



## Administrator's Update 3/9/09

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**Fire Prevention & Life Safety Program** Representatives of Grand Traverse County met with representatives of Metro Fire to discuss Metro Fire's Fire Prevention & Life Safety Program. Several years ago, the County Board of Commissioners agreed to fund a fire prevention and education program. The program was initially provided by Rural Fire and was transferred over to the responsibility of Metro Fire last year. The name of the program has been changed to Fire Prevention & Life Safety. This meeting was held to work out the details of running the program. Chief Pat Parker and Wayne Kladder, Chairman of the Metro Fire Board, presented details of the program to the County. It was agreed that a contract will be established between the County and Metro Fire. Metro Fire will provide an annual budget for the program as well as a work plan for the coming year. Metro will also provide a report at the end of each year on the success of the program. Grand Traverse County had a long-standing relationship with the fire departments and is pleased to be able to continue that relationship.


**Construction Code Budget** As you might imagine, the last 2 years have been difficult for the Construction Code program as the economy has slowed and new construction and remodeling has been significantly reduced. We are currently seeing an approximate 45% reduction in activity in the program. The Construction Code Department is an enterprise fund of the County. An enterprise fund means that the cost of the program is completely paid for by the revenues that are generated in the program. These revenues come from fees paid for building inspections. Our Construction Code Department does building code, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical inspections and plan reviews for construction in most of Grand Traverse County. Over the years at the direction of the County Board, the Construction Code Department has built up a substantial fund balance solely for the purpose of addressing hard economic times. That has allowed us to sustain the program over the last couple of years. In addition, in response to the slow down, the staffing in the department has been reduced from 20 staff down to 13 staff. Even with those reductions this past year, the program had to utilize fund balance to balance the budget. We are in the process of reviewing the situation and making additional recommendations for reduction in the program. We are hoping to do so in a way that will not affect customer service so as not to discourage any building that will take place. We will be reporting this to the County Board at the Ways & Means Meeting on March 17.


**Labor Negotiations** Labor negotiations with County departments continue. Over the past several months, we have settled contracts with our Corrections Officers, our Dispatch Officers, our Health Department, and our AFSCME Unit. We continue to negotiate with our Circuit Court employees, Sheriff Deputies, Sergeants, and Captains and Lieutenants. We will also begin negotiations soon with our Central Records employees and our Central Dispatch Supervisors. The negotiations have been difficult with the tight economic times. Our employees have been very understanding and, as always, have continued to work with us to bring resolution to these labor agreements.


**2010 Strategic Planning** On March 12, the County Board of Commissioners will take the next step in their 2010 Strategic Planning. In January, the County Board held a series of meetings where the public was invited to make recommendations and suggestions on issues important to the citizens of Grand Traverse County as they relate to Grand Traverse County government in future


years. This Thursday night at 6:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the Governmental Center, the County Board will review the information provided by the citizen groups. In addition, they will add other items they feel are important for our future planning. The County Board will then work with facilitators to develop a plan for 2010. That may be completed Thursday night or may take an additional meeting. Once done, that information will be provided to departments so departments can utilize it in preparing their 2010 budget and in developing their own strategic plans for 2010. This year, the meetings with the public were an additional step that was planned for by the County Board. We believe public involvement can only make the process better.


 **Disposition of the Dams on the Boardman River** The County and the City continue to work together towards a final decision on the disposition of the dams. The City Manager and I are working together to come up with a process to provide the information necessary to the City Commission and County Board so decisions can be made. Our goal is to try to make decisions in concert with each other. We anticipate additional meetings of the two boards in the first few weeks of April. We've also asked for the information on hydropower generation to be consolidated by our consultants into a summary document that is easy for all to read and understand. We continue to work to bring this project to conclusion.

 **2008 Budget** While Dean Bott, our Finance Director, and his staff are still putting the final touches on the 2008 budget, it appears that 2008 was a good year in spite of the difficult economic times that we face. There were many challenges that we faced in 2008 including lost revenue from interest, increased costs related to the Child Care programs, and lost fees and revenues in some court operations to name a few. Despite all those difficulties, our County departments worked hard to keep expenditures to a minimum. Because of their hard work, the expenditure budget came in substantially under the expected budget, which allowed us to end the year with a positive fund balance of almost \$200,000. I want to thank all the departments for their efforts and hard work and the responsibility they showed in managing their budgets with great efficiency.

 **Human Resources** I continue to interview candidates for the Human Resources Director position. We've been through two rounds of interviews and have not yet identified a successful candidate to take on this very critical role for the County. We will continue to review candidates and may re-advertise - this time with an open deadline, which will allow us to continue to interview until the position is filled. It is very important that we get the right individual for this job. With more than 500 employees and 13 different bargaining units and associations, the role of the Human Resources Director is critical to the successful operation of the County. In the interim, I have assigned additional duties to several of the staff in the department and have taken over all responsibility for the operation of the department.

 **DPW** Our Department of Public Works Manager, Chris Buday, has been called up in his National Guard responsibilities and has left for Florida. He is estimated to be gone for 200 days. In the interim, Ross Childs has contracted with the Sewer & Water Committee of DPW and the Board of Public Works to pick up some of that workload. The rest of the workload will be spread among other employees including myself. We are currently evaluating with the townships (who pay all the costs associated with this department) the best way to carry out the work responsibilities of the department for the next 6 months until Chris' return.

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