

County Administrator's Digest

July 2, 2014

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TAX MIS-INFORMATION

One of the local radio stations broadcast misinformation when it reported that Ottawa County recently raised taxes. This is not true whatsoever. The Ottawa County millage rate remains 3.6 plus .44 for 9-1-1 and .3165 for Parks. The operational millage of 3.6 mills is 5th lowest and the combined rate is the second lowest among Michigan's 83 counties. The Headlee Amendment to the Michigan Constitution requires the Board to hold a public hearing and the required language advertising the hearing indicates that the Board is raising taxes if the taxable value increases over the previous year. Taxable Value has not recovered from the decreases associated with the Great Recession so from that perspective most taxpayers are paying less in County taxes than they were in 2008.

Ottawa County had two very significant events happen within hours of each other on Monday involving the swearing-in of the new Clerk/Register Justin Roebuck and the changing of the guard of the Spring Lake Ferrysburg Police Department to the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office.

CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS SWEARING IN CEREMONY

The swearing in ceremony for Justin F. Roebuck as Ottawa County Clerk/Register of Deeds was held on Monday, June 30, 2014, at 4:00 p.m. at the Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven. Chief Circuit Judge Ed Post performed the ceremony and did an outstanding job. The large courtroom on the 3rd floor was packed with those who witnessed this historic occasion. Roebuck was



appointed as interim County Clerk/Register of Deeds and will serve until the next general election in 2016. Roebuck was serving as Elections Coordinator in the County Clerk/Register's Office, where he has been employed since 2009. Prior to his current role, he served as Campaign Manager for Congressman Tim Walberg



in Michigan's 7th Congressional District, and on the executive staff of former Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land. He is a lifelong West Michigan resident and currently resides in the City of Zeeland with his wife Laura.

The County Clerk is the keeper of all Circuit Court and Family Court records, and of all vital records such as birth, marriage and death records within the County, and in the capacity of Register of Deeds is the keeper of the public record for all land documents. The Clerk/Register serves as the administrator of all county elections and, by law, serves as the Secretary to the Board of Commissioners and keeper of all official Board records. The Clerk/Register's Office also provides other services to the public. These services include but are not limited to: genealogical searches, Notary Public registrations, Concealed Weapons Permits, passport application acceptance.

Access county services and learn more at miOttawa.org, facebook.com/miottawa or [@miOttawa](https://twitter.com/miOttawa) on twitter.

CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY

The County was well represented at the Change of Command Ceremony at St. Mary's Church in Spring Lake Monday evening. It was a moving ceremony and fitting for such a momentous occasion. The Grand Tribune had the following coverage of the event:

Sheriff takes over command

A dignified and solemn ceremony Monday night signaled the end of the Spring Lake/Ferrysburg Police Department, as nine officers officially became part of the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department.

MARIE HAVENGA SPRING LAKE Jul 1, 2014

More than 120 local leaders and law enforcement personnel attended the Change of Command ceremony at St. Mary's Catholic Church, where the Spring Lake/Ferrysburg police officers were honored for their past service and ushered into a new employer.

Each of the officers chose loved ones to unpin their Spring Lake/Ferrysburg badge from their traditional blue uniforms. They then were led out of the auditorium by the honor guard and reappeared 15 minutes later in brown county attire.

When the officers returned to the sound of bagpipes and applause, their family members pinned county badges on their new uniforms. Ferrysburg Mayor Dan Ruitter and Spring Lake Village President Jim MacLachlan then presented them with shadowboxes that encapsulated their badges, patches and name plates.

"Put them where you can see them and reflect back," Sheriff Gary Rosema said. "This is part of your history."

[CLICK HERE](#) to see more photos from the ceremony.

Deputy Curt Theune, who started with the Spring Lake/Ferrysburg Police Department in 1991, said Monday was a bittersweet evening.

"I'm ready to get going," Theune said as he stood in a greeting line outside the auditorium. "It's been a long time coming. There are some nerves, some emotion — but it's time to get started."

The new county deputy patrols in Spring Lake and Ferrysburg began at midnight.

Spring Lake and Ferrysburg officials researched cost-saving moves for more than a year to help offset defined-benefit retirement contribution costs, a common problem for many Michigan municipalities after the downturn in the stock market a few years ago led to less-than-expected investment performance.

The police department's retirement fund was underfunded by more than \$600,000, even though Spring Lake officials paid in amounts recommended by the Municipal Employee Retirement System.

Contracting with the county for police protection is projected to save about \$300,000 a year. Those savings will be put toward the retirement plan for the first several years.

"It's a relief to know that our pensions will be funded," Theune said.

