



# County of Ottawa

*Administrator's Office*

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## County Administrator's Weekly Digest January 29, 2010

### **JESSICA KINSER**

Jessica Kinser has accepted the position of City Manager of Griswold, IA. Griswold is near her hometown of Walnut Grove, IA. Jessica has done an outstanding job in her tenure here. She has taken the lead on performing the analysis for several difficult issues including the possible change to a defined contribution plan for new hires, health plan analysis, and performance measurement improvement to name just a few. She also took the lead in organizing the last two annual Water Quality Forum programs.

We wish Jessica the very best in all of her future pursuits.

I have already been asked about our plans to fill the position by a number of people. We will not fill the position at this time due to the economy and uncertainty regarding property tax revenue, state shared revenue and many other state revenue related pressures. This is a very important position as regards our ability to quickly do quality analysis and projects. Also, this position was the replacement for Mark Scheerhorn's executive level position after we eliminated the Administrative Services Department after his retirement. I plan to keep this position open, same as we have offered to other departments, until we see major improvement in the economy. This move will save the General Fund about \$53,000.

### **CITY OF ZEELAND STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Keith VanBeek and I facilitated the annual strategic planning session for the Zeeland City Council. It was a good session from our perspective.

### **MUSKEGON AND OTTAWA COUNTY HOSTING AGREEMENT** (Dave Hulst)

Muskegon and Ottawa Counties have been negotiating an agreement for Ottawa County to serve as a hosting site for Muskegon County's first on-line service.

This effort was initiated in November 2009, when Muskegon County selected WebTecs, Incorporated to create an on-line search for Circuit Court and Probate Court Records. Based on the existing capabilities of Ottawa County, JoAnn Arcand and Dave Hulst discussed the possibility of hosting this service from the Ottawa County web site. JoAnn provided a draft hosting agreement previously used by Kent County. Dave Hulst and Greg Rappleye reviewed and edited the agreement and sent it to Bonnie Hammersley, Muskegon County Administrator, for review. On Friday, January 22, JoAnn met with Muskegon County. Muskegon County is ready to move forward with this project.

The Ottawa County web server will provide the ability to search records and accept payments. Searches will occur over a secure connection with Muskegon County. This connection is already in place, and currently supports synchronization of Master Patient Index data between Ottawa and Muskegon Counties' Community Mental Health systems. Having an existing connection will preclude any initial setup costs. Muskegon County will reimburse Ottawa County for the hosting service at a

fixed rate of \$500/month. Muskegon County will benefit by avoiding the significant investment and time needed to build the web infrastructure required for self-hosting.

### **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW AND BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2010** (Keith VanBeek)

Each year the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners conducts an annual strategic planning session. This year the Board met on January 19 to review the vision, mission statement, vision and values of the County as part of the broad strategic plan. The Board spent more time developing a specific action plan for 2010, involving an updated SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and development of goals and objectives. To conclude the process the Board ranked their priorities on January 26, providing their view on the respective importance of each goal and objective. The attachment provides the results of this ranking. In the following weeks staff will accumulate this information into a business plan that will be reviewed and adopted by the Board. The complete strategic plan/business plan is updated yearly and can be found on the front page of the County website, [www.miOttawa.org](http://www.miOttawa.org).

### **HUDSONVILLE RECOGNIZED FOR EFFORTS TO BECOME AN ACTIVE MICHIGAN COMMUNITY**

(Lisa Uganski, Health Dept.)

In 2009, the Ottawa County Wellness Coalition (OCWC) Southeast Action Team completed the Promoting Active Communities (PAC) assessment on the city of Hudsonville. The unique assessment tool was created in partnership by the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Michigan State University, and the Prevention Research Center of Michigan so that communities can better understand their status as an active community and more efficiently remove barriers to active living, thereby increasing physical activity opportunities for residents.

The city of Hudsonville received a Bronze level award to recognize their efforts to create and maintain an environment that encourages and supports physical activity. On January 12, 2010, Lisa Uganski, OCWC Chairperson, presented the PAC award to Mayor Don VanDoeselaar at the Hudsonville City Commission Meeting. In addition, State Representative Joe Haveman presented a Special Tribute to the city of Hudsonville for their efforts. County Commissioner Jim Holtrop was also in attendance.

