

County Administrator's Digest

August 5, 2011

Alan G. Vanderberg, County Administrator

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LOCAL UNIT QUADRANT MEETINGS

The fall local unit quadrant meetings have been scheduled as follows:

Northwest

October 4, 2011 from 10 AM – 12 PM at Grand Haven Charter Township

Northeast

October 20, 2011 from 2 – 4 PM at the City of Coopersville

Southwest

September 29, 2011 from 2 – 4 PM at Holland Charter Township

Southeast

September 26, 2011 from 2-4 PM at the City of Zeeland

MISSING FINANCE ANNUAL REPORT?

A resident asked whether we had missing Finance Annual Reports on miOttawa.org during public comment at the last Board Meeting. The Budget and Audit reports for the past several years are on the website. The Fiscal Services department does not do an annual report nor have they in the past. The Budget and Audit are the major documents that they produce each year.

SB – 7

Senate Bill 7, entitled the Publically Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act of 2011 has been signed into law by Governor Snyder (sic). The law restricts public employers from paying more than a capped amount (“hard caps”) for public employee health insurance plans. The law received enough votes in the legislature to go into “early effect” on January 1, 2012. As of that date, public employers will be restricted to paying no more than \$5,500 for the average of all employees with single coverage; \$11,000 for the average of all two-person plans; and



\$15,000 for the average of all family plans. If the public entity prefers, it can opt-out of the hard cap approach with a simple majority vote of its governing body and go to the 80-20 approach wherein the public entity cannot pay more than 80 percent of the total cost of all the medical plans that it offers. Finally, non-public school public entities such as counties, cities, villages and townships can opt out of the hard cap and 80-20 requirements with a super-majority, or two-thirds vote of its governing body. State employees have been exempted from SB – 7.

The most disappointing aspect of the new law is that it really does nothing to control or attempt to control burgeoning health care cost. The law does not address health management or “disease” management plans such as Ottawa County implemented on January 1 of this year. In other words, the law mandates who pays what portion of health care but does even attempt to address the core causes of escalating health care increases. Many studies have been completed that show clearly that over 80 percent of health care expenses derived from the diseases that cost health plans the most can be eradicated two to three years before they hit with a good health management plan. Ottawa County is well ahead of the state in this regard.

We are reviewing our options for dealing with SB-7 and they include: **implementation of the hard cap method; opt out of the hard cap and adopt the 80-20 approach; opt out entirely and opt out and implement an Ottawa County solution.** We look forward to discussing a recommendation with the Board Finance & Administration soon.

STEFANOVSKY APPOINTED TO MALPH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Health Officer Lisa Stefanovsky was elected to serve on the Michigan Association for Local Public Health (MALPH) Executive Committee. Congratulations to Lisa on having her hard work and excellence recognized in this way and also to her team at the Health Department!

CITY OF HUDSONVILLE STRATEGIC PLANNING

Keith Van Beek and I facilitated strategic planning for the Hudsonville City Council last week. It was a fruitful session and the Council clearly prioritized objectives for the City Manager to now put into a business plan.

CMH

Dr. Michael Brashears has taken a lead role in making sure that the CMH community understands the ramifications of the State Department of Community Health “Integrating Care for Dual Eligibles in Michigan” plan. The plan could have a profound impact and likely a negative one on the delivery of CMH services to County residents. A Holland Sentinel article on the topic is included below. ([Click Here](#)) Michael did comment that the article should have read that 40% of Developmentally Disabled (DD) consumers would be impacted and not that

40% of CMH staff would be laid off.

WMSA

WMSA President Northrup to Step Down at End of 2011

Board to Recruit New Leader, Future Opportunities to Drive Regional Mindset

West Michigan Strategic Alliance president Greg Northrup has notified the board that he will resign effective at the end of the year.

Al Vanderberg, administrator for Ottawa County and chair of WMSA's Board, noted the organization's progress under Northrup since he was named president in late 2005.

