



Sheboygan County News

A Newsletter for County Employees

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Changing Fiscal Outlook Affects All

by Adam Payne, County Administrator

State officials are now projecting over a \$6.5 billion deficit for 2009-2011, the largest in our State's history. Though clearly the recent economic conditions are a significant cause, the State has been leading us down this track for many years. Even in this crisis, the State has yet to provide the political will to position us for long-term success.

Local units of government are once again being called upon to help solve the State's fiscal mess and lack of leadership. No doubt you have read headlines with some local officials calling for significant wage concessions by their employees, or threatening mass layoffs. Not so here.

The sky is not falling in Sheboygan County. Good decisions of the past, including consolidating three nursing homes into one, reducing our debt service obligations, evaluating and prioritizing all our programs and services, and a budget process that emphasizes working together to achieve our goals, have contributed to our success. We have healthy fiscal reserves, an excellent bond rating, and we are prepared to weather this storm.

Though our track record is impressive, unfortunately, our fiscal outlook doesn't look so bright.

For example, wages are growing at approximately \$1.3 million annually. Over the past ten years, health costs have increased from \$6.2 million to \$11.6 million, an average of 10% a year. The County also pays 100% of our Wisconsin retirement benefit, which for 2010 is projected to increase \$352,000.

These three wage and benefit increases total just over \$2 million annually. To put this in perspective, a 3% increase in property taxes (our legal cap for tax levy increases) provides just \$1.3 million in additional revenue. Obviously, this is not sufficient to cover wages and benefits. As you know, we also have to contend with increases in operating expenses for purchased services, equipment, and supplies, most of which are out of our control. Fuel increases alone have more than doubled since 2003.

As I shared in the last employee newsletter, what makes our situation even worse is that state funding for mandated programs is eroding, and the state disproportionately taps into county revenue streams (such as Clerk

of Courts fees). The governor has proposed \$1.4 million in negative budget impacts for Sheboygan County in 2010. The trends are discouraging.

Like it or not, change is inevitable, and all of us need to be part of the solution. Personally, I believe we all need to contribute more towards the cost of our health insurance and begin contributing towards our State Retirement pension. We also have to continuously strive to gain efficiencies, establish priorities, collaborate, and share services with other units of government. We simply cannot sustain our present level of programs and services. Finally, like any successful business, we need to diversify our revenue streams and be less beholden to the State, including implementing a ½% sales tax to help meet our fiscal challenges and provide property tax relief.

We must continue to lead by example, provide quality services, and balance our budget. Passing the buck to future leaders and generations is wrong.

Thank you for all that you do, and being an important part of our team. If we continue to work together, and have the courage to make some changes, our future looks bright.

Employee Appreciation Picnic

Thursday, August 13, 2009 at the Airport!

REGISTER BY FRIDAY, JULY 24TH (SEE INSERT)

Unique Arrangement Provides County with Legal Services

by Carl Buesing, Corporation Counsel



There is no greater joy nor greater reward than to make a fundamental difference in someone's life.

*Sister Mary Rose
Children's Advocate*

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The City sewer, water and paving project around the Courthouse complex continues, and is on schedule for October 1st completion.

The Office of the Corporation Counsel acts as the civil legal advisor for the County Board and its Committees, the County Administrator and his Departments.

In Sheboygan County, the Corporation Counsel duties are undertaken through an arrangement of public and private resources. This arrangement is a product of the unique history of the office.

Originally, civil legal services were provided to county governments by the elected district attorneys and their staffs. In 1954, a young lawyer by the name of Alex Hopp was hired on a part-time basis to assist District Attorney David Weber. District Attorney Weber assigned to Attorney Hopp the County civil work, and Attorney Hopp continued to provide those services as a part-time Assistant District Attorney until April 21, 1959, when the County Board created the part-time stand-alone position of Corporation Counsel. Attorney Hopp was appointed to serve as the first Corporation Counsel.

He continued as a part-time employee of the County throughout the years while maintaining his private law practice. Ultimately, in 1995, after nearly 40 years, he stepped down as Corporation Counsel but his law firm has continued to provide civil legal services to the County on an independent contractor basis ever since. In December 2000, the tradition has continued with my law firm, now called Hopp Neumann Humke LLP, designating me as the lawyer to principally handle County matters, and the County agreed to this assignment.

The arrangement seems to make sense because although I am the principal face of the office, I am able to rely upon the assistance of the other lawyers in my firm to offer help on areas of law in which they are more familiar. In those circumstances, my fellow lawyers are Assistant Corporation Counsels.

Thus, people may deal with Mary Lynne Donohue on an employment matter, or Phil Mueller on a transactional matter, or Bill Powell on a real estate question. If these lawyers are not on the frontline of the legal issue, they remain behind the scenes so that if there is a zoning issue for example, I can consult with Paul Dirkse or Mike Bauer, or if there is a litigation question, I can bounce it off Bill Moir or Herb Humke, or if there is an immigration inquiry, I can get an answer from Crystal Fieber and then look good by transmitting it to the questioner.