The City of **Hudsonville** has joined a network of 115 Michigan communities in 53 counties who have participated in the Promoting Active Communities Program since 2000. The Ottawa County Wellness Coalition plans to collaborate with the city in the future to increase residents' access to physical activity.

### **QUARTERLY MEETING WITH ROAD COMMISSION**

[Don Disselkoen, Phil Kuyers, Roger Rycenga, Keith VanBeek and I meet quarterly with Road Commission representatives. This started when Roger Rycenga was chair in the attempt to improve communication with the Road Commission. We decided to start putting notes from the meetings out for the benefit of the entire Board of Commissioners. The Road Commission is also resuming presenting their annual report before the Board.](#)

### **Update – US-31/M-231 Final Environmental Impact Statement**

Dennis Kent reviewed the progress made towards the approval of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Most issues have been worked through and they are expecting the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to sign the document soon. The process would then require printing in the Federal Register, which would initiate a 30-day comment period. The group discussed various opportunities to bring this to the attention of the public, including issuing a press release when the FHWA signs off on the FEIS. While funding issues at the state and national level may impact the completion date of the overall project, MDOT remains committed to the project and has funding secured for the design phase and to initiate construction. With approvals on the timeline expected, construction should begin in 2011.

### Other Topics

The group quickly reviewed or mentioned the following topics;

- Possibility to experiment with the use of a snow fence on 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue between New Holland and Bingham.
- Appreciation to the road commission for addressing concerns about plowing on Fillmore in the early morning due to amount of traffic to the Fillmore Complex
- Broad discussions regarding funding for roads at the state level
- Update regarding County report regarding public utilities

### **LOW INCOME FEE WAIVER POLICY APPROVAL** (John Scholtz)

The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission charges motor vehicle parking fees at selected facilities to offset operating costs, provide a means for non-residents to support the park system, assist with management of high use facilities, and to apportion costs to those who benefit from special services. The Parks Commission recognizes the importance of outdoor recreation opportunities to the health and well-being of all people and is concerned that fees could inhibit use of the parks by low-income residents. This concern prompted the Parks Commission and Board of Commissioners to establish a policy that provides a means for low income residents to apply for and receive a free annual motor vehicle parking permit. Applicants will be required to show their Michigan Bridge Card, a benefit card issued by the Department of Social Services to residents qualifying for assistance.

Another issue addressed by establishment of the policy is the Parks Commission's ability to remain competitive for grants through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The grant program has criteria which penalize applicants that do not have a fee waiver in place for low income residents. Contact the Parks and Recreation office for more information on this program.

### **EASTMAN BAYOU MASTER PLAN** (John Scholtz)

Master planning was completed recently for a popular open space property with frontage on both the Grand River and Eastmanville Bayou. Acquired in late 2008, the property immediately became popular with fisherman as an access point to Eastmanville Bayou. Two houses on the property were removed in 2009 and vehicle access was permitted. Now the Parks Commission wants to move ahead with park improvements and promote the site as a key Grand River access point.

Nearby residents and the general public were encouraged to participate in the master planning process which was completed in January, 2010 for the 157 acre site with 1.75 miles of Grand River frontage and 1.5 miles on Eastmanville Bayou. Most improvements are planned for the portion of the property just south of the 68<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge over the Grand River which will serve as the primary access point for activities at the site.

Proposed improvements include a 40 car parking area, a small boat launch ramp on the inland bayou, a walkway under the bridge to access the portion of the site to the east of 68<sup>th</sup> Ave., as well as other amenities including picnic sites, interpretive displays, a canoe and kayak dock on the Grand River and rustic toilets. The plan also envisions the site as a trailhead for the future Grand River Greenway non-motorized trail. The remainder of the site, composed primarily of mature floodplain forest, will remain undeveloped with the exception of the future riverfront trail. Improvements to implement the first phase of the master plan are scheduled for summer, 2010.

### **NEW STATEWIDE POLL SHOWS VOTERS OPPOSE SENATE GOP REFORMS** (Don Stypula)

Proposed constitutional amendments from the Senate Republicans to cut the pay of every public employee in the state by 5 percent and require them to contribute 20 percent to the cost of their health insurance would fail to win public approval, according to a poll commissioned by Gongwer News Service.

