

INGHAM COUNTY

Issues Update

June 1, 2004



Ingham County Controller's Office
Jerry Ambrose, Controller
(517)676-7206
cojerr@ingham.org

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 is reflected with consistently strong credit ratings 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

Issues Update - June 1, 2004

In spite of significant financial challenges associated with a weak economy and declining state tax revenues, Ingham County continues to provide a high quality of services to its 279,000 residents. Services are provided by dedicated elected and appointed officials and employees in the areas of health and human services, law enforcement and justice administration, recreation, elections, and record keeping. Over the past several years, the Board of Commissioners has strived to maintain all county services at an acceptable level, but has placed particular importance on providing uninsured residents with access to health care; expanding recreational opportunities; and improving the adult and juvenile justice systems.

Efforts this year to provide a high quality of services to county residents are reflected in many ways, including:

- Increased access to health care when the *Ingham County Advantage* health insurance program becomes available to small businesses in early June;
- Expanded recreational opportunities as a community built playground is added to Hawk Island Park and as work begins on linking various parks in the county together by means of trails;
- Improved programming and increased capacity of the juvenile justice system utilizing the funds generated from the special Juvenile Justice millage;
- Expanded facilities and programs to more effectively handle adult offenders, such as providing work release housing at the Jail and seeking additional community based placements;
- Improved public safety when the upgraded 911 system becomes operational later this year; providing enhanced communication between emergency responders and 911 Dispatch Centers;
- Creation of a special Lead Task Force to assess the extent of lead poisoning in the county and to provide recommendations on how to address the major sources of contamination, improve public health response, and enhance public awareness;
- Enhanced access to health and human services agencies with the establishment of the Capital Area Human Services Connection /2-1-1 System;
- Development of strategies for promoting smart growth and protecting environmental resources, including participation in the regional growth study, revision of the Soil Erosion Ordinance, and consideration of a wetlands ordinance and Purchase of Development Rights program;
- Approval of tax sharing agreements with Delhi Charter Township and Lansing Charter Township which support local economic development to the benefit of the county and region;
- Consideration of potential improvements in the financing and delivery of governmental services in areas such as Animal Control, District Court, primary law enforcement in rural areas, community agency funding and the Capital Region Airport Authority;
- Enhancements to the internal operations of the county government, including a revision of the County's Equal Opportunity Plan, implementation of the Living Wage Policy, updating the county's financial management system and conducting an energy utilization analysis of county building systems;

- Preparing a budget for 2005 which will minimize the impact of anticipated reductions in state funds on the delivery of services to residents and on county employees.

A more detailed discussion of the activities highlighted above follows.

Issues Update
June 1, 2004

In spite of significant financial challenges associated with a weak economy and declining state tax revenues, Ingham County government continues to provide a high quality of services to its 279,000 residents. Services are provided by dedicated elected and appointed officials in the areas of health and human services, law enforcement and justice administration, recreation, elections, and record keeping. Over the past several years, the Board of Commissioners has strived to maintain all county services at an acceptable level, but has placed particular importance on providing uninsured residents with access to health care; expanding recreational opportunities; and improving the adult and juvenile justice systems.

Efforts to provide a high level of services to county residents are reflected in many ways this year, including:

- **More county residents will have access to health care when the *Ingham County Advantage* health insurance program becomes available to small businesses in early June.** Ingham County Advantage is a subsidized health insurance product for small businesses with low-wage employees. Using county, state, and federal funds, the county-sponsored Ingham Health Plan Corporation will subsidize approximately 1/3 of the cost of the premium, with the other two-thirds to be paid by the employer and/or the employee. ICA will compliment the *Ingham Health Plan*, which provides nearly half of the county's 30,000 uninsured residents with access to primary health care.
- **Recreational opportunities for county residents will continue to expand as Hawk Island Park adds a playground and as work begins on linking various parks in the county together by means of trails.** Thanks to the *Friends of Hawk Island Park* and the volunteers who donated their money and their labor, Hawk Island Park now has a new community playground. Community donations have provided most of the \$125,000 needed for materials, and with volunteer labor in five days at the end of May accomplished the construction.

