




Administrator's Update 6/18/07


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Dams The dam feasibility projects continue to move forward working with the Boardman River Dams Committee. The feasibility study is underway, and the first components are being worked on. There is still more funding that is needed in order to complete the feasibility study and work with national foundations and others is taking place to secure those funds. On the local front, the draw down permit by the DEQ has been approved. This past weekend the County has noticed in the paper the intention to begin the draw down on June 18 at approximately 2 inches a day. A draw down plan has been developed by ECT Engineering and that plan will be followed as we go through the draw down process, which includes monitoring of the draw down will take place on a daily basis, both by local staff and representatives of ECT.

We understand that property owners have filed an appeal with the DEQ to have this decision reviewed. The County will proceed with the draw down, primarily because we have an agreement signed between the County and the DEQ at the beginning of the year, which indicated we would have the pond drawn down by 17 feet by August 31 of 2007. We also understand the property owners are considering filing an injunction to stop the draw down and we will of course, address that issue when it arises. Throughout this process, the property owners have been involved and actively engaged in the decision-making. Finally, we received a report from Varnum & Associates, a law firm out of Grand Rapids hired to evaluate the ownership of the bottomlands when the pond is drawn down. This group was hired and recommended by the Property Owners Committee. The summary of the findings of Varnum after about 8 months of research indicated in their opinion that the bottomlands will be owned by Grand Traverse County as a successor to Consumer's Power who deeded the property to the County several decades ago.

Robert P. Griffin Hall of Justice Remodeling Work continues on the punch list items for the Robert P. Griffin Hall of Justice. A meeting with the contractor, architect and the County and court staff met last week to continue to move this project to conclusion. Several items are still under appeal with the State of Michigan. They include several door openings and a ramp landing where the stairs connect the old existing church and the new building. Results of those appeals should be done by the end of July. In no circumstance will it be the responsibility of the County to make any appropriate changes. It's not unusual in a large project like this for a number of things to drag on. We are working hard to get them completed as quickly as possible. This is of course complicated by the fact that we run 4-5 courts in that building five days per week.

 **Capital Improvement Plan** Grand Traverse County has set up a Capital Improvement Plan Committee. The purpose of this committee is to develop a capital planning process that the county will use to support its decisions in properties, facilities and long term planning in the 20 year range as well as short term goal development in the 1 to 5 year range. The County Board of Commissioners have discussed the need to evaluate the current assets owned by the county to look at ways to reduce and eliminate unnecessary ownership of properties and to put in place a plan for where the county's facilities will expand and grow as demand requires. This committee will establish criteria that will be used to evaluate future development, public process to engage the citizens of the county in the discussions and the procedures that will be used by the county planning commission and the county board in evaluating these recommendations during the budget process. The work of this committee is expected to take approximately 6 months. Included in the committee and staff Dennis Aloia, John Sych, Tim Schreiner, Don Sheehan, Danny Brown and Dean Bott, County Commissioners Richard Thomas and Bruce Hooper as well as County Planning Commissioners Virginia Coulter, Richard Crampton and Aaron Bowron.

 **Historic Courthouse Remodeling** This past month the County Board of Commissioners awarded a bid for architectural services for the remodeling of the old court house to Clark, Walter, Serrine Architects. This project includes the remodeling of the first, second and third floors of this building to accommodate the circuit and circuit court related services. It will also include moving the state probation office, which is the probation office for the circuit court, back into the historic courthouse and expanding the facilities for Friend of the Court operations. Remodeling plans also include replacing all of the existing windows. This of course requires coordination with the State Historical Preservation office and will be a much needed improvement.

 **Record Eagle Articles** There were 2 articles reported in the Record Eagle this past week inferring that the county inappropriately was hiring a public relations company to train department managers and supervisors in how to communicate effectively with the media. The purpose of this is ongoing training for county employees to become as effective as possible in conveying the programs and services offered in the county and to utilize the media as a means to get the word out to our citizens. We believe this will help to increase utilization of these programs. In addition, it was inferred that this was in some way illegal or that we did not follow the county purchasing policy. Bob Cooney, civil council for the County, has reviewed this situation and issued an opinion. The legal opinion states that the County did in fact meet all legal requirements. The purchasing policy states that professional services can be obtained by the county without the necessity to go out for formal bids. While it is generally the practice of the county board on large projects such as hiring of architects and engineers to go out on bids, smaller projects (this project was estimated to be under \$2000) do not require bids and, in fact, often times professional service is based on particular expertise. In this case, training through Mike Kent has been provided in the past to department heads and supervisors and this is a continuation of that training. The bottom line is that we adhered to the policy.



County Website the County's website is up and running and we are pleased with the success we have seen with the website at this point in time. Recent statistics show that in the last 3 months alone, we had 64,069 individual hits to the website with more than 211,000 total hits. We continue to work to improve the website to make it more user friendly. The change to the new website design has allowed departments to interact more directly with changing their personal websites and all but a few departments have active websites on the computer. In addition we are pleased that all county departments have come back under the county's website to provide more streamlined access for the customer. If you haven't, please take a moment to look at our website at www.grandtraverse.org.