

**INGHAM COUNTY**

**Issues Update**

**May, 2003**



**Ingham County Controller's Office**

**Jerry Ambrose, Controller**

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## **Services of Ingham County**

Ingham County government provides and supports many services to its 279,000 residents. Services are provided in the areas of health and other human services; law enforcement and judicial administration; recreation; economic development; the recording of personal and property records, and others.

On any day, many residents access services provided or supported by Ingham County government by:

\*Utilizing the many public health, sanitation, or disease control services provided by the Health Department, the support services of Veteran Affairs, or the residential services of the Medical Care Facility and the Housing Commission;

\*Utilizing the many other County supported human service programs in mental health, substance abuse, aging, special transportation, or youth violence prevention;

\*Utilizing the services of the Prosecutor, Sheriff, or the courts, or anticipating the arrival of law enforcement, fire or emergency medical service personnel dispatched by county supported 911 Centers;

\*Obtaining birth, death, tax or property information from the offices of the County Clerk, Treasurer, Register of Deeds, or Equalization Department; participating in elections; receiving assistance in drainage-related problems from the Drain Commissioner; or traveling on county-built or maintained roads in non-urban areas of the county; or

\*Attending educational events sponsored by MSU Cooperative Extension, visiting one of the many county parks, or visiting the county fairgrounds.

County services are provided by dedicated employees under the leadership of elected officials, department heads and agency boards. Ingham County has a history of excellent labor relations which is typified by peaceful contract negotiations, by the stability of the county workforce, and by the cooperative approach taken by labor and management to address rapidly rising health care costs. The County also has a history of dedication to strong financial management, which was again recognized with a recent upgrade in the county's credit rating, and by the development of annual budgets which maintain vital county services in areas of importance to our citizens even in times of economic uncertainty. County buildings and facilities continue to be maintained in good repair, while investments in technology are continued, enabling our work to be more productive and our services more accessible.

For more information on services provided or supported by Ingham County, please visit the Ingham County Web Site at [www.ingham.org](http://www.ingham.org)

### **Leadership Changes in 2003**

Several new individuals became county officials in 2003, and others assumed new responsibilities. Five new County Commissioners were elected to an expanded 16 member board, three from new districts and two replacing retiring incumbent commissioners John Czarnecki and Amy Krause. Newly elected commissioners Dianne Holman (D); John Nevin (R); Andy Schor (D); Marc Thomas (D); and Tina Weatherwax-Grant (D) joined current commissioners Victor Celentino (D); Debbie De Leon (D); Lisa Dedden (D); Mark Grebner (D); Curtis Hertel (D); Thomas Minter (R); Calvin Lynch (D); Mike Severino (R); Mary Stid (D); Randy Schafer (R); and Chris Swope (D). The new Board consists of 12 Democrats and 4 Republicans. In addition, Beverley Nettles-Nickerson and Janelle Lawless were elected to the 30<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court, replacing retiring Judges Peter Houk and Lawrence Glazer.

The 2003 Board of Commissioners is led by Commissioner Calvin Lynch, who was elected Chairperson in January. Also, elected were Curtis Hertel as Vice-Chairperson, and Tom Minter as Vice-Chairperson Pro-Tem. Appointed by the Supreme Court as Chief Judge of their respective courts were Judge William Collette (Circuit Court); Judge Thomas Brennan (55<sup>th</sup> District Court), and Judge George Economy (Probate Court). George Strander was appointed the Administrator of the Probate Court, replacing Janelle Lawless, who was elected to the Circuit Bench.

### **Overview of Activities Anticipated in 2003**

The priorities identified by the Board of Commissioners over the past several years have consistently included expanding access to health care; expanding recreational opportunities; and increasing the continuum of sanctions and placements for youth and adults. Other priorities have included encouraging the participation of youth in county government, assuring an appropriate level of services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, exploring ways to expand and improve services for seniors, improving the overall jury selection system, exploring more equitable ways of governing and financing the Capital Region Airport, and examining the implications of regional land use on the region's future. Through its discussions and actions, each new Board of Commissioners will determine what priorities it wishes to continue and what new ones to establish.