As County government becomes more complex, the number of issues that need to be addressed is becoming ever larger. On an average day, our office may get inquiries on topics as varied as airport leases, employment questions, zoning interpretations, collection matters, jail policy, open records requests, real estate title concerns, tax issues, building contract bids, tuberculosis quarantining, and nursing home service contracts.

In December 2008, our firm moved to new offices on Kohler Memorial Drive. While the office location is more central to our firm's individual and business clients, it also is further away from the Administration Build-

ing and the Courthouse. Therefore, I try to make the rounds of several of the County Departments when I am downtown.

Part of what makes Sheboygan County's arrangements so unusual is that even though I am an independent contractor, I also supervise a full-time County employee. This person handles all of the frontline child support establishment and enforcement activities for the Child Support Enforcement Agency and all of the mental commitment and

guardianship matters for the Health and Human Services Department. These duties had previously been performed by the District Attorney, but

in 1990, when District Attorney's offices became part of state government, the County had to provide for its own resources for these actions. The County created an in-house position of Assistant Corporation Counsel.

For the past five years, Natasha Torry-Morgan has held this position. Natasha has shown herself to be an aggressive advocate in support of excellence, and hiring her has been one of the smartest decisions that I have made.

Finally, no overview of the Corporation Counsel office can be complete without recognizing the work done by my gatekeeper and legal assistant, Dianne Corcoran. She is an asset of incalculable value and makes sure that the work performed by our office is done in a prompt, thorough, and professional manner.



ARE YOU FISCALLY FIT?

Watch for classes coming this Fall, 2009



Sessions offered by: Margaret Wittkopp of The Heartland Institute of Financial Education

Team Focuses on Conserving Energy

by Karin Pierce, Mapping Technician

As part of our County Energy Management Policy, which went into effect on December 1, 2008, an Energy Team was formed to investigate ongoing conservation options. The team first met in April 2009 and the group is currently meeting on a monthly basis.

Representatives from Focus on Energy and Wisconsin Public Service were in attendance at the initial meeting to educate the team on how energy use is calculated and the reasons for conservation. It is expected that educating individual departments will result in the small daily actions that will contribute to a reduction in the \$1.4 million

county-wide energy expense.

During the second meeting, Building Services Director Jim TeBeest reported that through the end of March the electricity demand had decreased 5% and as of April 30th, usage of gas had decreased by 1.8%. The Energy Team continues to track the County's gas and electric usage and investigate viable options that could be implemented to reduce energy consumption and the resulting expense.

The Energy Team is interested in hearing your energy-saving ideas or questions you might have related to energy consumption within your depart-

ment. If you have any suggestions or questions, please contact any one of the following Energy Team members: Jim TeBeest—Building Services (x4349); Mike Ziereis—County Electrician (x4390); Kathy Pluskat—Courthouse (x3938); Marty Bonk—Health & Human Services (x3251); Paul Brinkman—Detention Center (x1304); and Karin Pierce—Administration Building (x1331). The Energy Team is also fortunate to have the assistance of Scott Jones—Focus on Energy, Mike Valleskey—Wisconsin Public Service and Ken Kozak—Wisconsin Public Service Engineer.



Various Tasks Keep Natasha on the Move

by Natasha Torry-Morgan, Assistant Corporation Counsel

Prior to accepting the position of Assistant Corporation Counsel in September 2003, I practiced family law at Legal Services of North-eastern Wisconsin in Green Bay and the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee. I graduated from Ripon College with a degree in politics and government and then immediately attended law school at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

My job title is commonly referred to as the "child support attorney." That is because I spend roughly 55% of my work hours representing the Child Support Agency (CSA) and until a few years ago performed most of my work duties from an office in that agency. I am responsible for representing the CSA in approximately 5,300 active child support files that involve families who are receiving public assistance or requested child support enforcement services. On an annual basis I appear before the

court in up to 1,400 matters involving paternity establishment, child support establishment and modifications, and child support enforcement.

The other part of my duties are dedicated to Health and Human Services—Division of Community Programs (HHS-DCP). I am also responsible for handling mental commitment and guardianship/protective placement matters. My second office is located in the HHS main building. I also have the privilege of working with various DCP staff to develop and implement policies that have a great impact on our community and particularly persons with mental illness, drug or alcohol addiction, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

I often begin my day by attending court hear-

ings at Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center, then either making an appearance at the courthouse or stopping by the CSA to sign pleadings or give advice, and ending at either the HHS main building or annex. I really enjoy all of the different people that I am able to interact with and the various subject matters that I must keep knowledgeable in and the multiple roles that I play. I am never bored in my job.



