

INGHAM COUNTY

Issues Update

November, 2002



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

Overview of Activities Anticipated in 2002

Priorities identified by the Board of Commissioners over the past several years include expanding access to health care; expanding recreational opportunities; and increasing the continuum of sanctions and placements for youth and adults. Other priorities include 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, assessing the county's responsibilities for Phase II of the Federal Clean Water Act, and examining the implications of regional land use on the region's future. Internal priorities include developing and equipping the county workforce, enhancing the county's management information services capabilities, and preparing the Board of Commissioners' room to reflect changes necessary due to redistricting.

As a county with a significant urban population, Ingham is increasingly challenged to determine how demands for services, particularly those relative to low income residents and incidents of crime, will be addressed when 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 challenges 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.

In 2002, activities related to the long-standing priorities were projected to occur while activities related to new priorities surface. Consideration of the proposed smoking regulation and the plan to provide an organized system of health care for the uninsured; financing of the solid waste plan; a challenge to the unfunded requirements of the recently enacted Concealed Weapons legislation; responding to September 11 with an increased focus on safety and security improvements to the 911 emergency dispatch system; continued focus on alleviating regular jail and youth detention center overcrowding; assessing the county's role regarding new storm water regulations; and improving the jury selection system are all examples. Renovation of the Grady Porter Building will also take place during 2002, with employees returning from temporary quarters by year's end, and accommodations will be made for the expansion of the Board of Commissioners from 13 to 16 members. In addition, continuing discussions is anticipated on issues of regional and county importance, including the need for a living wage ordinance; economic development, access to health, water quality, and land use growth trends. Ongoing budgetary, labor relations, and other administrative processes will occur, with the possibility of budgetary amendments necessary to reflect unanticipated revenue losses; with consideration of recommendations on user fees; and the reality of labor negotiations with major bargaining units, where the continuing escalation of employee health insurance premiums is expected to be a major concern. Finally, 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 was also anticipated.

Accomplishments in 2002

In addition to the many activities related to the conduct of daily business, Ingham County has:

- **Adopted a proposed regulation to assure smoke-free areas.** A two-year effort by a county appointed task force was recognized when the Board of Commissioners approved a Health Department regulation requiring smoke-free areas in public places and work sites other than bars and restaurants. The regulation went into effect on May 13, with affected businesses having until August 11, 2002 to comply. Despite initial concerns voiced about the negative effects this regulation might have on small businesses, there have not been any complaints brought to the attention of the Board since the effective date. Only one business requested an extension beyond the August 11 deadline in order to comply.
- **Pursued 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.
- **Initiated the Ingham County Youth Commission.** With the initial appointment of 15 youth from throughout the county, the ICYC has begun its task of advising the Board of Commissioners and others within the county government on issues relating to young people. Supported by MSU/Ingham County Extension staff, the ICYC has been meeting regularly. One of the ICYC's most recent projects was to sponsor mock votes in area schools as a way of educating youth about the electoral process.
- **Opened Hawk Island Park.** This new 120 acre park opened on June 15, and provides summer opportunities for swimming, fishing, hiking, and picnicking, as well as winter activities such as sledding and cross-country skiing. Located at Cavanaugh and Pennsylvania Ave. in the southern part of the City of Lansing, this is the first major county park to be located in the urban area of the county. More than \$6 million was invested by the county and state in the development of this park.
- **Renovated 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 Prosecutor's Office. Employees who will occupy the building are in temporary facilities and are scheduled to return by year's end when the \$10.5 million project is complete.
- **Received proposals for improving 911 emergency services.** Proposals for upgrading the 911 emergency telephone answering and dispatch systems were solicited for a second time. Three proposals were received, ranging in price from \$10 million to \$15 million. The process of reviewing the proposals has taken longer than anticipated, and the 911 Advisory Committee now projects that its recommendation for a vendor will be ready for consideration by the Board of Commissioners by early 2003. The 911 Advisory Committee is composed of representatives from all of the fire and police agencies in the County.
- **Addressed unexpected revenue shortfalls in the 2002 budget.** As a result of state revenue sharing being reduced and interest earnings projected to fall below expectations, the 2002 budget was reduced by 3.4%. 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. An additional revenue loss of

\$1 million was avoided as the Sheriff's Office was able to rent jail beds to Oakland County when the State of Michigan unexpectedly cancelled its contract with the county for the rental of 103 beds.

