In 2009, the County added 6.3 FTEs due to increased service demands and community policing contractual requirements. New personnel approved with the 2010 budget included 7.7 FTE grant funded positions in connection with federal stimulus funds. The 2010 budget process resulted in a net decrease of 38.5 FTEs among those were 25.15 from a restructuring of Community Mental Health, 6.3 from Public Health, and 5.25 from Facilities and Maintenance as a result of contracting cleaning services.

EMPLOYEES BY FUNCTION

The graph to the right represents the total FTEs by function for 2010. Health and Welfare, which includes Community Mental Health and the Health Department, has the largest number of employees, while Public Safety (Sheriff's Department) is second. General Government includes the Clerk, Treasurer, Register of Deeds and Drain Commissioner (all elected officials), Facilities and Maintenance, and other general administrative/support functions.



2010 General Fund Revenues



GENERAL FUND:
The General Fund is the common term used in state and local governments to identify the chief operating fund.

Source

2010 Adopted Budget

Taxes	\$39,292,953
Intergovernmental	\$4,467,497
Charges for Services	\$9,106,981
Fines & Forfeits	\$979,800
Interest on Investments	\$526,400
Rental Income	\$3,152,369
Licenses & Permits	\$253,525
Other Revenue	\$359,812
Operating Transfers In	\$5,761,213

TOTAL: \$63,900,550

Ottawa County's Bond Ratings

Fitch	AAA
<i>(AAA= very high quality)</i>	
Standard & Poors	AA
<i>(AA= high quality)</i>	
Moody's	Aa1
<i>(Aa= high quality, 1= higher end of Aa category)</i>	

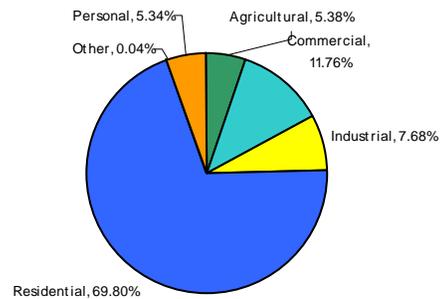
Bond Ratings

A bond rating is an evaluation of credit worthiness and risk potential for future repayment. Three firms in the United States issue this rating: Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poors. Multiple financial and economic factors play into a rating agency's decision, often based on a government's past performance and future projections. These ratings are especially important to Ottawa County because the risk potential often determines the interest rate at which the County can bond; the lower the interest rate, the lower the overall cost of repayment by the County. The County also guarantees the water and sewer bond issues of the municipalities of Ottawa County. This effectively lowers their interest rates, helping to save money for taxpayers throughout the County.

Understanding Property Tax

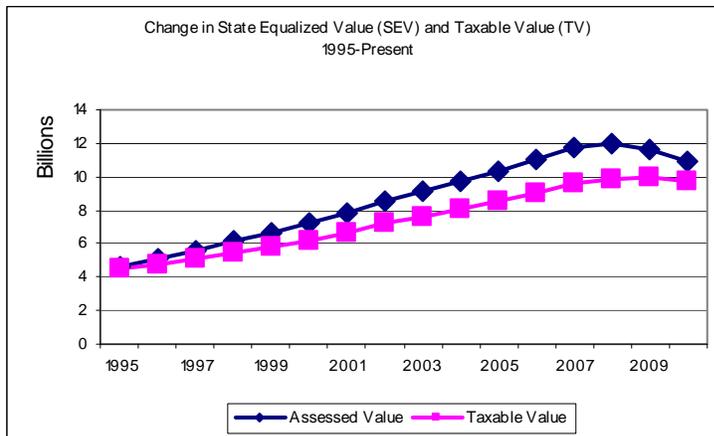
TAX BASE

Ottawa County has four major classes of real property: agricultural, commercial, industrial, and residential. The graph to the right shows that the 2009 residential class is nearly 70% of the County's tax base. This means that when home values fall, the County's property tax revenue also drops.



ASSESSED AND TAXABLE VALUES

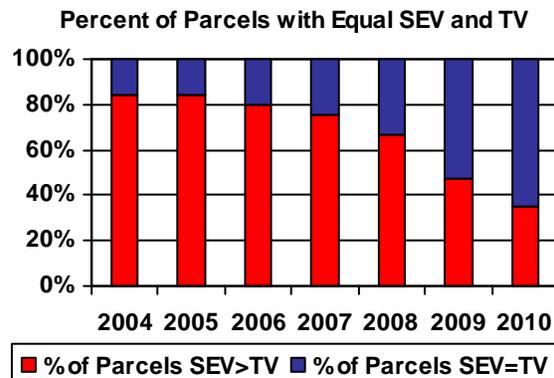
The citizens of Michigan enacted Proposal A in 1994, which changed the method of property tax calculation. Prior to Proposal A, the assessed value of your home was used to determine how much you would pay in taxes. Proposal A created a taxable value for each piece of property which was only allowed to increase annually by the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever was less.



whichever was less. The graph to the left shows that since 1995 Proposal A has resulted in savings to taxpayers, which is evident by the gap between the assessed and taxable value. 2009 is the first time that Ottawa County has seen a significant decrease in the gap between the two values, and the estimated SEV and TV for 2010 show the same trend with an anticipated 3.3% decrease in taxable value. Overall, Ottawa County residents have still had a benefit from Proposal A. Since the implementation, the total savings to taxpayers on only the County levy is over \$73 million.

