



# County of Ottawa

Administrator's Office

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## County Administrator's Weekly Digest March 5, 2010

### **CLERK-REGISTER COMBINATION REPORT**

The Clerk-Register of Deeds Combination Report is on next week's Board of Commissioners regular meeting agenda. The report will be passed out to the Board and I will make brief remarks regarding the report. Per my commitment to the local units of government, the report will not be taken up for discussion by the Board of Commissioners until the report has been in hands of the local units of government for a minimum of 30 days. After 30 days, the report will then appear on a Board workshop agenda and local units of government will be invited to attend this meeting. Should the Board of Commissioners desire to move the issue to a regular Board meeting for a vote a public hearing is required before the Board can vote on this issue. However, once the public hearing is held, the Board decision cannot be until 10 days has passed from the date of the public hearing and must be happen no more than 30 days from the date of the public hearing.

### **COUNTY HEALTH PLANS AND ABORTION**

Kalamazoo County was in the news this week when a Commissioner learned that abortions had been paid for through the County health insurance plan. This caused a flurry of activity of the media surveying these provisions in other county health plans. In the event you are asked, this is the language in the Ottawa County health plan:

#### A. Abortions

Charges for Medically Necessary abortions and for complications due to abortions.

### **CREDIT RATING UPDATES**

June Hagan and I completed a phone interview with ratings analysts from Fitch Ratings a couple of weeks ago. We later received the good news that the County maintained an AAA rating, the highest rating from Fitch Ratings. However, Fitch did change the County outlook from "stable" to "negative." We dug into this further and Fitch said that this change is due to the State economy and outlook over the next few years. I checked with Kent County who had one of their ratings changed from "stable" to "negative" a couple of years ago and they confirmed that they were also told that this change was due to the State economic outlook.

Standard & Poors (S&P) sent June a very comprehensive questionnaire to review their rating of Ottawa County because we have not used S & P for debt issuance in over 3 years. They maintained the AA rating for Ottawa County with a "stable" outlook.

Moody's has not contacted the County regarding a review of their Aa1 credit rating as of yet.

### **OUT AND ABOUT**

Keith Van Beek and I facilitated the Parks Commission strategic planning session at the beautiful new nature center last week. In the past two weeks we have had brown bag lunches with the Sheriff

Command, Juvenile, and Health Department. June Hagan provided a budget presentation at the Health Department to a record brown bag lunch crowd of almost 50 employees. The previous record was held by CMH a few years ago when we had 35 attendees. June and I answered previously prepared questions and fielded additional questions. Overall this was an excellent session from our perspective. Previously this year, June has done special budget presentations for the Circuit Court, Sheriff Command group and the Labor Management Cooperation Council. She is available to do this for other groups if desired.

### **CITIZEN BUDGET MEETINGS**

We initiated citizen budget meetings with the lofty goal of involving County citizens with opportunities to learn more about the County budget process and give input on service and funding priorities. We had a somewhat disappointing result. A few folks showed up but not many. This year we decided to take the budget to groups and not simply advertise times and hope people show up.

We have one citizen budget forum set up at the Sunset Manor in Georgetown Township with the Georgetown Seniors also invited. This is scheduled for March 11 at 3:00 p.m. with the Georgetown Seniors at Evergreen Commons. Another will be set with the Holland Chamber of Commerce Public Policy Committee for April 16 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. This committee typically has about 20 in attendance and up to 30 more chamber members will be invited to this meeting. We are also working with the Grand Haven Chamber of Commerce to set up a presentation for their membership. Commissioners are welcome to attend these sessions, please let Misty, June or I know if you plan to attend for logistical purposes.

Today was a truly interesting day. June, Mark Knudsen and I joined roughly 35 Ottawa County Farm Bureau members on a bus trip to view the Sietsema Farms operation in Howard City where Turkey waste is converted into energy via a biomass gasification system and where corn is made into animal feed. June presented the County budget on the bus on the way to Howard City and she and I fielded questions. The group completed a short survey on budget and service priorities which will be compiled and presented to the Board after the citizen budget meetings are completed. Mark Knudsen then updated the group on the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and Agricultural Incubator initiatives. All in all this was a very interesting experience.

### **COUNTY JAIL REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM REVIVED (Gongwer News)**

**[Some good news for a change from Lansing: The County Jail Reimbursement Program will be funded in 2010 after previously being cut. We have \\$173,000 budgeted for jail reimbursement in the 2010 General Fund revenue budget so this will not have to be cut.](#)**

**More than four months after Governor Jennifer Granholm vetoed funding for the county jail reimbursement program, the issue was revived by the House Appropriations Committee on Thursday when it approved a supplemental restoring the program for the remainder of the fiscal year.**

The committee unanimously reported the bill to the full chamber after adopting a substitute that creates a tiered reimbursement system.

Under the bill, counties would get \$60 a day for criminals who have a presumptive prison guideline score, while offenders with straddle cell sentences for a group one crime would be worth \$50 a day. Straddle cell prisoners for a group two crime would be worth \$35 in state reimbursement to counties.

[Rep. John Proos](#) of St. Joseph, the top Republican on the Corrections subcommittee, said it was unfortunate the governor vetoed funding for the program because counties have now gone months without reimbursement, which totals \$2.8 million, the panel was told.

But the chair of the budget subcommittee, [Rep. Alma Wheeler Smith](#) (D-Salem Twp.), said the governor's office was clear during the budget process that she would veto a bill that did not contain a tiered system for reimbursement.

"We accepted the current practice in order to get a budget done and not shutdown the department knowing full well there would be a veto," she said.

In all, the county jail reimbursement program would receive \$7.5 million (\$2.2 million general fund) under [HB 5406](#).

That bill also includes \$18.7 million in restricted fund spending for the Muskegon Correctional Facility, which is supported by fees from Pennsylvania to house some of its prisoners. The state is receiving \$62 for every prisoner housed in Muskegon, while Pennsylvania is covering the health care costs for prisoners who receive treatment outside the prison gates.

### **US 231 BYPASS**

The US 231 Bypass was in the news a week ago. I have attached the latest project map and timeline recently updated by the Planning and Performance Improvement Department to the Digest email message.