

To: Tuscola County Board of Commissioners
Chairperson, Gerald Peterson
From: Controller/Administrator
Michael R. Hoagland
Date: October 14, 2004
Re: County Activity Report (Quarter of July-September)

The following report is intended to summarize the status of more significant projects and work activities of the county. It is updated quarterly to provide commissioners, employees, and the general public a status report of various activities and projects of County Government.

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2004 ACTIVITIES

1. 2005 County Budget Development

- ❖ Financial Planning continues to be a top priority of the county. Various scenarios have been developed estimating the amount that expenditures could exceed revenues for the 2005 and future budget years. Budget forms have been sent to each department requesting certain levels of expenditure reductions.
- ❖ Unprecedented cuts in revenues provided by the state have put Tuscola County in a precarious financial situation. Development of the 2005 County Budget is underway. The outcome of the November Sheriff road patrol millage-funding request (.5 mill) and other financial variables will be major factors as to how the 2005 county budget is balanced. By law, this budget must be adopted before the end of the calendar fiscal year.

2. Ballot Question to Fund the Police Road Patrol

- ❖ The .5 mill-funding request failed in the August primary election. The Board of Commissioners authorized this millage question to again be voted on the November 2, 2004 election. Approval of this request would enable the road patrol to continue to operate at current levels without funds from the general fund. With declining state funding and other negative financial factors, the Board has explained that it can no longer use general fund monies to pay a portion of the road patrol operational costs because these monies must now be used for state required services.

3. Millage Renewals

- ❖ The .9 police road patrol and .2 senior citizen millages were successfully renewed in the August Primary election. This guarantees a certain level of funding for the road patrol for the next six years. It also assures funding for important senior citizen services for the next six years.

4. State Financial Developments

- ❖ In late September, the State approved legislation to allow the County to replace nearly \$1,000,000 in state revenue sharing payments the state formally paid to the County. Property tax collections will shift from December to July over a 3-year period and create a pool of funding, using one-third of the tax collections. The county will be able to draw from the pool what the state is no longer paying them in the form of state revenue sharing.
- ❖ The net effect of this change is that it is not a tax increase, but property owners will pay some of their property taxes sooner. Without this change, the state would have cut state revenue sharing to the county an additional 38% or approximately \$380,000. Tuscola

County has already been cut \$400,000 from this revenue source over the past three years. This pot of money will last Tuscola County approximately four years (the least amount of time of any county in the state). What will happen after that point in time has not been determined by the state.

- ❖ The Michigan Association of Counties stresses the need to form a work group of county and local government officials to recommend to the state how to fund government at the local level on a long-term basis.

5. Tuscola County Officials in State Leadership Roles

- ❖ Tuscola County has talented dedicated officials serving in statewide leadership roles. Board Chairperson Gerald Peterson will become the President of the Michigan Association of Counties in August of 2005. Sheriff Tom Kern is the current President of the Michigan Sheriff's Association. County Clerk Margie White-Cormier was recently honored by her peers as the County Clerk of the year. Patrick Finn has been nominated as the Emergency Services Director of the year.

6. County Parking Policy

- ❖ The County Board has adopted a Parking Policy making all parking around the perimeter of the Courthouse available to the public. Employees now park in other county lots. The County Board has sent correspondence to employees thanking them for making this change.

7. Labor Negotiations

- ❖ All county labor contracts expired at the end of 2003. MAP and POAM (Dispatchers) contracts have been settled for 2004. All other bargaining group contracts for 2004 remain unsettled. AFSCME (Deputies and General Group) have settled a three year 2004, 2005 and 2006 contract. Both police unions POAM and POLC are going to binding arbitration.

8. Adult Probation Relocation

- ❖ The Board of Commissioners recently authorized relocating Adult Probation from the second floor of the McNair Building to the former Stanley Bakery Building on State Street in Caro. The County will remodel the interior of this building for barrier free compliance and to provide improvements so Adult Probation can properly conduct their state required probation operations. Entering into a multiple year lease without lease cost increases will offset remodeling costs.

9. MSU Extension Staffing

- ❖ MSU is in the process of hiring a Director to replace the previous Director who resigned in February of 2004. The Board of Commissioners Chairperson and Controller/Administrator are part of the interview team to choose the new Director. Interviews and public presentations by candidates will be conducted on November 10, 2004. The goal is to have a new full-time director in the county by the start of 2005.

10. Lawsuits Pending

- ❖ Notary and Decker lawsuits remain outstanding. In late June, the County Board of Commissioners decided to ask the Michigan Supreme Court to hear the apportionment lawsuit.

