



Administrator's Update 8/3/07

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Strategic Planning This past Tuesday night July 31, the County Board completed their strategic planning for 2007/2008. This was the second meeting held. The Board formulated several long-term goals that will be brought forth to the public and considered in the month of August. They also developed a list of short-term priorities that will be directed to various groups for completion in the next 12 to 18 months. The process used by the Board was somewhat different from the past, and I anticipate that this process will be further modified as time goes on. The County Board has moved their strategic planning to the June through July timeframe in order to have a strategic plan in place prior to the adoption of the budget in October for the subsequent year. In the past, strategic planning has been held in January of the year for which the plan is intended. The change will allow departments to prepare and plan and allow staff to develop budget recommendations that will more closely help meet the goals of the County Board of Commissioners.

2008 Budget The 2008 budget process for Grand Traverse County continues. As most of you know, the total County budget for 2007 is approximately \$148 million with approximately a \$36 million general fund appropriation. Dean Bott, Finance Director, and I are meeting with all departments to discuss their budget requests and make adjustments in order to bring the budget in line with the anticipated revenues for 2008. Budget requests total approximately \$40 million of general fund requests on an estimated 36 million revenue budget. In all likelihood, this means that in most cases, new positions requested will not be recommended to the County Board and other cuts will be necessary in order to bring this budget in line. The budget needs to be recommended to the County Board by September 18. The County Board will hold public hearings the first and second week in September on this budget. I anticipate that department heads will make presentations to the Board the first part of September and the County Board will deliberate and make final recommendations on the budget toward the end of September. Of course, these are public budget meetings and anyone and everyone is encouraged to attend.


Pugsley Work Crew As the State continues to face budget problems, their decisions continue to have negative impacts on local service deliveries. Last week, we were notified by the State prison at Pugsley that work crews will no longer be available to local units of government and not-for-profits. The State has had a unique program where they provide work crews at a significant discounted cost to local units to assist in providing services. In the Grand Traverse region, we have heavily relied on those work crews. They help many agencies such as the County, City, parks departments, Soil Conservation District who runs our Nature Education Reserve, State parks, and

others. For Grand Traverse County itself, the Pugsley crews do a significant amount of grass cutting and landscaping during the summer and much of our snow shoveling all winter long. At the Nature Education Reserve, they help build our walkways and our boat ramps and clear paths to provide more access to the project. We were notified that they will discontinue work on August 17. It is estimated that for our County unit of government alone this will equate to the equivalent of about \$90,000 in lost services. We are currently in the process of trying to find a way to address that issue. Anyone who shares our concern about this loss of service to our community should contact our legislators and the governor's office to express his/her concern. The County Board has passed resolutions at their last Board meeting to that very thing and expressed their displeasure, and similar comments are being made throughout the State of Michigan.

 **Boardman Pond** The County continues to draw down Boardman Pond under the agreement with DEQ to bring the water in the pond to a more safe level. Currently, the pond has been drawn down 130 inches or 10 feet 8 inches. The County monitors on a regular basis the impacts of the draw down on the pond. There are two or three areas of erosion that are being watched by the engineers. Signage is being posted to warn people of the potential danger associated with unstable soils. Our risk management company, MMRMA, will be here around the 14th of August to do a walk of the site to ensure that we have adequate risk prevention methods in place. This draw down is temporary until the feasibility study is completed. The impacts, of course, though, are very evident and significant. The good news is that many areas of the pond where there is no longer water have already begun to re-vegetate. In addition, the river upstream of the pond is beginning to reclaim some of the land and clear out some of the sediment that was in that part of the river for years. We are noticing new gravel beds, and generally, the draw down I believe has been very successful. As we continue to monitor this situation, we take steps that are necessary to ensure public safety and maintain safe access where possible. One example of this is that the original boat launch on the northern end of the pond was closed due to the steep banks, but a temporary boat launch is being opened about 50 yards to the west, which will accommodate the reduced level of water as the pond is drawn down. We expect the draw down to be completed on September 8.

 **TBAYS Soccer Fields** Another project that the County continues to work on is finding more safe and suitable access for the TBAYS soccer fields located at our Keystone Park property. A number of years ago through a combination of land acquisition and donations, the County was able to purchase the property on the corner of Brimley and Keystone. Through a cooperative agreement with TBAYS soccer, that property has been dramatically changed and turned into a very successful soccer program for youth in our community. While the County made the investment primarily through grants and purchased the land, TBAYS has paid for all the improvements. This complex routinely holds State and regional soccer competitions and championships. Most recently, we have begun to hold college recruiting clinics at the facility. On a weekend, it's not unusual to see 500-750 cars in the parking lot with several thousand people at the site. It has been brought to our attention by the railroad, whose tracks

our temporary entry way granted by Consumers Power crosses, that this is not an acceptable condition and they want us to look for a new means to permanently enter the property. Last week, the County met with MDOT Rail Safety, the railroad, Consumers Energy, the Parks Board, the Road Commission, and County Commissioners to discuss this project and look at what alternatives may be available to provide a better access to the property. Several options are being discussed and we hope to propose an option before the end of this year. A new entry way into the property is vital and is estimated to cost several hundred thousand dollars. Final numbers will not be known for some time. This is one of our most used County facilities and it is an important recreation asset for Grand Traverse County.

 **Land Bank Authority** In the last year and a half, the County has established a County Land Bank Authority. Most recently, the Land Bank Authority has approved the acquisition of a property that has come under foreclosure for non-payment of taxes. The Land Bank Authority under Chairman Bill Rokos, County Treasurer, has opened up discussions and begun a partnership with Habitat for Humanity. On this project, the intention will be to acquire the land, split the property into two lots, demolish the existing facilities, which are unacceptable and unsafe, and turn the property over to Habitat for Humanity who will build two Habitat for Humanity houses on the site. Habitat for Humanity will pay all the costs associated with this transfer. Two benefits are provided by this. First, two families who could not otherwise afford it, will be afforded a place to live in Grand Traverse County. Secondly, a property that has been considered by the township an eyesore will be cleaned up and put into productive use. I am very pleased that the Land Bank Authority has decided to take this step, and while their work in the future may go in different directions, the collaboration and partnership with Habitat is appropriate and serves a public need.