The proposed three-year police contract with the county will cost the village and city \$704,629 in its first year, \$814,314 the second and \$861,857 in the final year. As part of the agreement, all officers maintained their employment and vacation benefits.

Village Manager Chris Burns said residents will not notice any changes, other than a different uniform color and car striping.

Read the complete story in today's print or e-edition of the Grand Haven Tribune.

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT DECISION - CUNNINGHAM CASE

The Michigan Supreme Court rendered its decision in *People v. Cunningham* (not *Misty*) on June 18. The Court unanimously ruled that the law "provides courts with the authority to impose only those costs that the Legislature has separately authorized by statute." The Court further stated that the law doesn't authorize the courts to impose "any cost." The bottom-line is that courts cannot assess operational cost as a component within court costs as has been common practice for many years. The loss to Ottawa County in District Court revenue alone would be over \$800,000. Counties across the State and the Michigan Association of Counties will seek a quick legislative fix once the Legislature once again convenes in September. A quick review of the statute makes one wonder why the current language was not clear enough to allow these charges but the Michigan Supreme Court has spoken and we must seek the legislative remedy.

RACIAL DIVERSITY INCREASE IN OTTAWA (Andrea Goodell, Holland Sentinel)

Business people in a seminar

By Andrea Goodell

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Posted Jun. 26, 2014 @ 7:00 am

Holland, Mich.

Racial diversity is on the rise in Ottawa County, and advocates want to make sure that racial equality follows.

Each of West Michigan's major racial minority groups is growing faster than the general population, according to the latest census numbers.

Between 2010 and 2013, the number of black Ottawa County residents increased 17 percent, though the total number remains relatively low (6,943) when compared to other groups. The Asian population in Ottawa County is up 8.6 percent and 2,522 new Hispanic residents had moved to the county between 2013 and the most recent census, an 11 percent increase.

By comparison, the total population in Ottawa County increased 3.4 percent to 272,701. Allegan County's population remained relatively flat, ticking up 1 percent to 112,531. However, both counties are both still more than 90 percent white.

"It is imperative to embrace the rapid change of demographics," said Alfredo Hernandez, diversity education associate at Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance.

Latin Americans United for Progress serves primarily Hispanics who face language, employment, education, cultural and legal challenges.

"We're constantly trying to make sure what we have available is what's needed out there," said Lena del Real, LAUP interim executive director.

LAUP has renewed its focus on youth and educational programs such as Mas Adelante and Digital Connectors, she said. The nonprofit offers the county's only year-round Spanish-language GED preparation course.

"It's that upturn in our economy. Things are getting better. People are feeling better," del Real said.

Many Hispanic migrants work in factories or as seasonal farm workers, she said. At 5 percent unemployment, Ottawa County has the second lowest rate in the state.

Many have moved to the area because of the economic upturn and because diversity begets diversity, said Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony President Marvin Younger. But there's more to it: Holland celebrates diversity, he said.

"It's a win-win for everyone," Younger said.

There will always be misunderstandings and he expects growing pains, but it's part of the reason ACEH has monthly community workshops to talk through issues surrounding diversity and equality.

Diversity does not necessarily mean racial equity. With increasingly diverse demographics comes a greater need to focus on equality, Hernandez said.

"We still find dramatic racial disparities in health, incarceration, life expectancy, employment and more," he said.

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PARK PROJECT UPDATE: MACATAWA GREENWAY TRAIL (Curt TerHaar)

Construction of the long-awaited non-motorized trail through the Upper Macatawa Natural Area (UMNA) is expected to begin in July and be completed in November. Bids for construction were received in early June with the low bidder well within the estimated budget. The \$1.85 million project will be funded with assistance from a \$941,268 grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation through its Transportation Alternative Program. The 2.4 mile trail project, combined with an existing half mile of trail through the park, will connect the Fred Meijer Kenowa Trail along Byron Road to the existing bike path on Adams Street. The trail will run through the diverse habitats of the UMNA and include three large ravine bridges plus a bridge over the Macatawa River. The project will be supplemented by a \$75,000 improvement project that will enhance the existing parking area on 84th Avenue with parking lot paving, a small shelter, and water and electrical service to better serve visitors accessing the trail from this location. The trailhead project benefits from an additional \$20,000 grant from the West Michigan Trails & Greenway Coalition to fund the proposed site amenities.

OTTAWA COUNTY PARKS RELEASES NEW BROCHURE (Shannon Felgner)

The Ottawa County Parks released its 2014 brochure in June and is working furiously to get into the hands of, well, everyone! The brochure includes a county map, park descriptions, and addresses plus beautiful photographs over a dozen properties captured by talented County residents. (Including Judge Edward Post) If you would like a supply of brochures for your organization's office, please email sfelgner@miottawa.org.

Ottawa County Parks