Ingham County has a significant urban population and provides many services related to the needs of low income residents and the prosecution of crimes. Ingham is increasingly challenged to determine how demands for services will be addressed when the total population is declining, and while the county's tax base relative to other counties in the region is also declining. It is also challenged to assure residents in suburban and rural areas of the county that their demands for county services, which may not be the same as for urban areas, are also addressed.

As the economy has slowed, there have been financial impacts to the county. Although property tax revenues remain stable, state shared revenues have been reduced and interest earnings are below expectations. In addition, there are financial losses to specific programs which rely on state and federal grants as grant levels remain at current levels or are reduced. Ongoing monitoring of the budget and conservative estimating aims to assure that critical county provided and supported services continue to be provided at acceptable levels.

Activities related to long-standing priorities have been occurring while activities related to new priorities surface. Determining how to most effectively expand the juvenile justice system utilizing the proceeds of the recently approved special millage; continuing to support the expansion of access to health care through establishment of the Health Department as a Federally Qualified Health Center and creation of the Tri-Share insurance plan; continuing to focus on safety and

security improvements to the 911 emergency dispatch system; continued focus on alleviating regular incidents of jail overcrowding; and improving the jury selection system are all examples. Continuing discussions have also been ongoing on issues of regional and county importance, including the need for a living wage ordinance; supporting economic development, and developing strategies to address the consequences of current land use growth trends. Concerns regarding the County's policy on the sale of animals for medical and veterinary research are being evaluated, and the County is challenging the capture of its property tax dollars by a newly created Tax Increment Financing District. Ongoing budgetary, labor relations, and other administrative processes have continued, with budgetary reductions made necessary by unanticipated revenue losses. Labor negotiations with bargaining units is a continuing process, with the continuing escalation of employee health insurance premiums a source of major concern.

Continuing work with the various elected officials, judges, department heads, and others as opportunities and challenges arise in the day to day delivery of county services is also anticipated. Contemplation of possible consolidation of 54B and 55<sup>th</sup> District Courts; a review of county animal control policies in light of some public concerns; and a challenge to the establishment of tax increment financing districts are examples.

### **Activity Highlights: January - May, 2003**

In the first five months of 2003, Ingham County has:

