

Bi-Weekly Update from County Administrator/Controller Kelli Scott, 3/28/16:

Employee Security Training

The County's *Risk Management Committee* collaborated with the Office of Sheriff Matt Saxton to provide on March 25th a Lockdown Security Training Program and Active Shooter Drill for the employees of the County Building in Marshall. The training was designed to promote a level of self-assurance and well-being for employees, and to expand our ability to respond to security threats, thereby enhancing public safety for County Building visitors. The training was well-attended and very engaging. Thanks to Assistant County Administrator Brad Wilcox and Detective Steve Hinkley for leading this initiative!

FireKeepers Local Revenue Sharing Board Approves Cost Reimbursements

The FireKeepers Local Revenue Sharing Board (FLRSB) met on March 18 for their second meeting of the year. The Board approved all applications for Tier II reimbursements, totaling \$126,242, intended to cover increased actual specific costs due to the operations of the FireKeepers Casino and the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi's Tribal Reservation. Reimbursements will be made to Emmett Township for public safety, legal and sewer related expenses; to Athens Township for public safety services; and to the Village of Athens for partial funding of a local street reconstruction project. The FLRSB is contracting again this year with County Administration for administrative services, including clerical and financial functions for the Board, for a fixed amount of \$30,000. I reported at the March 18 meeting a preliminary unaudited ending fund balance at December 31, 2015 of approximately \$135,000, which will carry over as unrestricted funds to start 2016. The 2016 "Net Win" payment of nearly \$5.3 million from the Tribe was the largest ever since the creation of the FLRSB in 2010, and was a 5% increase from last year's check.

The next FLRSB meeting is scheduled for *Friday, April 29, at 8:30 a.m.* at the County Building in Marshall. At the April meeting, the Board will consider allocation methods for Tiers III and IV, Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Remaining 20% Governmental Purpose funding, respectively. The FLRSB has not yet decided whether to offer a Tier IV Discretionary Grant program for this year. The meetings are open to the public.

2015 Medical Examiner Program Highlights

The County's Public Health Board met on March 21, receiving the 2015 annual report for our Medical Examiner program, administered by Western Michigan's School of Medicine (WMED) under the leadership of Dr. Joyce DeJong. One of the highlights of 2015 was the establishment of a local medical examiner advisory committee, including representatives from the County Health Department, County Administration, law enforcement, funeral homes and the Office of the Medical Examiner. This committee meets quarterly to discuss operational issues in order to ensure the best service is being provided to our residents. We also created a feedback form, available at the Health Department, for anyone to communicate concerns, suggestions or appreciation to the Medical Examiner's Office at WMED, or our transport service, Daniel Removal.

Dr. DeJong reported that during 2015, there were 429 reported deaths in Calhoun County, 392 of which were investigated by the Medical Examiner's Office, and 104 autopsies conducted. Of the total deaths, 313 were from natural causes; 80 from accidents; 25 from suicides; 2 from homicides; and 9 from indeterminate causes. The annual report notes that 44 of the 80 accidental deaths related to intoxication with drugs (21 involved heroin), far exceeding all other accidental causes of deaths in Calhoun County in 2015. This statistics also show that in Calhoun County, accidents cause a much greater proportion of deaths than they do in our peer counties. On a positive note, Medical Examiner referrals to the Gift of Life program has increased greatly since WMED began operating in Calhoun County, resulting in 37 tissue donations and 44 eye donations during 2015. This optional referral program for families of individuals who die outside of hospitals has given life, sight and mobility to hundreds of recipients over the past several years.

Legislative Updates

The Michigan Association of Counties reports that *full funding of state revenue sharing* for counties for the Fiscal Year starting October 1, 2016 cleared a legislative hurdle last week, with the House Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government sending forward the budget bill (House Bill 5276) for further consideration. Calhoun County's share of state revenue sharing is just over \$3 million, providing approximately 7% of our General Fund revenue base. These funds are not constitutionally guaranteed; rather, state revenue sharing for counties relies solely on the annual state budget appropriations process. This legislative update is very good news for Calhoun County, as it is an important and necessary source of funding for providing local public services, most of which are mandated by the State of Michigan.

Regional County Administrators Meeting

I attended on March 18 our quarterly meeting of administrators/controllers from nine counties in southwest Michigan. Discussion topics included: anticipated wage increases for 2017; plans for complying with upcoming new statewide standards for indigent defense, which might include discussions of regional administrative offices; and standardizing collective bargaining agreements across multiple union groups within a local government. Within this region, Cass County is currently seeking a county administrator, and Kalamazoo County's administrator/controller is on administrative leave.

Employee Wellness Program Success

The County's Wellness Committee is proud to announce that collectively, participants in the countywide "Biggest Loser Challenge" lost 854 pounds over the past six weeks! This latest contest saw a remarkable increase in participation, with 31 teams, up from 10 teams in the previous challenge. Our Wellness Program is optional for all county employees, and provides wellness newsletters, education and different fitness and nutrition challenges each month, with a required Health Risk Assessment to qualify for a small cash incentive at the end of the year. We value employee wellness as a sound business practice that benefits each employee as well as our organization, and the whole community!