Efforts to connect recreational areas in the county by pedestrian and non-motorized trails have begun with efforts to obtain easements from affected property owners. Many of the easements necessary for the first phase of this project - constructing a trail connecting the County's Lake Lansing parks to the Lansing River Trail and ultimately to Hawk Island - have been obtained. Applications for state grants to construct this phase have been filed, and County officials are hopeful that this portion of the trail can be completed within the next few years.

- **Improved programming and increased capacity of the juvenile justice system has been implemented by County and court officials, utilizing the funds generated from the special Juvenile Justice millage.** Approval of a special Juvenile Justice Millage in November 2002 provided a significant opportunity for improving systems for the detention, housing, and treatment of juveniles. Much care has been taken to insure that the changes made have positive outcomes. In cooperation with the courts, the Judiciary Committee of the Board of Commissioners has dedicated a portion of nearly all of their meetings this year to determining the most effective ways of positively impacting juveniles at risk.

Much progress has been made. In 2003, additional bed capacity was secured at Camp Highfields and Catholic Social Services, and an After-Care unit was created to work with delinquent youth returning from residential placements out of state. An evaluation of the Juvenile Justice system was completed and provided recommendations for future programming based on what research has shown to be effective. Early in 2004, one of the study's key recommendations - the development of a standardized risk assessment tool and the

necessary addition of staff - was approved and is in the process of being implemented. Other system improvements have also been authorized since the beginning of the year, including the addition of staff at the Youth Center to bring it into compliance with state licensing requirements, the addition of 15 beds to the StART Program, and the replacement of the Youth Attention Program with the Family Intervention Rehabilitation Service Team. Most recently, the Board authorized the addition of 2 six-person group homes for female offenders. Proposals for the homes have been solicited and potential vendors are being evaluated.

- **Efforts continue to improve the facilities and programs necessary to effectively handle adult offenders.** Rising crime rates combined with the diversion of an increasing number of criminals from the prison system to county jails and programs has created constant overcrowding at the Ingham County Jail, and recently led to the first official Jail Overcrowding Emergency in several years. The result of constant overcrowding is the release of non-violent inmates from the jail or into other programs in advance of their original commitment. However, court and law enforcement officials work diligently to assure that the safety of the public is protected and that the releases do not create a crisis situation.

County and court officials continue to seek additional placements for adult offenders in community based programs, and a renovation of the County Jail is underway to provide space for work release inmates and to enable a necessary increase in medical staff. Conversion of the old Sheriff's residence to a small substance abuse treatment facility has been approved and is nearly complete. Finally, application has been made for grant funds to support the second year of Drug Court at the 55th District Court in Mason.

- **Public safety will be enhanced when the upgraded 911 Emergency Telephone Answering and Dispatch system becomes operational later this year.** Police, fire and other emergency responders in all areas of the county will have significantly improved communication with the 911 Dispatch Centers and with each other. Implementation of the new \$12 million UHF 400 Mhz system is being overseen by the County's 911 Advisory Committee, and funded from the proceeds of the 911 special millage.
- **Recommendations addressing the potential adverse impacts of lead poisoning will be developed by a special Lead Task Force.** Due to concerns about the potential adverse health impacts of lead exposure on county residents, a special task force is being formed to assess the level and sources of lead poisoning in Ingham County and provide recommendations on how to address the major sources of contamination, improve public health response and procedures for abatement, and enhance public awareness. The Task Force will be appointed by the Board of Commissioners and will have representation from several county departments, other local governments, utility companies, and the community. It is anticipated that the Lead Task Force will issue its findings and recommendations to the Board of Commissioners in March 2005.
- **Access to health and human services agencies to be enhanced with start-up of the Capital Area Human Services Connection/2-1-1 System.** With the support of Ingham County and other local units of government, non-profit organizations and foundations, the Capital Area United Way is coordinating the effort to establish the Capital Area Human Service Connection/2-1-1 System. This service will enable residents of Ingham, Clinton and Eaton Counties, through one phone number, to be connected with a trained specialist to get immediate and accurate information about health and human service agencies that can offer assistance. Because communities are required to operate a seven-digit information and referral phone line for at least one year before they can receive 2-1-1 designation, CAUW expects that it will be 1 to 2 years before the three-digit 2-1-1 system becomes

