

ISSUES UPDATE – MARCH 2008



The first quarter of 2008 was a very busy time for Ingham County Government. We are already working on the 2009 budget and we are predicting a shortfall of approximately 3 million dollars for 2009. Even with the budget cuts that were necessary to balance the budget for 2008, Ingham County has continued to provide a high quality of services to its residents. With the cooperation of the Elected Officials and Department Heads, the Ingham County Board of Commissioners has developed a strategy that continues to provide access to health care for the uninsured; expanded recreational opportunities; and improved the adult and juvenile justice system.

The first quarter of 2008 has seen much activity in Ingham County Government to include the following:

- Two new vendors began providing Deferred Compensation options to employees.
- Ms. Bonnie Toskey, from Cohl, Stoker, Toskey and McGlinchey, now staffs an office at the Human Services Building, within the Human Resources Department. Ms. Toskey, will be the lead attorney from the office to deliver Labor Relations services. This new arrangement replaces the Labor Relations services that had been provided by the Human Resources Department.
- Through a reorganization of the Human Resources Department and the Financial Services Department, the Insurance Benefits Coordinator is now assigned and works out of the Human Resources Department. Two employees were transferred from Financial Services to Human Resources to complete the reorganization.
- Collective bargaining continues with several of the labor unions. 2008 will be a particularly busy year for contract negotiations, as almost every labor contract expires during 2008.
- To comply with State Law, the Commissioners passed a resolution to terminate Domestic Partner Benefits. Other Qualified Adults benefits have been added to assist those employees who qualify.
- Through a cooperative effort from the Board Coordinator, Controller's Staff and Human Resources, a training session was provided to assist those employees who develop resolutions. Approximately 40 people attended and commented very favorably about the training. This type of training will be an ongoing effort to assist all departments and to better coordinate the activities and services delivered by the County.

- The Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to establish a County Advisory Tax Limitation Committee. This resolution will begin the process of restoring the county fixed separate tax limitation. Due to Proposition A and Headlee, the maximum levy of mills has been rolled back. Without reestablishment of the maximum levy of mills, county revenue will continue to decrease and county services will experience severe cuts. Unused taxing capacity is also an important component of Ingham County's excellent financial position, which contributes to its long term credit rating. Once the Board of Commissioners appoints the members to the Ingham County Advisory Tax Limitation Committee, the Committee will prepare their recommendation and transmit it to the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners will then propose a resolution submitting the question to a vote of the electorate of Ingham County. If passed, the question will be placed on the ballot for the fall election in November.
- The 2009 Budget Calendar was adopted. The 2008 Strategic Planning process and the annual update of county fees are underway. The 2009 budget process is expected to be challenging, with the knowledge of decreased revenues and increased expenses.
- The Board of Commissioners passed a resolution authorizing the establishment of a trust fund for retiree health care. Withdrawals from this fund may be made solely for the payment of health care benefits for Ingham County retirees and the administrative costs associated with this fund.
- The annual Cultural Diversity Luncheon Program was held at the Jury Assembly room in the VMC Building. A large variety of ethnic foods was served and a program filled with entertainment was enjoyed by the many employees that were able to attend.
- The State authorized PA 164 of 2007, fundamentally changing the way 911 services are funded. There will be a statewide 19 cent surcharge as well as a locally assessed surcharge on all devices/lines capable of accessing 911. This Act takes effect July 1, 2008 and sunsets February 2009. Therefore, the Ingham County Board of Commissioners adopted an amendment to the Ingham County 911 Service Plan to establish a monthly county-based 911 surcharge as permitted under this statute and established the county-based surcharge at 31 cents per device per month.
- Upon the recommendation of the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) the Ingham County Board of Commissioners adopted a Policy for the operation of computer network, internet access and email with the Circuit Court. This Policy written in collaboration with the County Attorney, the Circuit Court, MIS and the Board of Commissioners established policies and procedures, for the control and monitoring of the court's information, to assure that the non-public information is maintained in a protected and confidential manner.

