

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE 10/10/13

Federal Government Shutdown

Calhoun County government spent \$5.4 million last year in federal funding, for the provision of many mandated and essential services. These services span across many county departments, and come from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Justice, Housing & Urban Development, and Homeland Security. Our largest federally funded program is Child Support Enforcement, which spent about \$2.7 million last year within both the Prosecutor's Office and the Friend of the Court. The Women, Infant & Children (WIC) program is the second largest federally funded program at over \$800,000 per year. Since much of this federal funding is passed through the State and administered by state agencies, we are getting information from various offices to help us assess the potential impacts of the current federal government shutdown.

The recurring theme is that unless there is a "prolonged" shutdown, there should be minimal impact on the county's operations in the short term. The most common potential impacts being reported by the courts, elected officials and department heads are the inability to access grant reporting systems, draw down grant funding, and reach staff who administer some federal programs. A more significant impact may be staffing impacts due to the furlough of federal and federally funded state employees. One example is the request from the local VA Medical Center for legal coverage from the County Prosecutor's Office for mental health hearings at the VA Center, in expectation that their internal office of Legal Counsel will run out of funding this week. I will keep you posted as more information comes in.

2014 Budget Process

Budget hearings are this Friday and next Monday, 10/11 and 10/14, when the BOC Budget Committee and Administration staff will discuss 2014 funding requests and staffing needs with judges, elected officials and department heads. Submitted requests indicate that at this point we are still facing a deficit of \$2.4 million for next year, and so the budget hearings should help provide more insight and input as to how we will close this significant gap in available funding.

United Way Cookouts

All employees are invited to cookouts to benefit our United Way campaign this year. They will be held at the ***County Building on Friday, 10/11***; and at the ***Justice Center on Friday, 10/18***. Both events will be from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Sheriff Saxton will be manning the grills, joined by Prosecutor Gilbert, Board Chair Kale and Commissioner King. Commissioner Kathy-Sue Dunn will be providing some refreshments.

County Building Restoration

Construction on the first floor of the county building in Marshall is underway in response to the January 2013 flooding incident. The current construction project includes half of the floor designated to house MSU Extension, Senior Services, Planning, Parks, Economic Development and GIS, all of which fit within our new Community Development umbrella model. A recent new development is that the ***Treasurer's Office will likely be relocated*** from the second floor down to the garden level as well, which will substantially bring the first floor back to full occupancy. The Community Development side is ***scheduled for completion by year-end 2013***.

Shared Public Safety Building Discussions Back On

The City of Marshall and the State Police are moving forward with plans to build a new joint regional law enforcement center in Marshall, and Sheriff Saxton and County Administration are once again considering our ability to share space in the building. The plans have been scaled down drastically, with a new estimated total cost of approximately \$11 million for all three agencies, instead of \$24 million as originally designed last year. There is a new opportunity to seek state grant funding for the capital costs, and we are being encouraged to continue with the concept of all three agencies collaborating and once again submit grant applications, which are due by December 31. Representatives from the City of Marshall and the County met with our financial advisor and bond counsel to discuss financing options and possible cost sharing arrangements. Redstone Architects are now working on revising these plans, with the advice from legal counsel today to consider having the Marshall Building Authority own the building, and the County and State lease each agency's space from the Authority. They are also recommending that the lowest cost financing method would be to have the city of Marshall issue bonds for their portion of the construction cost, and have the County issue bonds for the County's and State's portions. The State's leasing arrangements would then reimburse the county for the State's portion of the debt service. The project is definitely progressing, at least for the City and the State. At this point Marshall has already purchased the land, and the City Council has approved the issuance of bonds. Lease documents have already been drafted for the State. The question really remains as to whether the County can obtain affordable financing and/or acquire through grants and other state assistance the necessary funding to take advantage of this unique and collaborative solution to relocate our sheriff's primary office to within the county seat, and to relocate our law enforcement operations that are currently in the outdated old jail building in Marshall.

Next steps will include getting revised draft floor plans and architectural estimates of construction cost, and revised cost sharing proposals within the next few weeks. Then assuming we deem this project worth continuing to explore, the County Board would need to pass a resolution authorizing the required 45 day referendum to begin for a possible bond issuance early next year. We would also seek Board approval to submit a Competitive Grant Assistance Program (CGAP) grant application to the state sometime between now and December.

