



County of Ottawa

Administrator's Office

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County Administrator's Weekly Digest October 1, 2010

OCTOBER EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

Use the following link to the October edition of County Connections, the newsletter produced by County employees for County employees. I have an article that details facts about the new health plan in this edition.

QUADRANT MEETINGS

Quadrant meetings will begin next week on Monday afternoon. We have an information agenda and are ready to go. I ask mayors, supervisors and managers who receive the Digest to please forward the Digest on to other elected officials and administrative staff as appropriate.

Southwest, Monday, October 4, 2010 from 2-4 pm at Park Township Hall

Northeast, Wednesday, October 6, 2010 from 2-4 pm at Wright Township Hall

Northwest, Monday, October 25, 2010 from 10 am - 12 pm at the Village of Spring Lake Hall

Southeast, Thursday, October 28, 2010 from 2-4 pm at Jamestown Charter Township Hall

OUT AND ABOUT

- MML Annual Conference Luncheon
It was an honor in my role as President of the Michigan Local Government Management Association (MLGMA) to introduce Mr. Rick Cole, City Manager of Ventura California (born in Royal Oak, MI) as the MLGMA Colloquium Luncheon Speaker at the Michigan Municipal League Conference in Dearborn last Wednesday. I also presented the John Patriarch Distinguished Service Award to East Lansing City Manager Ted Staton. I felt like I had gone full circle as both of these activities came out of the then MCMA Professional Development Committee when I chaired it 12 years ago.
- Grand Haven Rotary Club and Rotary Lite
I spoke Monday noon and early Tuesday morning to the two Rotary Club groups in Grand Haven. I spoke on the State of the County and the power points are available in the Administrator section on miOttawa.org.
- Meeting with House Fiscal Agency Director
Commissioner and Finance Committee Chair Denny Swartout, Fiscal Services Director Bob Spaman
- LEDA Institute on Healing Racism
I'm participating in the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance (LEDA) Institute on Healing Racism Tuesday afternoons at 3:00 p.m. We have had 2 sessions and 6 remain to be completed. It is an eye opening experience.

HEALTH CARE

We have received very positive feedback from employees on the new healthcare plan. We should have dental and vision completed next week and will beginning setting employee/spouse group meeting dates.

M-231 BYPASS PROJECT

Last week, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) held a meeting at the Spring Lake Township Library to provide an update on the M-231 Bypass project for residents and community leaders.

The MDOT presentation provided a current overview of the project, updated schedule, digital ortho photos, and bridge renderings. A copy of the presentation is attached to the Digest email message. It is important to note that MDOT's schedule is "proposed" and could be modified based on the availability of funds and the state's budget issues.

UPDATE ON USE OF ALCOHOL AT THE WEAVER HOUSE (John Scholtz)

In March of this year, the Board of Commissioners approved the recommendation of the Parks Commission to revise park rules to permit use of beer and wine in special circumstances. Park rules were changed from a strict no alcohol policy to a policy where it is possible to apply for a special permit to use beer and wine in fully enclosed park reservation facilities. The Parks Commission indicated it would limit permits to the Weaver House at Pine Bend for the first year. If the policy change is deemed successful following the trial year at the Weaver House, other sites may be added per staff recommendation and Parks Commission approval. The Parks Commission's vision is to limit the number of sites eligible for alcohol permits to a select few that are popular venues for weddings and other special gatherings.

In addition, the proposed policy change includes provisions for approval of alcohol permits at special functions sponsored by the Parks Commission or Friends of Ottawa County Parks. Each function is to be considered individually and approval of each event would be required in advance by the Parks Commission.

As of September 30, there have been six reservations at the Weaver House involving alcohol with a few more scheduled before the end of the year. Five were weddings, one was a memorial celebration and some upcoming events involve family Christmas parties. Procedures developed by the Parks Department require all functions with over 50 people to utilize a bartender service which is licensed and insured. Five of the six functions held so far have utilized bartender services. Insurance certificates were received from the bartender services naming Ottawa County as additional insured for each function. For small events not requiring a bartender service, the reservation holder is required to provide an insurance certificate through their homeowners' policy.

Parks staff reports no problems with any of the reservations involving alcohol so far. Park staff has visited the site during each of the reservations and all were reported to be orderly and well run. The facility has been left in good condition after each of the functions.

In addition to the Weaver House functions, alcohol was authorized for one Parks Commission event – the donor reception at the Nature Education Center. Alcohol was donated for this event and approximately 100 major donors to the Nature Education Center were given a sneak preview one week before the new center opened to the public. This event involved wine only from a bartender service and it went very smoothly. Numerous county commissioners were present and all were well behaved.

SCHOOL PROGRAM'S AT THE NATURE EDUCATION CENTER (Chip Francke, Coordinator of Interpretive and Information Services)

The Nature Education Center (NEC) at Hemlock Crossing opened in late April, 2010 and the center's staff has been busy gearing up for fall school group field trips. The response from teachers has been good and the NEC's October schedule for school groups is nearly full with groups coming from throughout Ottawa County.

The NEC's holistic approach to youth programs is that all children are born with an innate sense of wonder about the natural world. Small group sizes allow the NEC staff to use a variety of techniques that provide positive hands-on outdoor experiences for all students. Using all the senses

to unlock the many textures, smells, sounds and sights of the natural world and encouraging self-discovery form the basic core of all our outdoor programs. In addition, teachers may select a program that meets Grade Level Content Expectations in the Life Science Discipline.

The NEC's full and part-time naturalist staff has nearly 200 combined years of educational experience including nature interpretation and classroom teaching. Parks naturalist Kristen Hintz, a certified elementary school teacher, heads up the center's school and other youth programs.