



## The Value of Communication

I believe effective communication plays a vital role in the creation of a culture where success is the inevitable outcome. Communicating is one of the most important things we do in our work, yet good communication is often a casualty during difficult times. Like you, the first thing I see in the morning when I turn on my computer is eCentral News and recently, not a whole lot has changed. However, in conversations with Department Heads and Elected Officials during the past few weeks I know you have a lot going on.

Of course, I realize that many of you choose to communicate through face-to-face conversations, email and phone calls and that's great, but we're missing out on a great opportunity to engage more employees through eCentral and the broader community through eWashtenaw. We are all ambassadors for Washtenaw County and thus it is important that we be informed about what is going on across our organization. The best place to get this information is through these websites.

I'm committed to sharing as much information with you as quickly as possible and I challenge you to do the same. I'm looking forward to reading about what's happening in your departments on eCentral and eWashtenaw. If you have ideas for stories or need help getting something online, please contact the [eCentral team](#).

Feel free to contact me directly at 222-3401 or by [email](#) with any feedback, comments, or suggestions.



## News from the *Administrator*

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## The Administration Team - Who's Doing What?



I have spent the last several weeks working closely with Bill and I have quickly learned that he's inquisitive, highly motivated and he demonstrates a lot of initiative. I'm confident that he will gain a greater understanding of each department, its issues, and its various initiatives with time. The best way for Bill to do this is by spending time getting to know you and touring your department. Over the next few weeks you will be contacted by Administration to schedule these tours. Thank you in advance for your flexibility.

We will also be working with The Board of Commissioners to schedule a tour of each township and city within Washtenaw County. This will be a great opportunity for Bill to find out what's happening within the community and to get better acquainted with each Commissioner.

I will continue working closely with the elected officials and I've asked Bill to manage all of the appointed department heads.

I encourage you to contact either Bill or myself with any questions.

### Managing the Multi-Generational Workplace

Recently I read an article on generational differences that impact how people perform in the workplace. There are a lot of management techniques to effectively manage a multi-generational workforce. Having a spread of 50 years between the youngest and oldest employee can add a richness of experience and perspectives that has not been encountered before, but it can also cause challenges in terms of communication. I hope you'll take some time to review the [online articles](#) and complete the [quiz](#).

How did you do? How can you use this information to strengthen your team?

## Bringing Out The Best in our Employees



Initially, this topic felt daunting to write about after a year of severe budget reductions. Our work has been centered on necessary cost-cutting and while this is critical work I don't want to forget about our employees. I'm sure employees are grateful to have a job during this economic downturn, but it's likely they are also struggling with a flood of other emotions, such as frustration, anger and desperation. In the midst of trying to solve financial issues, too often, little energy is spent appreciating, recognizing and bringing out the best in employees.

I recently read some research from the human resources consulting firm Towers Perrin suggesting the effects of a lack of appreciation and recognition in the workplace are much stronger than we might expect. They concluded that "engaged people consistently produce superior work, they innovate more, deliver better customer service, and go out of their way to manage costs and meet expectations. And, they behave this way because they **want to**, not because they are expected to."

Over the years, we've recognized employees through the Employee Recognition Program; a program that I believe is incredibly important. Unfortunately, we've also had to reduce funding for this program. These reductions are not meant to diminish the work of our employees or to insinuate that our employees aren't valuable. Rather, these reductions were made to save jobs and services. Even though the program has changed, I still believe it is very valuable. The names of the Employee Recognition nominees and those being honored for their Years of Service with Washtenaw County have been [posted online](#). I hope you'll take a moment to acknowledge your fellow coworkers.