THE "GAP"

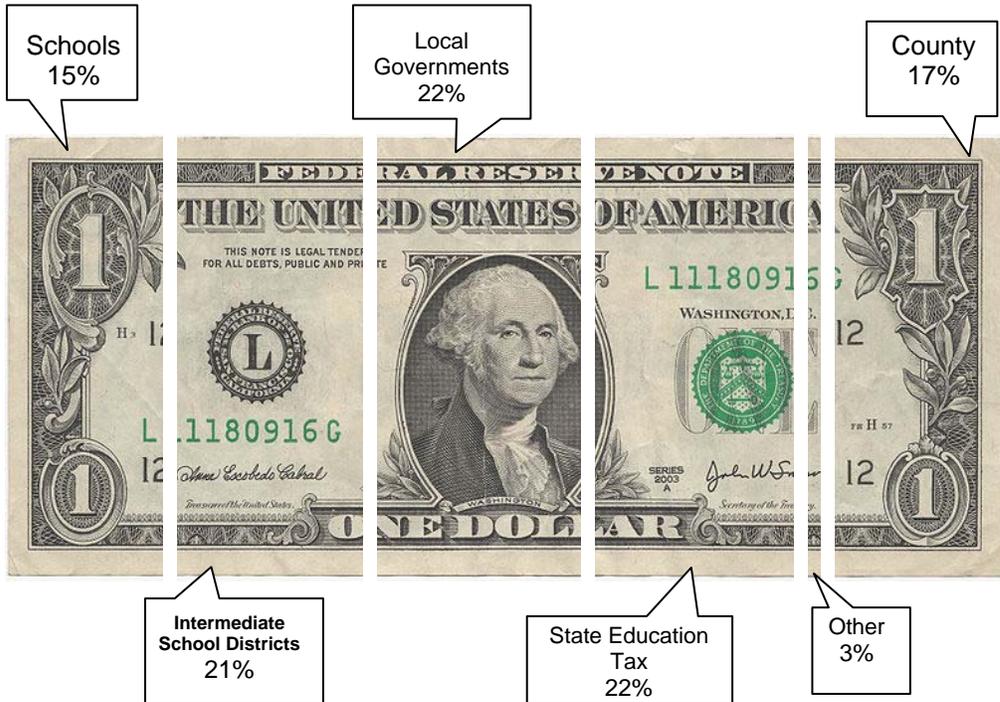
Since Proposal A started, the State Equalized Value (SEV) has grown at a faster rate than the Taxable Value (TV), mostly due to the fact that the growth in TV is limited to the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less. This created a healthy cushion between the two values on more than 80% of the residential properties in Ottawa County. The current economic conditions have caused a decline in the SEV, bringing the two values closer together and reducing the gap. Nearly 53% of properties had an equal SEV and TV in 2009 while 65% are expected to have equal SEV and TV values in 2010.



Tracking The Dollar: How Your Property Tax

If I am a Homeowner, Where Does My Tax Dollar Go?

The breakdown of the tax dollar below is an average of all areas of Ottawa County. The local government tax varies based on where you live. The Schools total is what homeowners with a homestead exemption pay. The Schools portion increases to 35% of your tax bill without the exemption. Other includes local taxes for libraries, pools, transportation, and other areas.



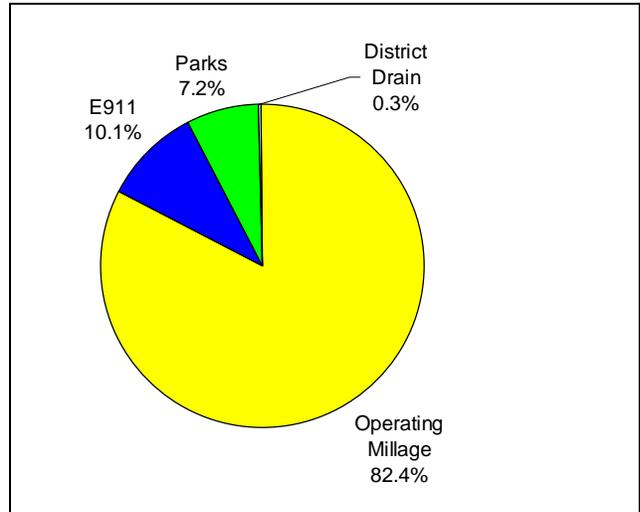
Did You Know...

