

# County Administrator's Digest

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## **MANY BENEFITS REALIZED FROM EECBG PROGRAM** (Keith Van Beek)

As reported on several times since 2009, the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program is coming to a successful end. The EECBG program, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, implemented multiple strategies to reduce fossil fuel emissions, reduce the total energy use of eligible entities and to increase energy efficiency. Ottawa County was the recipient of \$2,052,800 in grant funding, that was used not only for county facilities, but also in twenty-two (22) local units of government and fifteen (15) private industries that qualified.

Completed projects to date include;

project partner Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC) completed a traffic signal synchronization project that will annually reduce vehicle hours of delay by 311,000 hours, fuel consumption by 273,000 gallons and air pollution by 1,023 tons

project partner US Energy Engineers completed energy audits for 37 different local governments and private industries which prioritized projects that would save over \$100,000 in annual savings per year if implemented

twenty-one (21) local units of government leveraged \$379,772 in EECBG funding to complete numerous energy efficiency projects, primarily lighting projects which are being tracked to generate an actual annual savings

Ottawa County worked with various local contractors to improve boiler and HVAC systems in county facilities, which in addition to producing annual energy savings was leveraged to obtain utility rebates approaching \$191,000

The Sheriff's Office is planning the purchase of up to four (4) alternative fuel vehicles that would be used for support operations, like in the Senior Volunteer Program, where the differential in cost between a "typical" vehicle and the alternative vehicle is covered with grant money

As the projects described above are closed out, any remaining grant funding will be used towards a transition to outside LED lighting at county facilities, primarily in parking lots. This project and the others already approved were chosen as having



the highest return-on-investment (ROI) when compared to other energy saving solutions. The Board of Commissioners has as a goal in their strategic plan to evaluate alternative power options. The EECBG program has been very effective in evaluating various options, but also in moving forward with lowering the ongoing utility costs involved with operating our facilities. The task of continuing to monitor, benchmark and evaluate utility costs and alternatives will become a primary responsibility of the Facilities Director, a position that is currently vacant but will be filled early in 2012.

### **OPTICAL INSURANCE**

As most assuredly noticed during the recent health benefit enrollment for 2012, the County has changed vision carriers back to VSP from NVA. NVA failed to sign up enough of the providers that employees and their families utilize and as committed to during brown bag lunches and other forums this was evaluated by HR prior to the enrollment period. A total of 255 employees responded to a Survey Monkey inquiry that was sent out on the topic and 64.3% were not satisfied with the vision insurance as provided by NVA and 35.7% were satisfied. HR was able to negotiate an acceptable plan with VSP and the change will become effective January 1<sup>st</sup>. Thank you for your input.

### **OC DSS TRUST DEED**

We experienced a different sort of issue a few weeks ago when an attorney called representing a client who was attempting to close on a home that was being transferred from an estate to an individual. The former Ottawa County Department of Social Services existed prior to the State taking over this function and eliminating County departments. It was a common practice at one time that if an individual or family needed DSS assistance they signed an interest in their house deed over to the County. In the case we reviewed, the grandparents of the person seeking to obtain the home signed a trust deed to the County in the late 1950's in return for assistance. The provisions of the deed stated that the grandparents and one more generation down could live in the house and if the bill remained unpaid the house would go to the County when the home passed out of ownership of the second generation. The second generation died and this trust deed came up in the title search for the closing of the property and transfer to the third generation. When no files can be located on the amount owed the property is signed off. A typical amount of assistance of this sort back then was \$500 to \$1,000. In this case, no documentation of the amount owed was found so the house was signed over.

I thought readers might be interested in this anomaly from the past.

### **ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATION – 1863**

**Happy Thanksgiving to all associated with Ottawa County and families! As a County and as individuals we have much to be thankful for. I've always liked Abraham Lincoln's Thanksgiving Day address done**

**within six months of the Battle of Gettysburg during the Civil War and pasted it below for those of you who would like to reflect on it this weekend.**

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years, with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.

**By The President: Abraham Lincoln**

**William H. Seward, Secretary of State**