2014 STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

I had the honor of giving the State of the County speech at the Board Meeting this week. I provided written copies of the State of the County in the typical format. We have found that this serves as a good historical reference to quickly check when something happened. Since I passed the 10-year mark as County Administrator in late December 2013, I gave a different presentation on the difference a decade makes. I have had the opportunity to serve many great Board of Commissioners who have been willing to set a strategic direction, hold me accountable and allow me to manage. I have had the benefit of having outstanding department heads, elected officials and employees to work with and I am amazed at what we have accomplished together.

Please follow the links to the standard State of the County and The Difference a Decade Can Make.

PROPOSAL 1 – PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX REFORM

Michigan citizens will vote on a very important issue to Ottawa County and local governments on August 5: Proposal #1. A "Yes" vote on Proposal #1 would eliminate the personal property tax for manufacturing/industrial businesses. Personal Property Tax (PPT) is a tax levied only on business equipment. Those opposed to the tax argue that it limits attractiveness for new manufacturers to locate in Michigan and can provide an incentive for existing manufacturers to locate expansion projects in other states. PPT has been a stable and important source of revenue for local governments for decades and it pays for essential services like police, fire, schools, jails, roads and libraries. It represents $2.7 million of revenue in the County general fund.

A "Yes" vote on Proposal #1 would provide stable replacement funding for Ottawa County and other local units of government, separate from the annual appropriation process of our State government. A "Yes" vote on Proposal #1 does not raise taxes on anyone, but is paid for by redirecting a portion of the State Use Tax to a new Statewide Authority that would be set up specifically to receive the
Use Tax payments from the State and redistribute the payments to local governments that would lose revenue as a result of elimination of the industrial personal property tax. Other sources include eliminating corporate tax incentives such as those awarded to Holland manufacturing plants and others for production of lithium ion cell batteries and establishing a new statewide essential services assessment that is only paid for by manufacturers that receive the Personal Property Tax reduction. You can find more information at www.strongandsafecommunities.com, detailing the current problem and proposed solution.

This the only time I can remember in a 30 year career that all of the government associations (MML, MTA, and MML), business associations, West Michigan Chambers of Commerce, Detroit and the State Chambers of Commerce, and many other groups including AARP are on board.

It is the first time that I have seen major tax reform done in a way that does not immediately and directly impact local government in a negative way.

**PART FOUR OF AN INVASIVE SPECIES & LAND MANAGEMENT SERIES: PARKS ADD ECO-FRIENDLY BUGS TO WORKFORCE** (Shannon Felgner)

While many of us are swatting and shooing away bugs, the Ottawa County Parks welcomed 4,000 weevils into the water at Grand River Park in Georgetown. The bugs are part of an ongoing attack on invasive species throughout Ottawa County Parks properties. Last month, the Parks added goats to its biological control arsenal. The weevils will be attacking invasive Eurasian watermilfoil (milfoil) which has taken hold of the small lake at Grand River Park. According to Michigan State University, milfoil is an invasive, aquatic plant that can alter the physical and chemical conditions of ponds, lakes and rivers, severely impacting fish habitat and deterring fishermen, boaters, swimmers and other recreationists. Weevils are native and will not harm aquatic life, including the rare Blanchard’s cricket frog (pictured) recently discovered living in Grand River Park. Annual chemical applications are available to treat milfoil; however the biological bug is a far safer alternative and often more effective. Like other invasive species management efforts, this application of weevils will be closely monitored to evaluate its effects.

Visitors to Grand River Park will not be bothered by the weevils and will likely not even realize their presence. In fact, the most noticeable indication of the bugs will be the reduction in milfoil in the lake.

The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission is aggressive when it comes to protecting and beautifying the properties entrusted to them by residents. In addition, biological control agents are preferred over chemicals when feasible. Along with weevils, the parks recently added goats to its list of tools used to
manage invasive species in some hard-to-manage areas. Prescribed fires and growing corps of volunteers who hand pull invasive plants are also used.