Ottawa County's annual financial reports also include the revenues and expenditures for other component units. A component unit is a legally separate entity that a primary government must include as part of its financial reporting for fair presentation in conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. In Ottawa County, the component units include the following:

- Ottawa County Public Utilities System
- Ottawa County Central Dispatch Authority
- Ottawa County Drain Commission
- Ottawa County Road Commission

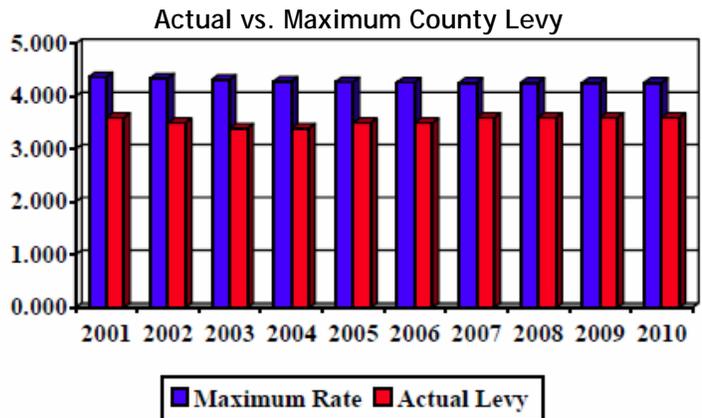
Ottawa County's Tax Dollar Breakdown

Of the 17% of taxes you pay to Ottawa County, 82% or approximately \$34 million supports the general operations of the County.



The County Millage Levy

The citizens of Ottawa County enjoy one of the lowest County millage levies in the State of Michigan. The maximum allowable millage for County operations is 4.2650 mills, but Ottawa County property owners only pay 3.6 mills. The graph to the right shows the gap between the maximum and actual millage rates. Specifically, the difference between the maximum levy and the actual levy represents a **16% savings** to the taxpayers.



How Ottawa County Compares

Each year Ottawa County monitors how our property tax levy compares to other counties in Michigan. Not only is Ottawa County's tax levy lower than neighboring counties, but it is also lower than that of four comparable counties.

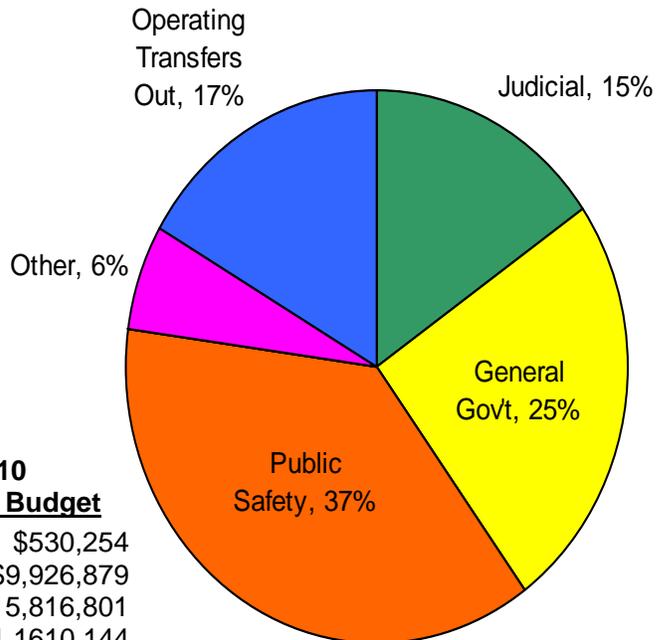
1 mill = \$1 per every \$1,000 of assessed valuation

Ottawa	3.6000
Kent	4.2803
Allegan	4.6577
Muskegon	5.6984

Ottawa	3.6000
Washtenaw	4.5493
Kalamazoo	4.6871
Genesee	5.5072
Ingham	6.3512

Baraga	8.3257
Livingston	3.3897

2010 General Fund Expenditures



Use

<u>Use</u>	<u>2010 Adopted Budget</u>
Legislative	\$530,254
Judicial	\$9,926,879
General Government	\$15,816,801
Health & Welfare	\$1,1610,144
Public Safety	\$23,790,713
Public Works	\$466,500
Community & Economic Development	\$641,711
Other	\$902,351
Operating Transfers Out	\$10,662,181

TOTAL: \$64,347,534

What is an Operating Transfer Out?

