



Administrator's Message

GREETINGS EVERYONE. I hope you are enjoying the beautiful fall weather. Over the last few months I have met with community leaders and I have spoken at quite a few community events. No matter where I go the comments are the same. People tell me how great the county is in terms of leadership, customer service and responsiveness. The community believes in us and they have confidence that we are going to help this community make it through these difficult times. I can't help but be proud when I hear this feedback. Thank you for representing the county well.

A Successful Group of 180

I just want to take a moment to thank all of those who answered my Call to Action for the September Group of 180 meeting. As you may recall I asked each of the Priority Areas to get together in brainstorming sessions to discuss what they are currently doing in terms of collaboration and to develop creative options for future consideration. The presentations were given at last week's meeting and they were informative. I was pleased to find out that so much collaboration was already taking place. The presentations are all available [online](#). I hope you take a moment to review them. There's a lot of great information in them.



News from the *Administrator*

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VETERAN AFFAIRS INTERIM DIRECTOR



I am pleased to announce the appointment of Michael Smith as Interim Veteran Affairs Director effective October 1st. Michael will manage the day-to-day operations of Veteran Affairs while Bill and I assess the department and determine appropriate next steps.

Michael began his career in the US Army in 1983 and retired in 2004. During his military career he had the distinction of serving in all three components of the US Army (Active, National Guard, Reserves). He began working for Washtenaw County in 1993 and has worked in HR, ETCS and Support Services. Michael was hired as the Veteran Benefits Specialist in 1997 and has been there ever since.

Michael has demonstrated tremendous leadership during his time at the county and in the community. He is currently a member of the Advisory Board for the Communications, Media and Public Policy Magnet (CMPP) at Skyline High School. As a guest lecturer at Skyline he discusses the Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare policies as well as other federal and state government policies for veterans.

He possesses an Associate's Degree in Humanities and Social Sciences from WCC and a Bachelor's degree with a major in Public Administration and a minor in Political Science from EMU. He also earned a Masters in Public Administration in 2004. Currently he serves as an Adjunct Lecturer at EMU.

Recently I asked Michael what makes him so passionate about serving the veteran community and he said, "Military leaders are true examples of Servant Leaders. It's rewarding to work with veterans from all branches of the military and from all eras of wartime and peacetime. Veterans are folks who participated in one of the most dangerous occupations on earth and whether they served during war or peace, the nature of the work is perilous and people get hurt. It is only right that we take care of those who served and received disabilities that place them at a disadvantage."

Michael's operational experience, commitment to public service and his passion for making the lives of veterans and their families better makes him the right person to lead Veteran Affairs during this time of transition.

PREPARING OUR LEADERS



When you've been with an organization as long as I have you sometimes assume that employees know everything about everything, but that's not always the case. Take the Washtenaw County Leadership Academy, for example. Did you know that its creation was in direct response to employee feedback from our Organizational Capability Survey?

Through your feedback we learned that while many of our managers and supervisors possessed strong operational knowledge they didn't necessarily have solid managerial skills. We have long made a commitment to employees in our [guiding principles](#) to provide the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to County employees so that they can carry out the principles of this organization. Out of that commitment, the Washtenaw County Leadership Academy was born.

For those of you that aren't aware, the Washtenaw County Leadership Academy provides development and networking opportunities for supervisors, managers and key professional staff. The Leadership Academy is a comprehensive program offering training in the areas of leadership, management and coaching, which are the cornerstones of our approach to the vision of being a "World Class Service Provider" and creating community impact.

Membership in the Leadership Academy is by Department Head request. Members may either be "core" members, accountable for attending all the core LA courses; or they may be "at will" members who may attend courses as desired. All of the Leadership Academy members are invited to the quarterly Leadership [Group of 180](#) meetings.

The [new 2010/2011 Leadership Academy schedule](#) was launched last week, so please take a moment to see what's coming up. You can also view your membership status and transcript online too.