For additional announcements, “like” the parks at facebook.com/OttawaCountyParks. Visit miOttawa.org/parks to learn more about the 6400 acres of parks and open spaces available for your enjoyment. Operations, improvements and programs are funded by grants and a parks millage. If you own a $150,000 home, you pay $24 annually investing in opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature education today and for future generations.

**LAKE SHORE HABITAT HOUSING EVENT**

I’ve attached a notice for a housing event that will feature Mayor Kurt Dykstra of Holland and Patrick Sisler, Director of Lakeshore Non-Profit Alliance and Ottawa County Human Service Coordinating Council.

As affordable housing continues to be a Lakeshore community concern, the Lakeshore Habitat Board of Directors, staff and Mayor Kurt D. Dykstra, City of Holland are requesting your attendance to learn more and stand side by side as a collective voice to support Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity’s Blueprint to ReBuild the Lakeshore, a campaign that will address safe, affordable, decent housing within our Lakeshore community. The public announcement event will take place in Holland in front of a current build site on Wednesday, June 25 at 11:00am. Further event details are listed below.

**The Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity Blueprint to ReBuild the Lakeshore Community Campaign** is a $1.2 million dollar, 5 year initiative that will improve the lives of deserving, low-income families in our Lakeshore community needing safe, affordable housing. These funds will be used to expand current build capacity, increase our local impact and have a positive impression on our local economy. Affordable housing enables hardworking, low-income families the opportunity to own their own home, create a stable environment for their children and opens greater possibilities for their future.
COMMUNITY PICNIC CELEBRATES ACCESSIBLE LAUNCHES (Shannon Felgner)

The public is invited to celebrate the installation of two universally accessible kayak and canoe launches within Ottawa County Parks. With the help of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant and the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation’s Youth and Greatest Needs Funds, Grand River Park and Connor Bayou Park are now each equipped with launches for all ability levels. To celebrate, a picnic is scheduled for Sunday, June 22 at Connor Bayou from 2-6pm. (Address: 12945 North Cedar Drive, Grand Haven) The Friends of the Ottawa County Parks are offering free hot dogs, chips and refreshments. Activities include paddles on the 28-foot voyager canoe, fishing activities for kids, frog and birding stations, nature walks and music by Dem Two Guys.

A guided two hour kayak trip exploring nearby Crockery Creek is also being offered through Lakeshore Kayak Rental. Participants will meet at Connor Bayou at 1pm and be shuttled to the launch with return by water at approximately 4pm to join the festivities in progress. Registration is required by calling Lakeshore Kayak Rental at 616-566-1325. A discounted fee of $25 includes rental and shuttle service. The kayak trip best for ages 16 and older, but all skill levels are welcome.

An important consideration for Parks and Recreation amenity upgrades and additions is universal accessibility. The new launches offer easy-to-use transfer benches and slide boards. Users simply sit, slide over and drop down into a kayak or canoe, then use the side rails to glide over the smooth rollers into the river. “We consider this universal design and by that mean that it is intended to serve both able bodied people and those with disabilities equally well. Whenever possible, we try to use universal design as opposed to having separate facilities for people with disabilities,” commented John Scholtz, Parks Director. “The kayak launches are a great example of universal design in that they really do attract all users. They provide a properly sloped, hard surface access for wheel chairs and others not able to navigate steeper terrain and they provide all users with a way to launch from a stable surface without getting wet, muddy feet,” added Scholtz.

Both launches are located on the Grand River Heritage Water Trail and Grand River Greenway. On miOttwa-wa.org, paddlers can learn more about the water trail, the river history and view maps of various reaches.
Connor Bayou is located at 12945 North Cedar Drive, Grand Haven. The entrance is on the gravel portion of North Cedar, just west of 128th Avenue.

For additional announcements, “like” the parks at facebook.com/OttawaCountyParks. Visit miOttawa.org/parks to learn more about the 6400 acres of parks and open spaces available for your enjoyment. Operations, improvements and programs are funded by grants and a parks millage. If you own a $150,000 home, you pay $24 annually investing in opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature education today and for future generations.