Every year, the County transfers money received in the General Fund to special revenue funds (used to account for proceeds of specific revenue sources that are committed to expenditures for specific purposes) in order to support the operations of various departments in the County.

Ottawa County has several special revenue funds which are funded by dollars from the General Fund annually. The \$10.6 million transferred out in 2010 are for departments such as the Health Department, Community Mental Health, Friend of the Court, Community Corrections, programs in Juvenile Services, contracts in the Sheriff's Department, and the drug courts in the District and Circuit Courts, and others.

Ottawa County's Financial Outlook

IMPACTS ON THE COUNTY'S BUDGET

The future financial projections for Ottawa County are highly dependent upon the world around us. The national economy has financial ramifications that trickle down to the state level which make their way to the local economy as well as State Budget impacts. A snapshot of some of Ottawa County's future financial threats are described below.

- **State Revenue Sharing** The State of Michigan suspended revenue sharing payments to counties in 2004, but made up for the loss of state revenue to counties by requiring counties to advance the collection of 1/3 of their tax millage for three years and place it into a reserve fund resulting in moving the December levy to a July levy. When a county's reserve is depleted, the state is required to resume revenue sharing payments. In Ottawa County, this is about \$5 million annually, with the state payments to resume in 2011. If revenue sharing is not reinstated, large-scale cuts in service may be necessary. The State budget will determine if the revenue sharing is reinstated fully, at a reduced amount, or not at all.
- **Investment Income** The County is budgeting \$526,400 in interest income for 2010, a 45 percent decrease from 2009 and a 700 percent decrease from a high point of \$1.75 million of investment income in 2007. While this is not the largest source of revenue, it does provide dollars to the General Fund. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, the national economy and market have impacted the value of investments, despite the fact that the County's investments are laddered and should withstand large swings in fair market value. Second, the revenue began decreasing in 2007 due to the County allocation of reserved funds for the Fillmore Complex Addition and the new Grand Haven Courthouse.
- **Benefit and Pension Costs** For several years, Ottawa County has seen double digit increases in the costs of health, dental, and vision insurance for employees. The County is partially protected from inflation for medical care by self-insuring these costs, but in recent years this has not been enough to shield the County from increasing costs. As a result, employees have had an increased premium share over the last few years to 10% in 2010. Additional plan changes have been included in the 2010 budget as a long term strategy to control future costs.

Ottawa County offers its employees a defined benefit pension retirement plan after an employee has completed ten years of service with the County. The Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS) operates the plan. The County is required to contribute to the plan based on an actuarial study. This payment will be increasing dramatically over the next few years, as the economic conditions have impacted the investment income earned by the plan. An analysis of the benefits and long term costs of the defined benefit plan versus a defined contribution plan was initiated in 2009. A final report and any recommendations for possible changes will be made in 2010 to the Board of Commissioners.

- **Mandated Services** For many years Ottawa County has seen reduced state funding for mandated services. An example is programs in the Health Department that state law requires to be funded by the State and County at 50% each, which has not occurred as required. In 2009, the State funded only 41% of the required costs. New mandates have been unfunded by the State as well as current mandate funding reductions. The County has a public lobbying firm representing our interests in Lansing to prevent additional unfunded or under funded mandates and to advocate for funding of current mandates. The Legislative Commission on Statutory Mandates released a report on unfunded mandates for local governments and schools that concluded the State has continually violated the constitution by not funding mandates it places on local government. It is unclear if the Legislature will act upon the recommendations of this report and if local governments will see any relief.

Budget Balancing Tools

There are many tools that Ottawa County utilizes to help make informed decisions in balancing the County's budget. The tools presented below are ongoing and are utilized and updated annually. In addition, analysis is completed on specific functions/programs and expenditures as needed.

◆ Five-Year Budget Projections & Analysis

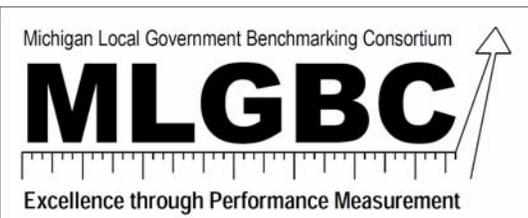
The County utilizes multi-year projections as a tool to prioritize immediate and long-range needs to develop a stable financial base. Budget projections are useful for planning to give the general direction of County finances based on trends. However, it is important to realize the figures projected are by no means guaranteed funding or expenditure levels as future factors (e.g. legislation, economy, etc.) will affect the trends.

