



County of Ottawa

Administrator's Office

Alan G. Vanderberg
County Administrator

12220 Fillmore Street, Room 331, West Olive, Michigan 49460

(616) 738-4068

e-mail: avanderberg@miottawa.org

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EPA GRANT - HOLLAND COUNTRY CLUB RESTORATION (John Scholtz)

Ottawa County Parks received notification early this week of a grant award from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through its Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant program for wetland restoration work at the former Holland Country Club property. The EPA gave preliminary approval of a \$646,800 grant to the project entitled "Golf Course to Wetlands: Holland Country Club Restoration Project".

The project involves Ottawa County Parks, working with partners, to implement best management practices identified in the Macatawa Watershed Implementation Plan including wetland and stream restoration in the lower elevation, riverfront areas within the 122 acre park property. Plans call for 32 acres of wetland restoration through the grant project which will supplement 22 acres of wetland mitigation being planned and funded by Request Foods, a private business that in the process of purchasing a conservation easement from Ottawa County for the right to construct a wetland mitigation project on the property.

The EPA funded grant project will involve wetland construction and stream bank stabilization which will reduce non-point source pollutant loading to Lake Macatawa and Lake Michigan and reduce phosphorous levels. The highly visible restoration project with restored plant and wildlife communities will provide excellent opportunities for watershed education in addition to a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Holland Country Club property was acquired in March of 2010 for \$450,000. Funding was provided by the county parks millage plus \$70,000 in donated funds raised by the Outdoor Discovery Center – Macatawa Greenway Partnership, a project partner.

Ottawa County Parks will invite the public to participate in master planning the Holland Country Club property later this year. In addition to habitat restoration for water quality enhancement and wildlife, potential uses of the property include hiking and cross-country ski trails, a paved greenway trail linking parks and preserves along the greenway corridor, nature interpretation, a nature play area, picnic facilities and disc golf. A full range of possible recreation and conservation uses of the property will be explored through the public master planning process.

2010 CITIZEN SURVEY (Keith Van Beek)

The Board of Commissioners once again authorized EPIC-MRA to conduct a citizens survey in 2010, following similar surveys from 2006 and 2008. A highly respected firm, EPIC-MRA interviewed 400 registered voters from recent general elections by phone, randomly selected among five geographic regions. This survey is conducted in order to gather the "customer satisfaction" for services and also to gather citizen input on various issues. The Board and county administration has used the survey as one of several tools to direct and manage county services. The survey can be found on the front page of the county website, www.miottawa.org, under Board of Commissioners.

Upon presentation to the Board of Commissioners, it was asked that the survey results be made available to local units of government, schools and legislators as many of the questions and results are applicable to other organizations in the county. A review of the executive summary and demographic analysis reflects responses on citizen attitudes towards local government, area schools, and overall ratings of what citizens most like about living in Ottawa County. If any organization is interested we can also provide a more detailed analysis, or cross-tabular data, that breaks down the responses by various demographic and geographic categories. Simply contact Keith Van Beek at (616) 738-4642 to request this information.

From a county perspective, some interesting data included;

- continued confusion that the Road Commission is not operated by the Board of Commissioners, although cited as a service the County could improve
- 100% of respondents reported feeling either "very safe" or "mostly safe" in their neighborhood
- not surprisingly, "unemployment" and "providing economic development and jobs" were the highest cited concern of respondents
- while there was a drop from 39% to 30% in respondents who said that "taxes are too high", 58% said they would prefer a "cut in services" rather than an "increase in taxes"
- a proposal to raise the millage rate by 0.1 mills for up to 13 years to provide for the short term start-up costs of \$8 million to convert the current pension program for county employees from a defined benefit program to a defined contribution, which could save the county a projected \$30 million over 30 years, was favored by a 49 to 41 percent plurality, with 10 percent undecided

OUT AND ABOUT

We held two brown-bag lunches earlier this week with Health Department and today with Juvenile employees. We had a smaller group at the Health Department (after the record setting crowd of over 50 last time!) and close to 15 at Juvenile. Good discussions were held on finance, health care and other issues.

WMAA STRATEGIC PLANNING

Keith Van Beek and I facilitated the strategic planning session for the West Michigan Airport Authority at Holland City Hall a week ago Monday. The session went well and the group developed priorities for action over the next year.