11. Emergency Services/Homeland Security

- ❖ The County has received approximately \$400,000 in federal grant funds for the county and local units of government to purchase equipment and related items necessary for emergency situations. These funds have enabled the purchase of equipment to handle biological and hazardous material situations, emergency generators, search and recovery cameras and related equipment. The Emergency Action Guide was also updated and simplified, which is a vital reference tool during emergency situations.

12. Moore and Sebewaing Drains

- ❖ A federal grant has been received by the county to mitigate flooding problems in the City of Vassar. This is a major drainage project that will divert water from the Cass River and prevent flooding in the center of the city. Downtown flooding has been a costly problem for many years. It is anticipated that the project will start in 2004. Another major project that will start in 2004 is the Sebewaing drain. These projects will have an impact on the county drainage costs.

13. Additional Prescription Cost Saving Program Offered by County

- ❖ The Board of Commissioners entered into an agreement enabling a prescription discount for residents of Tuscola County who are at least 18 years of age and are required to pay for prescriptions with cash. This program is called the National Prescription Health Plan. There are currently approximately 284 Tuscola County residents in this program. Total savings for 2003 was approximately \$68,979.
- ❖ The County is investigating another program called Prescription Relief. This program provides further prescription cost reductions by obtaining prescriptions that are near the end of their expiration date. This program is available to low-income residents.

14. Facility Maintenance Plan Developed

- ❖ The Controller/Administrator and Building & Grounds Director prepared an assessment over 5, 10, 15 and 20 years with cost estimates to conduct required capital maintenance to the 12 buildings currently owned by the county. Capital maintenance items included such items as: parking lots, roofs, heating/cooling equipment, floor coverings, window replacement, etc. In today's dollars approximately \$5.7 million would be required for this maintenance over the 20-year period.

15. Safety (Building Code) Inspection of Courthouse

- ❖ Fire exit signs and lighting in the Courthouse have been installed and certain other safety upgrades were made to improve safety within this building.

16. Courthouse Heating/Cooling System

- ❖ The heating and cooling system in the Courthouse was replaced three years ago at a cost of approximately \$1.2 million. The original system was no longer functional. Unfortunately, some of the heat pumps with the new system did not function properly. Numerous service calls were placed, but the problem with these heat pumps was not solved. The Building and Grounds staff was forced into an unintended situation of making special adjustments to the units each spring and fall so they would work. The county demanded and Johnson Controls (main contractor) complied with reimbursing the county \$8,500 for service call costs and believes the problem is now solved. However, if it isn't solved they assured the county they would fix it without cost to the county.

17. Veterans Honorarium

- ❖ Upon completion, the County will provide a link on the county web page to a listing of veterans who died in conflict since the Civil War. County veteran associations are preparing this information with voluntary assistance from county staff.

18. Collection of Delinquent Court Fines and Costs

- ❖ Circuit Court is requesting to enter into a contract with an individual or firm to conduct the collection of delinquent court fines and costs. The possible development of such a contract on a trial basis has been discussed. There is now estimated to be in excess of \$2 million in uncollected court fines and costs from Circuit Court. It is estimated that only 30% of this amount may actually be able to be collected, but this still amounts to \$600,000. Certain computer changes have been outlined explaining requirements to link Adult Probation to the county computer system for collection purposes. It is the goal to implement a collection system in the near future.

19. Jail Overcrowding

- ❖ The county continues to be plagued by jail overcrowding. In August the jail overcrowding reached a point where prisoners had to be released early. The only other option would be to house prisoners in other counties, which would put a further financial strain on an already financially strapped county budget. An overcrowded jail weakens the ability of Judges to maintain a tough stance on crime.

20. County Planning Commission Master Plan Promotion

- ❖ The County Planning Commission completed the development of a comprehensive master plan a few years ago. The Commission is requesting limited funding in the 2005 County Budget to pay travel costs to attend meetings with local units of government in the county to explain the county plan and how it compliments their local plans and other land use matters.

21. Smoking Ordinance

- ❖ County officials are discussing the possible development of a smoking ordinance to eliminate or restrict the location of smoking on county grounds for the employees and public.

22. Community Grant Foundation Grant Application

- ❖ Tuscola County has made application to the Tuscola Community Foundation in the amount of \$20,000 to facilitate supervised parenting time for children of divorced parents involved in the Friend of the Court operation of the county.