Annually, the County updates the five-year General Fund projection based on the history of expenditures, anticipated changes in revenue, and economic conditions. As the 2009 budget was prepared in the summer of 2008, the projections for the General Fund indicated a total fund balance deficit of \$8.3 million by 2014 if spending remains the same. Unfortunately, since then housing values have declined dramatically, resulting in revised estimates as of October 2009 of a total fund balance deficit of \$11.2 million by 2015 if spending and revenues remains the same. Other projections completed annually include fund balance analysis, Financing Tools analysis, tax base analysis, and employment legacy costs analysis.



◆ Performance Measurement, Benchmarking, & Evaluation

Performance measures are specific qualitative and quantitative assessments of a department's ability to meet its goals and objectives. Ottawa County has a policy that prescribes the use of performance measures in all departments in order to assess performance and provide accountability for results. Annually, the performance measures play a role in budget decisions relating to personnel requests, technology initiatives, program funding and other budget decisions. The County includes all departments' measures annually in the budget document, which can be found on miottawa.org.



The performance measures are also used to benchmark Ottawa County's performance against that of cities, villages, townships, and other counties throughout the state as part of the Michigan Local Government Benchmarking Consortium. The comparisons from the benchmarking data is helpful in determining if there may be better ways to perform a function that could result in better performance and/or lower costs.

Ottawa County has also placed emphasis on evaluating departments and programs to find efficiencies, ensure performance and outcomes, and to reduce costs. Since 2005, the cumulative savings to the County are more than \$5 million through evaluations conducted by consultants and by the Planning and Performance Improvement Department.

Budget Balancing Tools

◆ Ranking of Discretionary and Mandated Services

Ottawa County is mandated to perform many functions by both state and federal law, but there are additional services which are not required by any higher authority, referred to as discretionary services. There are over 80 discretionary services that account for approximately \$17 million annually. County Administration has worked to identify all discretionary services and bring them before the Board of Commissioners to prioritize. The Board has conducted four rankings with the assistance of Michigan State University, using an audience response system. The results have been presented to the Board as a tool for budgetary decision making.

A ranking took place in January 2010 that looked at more than just discretionary services. Almost every department had its functions, which would include mandated and discretionary services, ranked by the Board of Commissioners. The results will be used to provide guidance to all departments in preparing their initial, 2011 budget requests for Administration to review.

◆ Fiscal Policies and Budget Principles

The Board of Commissioners has adopted and periodically reviews and amends specific fiscal policies that guide the sustainability of County finances. Specific budget principles are taken from the intent of the related policies to help guide each budget year. The following are examples of a few of the budget principles:

Fund Balance Use- Strive to maintain an undesignated fund balance of the lesser of (a) three months of the most recently adopted budget, or (b) 15 percent of the General Fund's expenditures from the most recently completed audit.

Programs and Services to Citizens- It will be the County's intent to continue to provide the highest quality services to citizens. Budget reductions will be considered that would eliminate entire programs before reducing the level of funding for all programs evenly across the board.

The budget principles are also influenced by other budget balancing tools and by specific studies or analysis that occur during the budget cycle.

◆ Citizen Outreach

Ottawa County utilizes two different methods for directly connecting with citizens to receive feedback on the quality of services and areas for improvement. The first method is the Citizen Survey, which is conducted every other year in the even-numbered years. The Survey was conducted in 2006 and 2008, with the next survey to occur in 2010. The survey consists of phone interviews with 400 residents and asks a variety of questions about the quality of government of the city, village, or township and Ottawa County. Information from the 2008 survey was used to help modify the focus of the Planning and Performance Improvement Department from planning initiatives to economic development initiatives.

In 2009, Ottawa County held its first Citizen Budget Meetings throughout each area of the County. Attendance for the five meetings was limited, but those that did attend learned a great deal from the information provided. Please visit miottawa.org for a schedule of the 2010 citizen budget meetings and locations.



Stimulus Dollar Overview

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2007, many programs were created to stimulate the economy, and Ottawa County has been the beneficiary of some of the federal funding. Page 15 provides a list of grants that have been received by Ottawa County as of December 31, 2009. Many of the Community Action Agency and Michigan Works grants listed are grants that have been received from the Federal government in the past, so the dollar amounts listed are those that are only part of the ARRA/stimulus funding.



In addition to the grants that have actually been awarded, Ottawa County has also submitted applications for other funding, but the status of the pending grants is not known at this time. Other areas that have applied for stimulus funding include the 20th Circuit Court for the Adult and Juvenile Drug Courts, Planning and Performance Improvement for extended broadband wireless to the remaining areas not currently covered, and Planning and Performance Improvement for a revolving loan fund to support economic development for businesses in Ottawa County.

ARRA also created two different bond programs, Recovery Zone Facility Bonds (RZFB) and Recovery Zone Economic Development Bonds (RZEDB). The two programs provide tax exempt bonds for private companies and local units of government by allowing designated projects to be financed with lower borrowing costs to promote job creation and economic recovery in areas affected by declining employment. These two programs are not grant programs, but are bonds and must be repaid.