"He guided WMSA through many major achievements as an organization and established a track record for state and national best practices," Vanderberg said.

Some of WMSA's accomplishments under Northrup's direction include:

- developing the Collaborative Implementation Model-- a well recognized and effective process for ensuring transparency and inclusiveness;
- developing and publishing the Vital Signs — a trusted source of regional comparative data;
- overseeing development and distribution of the Green Infrastructure tool kit for use by local governments;
- successfully administering a \$15 million federal WIRED grant that enabled the successful launch of the regional internship initiative resulting in over 1500 new internships designed to retain area talent, enabled workforce skill set credentialing through the adoption of National Career Readiness Certificate, now available to high schools students statewide, with 3rd highest number of certificates issued nationally and established the foundation for launching Talent 2025, a CEO led initiative designed to significantly advance the talent agenda;
- expanded the availability of the successfully piloted Literacy to Work program advancing student coaching and credentialing achievement, in Ottawa and Muskegon funded by a \$550,000 Walmart Foundation grant;

developed INVEST, an Integrated Valuation of Ecosystems Service Tool, in partnership with Annis Water Resource Institute, which significantly enhances local governments ability to understand in a financial context the contribution of our watersheds, farmlands and other environmental systems.

"We are pleased with Greg's commitment to providing his leadership through year end, thus assuring a smooth transition," Vanderberg said. "We certainly will miss Greg, and wish him the best in his future endeavors. The board will initiate a search for a successor president very soon."

Vanderberg noted that WMSA's mission will continue to be a catalyst for regional collaboration among businesses, governments and non-profit institutions to help the region use its talent and financial resources most productively. He said WMSA will continue to focus on bringing regional leadership together to collaborate on improving the region's economic growth and education models.

"Like all non-profits, the organization faces some challenges in these times of serious economic constraints," Vanderberg added. "WMSA continues to focus on the best ways it can deliver greatest value to West Michigan."

Northrup, with deep roots in the energy business, is very excited about pursuing a number of alternative energy project options, stressed the importance for WMSA and West Michigan to build on the momentum of its accomplishments.

"WMSA has earned trust and respect from its participating organizations through objective data gathering, convening of forums for civil and constructive dialogue and the fostering of many successful business, government and institutional partnerships," Northrup said. "In these times of turmoil and economic stress, it is more important than ever for organizations in all three sectors to find innovative ways to improve value delivery and work together for mutual benefit."

About the West Michigan Strategic Alliance

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance launched in 2000, serves as a catalyst for regional collaboration among the businesses, institutions and governmental units serving 1.4 million people living in an eight county region encompassing the cities of Grand Rapids, Muskegon and Holland. The Alliance works to encourage a regional mindset, which will foster collaboration on critical issues that impact how we live, learn, work and play. Additional information on the Alliance is available at www.wm-alliance.org.

SOREN WOLFF RETIREMENT

Congratulations to Holland City Manager Soren Wolff on his retirement after a long and very accomplished career. I had the pleasure of serving with Soren on the Ottawa County Central Dispatch Authority (OCCDA) Board of Directors and on the West Michigan Enforcement Team (WEMET) Board of Directors and in other contexts as well.

A Holland Sentinel article on Soren's retirement follows as well as an invitation to attend a public open house honoring Soren tomorrow afternoon. ([Click Here](#)) We certainly join the Holland community in thanking Soren for a job well done and wishing he and his family the very best for the future.

VISIT BY DCH DIRECTOR (Lisa Stefanovsky)

The Ottawa County Health Department (OCHD) was recently selected as one of three health departments in Michigan to host a meeting with the new Michigan Department of Community Health Director, Olga Dazzo. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for her to meet local public health officials and learn more about the operations of a local health department. Director Dazzo met first with the OCHD Leadership Team and County Commissioner James Holtrop, Chair of the Board's Health and Human Services Committee. She was presented examples of local programs and services that demonstrate how a local health department carries out PH laws, state mandates and assures organizational competence in the areas that are core and central to public health's mission- which is the promotion of health and prevention of disease.