- **Selected an advisor to assist in increasing the capacity of the juvenile justice system.** In November, 2002 voters approved a .6 mill special property tax levy to provide \$3.6 million to expand the capacity of Ingham County to detain, house, and treat delinquent juveniles. It is anticipated that the funds will be used for housing an additional 48 juveniles in non-secure treatment oriented facilities, for absorbing the costs of the 24 bed detention center, and for restricting all 24 beds at the center to juveniles in need of secure detention. In an initial decision to expand the system, the Board expanded the number of beds available to the Family Court at Camp Highfields; authorized funds for beds primarily serving females at Catholic Social Services, and created an Aftercare Unit to monitor and support juveniles returning to the community following out of home placement. In cooperation with the Family Court, the County Board approved the selection of the Center for Criminal Justice Research (University of Cincinnati) to assist in analyzing the specific needs of the current system and developing specific recommendations for placement capacity recommendations. Recommendations will be forthcoming later this year.
- **Selected the vendor for upgrading 911 emergency services communications system.** For the past several years, the County, in cooperation with police and fire agencies throughout the County have been discussing a system to improve emergency telephone answering and dispatch capabilities. Three proposals for upgrading the current system were received, in late 2002, ranging in price from \$10 million to \$15 million. The 911 Advisory Committee, which is composed of representatives from all of the fire and police agencies in the County, recommended the selection of TyCo Ma-Com as the vendor and Mlj Consulting as the project manager. After a lengthy review of the vendor's qualifications, the Board of Commissioners approved the Committee's recommendation in March, 2003. Design and system implementation of the \$12 million system is estimated to take 18 months.
- **Completed renovation of the Grady Porter Building in downtown Lansing.** In conjunction with the new adjoining Veterans Memorial Courthouse, the 50-year-old Grady Porter Building will provide space for the Ingham Circuit and Probate Courts and the Prosecutor's Office. The renovation was in process for approximately one year and employees reoccupied the building in December. A rededication ceremony celebrating completion of the \$10.5 million project was held in late January.
- **Addressed unexpected revenue shortfalls in the 2003 budget.** As a result of state revenue sharing being reduced, interest earnings projected to fall below expectations, and jail medical costs rapidly increasing, the 2003 budget was reduced by 4.0%. County departments, county offices, and the courts addressed the necessary reductions through short term measures such as delaying hiring; deferring capital expenditures, and a reduction in contingency funds. A similar reduction was necessary in 2002, with positive results.
- **Authorized a renovation to the County Jail.** The Board of Commissioners approved a renovation to the Jail which will create space designed for work release inmates; upgrade the Emergency Operations Center, and provide additional training and locker space. The \$2.35 million renovation will be paid from additional rentals of jail beds to other counties, and should be complete by mid 2004. The project had previously been approved, but was delayed when it appeared that the current rental contract for jail beds was in jeopardy. Bonds were sold in May at a cost of 3,702% net interest cost. The favorable interest rate was due in part to the County's maintenance of its AA credit rating.
- **Approved funding for Housing Rehabilitation.** Over the past few years, the County Board has placed an increasing priority on fostering affordable housing. Through the efforts of the Housing Commission, a housing rehabilitation program serving areas of the County which do not have an existing

program has been implemented. In early 2003, the Board approved receipt of a \$937,800 Community Development and Block Grant Program for this purpose. (Lansing and East Lansing are not included in this program because they have their own programs through funds designated for their jurisdictions).

- **Began work on a budget for 2004 by setting priority guidelines.** While the County's budget year does not begin until January, the process begins early in the year with each Board establishing priorities to guide the development of the budget and the work of staff. Some 20 areas of priority emphasis were identified by the new Board, including a continuation of a focus on assuring accessible health care; supporting recreational opportunities; providing appropriate sanctions for youth and adult offenders; and pursuing a regional funding and governance base for the Capital Region Airport Authority. Also included is the development of strategies guiding appropriate land use development and the protection of natural resources; enhancing emergency preparedness capabilities with regards to terrorism, natural disasters, and public health threats; promoting the development of affordable housing; evaluating the county's role in animal control; and enhancing the effectiveness of road patrol services.
- **Continued to pursue agreement for regional governance and funding of the Capital Region Airport Authority.** Representatives of Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties, and the City of Lansing have met several times to discuss the creation of a new authority which would own and operate the Capital City Airport. Currently, while the airport serves the tri-county region, governance and funding are the responsibility of only Ingham County and the City of Lansing. Representatives of the three counties and City have agreed to continue discussions, and draft legislation is being prepared for consideration.
- **Continued discussions on the feasibility of a "living wage" policy for certain contractors.** The proposed policy, which has been under discussion since 2001, would require that private contractors with 5 or more employees (and non-profit contractors with 10 or more employees) who provide services to Ingham County government in excess of \$50,000 on an annual basis would be required to pay employees a minimum hourly wage equal to 125% of the federal poverty level for a family of four (currently \$11.50). The cost of employer paid health insurance can be counted toward 1/5 of this wage, but the hourly rate paid the employee cannot be less than 100% of the federal poverty level for a family of 4 (currently \$9.20). Discussion on this proposed policy has been taking place in a subcommittee of the County Services Committee; the full Committee is now beginning its discussions.
- **Continued efforts to address jail overcrowding.** Working in cooperation with judges, law enforcement officials, and others, efforts are focused on managing regular overcrowding in a manner which assures that the safety of the public is protected while the integrity of the judicial system is maintained. Strategies include improving the sharing of information in a timely manner; establishing a committee of judicial and law enforcement representatives who meet regularly to monitor the use and population of the jail; and a review and update of the Circuit Court Administrative Order governing early release.
- **Continued to increase access to health care for the uninsured.** Through the Ingham Health Plan, more than 16,000 residents now have access to primary physician care and speciality care; through the Capital Area Prescription Plan where some 2,000 residents have access to medication at reduced costs; and by financially supporting implementation of a subsidized health insurance program on a pilot basis for small employers, which is to be offered by the Ingham Health Plan in 2002. One of the strategies approved by the Board in 2002 is seeking designation of the Health Department as a Federally Qualified Health Center, which, if approved, will increase the financial resources available for this effort. The Board has established the structures necessary for this, including a Community Health Board with certain oversight responsibilities.
- **Continued to support planning efforts affecting our region.** The Board and county staff continue to participate in planning efforts on a regional basis. Examples include the Youth Violence Prevention Coalition's work to prevent youth violence; the Tri-County Planning Commission's evaluation of the long term impact of current land use trends and the Capital Area Health Alliance's development of an organized system of health care for those