Census 2010

The United States 2010 Census will get underway in the March 2010 when forms will be mailed/delivered to every residence in the United States and Puerto Rico. Forms are postage paid and must be mailed back when completed. If you do not complete the forms, a Census taker may visit your residence to ask the questions on the form.

It is very important for your local unit of government, Ottawa County, and the State of Michigan that you complete the forms and be counted. The Census information impacts the number of seats that the State of Michigan has in the United States House of Representatives, as well as federal funding for road projects, hospitals, emergency services and much more.

For more information visit www.census.gov.

Stimulus Grants as of 12/31/09

Grant Title	Dept./ Agency	Dollar Amount	Purpose
Weatherization	CAA	\$2,863,515	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weatherize the residences of low-income residents
Community Services Block Grant	CAA	\$415,083	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency assistance • Ottawa County Housing Commission • Homeless Youth Coalition Coordinator • Homeless Prevention & Rapid Rehousing • Social Security/Disability Outreach, Advocacy and Recovery (SOAR) Program • Community Garden • Safe Kids Lakeshore • Ready For School Initiative • Access to Health Collaborative • Access to Mental Health Collaborative • Call 2-1-1 of the Lakeshore
The Emergency Food Assistance Program	CAA	\$22,883	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly food distribution to low income populations
Adult Grant	MIW	\$354,358	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train low-income adults
Youth Grant	MIW	\$1,194,971	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide youth with summer work experience
Training for Dislocated Workers (3 grants)	MIW	\$879,229 \$416,191 \$750,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train workers dislocated due to lay offs, plant closings etc.
Re-Employment Services Grant	MIW	\$209,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide re-employment services for unemployment insurance claimants and displaced white collar workers
National Career Readiness Certificate Grant	MIW	\$55,828	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide WorkKeys testing and National Career Readiness Certificates
Justice Assistance Grant	Sheriff's Department	\$158,760	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase equipment for law enforcement
Port Security Grant	Sheriff's Department	\$210,797	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase specialized equipment for Marine Patrol and provide training on that equipment
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)	Administrator's Office	\$2,052,800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce fossil fuel emissions • Reduce total energy use • Improve energy efficiency in the building, transportation and other appropriate sectors

CAA= Community Action Agency

MIW= Michigan Works

Ottawa County Departments and Services

58th District Court

The mission of the 58th District Court is to interpret and apply the law with fairness, equality, and integrity, and promote public accountability for improved quality of life in Ottawa County. The District Court has a Traffic Division, which handles traffic tickets, a Criminal Division, and a Civil Division, which handles civil cases below \$25,000 including small claims. The District Court also has a Probation Division, which supervises District Court probationers, Community Corrections, which provides alternative sentencing options to District Court offenders, and a Sobriety Court. There are three District Court locations, including Holland, Hudsonville, and Grand Haven.



20th Circuit Court

The 20th Circuit Court has a mission of administering justice, providing restorative services and applying the law with equality, integrity, and timeliness through trained, courteous staff in a manner that inspires public trust. The Circuit Court has jurisdiction over the following cases: criminal cases where the maximum penalty is more than one year; divorce claims; civil damage claims greater than \$25,000; and appeals from District Courts and for some matters arising out of the Probate Court. The Circuit Court has a probation function that conducts pre-sentence investigations for the Court and supervises offenders placed on probation by the Circuit Court and an Adult Drug Treatment Court. The Circuit Court is located in Grand Haven and the Adult Probation offices are located in Grand Haven, Holland, and Hudsonville.

Juvenile Services

The Family Division of the Circuit Court, also known as Juvenile Services, processes delinquency and neglect and abuse cases as well as assists families and juveniles in the prevention, remediation, and treatment of delinquent behaviors. This division of the Circuit Court provides various programs for delinquent youth including detention, intensive supervision, in-house treatments programs, and community intervention programs. The Family Court and juvenile detention facility is located in West Olive.

Friend of the Court

The Friend of the Court is a part of the Family Division of the Circuit Court in Ottawa County and is responsible for protecting the rights and interests of the children in domestic relations matters. The Friend of the Court investigates, reports, and recommends to the Family Court which parent should have custody of minor children, enforces all child support orders entered by the Family Court, and ensures that children's rights to parenting time with non-custodial parents are protected and enforce parenting time rights ordered by the Family Court when denied. The Friend of the Court offices are located in Grand Haven.



Probate Court

The Probate court hears and decides cases related to guardianship, estate proceedings, and mentally ill persons. The Probate Judge serves in the Circuit Court Family Court. The Probate Court is located in West Olive.