- **Took action to increase capacity for detaining and housing juveniles.** Discussions on how to address the long term funding needs of the juvenile justice system, including identifying additional revenue sources, have taken place this year, involving Commissioners, judges, and law enforcement officials. A significant increase in delinquent and neglect petitions filed with the Family Division of Circuit Court, partially as a result of change in state law, has resulted in the county's Youth Center being regularly overcrowded and in the Child Care Fund being overspent. Actions taken in response include significant budgetary increases in 2002 and 2003 to reflect the costs of housing an increased number of juveniles; approval of an agreement with the Family Independence Agency for their assumption of certain juvenile caseloads; a shifting of some staff costs from the county general fund to the Child Care Fund; and a request to the voters for a .6 mill special property tax levy which, if approved, would provide \$3.6 million 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.
- **Identified long term strategies to address youth violence.** The Board accepted the Comprehensive Strategies for Addressing Youth Violence as recommended by the Youth Violence Prevention Coalition, and designated the YVPC as the agency charged with advising the Board with respect to implementation. The basic concepts underlying the strategies are (1) preventing youth from becoming delinquent through prevention strategies focused on youth who are at greatest risk; and (2) improving the juvenile justice system response to delinquent offenders through a system of graduated sanctions and a continuum of treatment alternatives that include immediate intervention, intermediate sanctions, community based corrections, and aftercare services. The YVPC is to brief the Board quarterly on progress. The YVPC has applied for additional federal funds to carry out its work.
- **Adopted a budget for 2003 which maintains all current services.** The \$68 million general fund budget approved by the Board of Commissioners in October made reductions totaling \$460,000, including the elimination of 5.75 positions. Growth in property tax revenues and earlier actions by the Board of Commissioners to review user fees helped to offset losses in state revenue sharing and lower interest earnings. However, significant increases in costs of employee and retirees health insurance, foster care, state wards, institutional placements, inmate medical expenses, and property and liability insurance were also necessary. Unfortunately, it is anticipated that the continuing weakness in state revenues will lead to additional reductions in state revenues, and that the county will again need to reduce its budget early in 2003.
- **Began discussions on the feasibility of a "living wage" policy for certain contractors.** The policy under discussion would generally require that contractors with 5 or more employees who provide services to the county in excess of \$50,000 on an annual basis would be required to pay their employees at a minimum an hourly wage equal to 100% of the federal poverty level for a family of four (currently \$8.83), if health insurance is provided, or 125% of the poverty level (currently \$ 11.04), if health insurance is not provided. The discussion remains in committee.
- **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.

- **Continued to support planning efforts affecting our region.** The Board and county staff continued 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; the Capital Area Transportation Authority's feasibility study of a Lansing to Detroit Commuter Rail System; and the Capital Area Health Alliance's development of an organized system of health care for those without insurance.
- **Continued efforts at supporting economic development.** The Board approved the establishment of a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and approval of a Brownfield Redevelopment Project for the Village of Dansville; renewed an agreement with the City of Lansing for the continuation of a contract providing retention services; and accepted the Michigan Regional Telecommunication Planning grant on behalf of the Tri-County Regional Economic Development Team. The Board also approved the creation of a Joint Local Development and Finance Authority by Lansing and East Lansing, which will support the creation of a technology park.
- **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; renovate 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 late next year.
- **Secured financial support for county solid waste activities.** In lieu of pursuing pending litigation on the county's right to establish fees at disposal sites receiving waste generated in Ingham County, the Board authorized entering into voluntary agreements with major solid waste industry companies in the county to financially support education, regulation, and monitoring activities associated with implementation of the county's solid waste plan. The financial support will cover 50% of the county's costs in this area, and assures that current rural recycling services will continue through 2005. At that time, however, municipalities whose residents receive the service will need to determine if they wish to assume the financial obligation of continuing.

Elections for the expanded 16 member Board of Commissioners were included on the November 5 General Election ballot. Five new Commissioners were elected, three from new districts and two replacing incumbent Commissioners John Czarnecki and Amy Krause, who did not seek re-election. Newly elected commissioners Diane Holman (D); John Nevin (R); Andy Schor (D); Marc Thomas (D); and Tina Weatherwax Grant (D) will join 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 will consist of 12 Democrats and 4 Republicans. In addition, Beverly Nettles-Nickerson and Janelle Lawless will join the Circuit Court, replacing retiring Judges Peter Houk and Lawrence Glazer.

Also on November 5, voters approved a .6 mill special property tax levy to provide \$3.6 million 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. The millage was passed by a 55% - 45% margin, and will be levied beginning this December. As a result of its passage, the county operating millage has been reduced by .1 mill, so the net tax rate increase is .5 mills. Discussions will begin immediately on specific strategies and appropriations utilizing the millage proceeds.

Officials and Employees of Ingham County Government and Courts

2002 Ingham County
Board of Commissioners
676-7200

Chairperson John B. Czarnecki, District 7
Vice Chair Victor Celentino, District 1
Vice Chair Pro Tem Thomas Minter, District 11
Commissioner Debbie De Leon, District 2
Commissioner Michael Severino, District 3
Commissioner Mary R. Stid, District 4
Commissioner Randy Schafer, District 5
Commissioner Curtis Hertel Jr, District 6
Commissioner Mark Grebner, District 8
Commissioner Amy Krause, District 9
Commissioner Lisa Dedden, District 10
Commissioner Chris Swope, District 12
Commissioner Calvin Lynch, District 13
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
676-2431
Treasurer Eric Schertzing
676-7220

Judges

30th Circuit Court
483-6500

Hon. Peter D. Houk, Presiding Judge
Hon. William E. Collette
Hon. Laura Baird
Hon. Thomas L. Brown
Hon. Lawrence M. Glazer
Hon. James R. Giddings
Hon. Paula J. M. Manderfield
Circuit Court Administrator David Easterday

55th 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 Janelle Lawless

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 Collette, 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, Pat Hepp, Chair; Bruce Bragg, M.P.H., Health Officer - 887-4300
Housing Commission, Dick Baker, President; Bruce Johnston, Director - 349-1643

Human Resources Department, Harold Hailey, Director - 887-4327
Facilities Department, John Andresen, Director - 676-7312
Medical Care Facility, Pat Munshaw, Chair, Susan O'Shea, Director - 349-1050
Medical Examiner, Dr. Dean Stenko, 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, Larry Smith, Chair; John Midgley, Managing Director - 676-9722
Veteran's Affairs Committee, Barry Damon, 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).