

County Administrator's Digest

February 6, 2015

Alan G. Vanderberg, County Administrator



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Time flies and I have not sent out a Digest this year! We will crank up the Digest machine and become regular again!

OTTAWA LEADERS ASSUME STATE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Tim Smith - Ottawa County Central Dispatch Authority (OCCDA) Tim Smith has been named Chair of the State 9-1-1 Committee Board of Directors and Executive Committee. Tim has served on the board for many years and was named by his colleagues to the position of Chair for 2015. Congratulations to Tim!!

Follow the link for more information: http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_47748---,00.html

Lisa Stefanovsky – Ottawa County Public Health Officer Lisa Stefanovsky was named President of the Michigan Association of Local Public Health (MALPH) Board of Directors effective January 1, 2015. Congratulations to Lisa!! [Click here](#) for more information.

REBECCA RYAN TO SPEAK AT OTTAWA COUNTY (Shannon McGoran)

Rebecca Ryan, “Manage Like a Futurist” Workshop

Wouldn't it be easier to ensure fiscal stability if we could look into a crystal ball? How will future trends affect the County's ability to provide excellent services? What upcoming storms and issues will affect service provision? Rebecca Ryan, in her “Manage Like a Futurist” workshop shares concepts and tools that professional futurists use to identify and interpret trends and futures. She assists governments with identifying the driving forces, assumptions, evidence or indicators of their possible future scenarios.

Rebecca is one part economist, one part humorist and one part futurist. She was the keynote speaker at the 2013 Transforming Local Governments Annual Conference sponsored by the Alliance for Innovation. In her book, *Regeneration*, she explains her belief that America has progressed through an 80 year cycle of seasons. The era of survival and regeneration, also known as “The Great Recession”



she predicts will last until 2019. She believes the following 20 years will be spring, an era of promise, belonging, "Peace and Prosperity"; followed by summer, an era of euphoria, defiance, "Summer of Love"; followed by fall, an era of separation and anxiety, a "Decline of Institutions". She encourages awareness of these cycles and awareness of technological, societal, environmental and economic trends. By providing the tools and concepts to interpret these factors, organizations can be more agile and responsive to challenges and opportunities of providing services.

She has outlined six steps to help prepare for future planning and provide strategic insight into how a community will function 100 years from now: Frame the issue, Scan, Forecast, Vision, Plan and Act. We are happy to host Rebecca Ryan's workshop at Ottawa County on April 23, 2015, sponsored by the Alliance for Innovation. An email will be sent to departments inquiring about interest to attend the workshop. We have been offered 50 internal spots in the workshop before general offering to other Alliance member organizations. Seats are expected to go quickly as the event will be advertised throughout the greater region (Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, etc.) Please look for the email and respond ASAP if interested.

STATE BALLOT PROPOSAL FOR ROAD MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

The State recently unveiled its ballot proposal to increase the sales tax to 7% to raise a net \$1.2 billion for road maintenance and repair. The following M-Live Article covers the issue though I'm not sure the headline matches the article well. The Ottawa County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution indicating its support for State transportation reform back in April of 2013 and [click here](#) to read that.

[Sales tax proposal for roads endorsed by Kent, Ottawa governments: 'We need more' money](#)

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Board of Commissioners held its annual strategic planning at the Ottawa County Courthouse in Grand Haven on January 22nd. The results are being folded into the Business Plan portion of the document and will be brought back to the Board of approval.

MICHIGAN CAPITAL NEWS MANDATES ARTICLE

Circuit Court Administrator Kevin Bowling and I were quoted in a recent article regarding unfunded mandates. The article follows.

[Less state money for mandates makes counties pay](#)

By ELIZABETH FERGUSON

Posted on [January 23, 2015](#) by [CNS](#)

Capital News Service

LANSING — Michigan is requiring Kent County to increase public health counseling with no additional state funding.

Ottawa County has just discovered it must begin reimbursing foster parents' mileage under Department of Human Services requirements.

State funding for Marquette County's senior services has dropped more than 20 percent since 2007, leaving these expenses for the county to cover.

Michigan counties say issues like these are created by unfunded or underfunded mandates — new services the state requires counties to perform without paying its share of the costs.

"This is a sore spot with local government throughout the state," said Alan Vanderberg, Ottawa County administrator. "This is one that deals with the rule of law. Ottawa County hopes the administration will help make this a priority."