Prosecuting Attorney

The Prosecuting Attorney is an elected official and serves as the chief law enforcement officer and chief administrator of criminal justice for Ottawa County. The Prosecutor authorizes warrants and is responsible for the prosecution of criminal cases on behalf of the People of the State of Michigan. The Prosecutor's Office includes a Child Support Division to help establish paternity and support and/or medical orders. The Prosecutor's Office provides specialized support to victims in domestic violence cases as well as a Crime Victims' Rights program for the support of all victims of crimes. The Prosecuting Attorney has offices in Grand Haven, West Olive, and Holland.

Sheriff

The Sheriff's Department operates many programs intended to increase the sense of safety in Ottawa County and to prevent crimes from occurring. The Sheriff's Department has statutory responsibilities for operating the County jail. Beyond the more noticed road patrol activities, the Sheriff operates a marine patrol unit to monitor the various waterways in Ottawa County, employs animal control officers, provides contractual school officers with the financial support of local units of government and schools, coordinates disaster preparedness and response efforts through Emergency Management, and houses a HazMat team to respond to hazardous material spills and other calls. The West Michigan Enforcement Team (WEMET) is a multi-jurisdictional agency that enhances drug enforcement activities and is supported in part by the Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Administrative Offices and the County Jail are located at West Olive.



County Clerk

The County Clerk is an elected official and is one of the major service offices of the County. Birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, concealed weapon permits and many more records are maintained and made available to the public through the Vital Records Division. The Circuit Court Records Division creates and maintains all files for the Circuit Court. The Elections Division conducts and oversees all elections (school, local, state, and federal) in Ottawa County and assists in the registration of voters. The County Clerk has locations in West Olive, Grand Haven, Holland, and Hudsonville.



County Treasurer

The County Treasurer is an elected official that serves as the collector and protector of money. The Treasurer's Office collects all delinquent property tax revenue and accounts for and deposits all other revenues coming into the County and is responsible for the investment of County funds. The Treasurer oversees the dog licensing program for Ottawa County and sells dog licenses in the office or via the internet at miottawa.org. The Treasurer's Office is located in West Olive and has a service representative in Grand Haven.



Register of Deeds

The Register of Deeds Office is an elected official that records, maintains and makes public land records for all real estate located in Ottawa County. Recorded information is retrievable on computer terminals in the Register of Deeds Office and via miottawa.org. The Register of Deeds Office is located in West Olive and has a service representative in Grand Haven.

Ottawa County Departments and Services

Drain Commission

The Drain Commissioner is an elected official. The Drain Commission records and accounts for all legally established County drains and oversees stormwater quality and stormwater management related to land development. The Drain Commission also provides direction to private land owners and local units of government through projects to ensure proper stormwater drainage. The Drain Commission Office is located in West Olive.



Equalization

The Equalization Department administers the real and personal property tax system at the county level and conducts valuation studies in order to determine the total assessed value of each classification of property in each township and city. The Department is responsible for ensuring that Principle Residence Exemptions are claimed properly and for providing assistance to local assessors as needed.

MSU Extension

Ottawa County MSU Extension disseminates and encourages the application of research generated knowledge and leadership techniques to individuals, families, youth and communities through educational programs in the following areas: Agriculture, Natural Resources, Horticulture, 4-H Youth Development and Journey Mentoring, and Community and Economic Development.



Planning and Performance Improvement

The Planning and Performance Improvement Department supports the Ottawa County Planning Commission and coordinates and performs work involved with many of the projects related to land use and planning, including transportation studies, agricultural preservation, and model ordinance development (wind energy, ethanol production). Planning and Performance Improvement assists departments and organizations with strategic planning, performance measurements and conducts outcome-based program evaluations of County funded programs.

Parks and Recreation

The Parks and Recreation Department is overseen by the Parks and Recreation Commission and oversees the acquisition, development, operation and maintenance of 15 County parks, several undeveloped park properties, and 13 open space land. The Parks and Recreation Department is supported by a special millage. The park system is comprised of 5,712 acres. The Parks Department provides outdoor education programs and will open a Nature Center in 2010.



Administrative Departments

Ottawa County has a number of administrative departments that support all departments of the County and are necessary for the functioning of the organization. These departments include the Administrator's Office, Fiscal Services, Human Resources, Corporate Counsel, Information Technology, and Facilities and Maintenance. While each of these departments plays a necessary role in the organizational puzzle, all of the departments are providing innovative ways to deliver services. All administrative departments are located in West Olive.

Community Mental Health

Community Mental Health (CMH) is a public provider of services for people with developmental disabilities and/or serious mental illness. Service is provided under a “Managed Care” contract with the State of Michigan, Department of Community Health. The programs and activities are governed by a Board of Directors. Services are available to residents of the community who have Medicaid or are uninsured, and who are eligible for services as defined by the Michigan Mental Health Code.