# Leadership is more than just a title!



When I realized that we were facing a \$30M budget deficit for 2010/2011, I felt like the light at the end of the tunnel had been turned off – it was overwhelming to say the least! I think we would all agree that the 2009 budget process was difficult, but we came through it with some significant accomplishments. Together, we produced a balanced budget that was unanimously approved by the Board of Commissioners; a budget that included minimal job and service reductions, accurate forecasting of property tax revenue for 2010, the retention of AA+ bond ratings and a 2009 GF year-end surplus of \$585K. This budget is a testament to the commitment we've made to **Guiding Principle #1: long-term fiscal stability.**

During the 2009 budget process we learned that we're not alone in our financial challenges and like so many others, we need to radically change the way we deliver services. We must work together to address the projected deficit for 2012/2013, a deficit that is continuing to rise. I believe the best strategy is to focus on **Guiding Principle #7: Provide leadership on intragovernmental, intergovernmental and intersectoral cooperation and collaboration aimed at improving services to County citizens.** We need to focus on doing the right things, not just doing things right.

There's a continuum of cooperation

between simply working together to fully integrating services and you must decide what works best for you and your program. We have a tendency to navigate to self-preservation and we try to protect those we work closely with, but we need to shift our way of thinking. We must think about the greater good of the organization and what's the best way to deliver services to the people that need them most. There are a lot of good reasons why we should collaborate, but bottom line, it's the right thing to do.

Collaboration is our best strategy for addressing the 2012/2013 budget woes and this will take time and hard work. These types of cultural shifts can be accelerated however by leaders who bring out the best in others and create an environment where people choose to excel. I believe that leadership is the ability to influence others. I read recently that a leader with no influence holds a position by title only.

We cannot act in isolation; each department trying to protect its budget and its employees. A leader draws from the knowledge, expertise and experience of others. Deliberate collaboration is critical if we want to navigate today's economic challenges.

Recently, I gave a [presentation](#) at the [Group of 180](#) that centered on transforming local government through collaboration. I have reviewed best practices throughout the nation and ultimately found some of the best examples right here in Washtenaw County. Several departments shared their collaboration stories at the June Group of 180 meeting. Take some time to review the articles on eCentral – I hope you'll find them as inspiring and motivating as I have.

## Article Top Pick

### A Commitment to Change

June 2010, Michigan Township News

A young Benjamin Franklin, who eventually became a skilled entrepreneur, writer, printer, scientist, inventor and statesman, was brilliant, eloquent, driven – and opinionated and argumentative.

On a trip to Europe, one courageous confidant was kind and bold enough to pull him aside and give him feedback. He told Franklin it didn't matter how intelligent or well-spoken he was, no one cared. People would literally avoid him because they couldn't tolerate being in his presence. Rather than push back, ignore or resist the feedback, Franklin decided to create a plan for improvement.

Okay, you may not be opinionated and argumentative; however: What feedback do you need to hear? Although Ben Franklin was devastated by the feedback, it didn't cause him to deny, rationalize, wallow, blame or resist. Instead, he started a focused, deliberate self-improvement process. He began by listing what he believed to be the attributes of an influential leader and prioritized them. Then, he selected 13 virtues he felt most worthy of his attention and organized himself around a demanding schedule of acting, monitoring and improving.

He focused on one attribute each week for 13 weeks then, started all over again. Rotating through his "top 13" translated into deliberate improvement of a specific quality four times a year. His continuous improvement increased his circle of influence and his ability to lead large numbers of people.

It's never too late to become who you could have been. Leading in lean times requires highly developed influential skills. Working to improve yourself and your relationships with others is no longer a luxury.

What will you improve today? What will you continue to improve?

