



Issues Update – June, 2005

In spite of challenges associated with a weak economy and declining state tax revenues, Ingham County continues to provide a high quality of services to its 280,000 residents. Health and human services, law enforcement and justice administration, recreation, elections, and record keeping are provided through the various County offices. 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; improving the adult and juvenile justice systems; and promoting environmental protection.

Since the beginning of 2005, there has been much activity in areas of importance to the County Board:

- Efforts to expand access to health care for the uninsured have continued, including promotion of the Ingham County Advantage program and the Ingham Health Plan; expansion of space for the Ingham Health Plan, opening of a new pediatric clinic, approval of a contract with Free Medical Care, Inc; and development of financial projections for providing access to all of Ingham County's uninsured within the next five years.
- Efforts to expand recreational opportunities have continued, including award of a grant to construct a Splash Park at Hawk Island; agreement to construct a portion of the Hawk Island Loop Trail through Lansing's Scott Woods; reorganization of the Parks Board to allow the continued use of certified police officers in county parks; and development of projections for financing the connection of major county parks by means of non-motorized pathways within the next ten years.
- Efforts to expand capacity to detain and treat delinquent and disturbed youth have continued, including the opening of the Peckham and Sequel group homes; implementation of the new juvenile assessment system; and preparation of a RFP soliciting assistance to develop final plans for deploying the remaining portion of the Juvenile Justice millage.
- Efforts to address chronic jail overcrowding continue with consideration being given to recommendations of the Jail Utilization Committee and the Community Corrections Board aimed at finding more alternatives to incarceration suitable to non-violent offenders and pre-trial detainees. While average daily population has continued to be high, and the early release of non-violent inmates is not uncommon, a review of the County's bed capacity for local purposes indicates that, on a per capita basis, jail capacity is comparable to other counties.
- Efforts to promote wise use of land and to support continued use of existing housing have been initiated. Implementation of the Farmland Preservation Ordinance has begun; the County Treasurer has assumed the role of Foreclosure Agent for tax delinquent properties and is evaluating the potential benefit of creating a Land Bank Authority; the Lead Task Force has nearly completed its

recommendations; and the Brownfield Authority has prepared to finalize agreements for a \$200,000 EPA grant to assess potential brownfields. In addition, the Housing Commission has continued to rehabilitate homes in the less urban areas of the county, financed most recently by a \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant.

- Efforts to expand the Capital Region Airport Authority have continued. Currently under consideration is a proposal from Clinton County for ex-officio membership which was submitted as an initial step in their efforts to become a full member of the Authority no later than 2010.
- Efforts to increase adoptions, improve shelter conditions, and enhance licensing have been undertaken at the Ingham County Animal Control Department and County Treasurer's Office.
- Efforts to support economic development have been enhanced with an agreement with MSU for appointment of an Economic Development Agent, and with the appointment of several new members to the County's EDC. Other efforts include a revision to the County's tax sharing policy, approval of a tax sharing agreement with the City of Mason; approval of the proposed Smart Zone by Lansing and East Lansing, and review of the tax sharing agreement with Lansing Township.
- Efforts have been made to address citizen and employee concerns regarding the Road Commission. Although the Board's authority to address the concerns is limited, it is working to assure that the concerns are heard and addressed in an appropriate manner.
- Efforts to enhance the internal operation of the county continue with the migration to a new finance and payroll system; near completion of the energy improvement project; adoption of an amendment to the purchasing policy giving preference to local vendors; and the beginning of negotiations of the county's several labor contracts.
- Efforts have continued in several other areas. The upgrade of the public safety wireless radio system is nearly complete and consideration is being given to consolidating the two current dispatch centers into one; homeland security capacity continues to be enhanced with annual federal grants; processing at the Register of Deeds continues to be enhanced with the use of designated technology funds, and accuracy and availability of tax maps is being enhanced with the digitizing of tax maps and acquisition of a 2006 flight of the county. An evaluation of the potential for consolidating 55th and 54B District Court was completed, with a conclusion that consolidation was not feasible at this time. Finally, the heritage of the 100 year old Ingham County Courthouse was celebrated under the sponsorship of the Historical Commission and Centennial Committee.

Activities will continue to take place in many of these areas over the next several months. In addition, there will be the need to focus on developing plans and budgets for 2006 and

beyond. These efforts are already underway, with priorities for 2006 having been set by the Board of Commissioners and departments having submitted their budget proposals. Financial projections for accomplishing the top county priorities have been developed; a five year projection of revenues and expenses has been developed; and adjustments to user fees for 2006 have been approved. Not surprisingly, revenues are insufficient to continue all current services and to move forward in areas of priority, and there are financial events identified in the next few years which will be problematic. Developing a spending plan which meets the county's obligations and priorities will be a challenging task.

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