

April, 2014

News from the Administrator



Administrator's Message

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“I am not afraid of storms for I am learning how to sail my ship.”

- Louisa May Alcott

Now that April is finally here, I feel comfortable enjoying and talking about the warm weather without worrying about one last snowstorm coming through. And as the warm weather comes in, so too does some exciting news and awards for the county.

Firstly, I am proud to announce that Washtenaw County has been recognized by the Alliance for Innovation for our Quadrennial Budget for Financial Sustainability as an outstanding achievement in local government innovation. The Alliance for Innovation is an international network of governments committed to transforming local government by accelerating the development and dissemination of innovative practices and models.

Additionally, as I mentioned last month in my Administrator's Message, such a long and difficult winter has motivated the County to reexamine how we support the most vulnerable in our population: the homeless. For a bit of context,

in 2004 the County was a partner in developing a Blueprint to End Homelessness in Washtenaw County. The plans laid out in that document have done much to improve the lives of many in Washtenaw County by keeping people in homes when possible, creating more permanent affordable housing, and reforming the system of care. As this winter has shown us though, there are still things to be done to improve our services. As the weather warms, we will be given a window to make these changes for the coming years, but we should not lose sight of the importance of that work.

In other budget news, Equalization Director Raman Patel has released the County's 2014 Equalization Report. It's good news for the county, we have seen a rise in equalized county value, with total equalized value up 4.7%. Taxable value is up 2.01%! While this should mean an improved financial position for the county, it will take time for county revenues

to return to pre-recession levels. For those of you interested, you can find the report [online here](#).

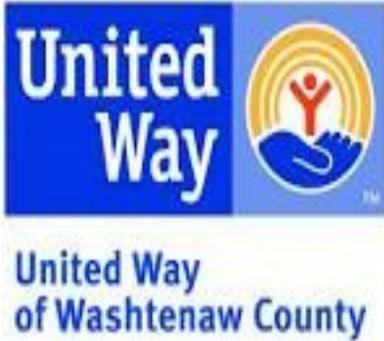
In other news, on April 28th the Group of 180 will be meeting to discuss what can be done to promote employee health and wellness, and at this meeting there will be one last opportunity to donate to the Food Gatherers canned food drive, but of course please feel free to donate before then.

Thank you all for your hard work and continued dedication to the residents of this county. It is your work and diligence which has made us so successful, and which is the basis for the recognition from groups like the Alliance for Innovation.

Happy April, and take care,

-Verna McDaniel

United Way Update!



It's our quiet time of year, but your United Way committee stays busy to help make giving easy. Their annual food drive, benefitting Food Gatherers ends on Monday, April 28. If you're planning to attend the Group of 180, please bring along a canned food item to donate. You could win a copy of our wildly popular 2013 Washtenaw County Employee Cookbook!

May Days of Caring offer a number of opportunities to have fun while fund raising. Community Baby Shower, bowling, pizza. Be sure to watch eCentral in the coming weeks for specific information.

June 20 is the annual Day of Action. Once again, we'll be working at Safe House Center.

If you like having fun while working outside with a great group of people, this volunteer opportunity is for you. Mark your calendar, and then watch ecentral for details.

Stuff the Bus is scheduled for early August and is a great opportunity to help school aged children with supplies. Be sure to watch eCentral for a chance to participate in this event.

Looking ahead, the committee has already begun to receive donations for this year's campaign— We've received donations from The Henry Ford, Toledo Zoo, Center for Yoga, Fran Coy Salon, Wideworld Sports Center and many more.

As always, your United Way Committee thanks each and every one who helps to make our annual campaign a success. We appreciate your support and encouragement throughout the year. If you have suggestions or questions, please contact us at

uwcommittee@washtenaw.org



2014 Red Cross Blood Drive



American Red Cross

Together, we can save a life

The American Red Cross collects about 40% of the blood needed in the United States. One blood donation may save as many as three lives.

We would like to thank all of those who gave blood at the American Red Cross Blood Drive on Friday, April 11. Thanks to your overwhelming support, we gathered 19 pints of blood that came from 23 donors.

We are excited to announce that our next blood drive will be this summer on July 25th at 200 N. Main Street in Ann Arbor.

Please watch eCentral for any updates. For more information on the need for blood in Washtenaw County or

about the efforts of American Red Cross, visit <http://www.redcross.org/mi/ann-arbor>.



**The Washtenaw County American Red Cross is located at:
4624 Packard, Ann Arbor, MI**

2013 Year-End Budget Review



A LOOK at the BUDGET

The Board of Commissioners recently received the year-end report on the 2013 budget, and like the equalization report, once again, we received some good news! The 2013 General Fund experienced a revenue surplus of just over \$2.35 million as a result of revenue sharing from the County Incentive Program, excess Sheriff Office, Clerk/Register of Deeds and Trial Court revenues. The General Fund expenditures surplus totaled just over \$1.56 million as a result of personnel services savings and departmental operating surpluses and use of budgeted reserves.

Through year end, total combined projected revenue and expenditure surpluses totaled \$3,920,818!

This surplus puts Washtenaw County in a good position to dedicate additional funds to its unearmarked reserve. The goal of our Board of Commissioners is to have 20% of our annual General Fund budget available to carry us through lean months of each year-while we wait for property tax

revenue to arrive.

Of course, this good news would not be possible without the hard work of our organized labor, staff, and the outstanding leadership of our department heads and elected officials! Keep up the good work, everyone!



The Board of Commissioners revisits the 2013 Budget

Washtenaw Ranks First in Health Factors for Fifth Consecutive Year

In an article recently posted on eWashtenaw, our own Public Health Department reported that Washtenaw County ranks first among Michigan counties in 'health factors'—according to the 2014 County Health Rankings released in March of this year. It is the fifth consecutive year this honor has been bestowed upon us here in Washtenaw County and a testament to the hard work of our Public Health Department and their partners. Congratulations, Ellen and team.