Whether you're a member of the Leadership Academy or not, I hope all of you take the time to invest in your professional development.

OPEN ENROLLMENT



Open Enrollment is your annual opportunity to review and update your benefits to ensure that they meet your needs. Any new choices that you make during Open Enrollment will become effective January 1, 2011.

New deduction or credits (cash back) will begin to be reflected in your January 7th 2011 paycheck.

2011 Benefit Guides containing valuable details about the various benefits offered by Washtenaw County were mailed to your home. Please make the time to review this benefits guide so you are aware of all the benefits you are eligible to receive.

Washtenaw County is pleased to offer voluntary insurance benefits uniquely designed to meet our employees specific benefit needs. During this enrollment period employees will meet, one-on-one, with a representative of Complete Benefits Alliance, a national enrollment firm specializing in the communication of employee benefits.

During these meetings, employees will have the opportunity to learn about, enroll in, or make changes to your existing benefit options including: Medical Insurance, Dental Insurance, Vision Insurance, Disability Insurance, Flexible Spending Accounts, Basic Group Life, and Supplemental Group Term Life. ***In addition, there are some new items to consider: Interest Sensitive Whole Life and Short Term Disability.***

A Dependent Audit is also being conducted to validate dependent status as it pertains to eligibility for health benefits offered by the County for its employees and “qualified” dependents. The requested documents include marriage license, birth certificates, tax returns, adoption papers, and court orders.

Please visit the [benefits website](#) for the locations of the one-on-one sessions, and more information regarding Open Enrollment and the Dependent Audit.

SUPPLEMENTAL RETIREMENT PLANS



I read an excellent article in this month’s edition of NACo County News entitled **Why Workers Don’t Participate in Supplemental Retirement Plans**. I believe investing in a supplemental retirement plan is incredibly important -

I have participated in the [county’s 457 deferred compensation plan](#) for over 28 years. This shouldn’t be confused with our standard retirement benefit though. The 457 is an optional retirement program offered to all regular county employees that gives you an option to further build your retirement savings. I have summarized the major points of the article below, but encourage you to read the entire article [online](#).

There are three basic barriers to long term saving.

Not Knowing Where To Start

Employees can be overwhelmed by “the process.” From daunting paperwork that comes from enrollment to the sheer quantity of questions on each form, employees often find they cannot decide and never enroll in the plan. ***Information on the county’s 457 can be found [online](#). You can sign up at anytime – you don’t have to wait for Open Enrollment!***

Believing They Do Not Have Enough Income

Most public-sector deferred compensation plans make entry easy by allowing low minimum contributions. However, employees may not realize that. Investing early on through a deferred compensation plan even if it’s just a few dollars a week can grow to a tidy sum at the end of a 30-year career. And if the employee is disciplined enough to increase contributions every time they get a raise the potential for growth is even greater. ***Our 457 plan doesn’t require a minimum payment.***

Not Having Enough Self-Control

Evidence shows that employees are less likely to delay participation if they are given a plan – rather than left to their own devices.

If you have questions, want more information or want to sign up contact [Michelle Murray](#) in Human Resources at 222-6597.

Updates on the Planning Advisory Team



To call the next few years “challenging” is to understate the issue dramatically. Our **preliminary** budget forecast indicates that we’re facing a \$1 million budget shortfall in 2011, \$16 million budget shortfall in 2012-2013. Property taxes continue to decline, state revenues are unstable, federal recovery funding will be winding down all while demand for the service that our citizens require (particularly those in most need) is increasing. To help navigate the budget crisis, Bill Reynolds and I have convened a group of trusted colleagues with excellent advice drawn from years of experience.

As mentioned in my August newsletter, the Planning Advisory Team will help identify the process and solutions for dealing with this budget deficit and promoting long-term fiscal stability. I’ve asked the county’s union negotiations team led by Human Resources Director Diane Heidt to join us for every other meeting because it is important to align our labor strategies with the overall budget strategies.