Community Development Offering Services to Townships

Over the past few months, the County's Community Development staff (Ingrid Ault, Jen Bomba, and Brent Thelen) have attended Board and Planning Commission meetings at 10 of the County's 19 townships. These visits are a new attempt to share information about what services the department can offer to local governments and individuals, including MSU Extension's Citizen Planner course, and various other planning and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) assistance. The staff are also promoting opportunities for County residents to get involved with local government decision-making, with *current openings on the Calhoun County Planning Commission and the County Parks & Recreation Commission, as well as our four-county regional entity, the Southcentral Michigan Planning Council (SMPC)*. The County created a new Community Development Department a few years ago, in attempt to better coordinate the management of our parks, solid waste and recycling programs, economic development and community development. The County's MSU Extension Office is also part of this umbrella department, and our Senior Services Office is housed within Community Development on the first floor of the County Building in Marshall. Our Parks & Recreation Master Plan was just updated in 2015 and shared with all of the townships. That project has helped to foster discussions with townships as to how they might benefit from assistance from the County's Community Development office.

Monthly County-Wide Leadership Highlights:

Due to our all-employee security training last week, there was no County-wide meeting of judicial administrators, elected officials and department heads in March. Here are some highlights from our last meeting:

Public Health Officer Jim Rutherford reported that he has been involved with the collective focus on the local heroin issue, noting that there seems to be a renewed interest in exploring a new detox facility or sobering house within the County. He also mentioned that the Health Department is planning to increase their capacity to test homes and especially children for lead-based materials and lead exposure with new equipment and increased collaboration with the cities.

MSU Extension Regional Director Julie Pioch noted that the university department is also responding to lead issues following the Flint water crisis, and have increased resources in Genesee County and put information on the MSUE website to help with questions on dealing with lead concerns.

Veterans Affairs Office Director Aaron Edlefson reported that with funding from the 2012 voter-approved millage, the office is now fully staffed with four full-time employees and two part-time volunteer service officers. Plans are in the works to send service officers to off-site locations including Homer and Albion, to serve veterans there in a more convenient manner. The County's VA Office is now facilitating the local Veterans' Resource Team, hosting last month's meeting of more than 30 attendees in our newly renovated VA Office conference room.

Treasurer Christine Schauer emphasized the importance of "March madness" within her office, with the ensuing March 31 deadline for property owners to pay 2013 delinquent taxes or face foreclosure.

Clerk/Register of Deeds Ann Norlander and Deputy Toni Underwood highlighted this year's elections, noting that the [May 10](#) election ballots are being printed now and will include for Albion School District voters the question of annexation with the Marshall District.

Circuit and Friend of the Court Administrator Jeff Albaugh and **District Court** Administrator Kate Ambrose noted that this year is unprecedented in that six of the County's nine judgeships will be on the election ballots. All courts are also in the process of implementing the County's new document management system and making valuable process improvements as part of this implementation.

The County's **Information Technology** Department is currently getting quotes from third-party software vendors in attempt to bring back for the public the Circuit Court Clerk's online records document search program. The program has been offline recently due to inadequate security features of the previous system, and the State's plans to upgrade the system used by our courts is experiencing delays.

Assessment Coordinator Brittany Clifton attended on behalf of **Water Resources** Commissioner Chris Kosmowski, and announced that there will be hearings in May to update boundaries of 22 drainage districts, following the 100 completed last year.

Community Development Educator Ingrid Ault reported that all county parks and restroom facilities will open [May 1](#) or earlier, weather dependent.

Land Bank Executive Director Krista Trout-Edwards described the Land Bank's attention to blight throughout the county, noting that there are approximately 160 properties abandoned that need to be demolished. She also is working with the City of Albion to address lead based paint in houses. The Land Bank is partnering with County Administration to manage the process to demolish our old jail building in Marshall, with a target of May and June for demolition.

Calhoun County Consolidated Dispatch Authority interim director Rich Feole said that the Authority's governing board, chaired by Sheriff Matt Saxton, is interviewing for the vacant Executive Director position, and hopes to select a candidate soon.

The County's **Juvenile Home** invites all to their [June 10](#) annual golf outing at Binder Park Golf Course in Battle Creek.

Road Department Managing Director Christopher Bolt gave winter maintenance spending figures, noting that despite the 2015/16 mild winter season, the Road Department is on track to spend the typical \$1.5 million that we've seen in past years, with exceptions for extreme winters like the 2013/14 one. The reason spending isn't drastically down is that road crews have continued to perform patching, tree trimming and other maintenance, even when snow plows are not needed. The department is also working on longer-term planning, with a first-time effort underway to create road and bridge capital improvement plans for all 19 townships.

Senior Services Director Carl Gibson reminded the group of the upcoming [April 7](#) Senior Fair at Marshall Middle School, and reported that the County is once again hosting a Centenarians Lunch to include up to approximately 50 County residents over the age of 99. The event is scheduled for May 24 at Schuler's in Marshall.