Director Dazzo was later joined by public health officers and medical directors from 19 other counties in SW Michigan who provided local perspective on a number of important public health issues.

Director Dazzo then shared Governor Snyder's strategic priorities related to healthcare and public health and asked for ideas on how to best impact these priorities. The priorities for public health are:

1. Implement a statewide stakeholder plan for obesity
2. Implement statewide stakeholder plan for infant mortality

To impact these priorities, MDCH will be convening 2 summits, one on obesity and the other on infant mortality.

The purpose of the summits will be to:

1. Share an assessment of prevalence, disparities, and factors that contribute to these public health issues.
2. Highlight best practices, including those underway at the state and local community level in Michigan;
3. Identify a limited number of priority strategies for addressing the issue with a focus on reducing disparity; and
4. Engage and mobilize partners across multiple sectors in efforts to reduce obesity/infant mortality.

The meeting went very well and we appreciated the opportunity to share with our state leadership just one more example of why Ottawa County is a model for excellence in so many areas of local government.

MORGAN ACCEPTS POSITION

Mr. Josh Morgan has accepted the Assessor II position with the Equalization Department and will be serving in the primary assessor role for the contract between Ottawa County and the City of Grand Haven for assessing services. Equalization Director Michael Galligan will be setting up an appearance for Mr. Morgan at a GH City Council meeting once he is settled into his new duties. Morgan comes to Ottawa from the Muskegon County Equalization Department. I've included a GH Tribune article below that covered the agreement between the County and City.

The Michigan Municipal League should have the contract finalized later this week for the study that the County and Grand Haven are conducting on Finance, IT, Treasury and Assessing service collaboration possibilities between the two governments.

PACE BONDING FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

Earlier this summer, Greg Northrup, President of the West Michigan Strategic Alliance made a presentation to the Board of Commissioners to have Ottawa, Kent and Muskegon counties take the lead by approving PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) Bonds for use by business and other organizations so they can construct electric vehicle charging stations.

I asked our bond attorney and financial advisor for their opinion on the risk and administrative cost for these bonds. I recently mentioned to a reporter that the County would likely only move forward on this if there is no risk or cost to the County. At that point individual organizations could access the program to construct the stations if needed for their business or other organizational need.

I should have the additional information by late next week.

The article that I was quoted in appears below. ([Click Here](#))

State mental health plan seen as threat to local services

By **LISA ERMAK**

The Holland Sentinel

Posted Aug 18, 2011 @ 11:19 PM

Recommend

Be the first or your friends to recommend this.



Holland — A drafted state mental health plan has the potential to devastate Ottawa County Community Mental Health and the 46 other community health organizations throughout the state, said department director Dr. Michael Brashears.

The Michigan Department of Community Health was selected this spring to be one of 15 states to take part in an initiative to develop new ways to provide services for those who use Medicare and Medicaid, also known as “dual eligibles.”

However, the plan is vague, and few details have been released.

“No one’s had a formal community dialogue about this. I’m taking it upon myself to ensure clients understand what they’ve been told,” Brashears said.

Although state officials think the plan called “Integrating Care for Dual Eligibles in Michigan” will streamline services, Brashears said it will eliminate the personal touch for the mentally ill and developmentally disabled people his department serves in Ottawa County.

“The state wants one entity to monitor all physical and developmentally disabled people in the state, and they have failed to release any details,” he said. “There’s no way a single case manager would be able to understand the whole health service bureaucracy.”

Ottawa County Community Mental Health is a public provider of services for people with developmental disabilities or serious mental illness and provides service under a managed care contract with the Michigan Department of Community Health.

Thirty-three percent of its clients are dual eligibles, and many of them need the highest amount of support to ensure they are integrated into the community and maintain independence.

Brashears said he is also worried if the state were to implement the integrated care model, his 170-person staff would be cut by at least 40 percent.