The poll, conducted by the Lansing-based polling firm EPIC/MRA, showed 40 percent of voters would support the constitutional amendments while 49 percent would oppose them.

Senate Republicans want to put the constitutional amendments on the August ballot as part of an overall plan they say will save between \$2.24 billion to \$2.6 billion and restructure government in light of continuing large gaps between spending and available revenues.

"It's consistent with all of our polling that we've seen to date," said Bernie Porn, EPIC/MRA president. "The public is opposed to cuts and they understand that by simply cutting to balance the budget that it's going to have an impact on services."

It requires a two-thirds majority of both houses of the Legislature to put the constitutional amendments on the ballot.

Support and opposition to the proposed pay cut and mandatory health care premium broke down in some interesting ways.

Perhaps most significantly, independent voters opposed the plan, 51 percent against to 37 percent in favor. Democrats were even more strongly against it, 65-28. But Republicans supported it, 54 percent in favor to 36 percent against.

"The proposal is not appealing to independents," Mr. Porn said. "Democrats are solidly against it, and Republicans are not that enthusiastic about it."

Support was higher in the Detroit area with 48 percent favoring it to 40 percent against while opposition was strong outstate at 55 percent against and 35 percent in favor.

Among education levels, the proposals fared best among those with a college degree, where support and opposition was split 46 percent each, while majorities of those with less education were against the plan.

There was a pronounced racial split with 69 percent of black voters opposing the plan to 20 percent in favor while white voters were split 48 percent against to 42 percent in support.

Opposition was stronger from women than men although respondents of both genders opposed the plan, 52-37 among women and 46-44 among men.

Opposition also outnumbered support among all income brackets except those making more than \$100,000 a year where a 55-35 majority backed the proposals.

Matt Marsden, spokesperson for Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop <<http://www.gongwer.com/programming/bio.cfm?nameid=17501&locid=1>> (R-Rochester), said he suspected voters would have a more favorable view of the proposal if they knew the choice was between pay cuts and health care premium increases for government workers or general tax increases.

"When you propose a tough reform to the people in the form of a couple questions, I think their reaction is bound to be skeptical because nobody likes change," he said. "You could ask the question in a different form and probably get a very different answer."

The poll also asked voters about the overall Senate Republican reform plan, which includes Medicaid cuts that do not require a public vote. Forty-six percent said they opposed the plan while 37 percent said they supported it.

The survey read the arguments in favor of the plan and against it, asking respondents to say which side's arguments better reflected their views. Fifty-two percent said the opposition arguments better reflected their views compared to 34 percent who said they sided with the supporting arguments.

The poll was conducted among 600 registered voters between Sunday and Tuesday. It has an error margin of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

### **Governor Supports Con Con**

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has come out strongly in favor of a convention to rewrite Michigan's constitution, saying the state has changed dramatically since the document was put in place more than four decades ago.

If voters approve a constitutional convention -- Proposal 1 on the November ballot -- it would launch a two-year process that could overhaul the version authored in 1961-62 and passed by voters in 1963.

"The state of Michigan is dramatically different than it was in 1961, and we need a foundation document that reflects the 21st century. Having a constitutional convention would help set the stage for a streamlined government that moves Michigan forward in a comprehensive way," Granholm told The Detroit News in her strongest statement to date.

A convention could put a host of issues on the table, including education finance, the state's tax structure and consolidation of school districts and municipal governments. Also up for discussion could be amendments passed by voters that outlaw gay marriage, ban some affirmative action programs and approve embryonic stem cell research.

State Sen. Tom George, R-Kalamazoo, a candidate for governor, also supports a convention.

### **GVMC Sponsors Debate on Con Con**

The question of whether voters should authorize a constitutional convention will be debated at the Grand Valley metro Council's Growing Communities Conference, set for Thursday June 10, 2010 at the Prince Conference Center on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids. Former Grand Rapids Mayor John Logie will argue passionately in support of a Con Con, while Michigan Chamber of Commerce President Rich Studley will argue, with equal passion, against empanelling delegates to rewrite the Michigan Constitution.