



Administrator's Update 11/12/10

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■ **Health Services Building** The Health Department moved into its current facility on Garfield November 17, 1993 as a temporary facility. This building was purchased from the Intermediate School District and has been remodeled and cobbled together to provide clinic services and most recently dental services. The building is in need of significant repairs and is too small for the present services, especially the growing dental clinic. The County Board of Commissioners directed an evaluation take place of the facility to look into the financial feasibility of expanding the building to accommodate the dental clinic needs of expanding to 12 chairs and reorganizing the existing building in a manner to provide better access to services by clients. The goal here was to expand dental services, include an emergency operations center, and reorganize the existing facility to more adequately serve the clients. A review was done by staff and it was determined that, for approximately the same money being spent on rent and an increase of rent by the dental clinic services, a new expansion of the building could be done and the building could be remodeled, thereby meeting all the needs and completing some seriously needed improvements to the existing facility. The County Board Public Health & Safety Committee last week authorized staff to do design and engineering specifications and to go out on bids for possible expansion of the building in the future. That determination will be made when the results of the bid are seen and full financial analysis is complete.

■ **Dams** Work continues on the removal of the County-owned Boardman and Sabin dams. The County continues to work with the Implementation Team and the City of Traverse City on this project. Currently, it appears there's enough money available to remove the City-owned Brown Bridge Dam. The group is on its way to also have enough funding to remove Sabin Dam. To this date, fundraising to remove the dams has exceeded \$2.5 million with a significant number of additional grants currently under consideration. In addition, the roads that are affected by dam removal - including Keystone, Cass, and South Airport - have been included in the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians' tribal road system. This potentially opens up significant federal assistance in modifying those roads to meet any modifications necessary as a result of dam removal. Progress in this project has accelerated significantly in the past 6 months and we hope that momentum will continue so that at least one dam will be removed starting in 2012.

■ **Labor Negotiations** The County continues to work on labor contracts. Three labor contracts have recently been completed, and we are in the process of negotiating four additional contracts. The unions and the County Board have come to an agreement for the first time on payment of a portion of premium for health insurance. Beginning in 2011, county employees will pay 6% of the premium, which will be reduced to 4% if they participate in the insurance wellness program by December 10, 2010. Starting in 2012, County employees will pay 8% with a 2% reduction to 6% if they participate in the wellness program.

■ **Economic Development** This past week representatives of the County met with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to discuss possible improvements in the relationship between the state agency and the counties, cities, and local municipalities. Local representatives stressed the need for the MEDC to modify their “one size fits all” strategic plan of the state to a more regional approach of looking at economic development. We made a strong case to the representatives that what is needed and useful in Grand Traverse County or in the northwest region of the state is quite different from southeast Michigan. We offered our assistance in helping them draft appropriate goals and objectives that will truly benefit the region. We made it clear that we think looking at a regional approach gives us the opportunity to share with our neighbors and collaborate on projects that will benefit the region as opposed to any individual county. Working together strengthens our opportunities to expand economic development in this area.

■ **Senior Center Millage** This past election, the voters of Grand Traverse County approved a millage for a senior center consolidation project. This millage allows the County to take over responsibility for operation of the senior center previously operated by the City of Traverse City along with contributions from several townships. In addition, this consolidation allows for expansion of programming and support services for senior centers in the outlying areas of the County. A meeting was held this past Monday to begin to discuss the transition. Tentatively, the transition will take place July 1, 2011. All seniors will be able to utilize the senior center services at no cost. In the past, a membership fee for all users was required. The City will continue to operate the senior center for the first 6 months of 2011 while we complete the transition plan and prepare for the County’s oversight starting July 1.

■ **Community Challenge Planning Grant** Grand Traverse County, in collaboration with the City of Traverse City and the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, was recently awarded a Community Challenge Planning Grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. That grant includes a \$50,000 grant to develop a housing information inventory and analysis. This evaluation will be completed by the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments. This inventory will identify housing needs and allow local communities to focus their attention on certain programs. The grant also includes \$50,000 for the County to complete our new master plan, which will include input from the leadership of all local municipalities and strive to include the principals developed by the Grand Vision process. The City of Traverse City will receive \$100,000 to develop revitalization plans for five of its corridors - Garfield Avenue, East Eighth Street, Fourteenth Street, and East and West Front Street - in an effort to increase economic vitality and improve public infrastructure. Finally, Grand Traverse County will receive \$195,000 for the development of a housing trust fund. This is relatively new in county government, but will allow a trust fund to be built to assist in needed housing projects throughout the community. It will be matched with \$190,000 in funds that have been identified from the foreclosure developed through the Land Bank Authority, bringing the total to over \$350,000 that we will be able to use to assist local developers in developing critically needed affordable housing throughout the community. A big thank you and congratulations are due to John Sych and the Planning staff as well as the other participants. There were only 42 grants awarded throughout the country with stiff competition being received from large municipalities and states. For Grand Traverse County to be one of the 42 recipients is quite an accomplishment.



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