The MDCH has hosted public forums and stakeholder interviews and accepted email comments in order to collect input and educate the public and consumers about what Integrating Care for Dual Eligibles in Michigan would entail.

However, many stakeholders are like Holland resident Penny Hesse and still don’t have clear answers.

Hesse is a dual eligible who suffers from bipolar disorder.

She is fearful that, under the state’s drafted plan, she might end up in an institution if her condition becomes manic and out of control.

Her care includes seeing a psychiatrist for medication and a counselor for one-on-one sessions.

“I have that choice. Will I be able to choose where I have my care done? Am I going to have that choice? To have one entity serving everyone in mental health wouldn’t do it justice,” she said.

“There is uniqueness in everyone’s diagnoses. My bipolar isn’t the same as someone else’s bipolar. We don’t fit into cute little boxes.”

Beth Childress works as director of services at Kandu Inc., a nonprofit agency that has a contract with Ottawa County Community Mental Health to provide services to their consumers and help them find employment.

She said it is too early to see how the hundreds of clients they serve through Ottawa County Community Mental Health would be affected.

“It’s really hard to tell right now. We’re always concerned about supporting the people and their families and want to provide our services.”

Once forums and work groups wrap up this fall, a final plan is expected to be implemented in April.

If you go

WHAT Community forum on state plan for Medicare-Medicaid services

WHEN 6-8 p.m. Monday

WHERE Hillside Learning and Behavior Center West, 212 Grove St., Allegan

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Giving up the helm: Longtime Holland manager Soren Wolff ready to step down

By **ANNETTE MANWELL**

The Holland Sentinel

Posted Aug 27, 2011 @ 11:23 PM

Recommend

17 people recommend this.



Holland — Holland City Manager Soren Wolff uses the words “we” and “our” a lot when he talks about the city of Holland.

Wolff will retire Sept. 6 after 23 years as city manager and another three as assistant city manager.

He also talks about committed staff, good leadership and a diverse community. When he says he is retiring with no worries, he means it.

“I’m in the process of cleaning my office out,” he said in a Thursday interview.

Such a long stint as a city manager is rare, said Alan Vanderberg, Ottawa County administrator and immediate past president of the Michigan Local Government Management Association. There have been city managers in Michigan that have spent 20 or even 30 years with a city, Vanderberg said, “but it’s certainly not normal.”

International City/County Management Association statistics from two years ago showed the average in one place for a city manager was six years, Vanderberg said.

“At one time, it was two years,” he said. “Certainly reaching 20 is significant.”

“It’s an amazing accomplishment,” he said, applauding Wolff and city of Holland officials. “Cities with stable management do better than those with revolving doors.”

And even with retirement, the relationship isn’t completely severed: Wolff has an agreement with the city to be available for one year for any needed assistance.

A career in city management

Despite landing in a career that would lead to his long tenure with Holland, including three years as assistant city manager from 1975-79, Wolff didn’t know, even as a senior in college, what he was going to do in life.

“I’m not even sure I knew what a city manager was,” he said.

It was pure coincidence that the Pella, Iowa, Central College graduate with a political science and economics degree went to Kansas University.

A political science teacher stopped him one day during his senior year and suggested the school, which marketed itself as the top city management school in the country. Wolff earned a master of public administration degree, specializing in city management.

Since then, city management is what he has done; first as an assistant in Grand Haven and Holland then as city administrator in Muscatine, Iowa. On Sept. 12, 1988, he returned to Holland to serve the city.

In his career, Wolff estimated, he attended about 2,000 city council meetings and has worked with four Holland mayors and about 25 council members.

His last regular meeting was Aug. 17. The members of the Holland City Council and others took the opportunity to thank him for his service and joke with him and his wife, Sue, who attended her first council meeting that evening.

“I’ve just had the greatest level of respect for Soren,” Assistant City Manager Greg Robinson said of his 19 years working with him. Robinson will be interim city manager while the city searches for Wolff’s replacement.