We now have a few meetings under our belts and we are making tremendous progress. Our first meeting was centered on defining our vision, a thorough review of our special initiatives and an initial brainstorming of desired outcomes. We’re still working on the vision, but many concepts are clear:

- **Leaders in customer service** – this has been a foundation of Washtenaw County that we do not want to let go. It will always be important and should be in the forefront of our process and decisions.
- **Washtenaw County as leaders in defining county government** – we still believe that our commitment to World Class Service provision and the guiding principles sets us apart from other government bodies. We want to be leaders around the State of Michigan in setting best practices and defining the future of local government.

- **Fiscally sound organization that aligns revenues with priority services** – we must balance revenues with expenditures, but we need to take a serious look at our expenditures and ensure they are set in alignment with our priorities. Our priorities must be more clearly defined, and we must dissect the budget to fully understand the relationship between the GF and NGF.
- **Targeted Community Impact** – we can no longer be all things to all people. We must define our target areas of impact and determine our core service areas.
- **Define and measure our success** – this is the only way to ensure we are on the right path. We need to determine how we define success and measure it along the way.

Our second meeting focused on initial budget projections for 2012 - 2014. At this point, we still have some work to do before the official projections are released, but I can say that the previous estimate of a \$16M deficit would be a best case scenario. We will continue looking at the projections in a range of best case and worst case scenarios, but there is quite a margin of variability between the scenarios. The best case scenario is optimistic and highly unlikely, but regardless of the scenario we choose to base our projections on we know we are facing a difficult road ahead. For me, these challenges are no longer just a budget crisis but it’s also a crisis in government defining itself.

While there is clearly no silver bullet strategy for managing these challenges, every team member stressed the importance of communication. The budget is the single most important priority for us. It takes time to communicate the scope and impact of the challenges we’re facing, so I feel it’s important to start getting information out now and keep getting it out there.

LAST WEEK TO GIVE TO UNITED WAY



I want to take a moment to recognize the United Way Planning Committee for doing such an amazing job planning all of the events for this year's campaign. The committee includes: Joanna Bidlack, Kari Dorr, Mechelle Hardy, Jessica Hoard, Latitia Lamelle, Cheryl Perry and Brenda Quiet.

I also want to thank our employees for giving back to the community either through the wildly successful [Stuff the Bus event](#), the very popular [online auctions](#) or through your generous monetary donations. This is our final week of the campaign and we're trying to reach the \$60,000 goal, but we need your help.

You've heard your colleagues share their stories as to Why They Live United either through the written articles online or the YouTube video. If you're still thinking about giving consider this ...

Your Donation	Your Impact
\$2/pay period	Buys milk to drink with breakfast, lunch and a snack for 96 children for 1 week.
\$6/pay period	Provides an attorney to a family facing eviction to help negotiate an enforceable reasonable payment plan to keep their housing.
\$10/pay period	Provides scholarship money for a low income family for 1 child to attend day-care for 1 month.
\$30/pay period	Helps 6 low-income families' access emergency funds to purchase necessary seasonal clothing.
\$40/pay period	Helps 1 homeless family with move in costs such as a security deposit, first month's rent and a moving van.

I think Susan Sweet Scott from ETCS summed it up best when she shared her story on the [YouTube video](#). She said, ***"Donate what you can, volunteer when you can and get involved. You'll find the rewards of being part of the solution are far greater than you could have imagined. Live United"***

AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD



In 30 years, how will Washtenaw County residents get around? What green spaces will be left? How will seniors maintain their quality of life? How will the County attract economic development and

young talented professionals? The AATA wants you to tell them what you want as they begin to develop the Transit Master Plan!

The AATA will be hosting a series of public meetings for the next phase of the Transit Master Plan effort. These are all "open house" style meetings, meaning people can drop in at any time during the meeting. At the meeting you can check on the plan's progress, provide input, and speak with representatives of the Master Plan team. The input from these meetings will be used to decide what package of transit options best meets the needs of Washtenaw County.

