

Updates from County Administrator/Controller Kelli Scott, 12/1/17:

County's 'AA' Bond Credit Rating Affirmed

Standard & Poor's (S&P) Global Ratings assigned 'AA' long-term ratings to the County's two recent bond issuances. According to S&P's website, a rating of 'AA' "has a very strong ability to meet its financial obligations and commitments" and differs only a slight bit from the highest 'AAA' ratings. The rating agency also gave us a "Stable Outlook," unchanged from past rating assignments, and credits an adequate economy, strong financial management, and very strong budgetary flexibility and liquidity as contributing factors to their rating. \$18M in Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) Bonds and \$9M in General Obligation Limited-Tax (GO) Bonds were both sold this week at a net interest cost to the County of approximately 3%. The MTF Bonds will be combined with federal, state and local match funds to provide for nearly \$34M in road and bridge improvements over the next year. The GO bonds will fund energy improvements and other facility, equipment, security and technology upgrades at County-owned buildings. The largest project to be bond-funded is a new geothermal heating and cooling system within the County building in Marshall, to be completed in conjunction with plans to improve security and access with a new parking lot and landscaping features, targeted for completion next June.

County Plans to Create new Public Defender Office

To meet new state standards for providing legal counsel to indigent defendants, Calhoun County submitted a required compliance plan to the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) on November 20, proposing that we replace our court-appointed attorney system with a public defender office that would employ full-time lawyers, support staff and in-house investigators. Our plan was developed by an internal workgroup led by County Board Chair Derek King, and including myself, Corporation Counsel Jim Dyer, Circuit and District Court judges and their administrators, Prosecutor David Gilbert, Sheriff Matt Saxton and Chief Deputy Randy Hazel, Deputy Circuit Court Clerk Teri Jones, contracted Defense Attorney John Sullivan and County Finance Director Michele Johnson. County Board Chair Derek King is a governor-appointed MIDC board member filling a statewide county representative seat. The MIDC was created by legislation in 2013 to oversee improvements to the state's public defense system. The new standards are intended to ensure fair, cost-effective delivery of this mandated service by counties in a way that protects public safety and accountability. The legislation also requires the State to fund all increased costs to counties incurred to comply with these new standards. Calhoun County's compliance plan includes an estimated total budget of \$2M, a little more than double our historical annual costs, for the first year of our new Public Defender's Office. Information about the new standards can be found on the MIDC website at www.michiganidc.gov.

Accountability and Transparency Tools Updated

Calhoun County has updated our annual financial dashboard and summarized data about debt service, budgets, pension liabilities, and other information the public may be interested in. It is based on our last audited financial statements for the year ended 12/31/16, and can be found on our Finance Department's web pages at <https://www.calhouncountymi.gov/government/finance/dashboard/>. Under the State's County Incentive Program (CIP) for 2018, each eligible county must meet certain requirements, outlined in 2017 Public Act 107, Section 952(3), including providing these accountability and transparency tools. The Michigan Department of Treasury also provides an interactive website called the MI Community Financial Dashboard, which includes easy-to-use, visual data regarding each local municipality's fiscal health. It is online at <http://micommunityfinancials.michigan.gov>.

Highlights from Monthly County-wide Leadership Meeting

On November 28, the County's judicial administrators, elected officials and department heads met

for our monthly leadership meeting, facilitated by the Administrator/Controller's office. We discussed the County's 2018 proposed budgets, and heard updates from Health Officer Eric Pessell, Sheriff Matt Saxton and HR/Labor Relations Director Kim Archambault regarding the recent Hepatitis A outbreak in Southeast Michigan. The message was that Calhoun County officials are exercising a heightened sense of awareness about the disease and are taking the necessary prevention and immunization steps for county employees identified as having higher risks or contacting Hepatitis A based on possible exposure during job duties. The County's Health Department also encourages public awareness through updates on the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Center for Communicable Diseases (CDC) websites.

Here are a few other highlights from County departments:

MSU Extension District Manager Julie Pioch noted that new Food Safety faculty assigned to our district are partnering with the County Health Department to offer "Cooking for Crowds" classes to help churches and non-profits be best prepared for serving large group meals for the holidays.

Calhoun County Land Bank Executive Director Krista Trout-Edwards reported that work continues to finish planned demolitions of blighted properties before winter, as well as several more home rehabilitation projects in partnership with Habitat for Humanity.

37th Circuit Court Administrator/Friend of the Court Kris Getting recapped a very positive recent adoption day event that included four families, and noted that Circuit Court is providing continual training in response to staffing changes stemming from this year's Early Retirement Incentive Program within the courts.

Veterans Affairs Office Director Aaron Edlefson announced that this year marked the first recipient of our new Calhoun County Veterans' Scholarship through Kellogg Community College, which was created as part of a new strategic plan for the office and our Veterans Affairs Committee.

Assistant County Administrator Brad Wilcox highlighted activities of the County's Risk Management Committee, including recent CPR and Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) training for over 60 county employees, and the upcoming installation of an updated door access and employee identification card system throughout the County.

Treasurer Brian Wensauer and Deputy Treasurer Nina Baranowski reported that their office is working on updating the County's Animal License Ordinance and associated processes, with goals to provide better education and efficiencies for the public, including the potential for an online dog licensing system.

Sheriff Matt Saxton announced the promotion of Holly Thomas from Lieutenant to Captain, making her the first female Captain within the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office!

Community Development Director Jen Bomba noted that upcoming year-end activities will include setting 2018 meeting schedules and recommending member reappointments for the Calhoun County Planning Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission, Solid Waste Advisory Committee and Economic Development Corporation. She added that there are pending significant changes in the state legislature regarding management of Solid Waste programs, including those that would impact our recycling and planning structures.

Senior Services Manager Helen Guzzo reported the County's involvement with the newly kicked

off “Dementia Friendly” community initiative, and with Medicare/Medicaid counseling for the open enrollment period to end December 7.

Juvenile Home Director Mike Gillum highlighted several community volunteer opportunities in which eligible juvenile home residents are participating in this holiday season, including helping at church-based food pantries.

Equalization Department Office Manager Sandy Peterson reported that county-wide sales studies are on track for completion within state deadlines, and that we will welcome a new contracted Equalization Director Matt Hansen to start December 5, along with an additional Appraiser, which is in the process of being selected through the County’s hiring process.

Human Resources/Labor Relations Director Kim Archambault stated that she and other county management are currently bargaining with four (out of our 10) union groups that have contracts expiring this year, and that employee benefits open enrollment is nearing the end, going smoothly with a totally online, automatic, easy-to-use system for choosing 2018 benefits.

Road Department Operations Director Doug Steffen said the County is gearing up for winter operations and planning to meet with school superintendents and transportation directors in December and January to give overviews of snow plowing plans as well as communication strategies.

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