“Your reputation is impeccable,” Councilman Jay Peters said.

“Once you got on council, Soren made you look good,” City Attorney Andy Mulder said.

The council also applauded Wolff’s talent for creating and balancing the city’s budget, attention to detail, thorough explanations and sense of humor.

Wolff simply said, “I always had a good head for numbers.”

Beyond city hall

Wolff and his wife, who also is retired, will spend time at a family home “that needs some tender loving care,” on Cape Cod, Mass., he said.

The home has been in his wife’s family and was the location of many family getaways and honeymoons. He said he is looking forward to spending unlimited time there.

But Holland is where the couple will live primarily.

“Maybe in six months or so, I might find something to do,” he said, but for the time being, he is looking forward to having no schedule at all.”

★ RETIREMENT OPEN HOUSE ★
IN HONOR OF
CITY MANAGER
SOREN WOLFF



★
Thurs, Sept 1, 2011
3:00 to 5:30 p.m.

★
***Please join the Holland City
Council as we celebrate
Soren's 27 years of service
to the City of Holland,
and extend best wishes
for his retirement.***

★ ★
**Council Chambers
1st Floor City Hall
270 River Avenue
Holland, MI 49423**

★



West Michigan counties may be losing interest in vehicle charging stations

Published: Thursday, August 25, 2011, 3:31 PM Updated: Friday, August 26, 2011, 10:07 AM

Rick Wilson | The Grand Rapids Press

By

GRAND RAPIDS — Enthusiasm might be waning among a group of West Michigan counties being asked to pledge support for \$35 million to \$40 million in bonds over 10 years to help fund up to 4,000 charging stations for electric and hybrid vehicles.

Kent County Administrator Daryl Delabbio told his executive committee Thursday that the county might see added administrative costs from the proposal, which it can't afford as officials work to close a projected \$5.9 million budget gap next year.



Kalamazoo Gazette File Photo

A Chevrolet Volt hybrid electric car is plugged into a new electric-vehicle charging station.

Delabbio noted Kent County has laid off workers to balance budgets in recent years. He said the county could experience added expenses because it would still be responsible for foreclosing on property owners who have installed charging stations if they default on property taxes.

Earlier this summer, Greg Northrup, president of the West Michigan Strategic Alliance, pitched the idea to officials in Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon counties to back bonds to provide funding that private building owners could use for the \$10,000 to \$15,000 cost of buying and installing the charging stations.

Delabbio, who has taken the lead in investigating the proposal, said he hasn't yet closed the door on the idea, but he has concerns.

"If it is viable, and if it is at no risk to any of the counties, I think it's a very intriguing thing and very foresighted on Greg's part," Delabbio said, adding that Kent's support has always been contingent on the counties experiencing no risk or added expense.

"There are going to be administrative costs — it's just a question of who will be paying them," he said. "If

there's any administrative burden for this, I'm not sure who's going to absorb it."

Ottawa County Administrator Al Vanderberg said officials there also are unwilling to take on added expenses as they work to close a projected \$300,000 budget gap for 2012. He agreed with Delabbio that the idea is intriguing but said officials probably will be cautious moving toward a final decision.

"We're not looking to subsidize it," Vanderberg said. "If there's a way to do this with without any risk to the county, it's something we would take a look at, but we can't afford to take on anything new without cutting something else."

Muskegon County Administrator Bonnie Hammersley noted that officials there have closed a \$3 million budget gap for 2012 through layoffs, reorganization and cutting health-care expenses. He said officials there expressed concerns about whether there is enough demand for charging stations to warrant county backing.

Northrup said his group is working on guidelines under which private businesses could pay for the stations over seven to 10 years by adding the cost onto their property tax bills. He said the group is still working out a process that would be used by all the counties involved and reduce administrative costs.

"If we can't do that, we fully recognize this would be difficult for the counties to do," Northrup said.

E-mail the author of this story: localnews@grpress.com

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