- The Ingham County Board of Commissioners approved entering into a contract amendment with M/A-COM, Inc. for a simulcast site enhancement to the Ingham County Public Safety Radio Communications System, as recommended by the Ingham County 911 Advisory Committee. In addition, a contract was approved with TUSA Consulting, Inc. to act as the County agent to review and make recommendations on the M/A-COM proposal, for this simulcast site enhancement. The enhancement to the system is scheduled to be completed, operational and accepted by the County by July 1, 2008.
- The Ingham County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution that expressed its intent to enter into a conditional agreement with the Cities of Lansing and East Lansing for the purpose of creating a Consolidated 911 Center operation, once an Action Plan has been developed and approved by the affected parties. Furthermore, the Controller was authorized to negotiate an agreement with representatives of the Cities of Lansing and East Lansing, with the final agreement to be brought back to the Board of Commissioners for approval. It is anticipated that the 911 Steering Committee and 911 Advisory Committee will put together a request for 911 funds for consultant services to assist in the preparation of an Action Plan to establish the main tasks, proper time sequence and time schedule to accomplish the consolidation of the two 911 Centers.
- The Ingham County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution urging all Ingham County municipalities to adopt ordinances and for all other Ingham County public entities, to adopt policies requiring public safety amplification systems for new construction and major renovations of substantial buildings within their communities. These in-building public safety amplifications systems will ensure that public safety officers have adequate communications while responding within these facilities to safeguard Ingham County citizens and public safety officers.
- The Ingham County Board of Commissioners authorized the extension of the contract under the new terms and conditions with Canteen Services for Inmate Jail Commissary Services through February 2011, with a possible extension of up to two years.
- The Ingham County Board of Commissioners in cooperation with the Circuit Court, the Community coalition for Youth and Community Partners has made substantial progress on purchasing a site for the Continuum of Care Facility and planning for programming there. The site selected is the Our Savior of Lutheran Church and School, located on Holmes Rd. near Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. A public meeting was held at OSL, for the purpose of presenting to the community the plans for the facility and to answer questions and respond to concerns from the community. An Advisory Board will be established which will be responsible for monitoring the integrity of the current and future services under the

- Continuum of Care Facility, providing advice and recommendations to the Circuit Court and the Board of Commissioners. The Board also authorized a contract to Wigen, Tincknell, Meyer & Associates, for consulting services to prepare bid documents and specifications for the renovation of Our Savior Lutheran - Continuum of Care Facility.
- The MTEAM, a citizen group working to create an entrepreneurial community in Meridian Township, coached by MSU Economic Development Educator Susan Pigg, hosted their first seminar for entrepreneurs and small business owners. A panel of financial experts discussed taxes for small and new businesses at the Okemos Hope Borbas Library.
- Over twenty university students in the MSU Adolescent Diversion Program received training in youth development principles, 4-H programming philosophies and program planning. These students became registered 4-H volunteers and are leading a 4-H Club in Lansing for youth involved in the juvenile court system. Under the guidance of the newly trained MSU students, youth participants will learn new life skills and spend more time in structured, positive ways.
- The Ingham County Agriculture Educator and 4-H staff members recently participated in the Project Rural Education Day, sponsored by Ingham County Farm Bureau and held at the Ingham County Fairgrounds. The event drew 3rd grade students from around the County to learn more about agriculture. The purpose of the event is to ensure that children learn where food comes from and experience a direct connection with the farmers that produce the food. The 4-H activity focused on nutrition and exercise to promote healthy lifestyles. Approximately three hundred students participated.
- The Treasurer remains very busy and continues to grapple with the increasing number of delinquent taxes. The Ingham County Land Bank Fast Track Authority has acquired over 60 mortgage foreclosed homes from HUD in the last 120 days. The Treasurer continues to work with homeowners in an education forum in an effort to assist homeowners from losing their homes.
- Discussion was initiated with the Ingham Regional Medical Center with respect to the continuation of medical services after the expiration of the in-kind service agreement. It is anticipated that the money deferred from the sale of the hospital to provide medical expenses for inmates, will be depleted in the fall of 2008.
- An application was submitted for \$1 million in Federal funds through Senator Stabenow's office. If Ingham County is successful and a funding award is made, these funds will be used to address stated priorities of the Ingham County Board of Commissioners such as expanding access to health care for the uninsured and under-insured, encouraging the use for appropriate sanctions for adults in order to reduce incidents of jail overcrowding and the development of a strategy by the Ingham County/City of Lansing Community Coalition for Youth to address delinquency rates in African American males. A determination on these funds at the federal level is not expected to be made until late 2008.

- A flurry of activity continues at Potter Park Zoo. Renovations and additional exhibits have kept zoo employees and Central Services staff busy. A bright new sign adorns the entrance to the Zoo and with spring in the air, dramatic improvements can be seen throughout the Zoo.

For further information, please contact:
Matthew J. Myers, Ph.D.
Controller/Administrator
(517) 676-7206
mmyers@ingham.org