*"Hell is when who you are meets who you could have been" - Benjamin Franklin*

# What's Happening with MSU Extension

## Upcoming County Events

### Board of Commissioners Regular Board Meetings

July 7th 6:30 pm

### Board of Commissioners Working Session

July 8th 6:30 pm

### Jaycees 59th Annual Carnival

July 8th—July 11th

Pioneer High School

### 14A-1 District Court Grand Opening

Friday, July 16th 1-4 pm

Eastern County Svc Ctr  
4133 Washtenaw Avenue  
Ann Arbor

### Michigan Elvis Fest

Ypsilanti Depot Town

July 9th—10th

### Manchester Community Fair

July 6th—10th

### Saline Celtic Festival

July 15th—17th

### Manchester Chicken Broil

July 15th 4-8 pm

### Ann Arbor Art Fair

July 21st—24th

### 4H Youth Show

July 25-July 30th

Washtenaw Farm Council  
Grounds

### Chelsea Summerfest

July 29th—31st

Michigan State University and the MSU Extension have begun the process of restructuring the colleges on campus and at Extension, as well as at the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station. Part of this restructuring is to prepare for when federal stimulus dollars will no longer be available. MSU has engaged in a thorough restructuring process with the intent of focusing its efforts on key statewide program areas; enhancing the expertise of staff within these programs; reducing administrative costs, and increasing funding for programs from resources beyond county, state and federal funding. MSU engaged in significant planning efforts during 2009 including focus groups with community partners and MSUE staff members. During focus group discussions, and in

subsequent communication, MSU explained that part of the redesign process would involve a) Maintaining a commitment to having a MSUE office in every county, b) Doing away with the county Extension Director and regional Extension Director positions, c) Reorienting staff assignments and reporting to focus on programming, and d) Coordinating county offices and staff members through multi-county districts. The latter will require a District Coordinator to be responsible for developing and maintaining strong collaborative relationships with our county and community-based partners. Using feedback received from the focus groups, MSU designed [the new district map](#). These new districts were implemented on July 1st and replaced

the regional structure. Programming and staffing will occur across district lines as dictated by community needs. At this time it remains unclear what programming our Extension office will offer. The districts simply provide a mechanism for organizing and reporting on relationships with community-based partners. Washtenaw County will now be referred to as District 12.

District Coordinators will be the primary contacts regarding county budget and program issues. They will also identify additional partners and funding to help sustain MSUE programming and will serve as coaches and provide feedback on staff members' performance. Our District Coordinator is **Matt Shane**. Matt attended [the June 2010 Ways & Means](#) meeting and spoke during citizen participation.

While District Coordinators officially started in their new roles on July 1st, they will be engaged in transition planning over the next three months or longer as necessary. Nancy Thelen has been asked to continue operating in her current capacity until details have been worked out.

Deputy Administrator Bill Reynolds and Budget Manager Jennifer Watson attended a Town Hall meeting hosted by MSU last week where they learned more about the changes. I have to admit that on paper the changes sound good, but we still have a lot of questions regarding the structure and funding stream. I will continue to keep you posted.

### Changes Include ...

- Creation of 13 districts
- Creation of District Coordinators
- Elimination of Extension Director position
- Questions remain on the structure and funding



Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners meeting *November 9, 2009*

## Changes in the Board of Commissioners

### *How will this impact you?*

More leadership changes are on the way! The makeup of our Board of Commissioners will change next year and that will have a significant impact on this organization. We rely on the Board to provide the leadership and direction necessary to ensure that we are fiscally stable and that we are providing programs and services that the community needs. We know that three of the eleven Board members are leaving and many others face a difficult primary in August.

**Commissioner Mark Ouimet**, District 1, is running for the 52<sup>nd</sup> District of the Michigan House of Representatives. Mark has served on the Board since 2005 and has provided tremendous leadership throughout, particularly in the area of finance.

**Commissioner Jeff Irwin**, District 11, is running for the 53<sup>rd</sup> House District. He has served on the Board since 2000 spending 4 years as Chair of the Board. He has demonstrated leadership in the areas of human services, transportation and the environment.

**Commissioner Jessica Ping**, District 3, is looking forward to the birth of her second child and hopes to spend more time at home with the family. Jessica has been a wonderful addition to the Board since 2007. Her energetic personality and commitment to public service will be missed.

The remaining nine commissioners face opposition in November with Commissioners **Wesley Prater**, **Ronnie Peterson** and **Conan Smith** also facing a primary election on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. You can view a list of all the candidates [online](#).