without insurance.

- **Objected to the use of tax increment financing in Lansing Charter Township.** A decision by Lansing Charter Township to utilize an existing 1983 DDA as the basis for the capture of future growth in property tax revenues from the area encompassing the Eastwood Centre allows the township to capture these revenues without approval of the County and other taxing units. It is projected that \$20 million in county taxes (\$52 million overall) will be captured over the next 30 years, to be used to finance development in Lansing Township. The County Board, Lansing Community College, and the Capital Area District Library have objected to this action as taking away resources for other needed services. These entities are currently pursuing discussions with Lansing Township and are exploring their legal options.
- **Reviewed the county policy regarding the sale of animals for research.** County policy for many years has been to allow the sale of certain animals for medical research or veterinary research only. The sale of live animals for research by Ingham County is limited only to institutions of higher education; hospitals, and fully accredited researchers whose object is the treatment of disease in animals. Any person releasing an animal to the shelter is advised of the possibility of its sale for research, and must declare in writing if it wishes to allow the animal to be sold for research. Individuals who oppose the use of animals for research have been demanding that the Board end the practice. There has been considerable debate among Commissioners on this topic. The Law Enforcement Committee of the Board has scheduled a public hearing to hear comments on the issue, and may establish a subcommittee to further explore the issue.
- **Begin discussions on possible County roles addressing urban sprawl.** For the past 2 years the County has supported the efforts of the Tri-County Growth Study in identifying the extent and impact of urban sprawl. Since Ingham County does not exercise land use or zoning powers, its role in this area has been limited. Several possibilities for a County role have been suggested, including a strengthening of the County Soil Erosion Program, adoption of a wetlands ordinance, and adoption of a Purchase of Development Rights Program. Since the beginning of 2003 the Board has adopted a new Soil Erosion Ordinance, and is beginning to explore the feasibility of a PDR program. It is also anticipated that discussion of the feasibility of a wetlands ordinance will begin in late 2003.
- **Carried on the ongoing tasks of governing and administering a complex organization.** Since the beginning of 2003, the Board has ratified labor contracts with court professionals and law enforcement supervisors; and will soon be considering ratification of a contract covering technical and office employees. Contracts with new vendors for the county's wide area computer network, internet service provider and long distance carrier were approved, implementation of a procurement card system has been authorized. Evaluation of proposals to upgrade the County's integrated financial system is underway. The Mason office of the Probate Court has been consolidated with the main Probate Office in Lansing, and the Parks Department is scheduled to move into the Hilliard Building at the end of summer. Finally, a satellite office for the County Treasurer has been approved for downtown Lansing at the Veterans Memorial Courthouse.

