



Administrator's Update 2/9/07

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Parks & Recreation This past week it was announced that Grand Traverse County has received a \$250,000 Kellogg Grant for a project at Twin Lakes Park, which is a result of the Twin Lakes master planning process that was initiated last year. This project incorporates access to the park including Twin Lake for all handicapped individuals. The project will include trails and walkways, a gazebo area, fishing pier, beach access - all handicap accessible. We believe this will be the only facility in the area of its kind. The project is scheduled to cost approximately \$750,000, and the County has secured the cost from donations. We are pleased to announce the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians has agreed to donate \$50,000 to this project. Grand Traverse County has committed \$62,000 and the Kellogg Foundation \$250,000. Thanks to Tim Schreiner, our Parks and Recreation Director, for his work in securing this funding.

In addition to being instrumental in our success for the Twin Lakes project, Tim Schreiner has just been awarded the State Fellowship Award for the State Park and Recreation Association. This is the highest award given by the Park and Recreation Association of the State of Michigan. Tim has served long and well in that organization, but in particular this award is granted to Tim for recognition for being one of the Parks and Recreation leaders in the State of Michigan. Congratulations, Tim! We are all very proud of you.

Boardman and Sabin Dams The County continues to take over responsibility for the Boardman and Sabin Dams. These last two weeks, we've been working with the Department of Environmental Quality, Board of Light & Power, and our Department of Public Works to develop the actual maintenance plan that includes all tasks and responsibility assignments between the DPW and Board of Light & Power for care and maintenance of the dams. That process has been very successful. The Board of Light & Power and the County are currently working together on maintaining the dams, and DPW staff continue to learn the operation with the goal of eventually taking over complete responsibility for maintenance of those facilities. In addition, we have received a preliminary order from the DEQ to do a temporary draw down immediately of the Keystone Pond of 3 feet. We are in the process of discussing this with DEQ, because we have concerns over the fact that there is currently ice on the pond and drawing down the pond at this time may create an unsafe condition. No final determination on that has been made. We do know, however, that we will be required to draw the pond down by approximately 17 feet by August 31 of this year. They are currently working to determine a plan for how that draw down will take place to ensure the structural integrity of the dam remains and that the draw down takes place in a way that will have minimal impact on the surrounding properties. In an additional development, a representative of Varnum & Associates, a law firm out of Grand Rapids who did a formal review of all the deeds of property ownership around the pond,

has filed a report with the Boardman River Dams Committee and has indicated that when the pond is drawn down, that Grand Traverse County will own the bottomlands that will be exposed as a result of the draw down. This therefore means that the County would own the land to the new river's edge. The initial determination was that none of the existing property owners - there are currently 27 - have any riparian rights of ownership. The County's intention is to work with those landowners to find an amicable way to continue to provide them with access to the new river if in fact the dams are taken down. A further issue that we worked on is how we would deal with the exposed bottomlands once the pond is drawn down. Would this area naturally re-vegetate? Will we seed? How will we prevent evasive species from entering the area? These are all questions that we are currently working on.

 **Conflict of Interest Issue** Recently, you've been made aware of a conflict of interest issue that is being reviewed by the County. You may have read that the newspaper is concentrating on the issue of Commissioner Wheelock and the work that he has done with the County over the years. There are other issues that we are finding of potential conflicts with other County employees. We are working through those at this point in time. It's important to note that this request to review Commissioner Wheelock's conflict of interest and to look at the conflict of interest policy of the County in general was initiated at the request of Commissioner Wheelock as part of the review of the Board Rules and procedures to be initiated at the beginning of this year. Commissioner Wheelock, the other Commissioners, and I are concerned and want to make sure that we are addressing conflicts of interest in the most appropriate manner. It is clear that there are some procedures that we need to change including re-looking at the purchasing policy and the Board Rules and procedures. We are also in the process of working with civil counsel to develop a new conflict of interest policy and appropriate disclosure forms for employees who may have a conflict. Really, we need to do a better job than we have in the past about monitoring these situations, and I am confident that we will when we institute these new reviews and policies. It's unfortunate, however, that the newspaper neglected to mention the fact that this review was initiated at Commissioner Wheelock's request. While it doesn't change the fact that we need to make improvements in our policies and procedures, I think clarifying the fact that this was requested by the Commissioner might have given the public a little different impression of what was going on as a result of the article that was published.

 **Smoke-Free Workplace Ordinance Consideration** The City of Traverse City recently sent to the County Board of Commissioners a request for the County to consider making Grand Traverse County a smoke-free workplace county. They provided us with an ordinance to consider. They further indicated that if the County decides not to move this forward, the City of Traverse City would likely develop an ordinance for the City itself to make all public places and workplaces smoke-free. The County is currently evaluating this proposal, and it will be discussed further at the Ways & Means meeting on February 20. Several counties and a number of cities in the state have taken similar action. We are currently gathering data for the County Board to consider.

I hope everybody has been able to keep warm. Good news ahead - balmy temperatures in the 20's next week! I hope everyone enjoys the weekend.