I hope you'll take some time to learn about the candidates running as they may be one of our Commissioners next year.

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### Board of Commissioners "Did You Know"

Every 2 years all members of the Board are up for reelection on a partisan basis from single member districts. Elections will be held this November and the new term will begin in January of 2011.

In 1969 the Board of County Supervisors, made up of one representative from each township and two or more representatives from each city, was replaced by the smaller Board of Commissioners we have today.

In 2011 the Board of Commissioners will go through the exercise of reapportionment, or redistricting which is the responsibility of the Prosecutor, Clerk, Treasurer, Democratic Chair and Republican Chair and it follows each decennial census. The last time the Board went through this process the number of Districts decreased from 15 to 11.

Core responsibilities of the Board include setting policy, providing direction for the organization, and ensuring fiscal stability. One of the Board's most important duties is to adopt a balanced budget.

Currently, 2 of the 5 county-wide elected officials are former Commissioners: County Clerk Lawrence Kestenbaum and County Treasurer Catherine McClary.

## More Changes to Come for Budget and Finance!



As you know, we recently interviewed candidates for the role of Finance Director. I'm delighted to report that an internal candidate was selected for the position. Public Health's Kelly Belknap has accepted the position and will begin later this month. Her wealth of knowledge in the areas of budget and accounting coupled with her organizational knowledge make her the perfect fit for the position. Please join me in congratulating Kelly on her new position.

Ready or not, our local government is evolving, beginning with the consolidation of the Finance and Budget Offices, effective August 1<sup>st</sup>. This merger will streamline operations and encourage greater integration across departmental functions.

Traditionally, the Finance Director has primarily focused on fiscal management, debt management and accounting while the Budget Manager focused on measuring outcomes and aligning resources to meet strategic goals. Moving forward these responsibilities will be shared and

the Budget Manager will report to the Finance Director.

We have an opportunity to better position ourselves to accomplish the goals and objectives of this organization by engaging a strong team of individuals who can assist in defining outcomes and evaluating programming within each county department. With an expanded strategic role, the Finance Director can provide backup or support to the Budget Manager and similarly, their staff can also provide backup to one another.

The benefits to this merger are 1) creating a great team of individuals who can assist in the upcoming strategic planning efforts, 2) enhancing communication between departments, 3) cross-training opportunities, 4) added value through differing perspectives and 5) backup for both the Finance Director and the Budget Manager.

This is an administrative change; therefore the Board of Commissioners will not need to vote on this merger. The departmental staff are already in one physical location, which will ease this transition. I will keep you informed as updates become available.

## Furlough and Banked Leave Days

This year's holiday weekend was extended an extra day due to either a furlough or banked leave day and I have to admit it made the sacrifice a little less painful. I just want to take a moment to thank our employees because without the cooperation, commitment and sacrifices of union and non-union employees alike during 2009, we would have not been able to bring forth a balanced budget for 2010 & 2011. The agreements reached, and leadership shown, allows us to continue to provide service to all citizens of the County in the areas of public safety and justice, human services, environment and land use, civic infrastructure, as well as support services, many of which are our most venerable citizens and in need of such services.

Two designated days off remain for 2010, specifically Friday, 11/12, and Monday, 12/27. The agreements also included designated days off during 2011. Such days will be announced by December 1, 2010 after discussion with the Trial Court, Elected & Appointed Officials, with the goal to minimize customer service impact.

Again, many thanks to all of you and the commitment you have shown for the citizens of Washtenaw County.

### Health Care Reform Open Enrollment

August 2, 2010 will mark the initial implementation of Health Care Reform for Washtenaw County. Beginning August 2, and continuing through August 13, Human Resources will provide an open enrollment period for eligible employees and retirees to add qualified dependents (age 0 – 26) on Washtenaw County health care benefits effective 10/1/2010.

Stay tuned to **eCentral** for specifics regarding the open enrollment process.