Here's an excerpt of the article, or, you may read it in its entirety. [Click Here](#)

Washtenaw's overall high rankings provide good infor-

ation about how we are doing locally compared to other counties and states. Within the county, however, there are significant health differences when we look at outcomes according to where people live, how much money they earn, their level of formal education or their race/ethnicity. For example, while infant mortality rates have improved overall, black babies under one year still die at almost twice the rate of white babies in Washtenaw. Similarly, how long you live may depend on where exactly you live within the county: The average age of death in Sylvan, York and Ypsilanti Townships starts at 64 years. In contrast, it is over 76 years in

Bridgewater Township, Saline and Ann Arbor.

Washtenaw's own source of county health data, called the Health Improvement Plan (HIP), illustrates these disparities in health. Taken together, the Rankings and HIP can help us develop innovative approaches to support health – across our local communities and, often, outside the doctor's office.

The article continues to discuss how our Public Health Department is partnering with others to set priorities and improve health, especially where disparities exist. An excellent read- verna



Getting to Know— Marc Breckenridge



After the record-breaking winter we've just experienced, many of us are anxiously anticipating the spring and summer months. As we gratefully welcome the sunshine, warm weather, flowers, and picnics with friends and families, we also must realize that beautiful weather brings with it the threat of thunderstorms, tornadoes and flooding. Fortunately, Washtenaw County has an excellent guardian at the helm of the Sheriff's Emergency Services Division. Marc Breckenridge has been Washtenaw County's Emergency Manager since 1992, but has dedicated his life to educating and keeping people safe.

I recently had an opportunity to ask Marc a few questions, and you'll see by his responses, our safety is in good hands!

What made you decide to pursue this career path?

When I was 12 years old, the Boeing 707 that I was taking with my family between Anchorage and Fairbanks experienced hydraulic systems failure over the McKinley mountain range and we had to make an emergency landing. It was exciting to watch the well-choreographed procedures being carried out before the landing, and impressive to watch the response from local public safety agencies first hand once we were down. Of course, the look on my mother's

face was not one of excitement! After the 707 incident, it was Scouting that led me to lifeguard training, which led to EMT training and that was pretty much it. I knew that I would be engaged in emergency services in some way for the rest of my life.

What part of your job do you find most satisfying?

I really like to work with groups to build consensus. I remember a time not that long ago when each agency or jurisdiction seemed to have diametrically opposed positions and opinions about everything! Today, I think government professionals are more open to possibilities and new ways to work together and to be more efficient. I'm sure that the economy has had a lot to do with that, but I'd also like to think that collaboration has simply become a more recognized and desirable skill set for public sector employees.

What part of your job do you find most challenging?

Maintaining an on-call status around the clock is the most challenging part of the job. It's not a job for someone who really hates to have after-hours plans frequently interrupted. My small Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff used to share designated on-call periods but we found that all hands were required in the center for any significant emergency that occurs. Now we're all basically on-call unless someone is very sick or on vacation.

Getting to Know— Marc Breckenridge

If you could tell citizens to remember/observe/prepare for one thing, what would it be?

It has to be two things! 1.) Keep a good flashlight, battery powered AM/FM radio and plenty of spare batteries in a safe place... and know how to tune-in your local emergency broadcast stations. Washtenaw County's stations are WEMU at 89.1 FM and WWWW at 102.7 FM. 2.) Except for scheduled testing, activation of our outdoor warning sirens means you should immediately go indoors and tune in your local emergency broadcast station for official information. It could be for a severe weather situation, but it could also be for a release of hazardous chemicals nearby or even another national homeland security emergency.

Your office partners with many other agencies/municipalities in Washtenaw County. Is it difficult to maintain/manage all of those relationships?

Yes, it can be difficult but I've found that sometimes you just need to take a little extra time to understand the concerns of others who may have (sometimes radically) different views on what needs to be done. 99% of the time they actually have good reasons for their concerns. Openness is critical. I think one of the hardest lessons to learn is that *my* idea is not always the *best* idea.

Have you noticed any changes in citizen interest or emergency

preparedness over the years?

When there are major national disasters or local ones nearby, people do tend to pay attention to their preparedness needs. Unfortunately, complacency sets in within a month or two. We really try to combat this sentiment by accepting every public speaking engagement, request for media interview and invitation to plan and train with local schools and businesses. We also utilize several electronic public information formats. Local and national media outlets help us quite a bit (such as Local 4 producing annual severe weather specials, and some of the outstanding documentary work done by The Weather Channel). That said it doesn't seem like the whole community will ever be completely prepared. While many do take preparedness seriously, there are many who do not. Our job is to convince them otherwise.

How has technology changed what you do?

Technology has vastly improved how we do many things. The trick in emergency services is not to engage technology so much that when you lose your network, for instance, there's nothing more you can do. So we embrace technology, but we also equally embrace redundancy and simplified backup systems at the same time.

Some of these technologies include Washtenaw County's pub-

lic safety communications system, which is second to none. This system has greatly improved information sharing and coordination of our first responders. Another example is our outdoor warning siren system, which we are expanding and will have the capability of reaching 80% of the county's population by the end of this year. Nixle alerting is now used by both Metro Dispatch and the EOC to quickly inform the community about serious situations. We have also been approved by FEMA to send Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA's) to all smart phone users who are near a developing disaster. This technology could someday save a lot of lives during a chemical accident, for example, that happens in the middle of the night.

Thank you, Marc, for your tireless work, and for helping to keep the residents of Washtenaw County safe! To learn more about [the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office Emergency Services Division](#), please [click here](#)