**ONSITE APPLICATION WAIT TIME INFORMATION** (Adeline Hambley)

As a desirable place to live and work, Ottawa County has experienced some degree of recovery from the economic recession in 2008. As Onsite services are directly related to the building and selling of homes, there has also been a significant and steady increase in the number of applications received since 2009, the slowest year in recent history. 2014 is projected to see a slight increase in the number of services over last year, with the majority of those services being completed in the spring and summer months when home building and sales are also high.

The expected wait time for Onsite applications is projected to be approximately four weeks this summer. Priority is given to failed septic systems and homes without water, and these services are expedited. All other services are processed in the order received, and applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as it is known a service is needed; when listing a home for sale rather than at the time of purchase, for example.

The department is continuously analyzing data to determine staffing needs and to identify areas for improvement to increase efficiencies. Since 2012, an additional 1.5 FTE was added to the Onsite program to handle the increasing number applications. In 2013, temporary summer employees were utilized to keep turnaround times as low as possible. These changes allowed Ottawa County to maintain a four week turnaround for applications in 2013 at a time when neighboring agencies had a wait time of eight weeks or more for similar services.

For the summer of 2014, temporary summer employees are again being utilized. Two full time temporary staff starting in May, and will continue through August. These positions will help complete simple inspection tasks so that Environmental Health Specialists may concentrate on more complicated tasks. To help ease customer frustration we are working with community stakeholders to notify customers they should apply early. This message is being communicated to area Realtors, builders, and installers.

Over the long term, new environmental health software is being implemented that will help increase efficiencies in the application process. Paper documents are being scanned to allow the Onsite team to have more immedi-
ate, and easy, access to information. In the coming years, the online application process will be improved to allow applicants to apply online for service and track the progress of the application via an online portal.

When examining the current situation and considering possible solutions a number of factors are considered. The department considers the number of applications received, the current revenue vs. expenses, wait times for service in other counties, wait times for service in complementary industries (such as home appraisers, bankers, underwriters, and builders), as well as the cost the current market will bear for service.

These factors will continue to be analyzed to determine appropriate staffing levels, fee structures, etc., so that resources are optimally utilized. Further exploration of what applicants are willing to pay to reduce turnaround times for service is needed. This will be further explored by working with a diverse stakeholder group of area builders, installers, Realtors, homeowners, and residents.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me Adeline Hambley, Environmental Health Manager, Ottawa County, 616-393-5625, ahambley@miottawa.org.

__Our Vision – Healthy People__

**GVMC WEEKLY UPDATE** (John Weiss)

[Click here](#) for the most recent updates.
Come join us and Friends of Ottawa County Parks!

Free Picnic and Family Activities

- Free Hot Dogs, Chips, and Refreshments
- Take a trip on the 28-foot voyager canoe (life jackets provided)
- Nature walks at 2 and 3 p.m.
- Fishing activities for kids (we’ll provide poles and bait)
- Visit the birding and frog station staffed by Park Naturalists
- Free kayak demos from 4-6 p.m. by Lakeshore Kayak (your chance to paddle)
- Music from 4-6 p.m. by ‘Dem Two Guys’

Help us celebrate!

- Our new universally accessible kayak launches at Connor Bayou and Grand River Park, funded with help from a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant and a grant from the Youth Fund and Greatest Needs Fund of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation
- Grand River Heritage Water Trail
- Grand River Greenway
Ribbon cutting for the launches at 4 p.m.
Exhibits and displays on the Water Trail and Grand River Greenway from 2-6 p.m.