As a wife and mother of young children I am never bored at home either. I am married to an attorney who also practices in Sheboygan County. As a family, we try to encourage healthy living, which for us includes: exercising together, eating a vegetarian diet, and promoting a general respect for nature. Sheboygan County has been a great place for me to work, live, and now raise a family.

Welcome New Finance Director—Sheree Reininger

by Kay Lorenz, Assistant to the County Administrator

Please welcome our new Finance Director, Sheree Reininger! Sheree began her employment with Sheboygan County on June 29th. She has 31 years of municipal government finance experience. Most recently, she was the Finance Director for the Village of Shorewood. Prior to that, Sheree was employed by the City of Glendale for 25 years. Sheree received her Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Cardinal Stritch

University. She enjoys new challenges and has a true passion for working in finance and accounting. Sheree is excited to have the opportunity to work for Sheboygan County.

Sheree is married, has a 21-year-old daughter who is a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point majoring in Biology, and an 11-year-old husky lab mix. Sheree is especially excited about helping

with planning her daughter's wedding, which is scheduled for October 2010. Sheree's favorite family activities include fishing, camping and swimming.



Wondergem Leaves a Legacy of Innovation

by Joan Ketterman, Division Manager Community Programs

It is a bittersweet opportunity to say farewell to Ann Wondergem, who is retiring as Director of the Health and Human Service Department on July 6, 2009. Ann began work for Sheboygan County at the Comprehensive Health Center as Volunteer Coordinator. She contracted with the Sheboygan County Department of Social Services as a Special Programs Coordinator launching first the Youth Aids Program and then the long term care system. The Social Services Committee was so impressed with her work they said "Ann Wondergem made the position of the State understandable! What a feat." And they offered her a Supervisory position with the Department of Social Services.

In 2001, Ann was selected as the Director of the Health and Human Service Department to

lead over 200 employees delivering services to Sheboygan County residents that range from Prenatal Care Coordination to Burial Assistance. As Ann affectionately says—"We serve people from womb to tomb." During her time as Director, she brought innovative services to the Department. These include the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Coordinated Service Teams, Wrap-around programming for children and families, and Sheboygan County Job Center, a one stop for employment and training related services. And, she did so with a smile.

Ann will be enjoying her new home in Elkhart Lake and her new granddaughter, Elizabeth. She will be busy with biking, golfing, and gardening, and has promised her husband, Gary, that she will not commit to any

volunteer activities until January, 2010.

At a recent WI Counties Human Service Association meeting, President Ann Wondergem was referred to as having a name that fits her perfectly. She is a wonder and she is a gem.



Employees Use Muscle-Power to Get to Work

by Aaron Brault, Program Specialist Non-Motorized Transportation

May 16th through May 22nd was the second countywide Bike & Walk to Work Week (BWTWW) in Sheboygan County. The goals of BWTWW are to increase both walking and bicycling as viable modes of transportation and to encourage people to reap the health, monetary, and environmental benefits of active transportation.

The week was a huge success. At five survey sites, there was a 45% increase in Nonmotorized travel when compared to the prior month. When



compared to the same time period the previous year, we witnessed a 47% increase. We had over twenty private employers participate including Kohler, Nemschoff, Rockline, Sargento & American Orthodontics. We had over 70 restaurants and merchants offer specials to those who biked or walked to their establishment that week. And, we had seventeen businesses donate their services, products, and/or time.

The challenge between County employees, City of Sheboygan employees, and the Sheboygan

Area School District employees proved very successful again as well. Between the three entities we logged 1,771 miles throughout the week. The City of Sheboygan won the challenge again followed by SASD in a close second. SASD won all four of the individual awards for most mileage by biker and walker, and longest commute by a biker and walker. Congrats to Mark Schorer in the County's building services department who came in a close third for most mileage by a biker!! And, congrats to Rockline Industries for winning the countywide private employer challenge.

EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION PICNIC

*Picnic funded entirely through Vending Machine Revenue
(Employees & elected officials are invited to attend)*

Date: Thurs. August 13, 2009

Time: 4:30 pm–7:30 pm

**Where: Sheboygan County Airport
Aviation Heritage Center
N6191 Resource Drive
Sheboygan Falls**



Brats, burgers, veggie burgers, pasta salad, baked beans, cookies, soda & bottled water will be provided.

DOOR PRIZES—MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN!

Beer & wine will be available for purchase.

FOOD WILL BE SERVED FROM 4:30 p.m. —6:30 p.m.

**BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND
ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDED BY
SHEBOYGAN'S OWN**

“II COOL”

PICNIC REGISTRATION

(RETURN THIS REQUEST TO YOUR DEPARTMENT HEAD BY FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2009)

YES, I will attend the Sheboygan County Employee Appreciation Picnic

PLEASE PRINT:

NAME: _____

DEPARTMENT: _____

To assist with planning,
please check your
preference(s):

BRAT

BURGER

VEGGIE BURGER