**Officials and Employees of Ingham County Government and Courts**

2003 Ingham County  
Board of Commissioners  
676-7200

Chairperson Calvin Lynch, District 6  
Vice Chair Curtis Hertel, Jr., District 9  
Vice Chair Pro Tem Thomas Minter, District 12  
Commissioner Victor Celentino, District 1  
Commissioner Debbie De Leon, District 2  
Commissioner Tina Weatherwax-Grant, District 3  
Commissioner Chris Swope, District 4  
Commissioner Andy Schor, District 5  
Commissioner Lisa Dedden, District 7  
Commissioner Marc Thomas, District 8  
Commissioner Mark Grebner, District 10  
Commissioner Dianne Holman, District 11  
Commissioner Randy Schafer, District 13  
Commissioner John Nevin, District 14  
Commissioner Michael Severino, District 15  
Commissioner Mary R. Stid, District 16  
Board Coordinator Becky Bennett  
County Attorney Peter A. Cohl

Countywide Elected Officials

County Clerk Michael Bryanton  
676-7201  
  
Drain Commissioner Patrick Lindemann  
676-8395  
  
Prosecuting Attorney Stuart J. Dunnings, III  
483-6108  
  
Register of Deeds Paula Johnson  
676-7216  
  
Sheriff Gene Wriggelsworth  
676-2413  
  
Treasurer Eric Schertzing  
676-7220

Judges

30<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court  
483-6500

Hon. William E. Collette, Presiding Judge  
Hon. Laura Baird  
Hon. Thomas L. Brown  
Hon. James R. Giddings  
Hon. Janelle A. Lawless  
Hon. Paula J. M. Manderfield  
Hon. Beverley Nettles-Nickerson  
Circuit Court Administrator David Easterday

55<sup>th</sup> District Court  
676-8400

Hon. Thomas E. Brennan, Jr., Presiding Judge  
Hon. Pamela McCabe  
District Court Administrator Larry Theisen

Probate Court  
483-6300

Hon. R. George Economy, Presiding Judge  
Hon. Richard J. Garcia  
Probate Court Administrator, George Strander

County Boards and Departments

Animal Control Department, Roger Fleming, Director - 676-8370  
Budget Office, Teri Younger, Budget Director - 676-7231  
Community Corrections Advisory Board, Judge Paula Manderfield, Chair; Mary Sabaj, Manager - 676-7232  
Controller's Office, Gerald W. Ambrose, Controller - 676-7206  
Economic Development Board, Joe Guenther, Chair; John Haneiski, Director - 676-7210  
Equalization Tax/Mapping, Doug Stover, Director - 676-7212  
Fair Board, Stan Jordan, Chair; Terry Brail, Director - 676-2428  
Financial Services Department, Jack Restuccia, Director - 676-7329  
Board of Health, George Rowan, Chair; Bruce Bragg, M.P.H., Health Officer - 887-4300  
Housing Commission, Rick Kibbey, President; Bruce Johnston, Director - 349-1643

Human Resources Department, Harold Hailey, Director - 887-4327  
Facilities Department, John Andresen, Director - 676-7312  
Medical Care Facility, Lloyd Fett, Chair, Susan O'Shea, Director - 349-1050  
Medical Examiner, Dr. Dean Sienko, M.D., M.S., Chief Medical Examiner - 887-4318  
MSU Cooperative Extension, Joe Lessard, Ph.D., Director - 676-7207  
Management Information Systems, Rodney Taylor, Director - 676-7373  
Parks Board, Ron Eggleston, Chair; Bob Moore, Director - 676-2233  
Purchasing Department, Jim Hudgins, Director - 676-7222  
Road Commission, June Pallottini, Chair; John Midgey, Managing Director - 676-9722  
Veteran's Affairs Committee, Raymond Young, Chair; Randy Marwede, Director - 887-4331

Employees

There are approximately 1,200 employees in Ingham County government and courts. Other than appointed officials and confidential employees, county and court employees are represented by the United Automobile Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW); the Ingham County Employees Association (ICEA); the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP); the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) or the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME).