



GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY Administration/Board of Commissioners

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Grand Traverse County provides mandated and necessary services that ensure safety and add value to our community.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

County Administrator Invited to Participate in State Policy Forum

September 9, 2016

Traverse City – Grand Traverse County Administrator Tom Menzel has been asked to participate in a panel discussion during the West Michigan Policy Forum on Monday, September 26, at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. Over 500 are expected to attend this day-long event that engages state business and policy leaders in discussions about priorities and “innovative pro-business policies that can continue driving Michigan forward.”

The conference is geared toward chief executives and presidents, vice presidents, directors, and managers in the business community, and legislators and government officials. This year’s topics include how unfunded pension and legacy costs affect Michigan’s cities; exploring market-based policies that fight poverty and connect people to jobs; identifying industries and jobs of the future, and preparing needed talent; reviewing talent data and policies that could expand talent pools; and how to keep Michigan a top-ten state by potentially removing personal income tax.

The panel discussion including Menzel will follow the morning keynote speech by David Walker, First Senior Strategic Advisor for the Global Public Sector Practice at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). Walker will present a study of seven Michigan municipalities (including Grand Traverse County), their legacy/pension costs, and how their liabilities might be “drastically understated.” Moderated by Mary Kramer, Business Publisher of *Crain’s Detroit Business*, the conversation will focus on the study and how Michigan’s citizens face mounting debt from governmental employee retirement benefits coming due that could cause large cuts to other budgets or necessitate tax increases to fund the bills.

Menzel will be answer questions about: the impact of the county’s retirement benefit debt on Grand Traverse County budgets; how and why move to defined contributions; and challenges and barriers encountered when addressing the debt. “I am privileged to share my experience and some of the county’s strategies for addressing its pension debt,” said Menzel. “I also look forward to such a unique opportunity to discuss potential solutions with some of our state’s finest business and governmental community leaders.”

Menzel’s co-panelists are Port Huron City Manager James Freed, Director of Legislation for Michigan AFSCME Nick Ciaramitaro, President and CEO of Autocam Medical John Kennedy, and Former Michigan State Treasurer Doug Roberts. For more information about the forum, visit <http://www.wmpolicyforum.com> on line.

The West Michigan Policy Forum’s mission is “to create jobs and opportunities in Michigan by removing barriers to competitiveness, empowering grassroots advocacy within the state’s business community, and moving forward legislative policy directives geared towards Michigan’s long-term prosperity.”

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