Guided Kayak Trip by Lakeshore Kayak Rental

Explore the Crockery Creek on a 2 hour guided trip by Lakeshore Kayak Rental. Discounted fee of $25 includes rental and shuttle service. Participants will meet at Connor Bayou at 1 p.m. and be shuttled to the launch with return by water at approximately 4 p.m. Registration necessary through Lakeshore Kayak Rental at 616-566-1325. Kayak trip best for ages 16 and older.
Proposal 1

As you know, over the past couple of years, several members of GVMC have been working to help eliminate the Personal Property Tax. Our goal was always to maximize and ensure continued revenue for local government. Proposal 1 on the August 5th ballot is the culmination of the long process of eliminating the PPT while providing local governments with the security that revenues will continue for essential services.

At our GMVC Board meeting last week, Mike Johnston, Vice President of the Michigan Manufacturer’s Association presented the proposal and explained the coalition that has formed to promote it.

This proposal is truly a bi-partisan, public/private method to remove the PPT while insuring future funding for essential municipal services.

It has the support of all Michigan’s governmental organizations like the MML, MTA and MAC. It also has the support of business groups including the Chambers of Commerce, Manufacturers Association, Farm Bureau and many others. Recently AARP also added their support. There is no known organized opposition.

The problem for local communities

Michigan communities have struggled for years to pay for essential services like police, fire, ambulances, schools, roads and jails. Communities also battle for annual legislative appropriations in Lansing to fund other services, including roads and libraries, through revenue sharing.

The problem for business

The PPT is an antiquated tax that has been on the books since the 1800s. Most states in the region don’t tax business equipment at all.

The PPT is a double tax on business. Each piece of equipment purchased by business pays the initial 6% sales tax and then each year after pays the PPT on the value of the equipment.

Benefits for local communities

Proposal 1 creates a stable, reliable funding system for communities in Michigan to pay for police, fire, ambulances, jails, senior services, schools, libraries, roads and other community services.

Proposal 1 comes with two guarantees

First, 100 percent of the funding for local community services will be returned directly to your community for police, fire, senior services, ambulances, jails, schools, roads, libraries and other community services.

Second, this dedicated funding for local community services is no longer subject to the uncertainty and instability of annual legislative process.

No tax increase - for anybody!

Proposal 1 doesn’t raise tax rates. Instead, it is paid for by eliminating special corporate tax loopholes (ie. battery tax credits) that the legislature has already voted to end, and by establishing a statewide Essential Services Assessment that is only paid for by manufacturers that will receive a significant PPT reduction.

For more information about Michigan Citizens for Strong and Safe Communities or to receive updates please follow this link:

http://action.strongandsafecommunities.com/page/s/join-the-campaign-GVMC
Governor Snyder Meets with GVMC and Regional Prosperity Alliance Boards

This morning we held a joint meeting of the GVMC Board of Directors along with our West Michigan Prosperity Alliance Steering Committee and guests. Governor Rick Snyder was our speaker and congratulated the group on the progress we are making in the area of cooperation and collaboration in West Michigan.

The meeting was held at the Seidman Center at Grand Valley State University and we want to thank President Haas and GVSU for their continued support of our initiatives. They are truly a great partner in our regional efforts.

Approximately 100 leaders from throughout West Michigan attended the event to hear the Governor’s comments and ask questions. I will have more about the meeting and additional information in coming editions of the Weekly Update. This is the first time a Governor has attended our GVMC or Regional Prosperity Board Meeting. We are pleased he was able to join us this morning.

West Michigan Prosperity Alliance Update

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance met last week in Ludington. Progress continues to be made on our regional cooperation and collaboration efforts and development of the West Michigan Prosperity Plan. Over 50 attended the meeting with over 60 including Ludington area business and governmental leaders attended a reception following the meeting.

The next step is the nomination and development of 5 projects of Significant Regional Economic Importance. The Steering Committee along with 180 participants from our region at the Governor’s Economic Summit developed criteria for determining priority projects. Those include: long term impact and sustainability, regional impact, ability to provide employment opportunities, recognizes the region’s strengths and challenges, promotes and supports public and private partnerships.

Project nomination forms are available at www.gvmc.org or by contacting Dave Bee at dbee@wmrpc.org.