The AATA will have approximately twenty of these meetings throughout Washtenaw county during the month of October. The public meeting schedule is [available online](#).

Do you know others who may be interested in the future of transportation? If so, I encourage you to share this information with them. "Talk it up" among your friends, neighbors and colleagues.

For more information check out the following websites. Questions? Contact Mary Stasiak at TheRide by phone 734-794-1870 or mstasiak@theride.org.

The County Wide Transit Master Plan Website

<http://www.movingyouforward.org>

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/CatchTheRide>

Twitter

<http://www.twitter.com/CatchTheRide>

INFANT MORTALITY



Recently I was asked to give a presentation at the Coalition for Infant Mortality Reduction Kickoff Event. My initial thought was, “I’m not in the medical field, so what can I contribute in terms of raising awareness around infant

mortality?” After some thought however, I realized that as a community leader and a longtime county resident I know this community well. More importantly, I care about this community. One of the reasons I wanted to be County Administrator was to use this position to make a positive impact on the community.

Since 2000, there have been more than 175 infant deaths in this community. Between 2000 and 2004, there were over 1,500 low birth weight babies born in Washtenaw County. Black infants are 3 times more likely to die than white infants, and more than 2 times more likely to be born preterm or at a low birth weight.

What happens to our youngest citizens is indicative of the state of our society as a whole. When we are faced with a staggering statistic such as the one that says African American babies are three times more likely to die than babies of other races, it is hard to sit back and not do anything about it.

While racial disparity in health-related issues is an unhappy fact across the nation, when it hits home and pertains to people in our own community, we have an obligation to address it.

The Washtenaw County Coalition for Infant Mortality Reduction has been doing just that – by examining this issue and looking for ways to combat it. When state funding for infant mortality dried up in our county the Coalition was determined not to give up. They have formulated a plan to train community volunteers to act as ambassadors and educators in this community. They are particularly interested in training volunteers who have regular access to young women such as beauty salon operators and church members.

If you would like to find out more about this work or get involved, please contact Marcia Dykstra at marcia@washtenawchildren.org.

WASHTENAW HEALTH PLAN



The current recession has driven the unemployment rate to levels we haven’t seen in more than a decade and it continues to rise. Those who have lost their jobs, too often, have lost health insurance for their family. Right here in

Washtenaw County, people are struggling to pay for the basic necessities leaving no room for necessary visits to the family doctor.

Did you know that more than 35,000 Washtenaw County residents do not have health care coverage? Universal access to health care for every citizen in Washtenaw County has been a large part of our vision for the future, and we explore opportunities and work with our community partners with that in mind. The WCHO partners with the University of Michigan to be this County’s Community Mental Health Service Provider. CSTS is the WCHO’s vendor providing the actual services in the community. The WHP was created in 2001 to help Medicaid and indigent consumer’s access health care by finding ways to arrange and finance that health care.

These County agencies are carrying out their missions in the best light of the Guiding Principles by ensuring adequate provision of mandated services; focusing on the root causes of problems and providing leadership on intergovernmental and intersectoral collaboration.

When we talk about getting to the root causes of the problems we face, we sometimes forget that to get to the root cause we must **aggressively pursue prevention strategies**. The WHP stands as a prime example of fiscal and social responsibility, working well with prevention as one of the key elements.

For nearly a year and a half enrollment to Plan A/ ABW has been closed, but **from October 1, 2010 through November 30, 2010**, the WHP program known as Plan A or the Adult Benefit Waiver program will be open for enrollment.

Plan A is intended for very low-income adults. The eligibility requirements are available on [online](#). Other help for the uninsured is also available. Contact the Washtenaw Health Plan at (734) 544-3030 or visit whp.ewashtenaw.org for more information.