The Headlee Amendment, passed in 1978, requires the state to give local governments funding when mandating new programs and prohibits the state from reducing its share of funding. In 2010, the Legislative Commission on Statutory Mandates confirmed the three state branches of government have failed to follow this amendment's requirements.

A package of Senate bills designed to prevent more unfunded mandates, was introduced in 2013 but stalled at the end of the session. The lead bill was sponsored by Sen. Tom Casperson, R-Escanaba. The bills would have required legislators to consider the costs of mandates before voting on them. If bills passed without an estimate of county costs included, counties would not have to follow the mandate.

"Counties are the service providing arms of the state," said Scott Erbsch, Marquette County administrator. While counties deliver state services to Michigan's population, counties face underfunding in many forms.

Michigan's Public Health Code requires the state to provide 50 percent of funding for mandated services. Vanderberg said Ottawa County is receiving only 21 percent of its public health costs from the state, forcing the county to fund the extra \$850,000 for state-mandated services from county health clinics to sewage management.

Vanderberg and Ottawa County's court Administrator, Kevin Bowling, are currently looking into a mandate from the Department of Human Services. Vanderberg said DHS has recently requested the county to fund reimbursements for foster parents' mileage. The county was previously unaware of this mandate and isn't sure how much it will cost.

According to the DHS, it has always shared the responsibility of reimbursing foster parents with counties. Bob

Wheaton, DHS manager of communications, said in a voicemail message that the department funds 50 percent of each county's reimbursements. DHS has recently included this in its foster parent agency contract, creating an increase in reimbursement requests for counties, and explaining why counties may think this is a new mandate.

Law also requires the state to fund 50 percent of Essential Local Public Health Services. According to Daryl Delabbio, Kent County administrator and controller, the state funded only 33 percent of the county's costs in 2013. Over the past two years, the state has increased funding to cover 41.5 percent of costs. Kent County is still underfunded this year by 8.5 percent, or \$326,248, Delabbio said.

Kent County is also funding a new public health mandate from the state. Previously, parents opposed to vaccinations needed a waiver from the state before their children could attend school. Now, the state has mandated counties provide these parents a counseling session with a public health nurse before granting them a waiver.

According to Delabbio, the mandate is a public health improvement, but because the state will not reimburse Kent County for the service, it creates another unfunded service for the county.

Casperson said while most mandates have honorable intentions and are popular, they create burdens for counties. For instance, in 2013, lawmakers voted to exempt disabled veterans from paying property taxes. Casperson agreed this exemption was honorable but said the cost to counties — which lose this property tax revenue — should have been assessed.

Several interest groups and lawmakers are working to address unfunded and underfunded mandates. The issue is a top priority for the Michigan Association of Counties, which has been supporting legislative changes since 2010.

The package of bills to address the issue failed in the last session because some lawmakers argued that costing out each mandate would slow the legislative process. Casperson said he "absolutely will reintroduce" the bills and work to overcome those concerns.

OTTAWA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATES (Kristina Wieghmink)

Click the links below:

[**Miles of Smiles participates in "Give Kids a Smile!" day**](#)

[**Connecting children and families to survive and thrive services**](#)

GVMC WEEKLY UPDATE (John Weiss)

[**Click here**](#) for the most recent updates.



Health officer appointed president

of the Michigan Association of Local Public Health

Ottawa County Department of Public Health Administrative Health Officer **Lisa Stefanovsky, M.Ed.** has been appointed the president of the Michigan Association of Local Public Health (MALPH) Executive Committee. Stefanovsky began her one-year term on October 1, 2014. In this role, she provides guidance to MALPH regarding fiscal, planning, legislative and policy issues. Since taking on the role, Stefanovsky has worked with the association to:

- **secure a \$1.9 million** Michigan Health Endowment Fund grant to improve immunization rates,
- **pass legislation** related to immunization waivers,
- initiate dialogue on expanding **regional approaches**,
- develop strategies with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to **implement new EPA regulation** changes for Type II water supplies,
- and facilitate strategies to **improve communication and resource sharing** during the 2014 Ebola event.

"I am honored to serve MALPH and my public health colleagues. It's exciting to be a part of an association that is ready with leadership, knowledge and expertise to drive positive change," said Stefanovsky.



MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH

MALPH represents Michigan's 45 city, county and district health departments before the state and federal legislative and executive branches of government. The association's mission is to strengthen Michigan's system of local public health departments and local governing boards to improve health outcomes for Michigan residents and create greater economic stability. Prevention is now recognized as the answer for health improvement and cost reduction. Local public health professionals are the boots on the ground who ensure safe food, clean water, timely responses to health threats and accessible vaccination and disease prevention programs. Through this forum, they help change the healthcare landscape by:

- coordinating service delivery,
- assuring a system wide approach,
- advocating health policies,
- creating training and professional development opportunities,
- and promoting consistent and quality programs.

COUNTY OF OTTAWA

STATE OF MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION

At a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the County of Ottawa, Michigan, held at the Fillmore Street Complex in the Township of Olive, Michigan on the 23rd day of April, 2013 at 7:30 o'clock p.m. local time.

PRESENT: Commissioners: Visser, Baumann, Disselkoen, Dannenberg, Holtrop, Van Dam, Holtvluwer, DeJong, Kuyers, Fenske. (10)_____

ABSENT: Commissioners: Bergman. (1)_____

It was moved by Commissioner Kuyers and supported by Commissioner Disselkoen that the following Resolution be adopted:

WHEREAS, Michigan's roads are consistently ranked among the nation's worst; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan is losing \$3 million per day and more than \$1 billion per year due to high maintenance costs and increased wear and tear on our roads and bridges; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan's gas tax - the user fee that is the primary source of transportation funding - has not increased since 1997. At the same time, the gas tax revenues collected today, adjusted for inflation, are only equal to that which was collected in 1974; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan's 6 percent sales tax goes into the State's general fund, not toward road maintenance and repairs; and,

WHEREAS, we risk a future fiscal crisis if the State of Michigan does not increase its investment in transportation. Currently, 35 percent of Michigan's roads are ranked as being in poor condition. By 2018, this number is predicted to rise to 48 percent; and,

WHEREAS, bringing a road from poor to good pavement condition costs 6 times more than it does to bring a road from fair to good condition; and,

WHEREAS, investing \$10 billion over the next ten years to fix Michigan's roads and bridges would create 12,000 new jobs and prevent an estimated 100 traffic-accident related deaths per year;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners hereby urges Governor Rick Snyder and Michigan legislature to save taxpayer dollars, save lives, and improve our economy by making the necessary investments to repair roads and bridges in the State of Michigan so that our transportation systems can function at peak performance; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Ottawa County Clerk is directed to send copies of this Resolution to Governor Rick Snyder, Senator Arlan Meekhof, Representative Roger Victory, Representative Amanda Price, Representative Joseph Haveman, the Michigan Association of Counties, and the County Clerks of all Michigan Counties; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all resolutions and parts of resolutions insofar as they conflict with this Resolution are hereby repealed.

YEAS: Commissioners: Disselkoen, Fenske, DeJong, Kuyers, Visser, Van Dam,
Dannenbergh, Holtvluwer, Baumann, Holtrop. (10)_____

NAYS: Commissioners: None _____

ABSTENTIONS: Commissioners: None _____

RESOLUTION ADOPTED:


Chairperson, Ottawa County
Board of Commissioners

4/24/2013
3:25:28 PM


Ottawa County Clerk/Register

4/24/2013
3:25:34 PM



***Miles of Smiles* participates in “Give Kids a Smile!” day**

February 6 is the 13th annual American Dental Association's “Give Kids a Smile!” day. Dr. Robert Ankerman D.D.S. will be the dentist on the Ottawa County Department of Public Health's *Miles of Smiles* (MOS) mobile dental unit. This Friday, he will provide comprehensive dental care for Medicaid-insured and financially-qualifying uninsured children at Jefferson Elementary School in Holland (Holland Public School District). Every child in the school will receive a gift bag, complete with oral health aids and oral health education for parents.

Miles of Smiles operates year-round to provide free dental services. “Give Kids a Smile!” day provides MOS an opportunity to participate in a nationwide event. Dental professionals in dental offices, clinics and schools in all 50 states will open their doors to provide free dental care to dentally-underserved children. The event raises awareness about the number of children with unmet dental needs and the obstacles they face when seeking dental care.

Pain from untreated dental disease makes it difficult for children to eat, sleep and concentrate in school. Poor oral health also affects their self-esteem. The partnership includes dental society involvement, dentist and hygienist volunteerism, school administration dedication, community support, funder's generosity, Ottawa County Administration support and Ottawa County Department of Public Health's commitment to help improve the health of children.



Ottawa County Department of Public Health *Miles of Smiles* mobile dental unit provides dental services for Medicaid-insured and financially qualifying uninsured children in Ottawa County.



ADA American Dental Association®

“Our Miles of Smiles program is the best example of a community collaborative effort that I could ever envision,” said Debra Bassett, RDH, BHS Ottawa County Department of Public Health Oral Health Supervisor.

Suggested Tweet

Give Kids A Smile program helps provide dental services to underserved children @AmerDentalAssn <http://expi.co/0FPWK> #GKAS @miOCDPH

Sources

Ottawa County Department of Public Health
www.miOttawa.org/dental
“Give Kids a Smile!”
<http://www.ada.org/1585.aspx#GKASDay>

***Miles of Smiles* in Ottawa County**

- More than 100 volunteer dental professionals and GRCC students provide dental services on MOS each year.
- More than 33,000 client appointments have been provided on MOS.
- 2013/2014 fiscal year
 - 1,100 exams/screenings
 - 1,000 cavities (ages 2-12)
 - Since 1999, average 34% reduction in tooth decay



Connecting children and families to survive and thrive services

Evidence shows home visiting programs make a difference in reducing at-risk infant deaths. By increasing family support systems, children may achieve better health and developmental outcomes. Michigan is 39th in the country for infant mortality rates. The state and stakeholders coordinated statewide efforts to help reduce the high number of infant deaths. Their goals are to create greater access to care, assess need and connect eligible infants and mothers to Medicaid home visiting programs; such as the Maternal and Infant Health Program (MIHP) and the Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS) program.

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), Division of Family and Community Health, granted \$10,000 to Michigan birthing hospitals. The funds are provided to aid hospitals in developing a referral system, linking Medicaid beneficiary infants and their families to the MIHP. Also, infants who may qualify for CSHCS will receive assistance in obtaining additional support, medical care and care coordination services.

North Ottawa Community Hospital, Spectrum Zeeland Hospital and Holland Community Hospital each received the grant to collaborate with the Ottawa County Department of Public Health, Intercare and other area MIHP providers. Their task is to develop the referral system for healthcare professionals, enabling them to share information with families about services provided by the MIHP and CSHCS. Working together on this statewide initiative will help reduce infant mortalities to protect babies and their futures.

Ottawa County Department of Public Health
Maternal and Infant Health Program
www.miOttawa.org/MIHP

- Home support to pregnant women, new parents and families.
- Team of social workers, dietitians and nurses.
- Provides prenatal, parenting and child development education.
- Offers counseling and nutritional information.
- Helps obtain needed resources, financial aid and travel expense costs.

“The first years of a child’s life are critical to forming relationships and trust in their future. The MIHP is an evidence based program that helps improve maternal and infant health outcomes; beginning during pregnancy, continuing at birth and ongoing through the first year of life. ‘It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men,’ said Frederick Douglas (1817-1895). We have an opportunity to empower families- resulting in healthier communities.”



Dawn Dotson, RN, MPA, BSN
Maternal and Infant Health Program supervisor

Ottawa County Department of Public Health
Children's Special Health Care Services
www.miOttawa.org/CSHCS

- Helps pay for visits to specialists.
- Helps pay for medications and specialized equipment, such as wheelchairs, when they relate to the CSHCS qualifying medical condition.
- Eligibility based on medical condition. All income levels qualify.
- Coordination of services and assists with locating community resources.
- May assist with travel and lodging expenses, relating to treatment and care for the CSHCS qualifying medical diagnosis.
- May help to keep private insurance as well as cover co-pays and deductibles from private insurance

“Parents tell me the CSHCS program has saved them from financial bankruptcy. I would like every eligible child's parent to have the opportunity to enroll in CSHCS. With this grant, informed hospital staff can improve their referral process to the program.”

Janine S Chittenden, BSN, RN
Children's Special Health Care Services supervisor





February 6, 2015

Grand Valley State University Joins GVMC/LGROW Stormwater Partnership

We are pleased to announce that Grand Valley State University has joined our GVMC/LGROW Stormwater coalition. GVSU becomes the 22nd member of the group.

Recent changes in the law required GVSU to have its own stormwater discharge permit. Rather than spending the time and resources to prepare the permit alone, GVSU joined with other communities in the LGROW program. As we reported last week, the City of Walker estimates their savings by participating in the collaborative effort at over \$87,000 per year.

GVSU joins the cities of Grand Rapids, Wyoming, Kentwood, Walker, Ferrysburg, Rockford, East Grand Rapids, Grand Haven, Grandville, Hudsonville. Also the townships of Cascade, Georgetown, Grand Rapids, and Plainfield. The villages of Sparta and Spring Lake are also members as are Forest Hills Public Schools, the Kent County Drain Commissioner and Administration, Kent County Road Commission, the Ottawa County Road Commission and the Ottawa County Water Resources Commissioner and Administration.

The deadline for filing the application is April 1st and each of these

communities is working hard with Wendy, Bonnie and Brian to complete the final phases of the application. Once it is submitted MDEQ will take an estimated 18 months to review the permit applications.

Two New Board Members Join GVMC

At our Board meeting yesterday two new Board Members were sworn into office. Joining the GVMC Board of Directors are Kent County Commissioner Diane Jones and Matt McConnon a trustee from Courtland Township. We welcome them to GVMC.

GVMC Partners with The Right Place and our Regional Partners on Governor's Economic and Education Summits

In early March, GVMC, The Right Place and our regional partners through the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance will play a critical role in Governor Snyder's Economic and Education Summits. We have joined together to focus part of the Summit on West Michigan and will host two large regional meetings during the event.

You're Invited To: Rick Snyder's Economic and Education Summit



GVMC



Event: Governor Rick Snyder's Economic and Education Summit

Date: Monday, March 2 and Tuesday, March 3, 2015

Location: Renaissance Center, Marriott Hotel
400 Renaissance Ctr, Detroit, MI 48243

As a leader in Prosperity Region #4, we encourage your attendance at the summit. Your voice will influence the future economic and educational growth of our region. We need your input.

You can register for the Summit and hotel lodging using the link below.

<https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1663880>

Birgit M. Klohs
President & CEO,
The Right Place, Inc.

John Weiss
Chairperson,
Region 4 Regional Prosperity Initiative
Executive Director,
Grand Valley Metro Council



January 30, 2015

GVMC Environmental Programs Presents to WMLGMA

Last week our Environmental Programs Department made a presentation to the West Michigan Local Government Managers Association. WMLGMA is an organization composed of city, township and county managers from throughout the region.



Wendy, Bonnie and Brian talked about the many programs they are involved with. Many of the members of the association also participate in our Stormwater Permit collaboration.

Recently, the City of Walker informed us that their cost to participate in the GVMC/LGROW collaboration to complete the stormwater permit was approximately \$13,000. They estimate their cost of seeking the permit without the collaboration at over \$100,000. There 23 jurisdictions that participate in the program. Grand Valley State University recently joined.

Next Board Meeting

February 5, 2015

8:30 am

Kent County Building

2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Nears Completion

We are in the final stages of completion of the long-range 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Over a years work, hundreds of hours, scores of meetings and a great deal of public input has helped us to develop the final plan.

The document now goes to the GVMC Technical Committee on February 4th, the GVMC Policy Committee on February 18th and final adoption by the GVMC Board of Directors on March 5th.

The full document is available on our website at www.gvmc.org or hard copies are available at the GVMC offices.

Governor's Economic and Education Summit to Include Regional Discussions

During the March 2 and 3 Governor's Economic and Education Summits there will be two sessions dedicated to regional discussions. During those times, participants will gather with others from our West Michigan Region 4 to discuss issues that pertain specifically to our area.

Business, government, education and philanthropic representatives are invited to attend the Summit. (see the link below). We encourage our members to attend. This is an excellent opportunity to meet with other leaders from around Michigan as well as spending focused time discussing the issues important to West Michigan.

You Are Invited

2015 Michigan Governor's Economic Summit

and

Governor's Education Summit

March 2 & 3

Detroit Marriott and the Renaissance Center

Registration and to Learn More:

<https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1663880>



Governor's State of the State

On Tuesday night Governor Snyder presented his fifth State of the State Address and many of us in local government watched to learn more about the year ahead. There were many issues presented in the speech that pertain directly to those of us involved in local government and regional prosperity.



Governor Snyder last Summer at
GVMC/RPI Event

Our economies and communities have grown. We have created with more than 300,000 private-sector jobs since December of 2010. We have created more than 86,000 new manufacturing jobs since 2010. Our state and thus our communities have had consecutive years of population increases. Food and agriculture is now a \$101 billion –a-year industry in our state while automobile production has increased 48.2% since 2010.

The Governor highlighted a few critical initiatives that he will emphasize in the future. Several of

these efforts are critical to the members of GVMC.

Some key areas for 2015 include transportation and fixing our deteriorating roads and bridges, improvements in the educational system including raising third-grade reading levels. The Governor is also reorganizing the Departments of Community Health and Human Services to create one department called the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. He called for more and better jobs which will involve creating “Regional Prosperity Teams” to help ensure that no area of the state is left behind. He wants to establish an agency for energy and fully implement the Regional Prosperity Initiative. GVMC is very active in our region and chairs the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance.

May 5, 2015 Ballot Question

The key points for ballot initiative are:

- Eliminates state sales tax on motor fuels
- Creates a new 14.9% wholesale tax on fuel
- Raise some registration fees
- Raise the state sales tax from 6% to & 7%
- Hike the Earned Income Tax Credit
- Increases spending on K-12 education by approximately \$300 million.
- Provide \$94 million for local government

You Are Invited

2015 Michigan Governor's Economic Summit

and

Governor's Education Summit

March 2 & 3

Detroit Marriott and the Renaissance Center

Registration and to Learn More:

<https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1663880>



January 16, 2015

Mississippi River Voyage

When many people retire, they talk of travel, relaxation and not being on a schedule. When Gary De Kock retired from the City of Grand Rapids, the long-time LGROW Board Member had travel in his plans as well.

Gary and his wife Linda decided to kayak the entire length of the of the Mississippi River. Leaving from Lake Itasca, Minnesota they traveled by kayak 2,291 miles to the Zero Mile Post, ten miles south of Venice, Louisiana. It was a journey that lasted 70 days.

Their voyage was a high profile, national project that was planned by the Water for People Committee of the Michigan Water Environment Association.

According to Gary, "Our days on the water were long and difficult and the mosquitoes in Minnesota were insatiable". For nine of our ten weeks, we were on constant lookout for public supplies of drinking water to refill our water bottles".

Gary also talks about the incredible challenge of navigating through the huge volumes of ship traffic in the southern part of the Mississippi River. A significant challenge given the size differences between freighters and a small kayak.

If you or your service group would like to learn more, contact Wendy our Director of Environmental Programs. Wendy can put you in touch with Gary and Linda or give you more information about this exciting and difficult journey. We really appreciate Gary for his service to LGROW.

Last year we printed a few stories about our member communities. Those stories were well received with several suggestions that we continue to publish community profiles from time to time.

The City of Walker

The City of Walker started out in 1837 as Walker Township, initially including the land west of the Grand River in Kent County in what is now most of Sparta and Alpine Townships. The township first met on property where the Gerald R. Ford Museum is located. It was the second township organized in Kent County with Canadian immigrants Samuel and Lydia White credited as its first settlers. Early pioneers found agricultural conditions especially favorable for orchards including peach and apple trees.

Eventually portions of the Township of Walker broke away or were annexed to adjacent jurisdictions. To protect its territory from further appropriation, the City of Walker was established in 1962 with an area of 26 sq. miles.

Today, the City of Walker is a thriving commercial and residential center with a population of 24,000. In addition to its agriculture heritage, Walker is known as a vibrant industrial and manufacturing center which includes Meijer Corporate Headquarters, Bissell, Betz Foundry and many other light, heavy industrial and high technology firms.



Mayor Mark Huizenga

It is my privilege to serve as the Mayor of the City of Walker. The city is comprised of diverse industries from agricultural, light and heavy manufacturing to corporate headquarters for regional and international companies. Our neighborhoods and parks are equally diverse providing access to bike trails, neighborhood parks and even the Kent County Millennium Park.

As the economy continues to rebound, we see new neighborhoods and plots being developed and even old legacy factories that once stood empty being revitalized into thriving businesses.

Our city faces many of the same challenges as other municipalities from long term liabilities and road funding issues. The management team at the City works diligently with the commission to continue to be creative with the resources we have and deliver services to our residents in a very efficient manner.

*Mark Huizenga, Mayor
City of Walker*

Next Board Meeting

February 5, 2015

8:30 am

Kent County Building