Health Department

The Ottawa County Health Department (OCHD) is committed to providing environmental protection, health promotion, disease prevention, and assuring quality health services to Ottawa County residents. Through the Environmental Health Division, OCHD works to keep citizens and visitors of Ottawa County safe through inspections of food service establishments, inspections of water and sewer systems for new homeowners, and beach monitoring during the summer months. The Health Promotions Division coordinates efforts to improve the health status of Ottawa County residents, prevent the use of tobacco, promote the responsible use of alcohol, and promote healthy dental habits to children through the “Miles of Smiles” dental van. The OCHD also tracks the spread of communicable disease in the County and works to prevent the spread of disease as necessary. The Clinic Services Division provides quality services including Family Planning, STD diagnosis and treatment, and Immunization and Travel Immunization Clinic. Additional programs provided by the Health Department include early childhood hearing and vision screening, Maternal and Infant Health Program, Early On, Medicaid enrollment, and a Prescription Drug Discount Card. The Health Department also works to facilitate public health preparedness in the event of a natural or human disaster.



Michigan Works!/Community Action Agency

Michigan Works is the agency dedicated solely to employment, training and business services. Michigan Works offers employment-related workshops and programs specific to employee training and a business services unit designed to help businesses run smoothly. Ottawa County Michigan Works is located in Grand Haven and Holland. The Holland location is the main center for services and most workshops, and the Grand Haven location is open for job search and some services. The service center offers employment-related classes and workshops, GED (General Education Degree) certification, WorkKeys training and testing, use of its computers, fax and copier (employment related) for anyone performing job searches, and resume posting on the Michigan Talent Bank when qualifying for unemployment and getting an employee resume online.

Community Action Agency (CAA) helps the individuals and families of Ottawa County who are struggling with financial self-sufficiency. The programs offered are mainly related to housing and food issues. Many of the programs include loans or general assistance to participants, but generally the recipients must prove their economic sustainability. CAA assistance is meant to help individuals or families reach a point where they can assist themselves without public funding. The Community Action Agency is part of an extensive regional network of faith-based and non-profit agencies that work on a knowledgeable referral basis. If CAA cannot help a client, assistance will be provided to help find the appropriate channel to meet their needs.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does Parks and Recreation keep buying land in this tough economic time?

In 2006 voters approved a millage of 0.33 mills (\$0.33 for every \$1,000 of taxable value for a property) for the “acquisition, improvement and operation of County parklands”. This was approved by 67% of voters. The money used for land purchases and improvements does not impact or take away from other services of Ottawa County. The tax dollars collected through this special millage can only be used for the specific purposes mentioned above. Also, recessions tend to be the best time to buy prime, pristine lands at a fair market value rather than at inflated prices that tend to be present in a better economy. All of the land purchases and improvements made since 1997 have helped to provide recreational opportunities for Ottawa County residents and visitors alike and improve the overall quality of life in Ottawa County. The Parks and Recreation Department is funded 100% by the millage.

Why doesn't Ottawa County do more about roads and snow removal?

In a biennial citizen survey, roads and snow removal are most often identified as the biggest problems of Ottawa County government. The duties of maintaining roads and removing snow are the duties of the Ottawa County Road Commission and not County government. The Road Commission is a separate body, with three commissioners making decisions that impact roads in Ottawa County. The only connection between the County and the Road Commission is the Board's duty to appoint the Road Commission's Commissioners. The property taxes you pay to the County do not support the Road Commission functions. Instead the Road Commission's revenue consists of funding from the state and federal fuel tax and vehicle registrations.

Who do I contact about the recent flooding issues?

If you are experiencing flooding of your home or property, you should contact the Ottawa County Drain Commissioner's Office at 616-994-4530. Staff will assist you in determining if the flooding is related to an established county drain and whether they have legal authority to perform drain maintenance and/or make drain improvements. If there is no county drain in the vicinity, they can inform you of other options that may be available to get the flooding issue resolved.

Why can't the County just act like a business and reduce costs?

Like a business, the County has reduced costs in several areas and continues to look for ways to reduce spending. Certain programs not meeting performance standards have been eliminated, employee retirement health insurance benefit costs to the County have been decreased and eliminated for future employees, and employee insurance premium sharing has been increased. Other programs, though effective, have also been reduced or eliminated.

However, unlike a business, as the County's revenues decline, the demand for services typically *increases*. Citizens who have lost their jobs and health insurance turn to the Health and Community Mental Health Departments for services. Activity in the civil court increases when citizens are unable to pay their bills. In addition, several County services are mandated by law. For example, the County is required to cover the cost of attorney fees for defendants in criminal cases that are unable to afford those costs.