23. Health Insurance Cost Increases

- ❖ Health insurance costs are expected to increase by approximately \$250,000 for the September 1, 2004 to the August 30, 2005 period. The County Budget could not absorb this full increase. Therefore, the following actions were taken: increase the employee co-pay by 10%, change the drug co-pay from 10/20 to 15/30 and make maintenance drugs mandatory mail order. The goal is to have these changes fully implemented for union and non-union employees by January 1, 2005.

24. Recycling

- ❖ The Recycling Committee and Staff have been busy trying to meet the needs of the

residents of Tuscola County. Programs that continue to experience great success include: the confidential shredding, recycling education, electronic waste, household hazardous waste, textile collection, battery collection along with oil and antifreeze programs.

- ❖ One very important addition to the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) is the participation with Michigan Works. The operation was able to get up to two workers per week from Michigan Works which pay \$100 per week per worker in exchange for on the job training. This program started last week and will continue to be used while evaluating the value to the MRF.

25. Mosquito Abatement

- ❖ The last day for truck mounted ULV fogging was October 1st, 2004. On October 4th a frost killed most mosquitoes. Technicians last day of employment was October 15th, 2004. Three technicians' and two foremen will remain for a limited period to thoroughly clean the fourteen trucks, equipment, and to paint the inside of the building. The two mechanics, foremen and two utility people continue employment until October 29th, 2004. The two mechanics are doing end of season repairs, painting ULV machines and winterizing them. The two utility people that remain are gathering treatment data for the end of year report and getting these records ready for storage.
- ❖ Demand for service in 2004 was heavy; however, most citizens were patient. It was discovered that one company out of Kingston would fog yards for \$80 for approximately 15-20 minutes of treatment time. It is not known whether this company also did larviciding, which is an integral part of an Integrated Pest Management program.
- ❖ The Director and Biologist are working on planning the 2005 Michigan Mosquito Control Association Conference and the Tuscola County Mosquito Abatement 2004 Year End Report. In addition, a Technical Program Report is being prepared for 2005. The Biologist will continue gathering specimens from the field and submitting them for testing until he isn't collecting any more from the traps.

26. Technology

- ❖ Efficiencies through computerization in Tuscola County continue to be strengthened. Computer system security has been improved through firewall upgrades. Secure remote access is now available through the internet for police operations. New state of the art wiring for computer systems continues to be an important activity and this has been recently accomplished in the Treasurer's Office. The ability to access election results via the internet has been further improved. The County is moving forward with the goal of making the overall computer system hardware and software current, consistent and homogeneous. Backup procedures are constantly monitored and improved. Information is posted to the county web site more frequently and its layout has been enhanced. An overall policy for appropriate use of county computer resources has been adopted.

27. Dispatch

- ❖ County costs for LEIN (Law Enforcement Information Network) computer access have been reduced by technological changes in the method of connecting to the system. Thumb Cellular and Nextel are both Phase II Wireless meaning 911 can now access these cellular telephone users and be located within a small area. Dobson cellular remains to become Phase II compliant. A new lighting system for the Dispatch Tower has been installed that automatically signals the Director if there is a problem with the

Tower. The old EF Johnson radio system processing computer was replaced the new computer increases the capability of Anderson Radio to solve and prevent problems without actually being at the facility.

- ❖ There has been no turnover in full time personnel since January 2001.

28. Medical Care Facility Addition

- ❖ In a recent inquiry to the Medical Care Facility Director she explained that the Alzheimer's and remodeling project is going very well! The Board and Staff are pleased with the Construction Management Team. They are being strong advocates in terms of seeking value-engineering opportunities to assist with budgetary limitations. Aspects of the project that are underway and should be completed in the new wing soon include: drywall and painting, flooring installation and bathroom fixture installation. The ceiling grid is in and they are quickly going to start closing in the ceilings. Contractors are within a couple of days of putting on the Hunter Green metal roof on the new entrance and "pagodas".
- ❖ The front entrance concrete is being poured and that should be completed soon. The exterior signage has been ordered and the large front sign will be arriving within a couple of weeks. Internal signage will help to make it easy for visitors to find their way around in this larger building. The goal is to try to give the residents Thanksgiving Dinner in the new wing. All residents will be moved temporarily to the new wing in order to allow them to come in and renovate the existing building without endangering residents.

29. Presentation of Issues to State Representative and State Senator

- ❖ The County Board of Commissioners meets with Representative Meyer and State Senator Barcia on a regular basis to discuss issues of concern to the county. This has proved to be a productive communication process to gain the understanding and in many cases the support of our state officials.