operational. The seven digit number is expected to be available by September, 2004.

- **Strategies for promoting smart growth and protecting our environmental resources protection are being discussed and implemented.** Ingham County's involvement in land use concerns and protection of environmental resources includes participation in the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, administration of the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance, and ongoing support of the Health Department's Environmental Health Division and the Drain Commissioner's Office. Most recently, the County has actively participated in Tri-County Planning's Regional Growth Study, agreed to strengthen its Soil Erosion & Sedimentation Program, and began discussions on a potential Wetlands Ordinance and a Purchase of Development Rights program for the protection of farmland and open space. The County is currently completing its work on a revised Soil Erosion Ordinance and waiting for the presentation of drafts of a proposed Wetlands Ordinance and a PDR Program. County staff is also working with Tri-County to determine the appropriate process for implementing the recommendations of the Growth Study.
- **Tax sharing agreements were approved with Delhi Township and Lansing Charter Township, whereby the incremental growth in county property taxes in portions of each township will be retained by the township and used to promote additional development.** The Delhi agreement represented a decision by the township to reduce the amount of funds currently being captured by the Township's DDA on an annual basis in exchange for lengthening the period of capture. The Lansing Township agreement is new and will utilize county funds to develop the area surrounding Eastwood Center. In total, more than \$2 million of incremental growth in Ingham County property taxes are captured annually to promote development in several areas of the County, including these 2 townships, the cities of East Lansing, Lansing, Mason and Williamston, and the Village of Stockbridge.
- **Consideration is being given to potential improvements in the financing and delivery of governmental services in various areas including Animal Control, District Court, primary law enforcement in rural areas, and the Capital Region Airport Authority:**

Efforts to improve licensing enforcement, to address citizen concerns regarding the operation of the Animal Shelter, and to improve responses to dog complaints, particularly in the City of Lansing, are under discussion in the new Animal Control Advisory Committee and the Board's Law Enforcement Committee. With the scheduled retirement of the Director in September, a recruitment process is now underway.

The County and the City of East Lansing, as well as the Judges of the 54B and 55th District Courts, are exploring the possibility of a consolidation or other cooperative arrangement to better equalize the workload of the two courts and to improve citizen access to the district courts.

The Board of Commissioners has directed that efforts be taken to explore an alternate funding mechanism for the delivery of primary law enforcement and paramedic services by the Sheriff's Office to rural areas of the County. It has been noted that since these services are funded by property taxes levied on a countywide basis but not provided on a countywide basis, some taxpayers are paying for services they cannot receive. It has also been noted that population increases in the areas served only by the Sheriff's Office will result in demands for greater services which the County will likely not be able to afford. Research is currently underway to determine how police services are currently provided and funded throughout the County; to identify discrepancies in the amounts paid for these services, and to identify some alternate funding models.

Efforts continue to expand the governance and funding base of the Capital Region Airport Authority into Clinton and Eaton counties. Discussions have been on hold since last fall when agreement was reached to have a study of the airport's economic impact on the region completed. The study, which was commissioned by the Authority, is due to be released within the next month. It is likely that discussions will resume in late summer after all parties have had time to review the results.

