

County Administrator's Digest

June 13, 2014

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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 We have found that this serves as a good historical reference to quickly check when something happened.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 the 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 fisherman, 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

The Blanchard's cricket frog is listed as a species of special concern in Michigan.
Photo Credit: Sara Viernum



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.

LAKESHORE 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.





you're Invited!

Blueprint Campaign Announcement
 Wednesday, June 25, 2014
 11:00 am – 11:30 am | Program
 11:30 am | Lunch (Compliments of the City Delicatessen)

The Almanza Family Build Site
 523 West 24th Street
 Holland, MI 49423

Join us as we unveil our 5 year plan for addressing affordable housing in the Lakeshore community through the Blueprint to ReBuild the Lakeshore Campaign

Speakers will be Mayor Kurt Dykstra, Patrick Cisler and other special guests

Help us ReBuild Michigan



To RSVP or for questions, contact Bev Crandall-Rice at development@lakeshorehabitat.org or 616.393.8001 ext 106

RSVP's appreciated but not required

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 miOttawa.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.

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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.