Road Department Transition

a) Joint purchase bidding with Jackson County: The next bid to come before the Board of Commissioners will be for radio equipment, scheduled for approval in November or December. This will be the first true collaborative bid with Jackson County's Department of Transportation. Assistant County Administrator Brad Wilcox has developed with Jackson County Road Department management a 2014 joint bidding schedule that currently anticipates over 20 bids--from cold patch to radio repair services--to be conducted for both counties to create cost savings in administrative oversight and from economies of scale.

b) Bridge repairs on 29 Mile in Homer: Bridge materials will be getting delivered this week, with an anticipated start date of October 21st, and potentially complete in two weeks.

c) Joint software purchase decision: We are still in the process of reviewing accounting software so that Jackson County Department of Transportation and Calhoun County Road Department use the same application. We hope to have a recommendation by mid-November.

d) Development of Scrap Disposal plan: Managing Director Jerry Peterson has been reviewing scrap metal, old parts, vehicles, equipment and other items currently on hand but obsolete, and is working on a plan that will clean up the grounds and should also result in some revenue generation.

e) Safety Grants: Grant applications have been submitted to MDOT for three different townships and six different sites, and we will have a much larger group of projects for submittal next year. Road Department management will also now start working on “F” grants, small urban and “A” grants yet this year.

f) Collaboration with County Sheriff: Managing Director Peterson is working with the Sheriff on the possibility of utilizing the sheriff's total station survey equipment for our road design. This would save the Road Department from needing to purchase the equipment and then in return the Road department can purchase additional accessories to help speed up surveying for both agencies in return.

g) Teamsters Group Leader Meeting 10/8: HR/Labor Relations Director Kim Archambault and I attended a meeting yesterday with the Teamsters business representative, union stewards and the **three new group leaders** who assumed their new roles within the past month as part of the road workers restructuring effort. We had a very productive conversation about communication, leadership, productivity and accountability, and agreed to some processes to implement that should help further the success of this new arrangement. We are planning to schedule a similar meeting to **follow up with the UAW union leaders and staff** at the Road Department to discuss how their new contract is going, and recognize their efforts, many of which went unnoticed, throughout the transition over the past year.

Medical Examiner Request for Proposals to be Issued Soon

County Purchasing is planning to issue by mid-October a request for proposals to provide Medical Examiner professional services for the next four years, under the oversight of the Calhoun County Health Officer. The RFP was written to include requirements to ensure our compliance with the Medical Examiner state statute, and was based on input from our county sheriff and prosecuting attorney, local law enforcement agencies and funeral homes, and in consultation with other neighboring counties and other pathology experts. Bids will be due in November and we hope to recommend contract awards to the Board of Commissioners in December.

Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Meeting 10/8

At the October CVB board of directors meeting, we welcomed four new board members: Mike Criswell from Holiday Inn in Battle Creek (returning after a year off); Eric Greene from Kellogg Community College; Chris McCoy of New Level Sports (recommended by Commissioner Terris Todd); and John Thompson from Albion College. We also discussed in closed session the annual performance review of our CEO, Linda Freybler. I was reelected as Board Treasurer in September, and Commissioner Kathy-Sue Dunn was elected as Vice-Chair.

Labor Negotiations Progressing

Bargaining with POAM, representing non-supervisory sheriff's office employees, continued on October 8. We have reached tentative agreement on most proposals at this point except for economic issues, and the discussions continue to progress and be productive. The next negotiating session is scheduled for November 1, and we hope to be able to recommend to the Board of Commissioners a new contract for ratification before the current contract expires on December 31.

Veterans Affairs Committee Meeting 10/9

Today's meeting was cancelled due to lack of quorum. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 13, at 2:30 at the VA Office.

CareHere Employee Clinic Agreement Completed

County Administration has been working for over a year now with representatives from the City of Battle Creek and Toyota Tsusho of Battle Creek on a collaborative contract with CareHere Management, PLLC, to provide a near site employee health clinic for employees of all three employers. We brought this concept to the Board of Commissioners and county employees several times during 2012 and obtained general support of the concept. We then began working on lots of details regarding legal and financial issues, which ultimately involved consultation with outside attorneys and benefits consultants. Collaboration is wonderful, but sometimes difficult! Anyway, we believe the project is now back on track, with a draft agreement now finally ready for Board of Commissioner consideration. Battle Creek's City Council is expected to take up the agreement for approval soon-- possibly as early as next Tuesday, 10/15. They have already started construction the build out of the space for this clinic, within their public services building on Kendall Street. County employees have been anticipating this exciting new convenience and cost saving measure, and so we are anxious to move forward with its completion. We will be sending out more detailed information separately for the Board's review and comments.

Kimball Pines Agreement Regarding Silver Leaf Renaissance Fair Bankruptcy

Corporation Counsel Richard Lindsey has been working with Silver Leaf's bankruptcy trustee and with input from the County Parks & Recreation Commission on finding an acceptable resolution to removing their property from the Kimball Pines county park and settling the County's outstanding claim for unpaid amounts due to us. We finally reached agreement today that should satisfy our need to have the site cleaned up by the end of December, and with minimal financial impact to the county.

Employee Health Fairs Successful

Human Resources Office coordinated two employee health fairs during the past few weeks. The Battle Creek health fair was held jointly with the City of Battle Creek's employee health fair, at the Fire Station right across from our Toeller Building. Hundreds of employees attended along with dozens of providers of health related services. The Marshall health fair was today and although scaled down in size, also was a success. Both health fairs included free flu shots for county employees and their families as part of the County's wellness program.