- **Several activities related to the internal operations of the County have taken place.** The County's Equal Opportunity Plan is in the final stages of being updated, with approval by the Board of Commissioners expected by mid-year. The process of updating the county's financial management system is underway, as is an analysis of improvements to county building systems to increase their energy efficiency. The first contracts under the County Living Wage Policy have been approved, with the cost impacts within the parameters anticipated. Relationships with employees remain stable as the joint labor/management Health Coalition continues to monitor trends in health insurance costs. Contract negotiations with law enforcement, corrections officers, and parks employees have been delayed as the result of elections being held to determine representation. The result of the elections has been that corrections officers will continue to be represented by the FOP, but that law enforcement and paramedics will now be represented by the Michigan Association of Police, and Parks employees will now be represented by the ICEA instead of ASCME.
- **Considerable attention is being paid to the development of the state's 2005 budget where, faced with the same financial challenges as in the past few years, further reductions in state aid to local governments is possible.** Even if there are no additional reductions, the initial county revenue projections indicate that additional reductions beyond those made in 2004 will be necessary. In 2004, reductions of more than \$1.3 million were made, including the elimination of 15 positions and implementation of hiring delays for 28 positions. It is likely that these reductions will be continued in 2005, plus additional reductions of more than \$3.2 million. This \$4.5 million reduction would equate to nearly 7% of current General Fund expenses. The county's next fiscal year begins January 1, 2005, so the budget process is just getting underway. The Board of Commissioners will begin its consideration of the budget in August with receipt of the Controller's recommended budget, and is scheduled to conclude with adoption in October.

Commissioners have given initial guidance to development of the 2005 budget and staff activities. Board Resolution #04-148 directs that in addition to supporting all of the county's long term objectives, priority consideration should be given to continuing efforts at expanding access to health care; expanding recreational activities, providing appropriate sanctions, and promoting environmental protection. Other specific activities underway this year, including improving dog licensing, supporting the development of network centers, and reducing and preventing incidents of lead exposure are also noted.

Officials and Employees of Ingham County Government and Courts

2004 Ingham County Board of Commissioners

676-7200

Chairperson Victor G. Celentino, District 1
Vice Chairperson Debbie De Leon, District 2
Vice--Chairperson Pro Tem, Randy Schafer, District 13
Commissioner Lisa Dedden, District 7
Commissioner Mark Grebner, District 10
Commissioner Curtis Hertel, Jr., District 9
Commissioner Dianne Holman, District 11
Commissioner Calvin Lynch, District 6
Commissioner Thomas L. Minter, District 12

Commissioner John Nevin, District 14
Commissioner Andy Schor, District 5
Commissioner Michael Severino, District 15
Commissioner Mary R. Stid, District 16
Commissioner Chris Swope, District 4
Commissioner Marc Thomas, District 8
Commissioner Tina Weatherwax-Grant, District 3

Countywide Elected Officials

County Clerk Mike Bryanton
676-7201

Drain Commissioner Patrick Lindemann
676-8395

Prosecuting Attorney Stuart J. Dunnings, III
483-6108

Register of Deeds Paula Johnson
676-7217

Sheriff Gene Wriggelsworth
676-2431

Treasurer Eric Schertzing
676-7220

Judges

30th 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

55th District Court

676-8400

Hon. Pamela McCabe, Presiding Judge
Hon. Thomas E. Brennan, Jr.
District Court Administrator, Anethia Brewer

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 Dept., 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 Hanieski, Director-676-7210
Equalization Tax/Mapping, Doug Stover, Director-676-7212
Fair Board, Mike Prelesnik, 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, Dennis Propst, Chair; Bob Moore, Director-676-2233
Purchasing Department, Jim Hudgins, Director -676-7222
Road Commission, June Pallottini, Chair; John Midgley, Managing Director-676-9722
Veterans' Affairs Committee, William Vernon, Chair: Randy Marwede, Director-887-4331

Employees

There are approximately 1,200 employees in Ingham County government and courts. Other than appointed officials, managerial and confidential employees, employees are represented by the United Automobile Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of Americans (UAW); the Ingham County Employees Association (ICEA); the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP); the Michigan Association of Police (MAP); or the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU).

