

the review

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

▶▶▶ November/December 2008

Robin Beltramini New League President

"The League headlines dynamic, enthusiastic speakers at its events, providing powerful working examples for municipal officials to use back home."

2008 Annual Convention

Informing and Inspiring
Local Officials

Public Safety

PA 312—The Elephant
in the Room

Designing for Safety

How Do Your Police
and Fire Departments
Rate?



The Michigan Municipal League is the Michigan association of cities, villages and urban townships. A nonpartisan advocacy organization, the League works through cooperative efforts to strengthen the quality of municipal government and administration by providing technical assistance and information to local officials regarding municipal issues.

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The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League.

Volume 81, Number 6

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Robin Beltramini, councilmember for the city of Troy, is the League's new president (see article on pages 5-8).



Executive Director's Message

By Daniel P. Gilmartin

Public Safety is Front and Center

This issue of *The Review* is dedicated to the importance of public safety. No matter how people's likes and dislikes may change about what they ultimately desire in a community, everybody still wants safe streets. Recent years have seen many important advances in several public safety areas and we highlight several of those in this publication.

Convention Highlights

The League celebrated its 110th Annual Convention in October on Mackinac Island. A first-rate cast of speakers joined about 1,000 delegates, business alliance partners, and guests for a three-day cram session designed to chart a path towards the creation of vibrant communities for the next 50 years. We also made a special effort this year to include those members who were unable to be in attendance through the use of same-day podcasts and streaming video. Highlights are available online.

The League's LDF Turns 25

The members of the League's Legal Defense Fund (LDF) recently celebrated its 25th anniversary by publishing a listing of the Top 25 cases that the LDF has undertaken on behalf of local governments during that time. The LDF was formed in 1983 as an advocacy program for Michigan's municipalities in the state and federal appellate courts. The LDF provides support and assistance to member municipalities and their attorneys in cases where the issues have a broad impact on both the municipality involved in the case and on other municipalities throughout the state.

The LDF has experienced a steady growth in membership from 88 communities in its first year to 440 in 2008. Nearly 85 percent of League members are members of the LDF. Each year approximately 20-30 cases are considered for action by the LDF. In its 25-year history, the LDF has reviewed over 370 cases.

To view the list, simply click on www.mml.org.

A New and Improved Website

Be sure to check out our new look at www.mml.org. We believe the redesign will allow everyone to access information faster. The League's new website should act as a one-stop shop for all things effecting communities in Michigan. My compliments to Rob Ferrari and his IT crew for making the League's site even more valuable to our members. Please spend some time navigating it and let us know what you think.

Beltramini and Jenks to Lead the League

Congratulations to the League's new president, Troy City Councilmember Robin Beltramini. Robin has shown tremendous leadership as a member of the Board of Trustees and her election is well deserved. The same can be said for Huntington Woods Councilmember Jeff Jenks, who was elected vice president. The League's future is in great hands with these two in leadership positions.

I also want to congratulate outgoing President Deborah Doyle of Durand on a job well done. During the past year, Deb led by great example and showed all of us how important it is to carry on despite great personal misfortune. Thanks, Deb! 

Daniel P. Gilmartin is executive director and CEO of the League. You may contact him at 734-669-6302 or dpg@mml.org.

Did you stop by our
Convention photo booth?

Find yourself in our
pages!



The Review

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The Review is the official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League. It serves as a medium of exchange of ideas and information for the officials of Michigan communities. The views expressed and the data presented by contributors and advertisers are not to be construed as having the endorsement of the officers, staff, or membership of the League.

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Editor's Note

In the September/October issue of *The Review*, credit was not given to *The School Administrator* magazine, the monthly magazine of the American Association of School Administrators, for their gracious permission allowing the reprinting of the interview "Tom Friedman on Education in the Flat World." The credit should have read:

"Reprinted with permission from the February 2008 issue of *The School Administrator* magazine."

My sincere apologies,
Kim Cekola, Editor



New President Sees Sense of Place, Involvement of Residents, and Education as Key Ingredients to Successful Communities

By Tom Wolff

Robin Beltramini, councilmember for the city of Troy, is the League's new president. Robin's interest in local government arose from a desire to positively affect the quality of life in her community. When she was first elected councilmember in April of 2001, the city of Troy was nearing the end of a growth spurt. Because of her living experiences in high-growth cities such as Austin and Dallas, TX, Tempe, AZ, and Fairfax, VA, Robin began thinking of ways that might benefit Troy at this stage in its life cycle. She wanted to share that knowledge and implement processes that had been successful in those other cities. It was and still is important to her that Troy's past accomplishments be honored, but also that lessons learned be used in a positive way to move the city forward. Robin is motivated by input from residents that can be used to develop innovations which will result in prosperity for the whole community.

Continued on page 6



The best thing officials can do is get educated, both formally and informally. - League President Robin Beltramini

One way Robin positively affected her community was by laying to rest divisive discussion about uses for the Troy Civic Center property. Robin was responsible for forming a group utilizing the democratic governance technique of task-oriented citizen participation. Members of the group had to overcome disagreements and had to compromise in order to come up with a plan for the property. The plan included a community center, skate park, pathways, water features, gardens, and open park areas. It is still a work in progress, but the result is a wonderful civic center property developed by a representative group of residents. It has been easily implemented by the city council without the usual back and forth and heated discussions because the plan was developed by such a disparate group. "It was the people's vision," says Robin. Because of its success, she would like to see this process replicated in other communities.

Robin acknowledges that the League Board is very involved in all aspects of the League's endeavors and believes this will continue, particularly in the advocacy arena. Many Board members are in contact with legislators and testify on a regular basis. Board members are also active in writing letters to the editors of local and major newspapers. The Board is a very diverse, well-rounded group of officials representing the tiniest village in the Upper Peninsula to our largest city, Detroit. This gives members credibility when speaking to legislators. "All members carry great credibility when speaking to state and federal legislators and potential partners for innovation, and each of us carries at least one compelling personal story as we speak to issues facing Michigan communities," she says.

Continued on page 8





Robin and fellow League Board member Richard Clanton, Mayor Pro Tem, Kentwood, attending a meeting at the League's Ann Arbor office.



Robin and the League's new vice president, Jeffrey Jenks, Commissioner, Huntington Woods, at the Convention.



Robin Beltramini, Councilmember, city of Troy

Position: League President, 2008-2009

Statements: The League's Public Policy Forums have done an excellent job of giving municipal officials additional tools for building a sense of place in their communities.

The North Coast Project shows promise for uniting the Upper Midwest in a move forward.

Vision: Robin would like to see the Public Policy Forums and the North Coast Project wed to further the vision of "Better Communities. Better Michigan."

Quote: "These initiatives (the Public Policy Forums and the North Coast Project) are workable, innovative and timely."

Involvement with MML: Robin became involved with the League when Jeanne Stine, a former Troy mayor and MML Board member, recommended Elected Officials Academy classes. The classes, along with face-to-face interactions with other elected officials, gave her invaluable knowledge for personal growth and assisted her in her duties and responsibilities to the city of Troy and its residents. She sees the League and all its programs as a necessary and beneficial way for people, groups, business and organizations of all sorts to join together for the betterment of communities.

She is encouraged by the very dynamic and enthusiastic speakers who have headlined recent Conventions and Capital Conferences and would like to see this continue. The upgrading of speakers from Michigan and around the country is key to building attendance at these League functions. Municipal officials benefit greatly from listening to speakers' discussions of what has worked well in other places because they are then able to use this information for future progress in their own communities.

Advice to Officials

"The best thing officials can do is to get educated, both formally and informally," says President Beltramini. This involves getting to know all members of the community, including those with whom you don't always agree. She encourages everyone to take classes through the League, U of M-Dearborn, attend National League of Cities seminars and attend other seminars that offer ways to learn what government can and can't do and what leaders do and how they do it. Finally, as a way to grow personally and to better serve the community, Robin always welcomes feedback and criticism and encourages others to do as well. 

Tom Wolff is the Risk Management Services claims manager for the League. You may contact him at 734-669-6343 or twolf@mml.org.

New League President Robin Beltramini and outgoing League President Deborah Doyle, at the 2008 Annual Convention.



2008 Convention Highlights

Mackinac Island

New MML Board of Trustees



Ray Anderson
City Manager, Norway



Karen Majewski
Mayor, Hamtramck



Lynn Markland
City Manager, Fenton



Virg Bernero
Mayor, Lansing



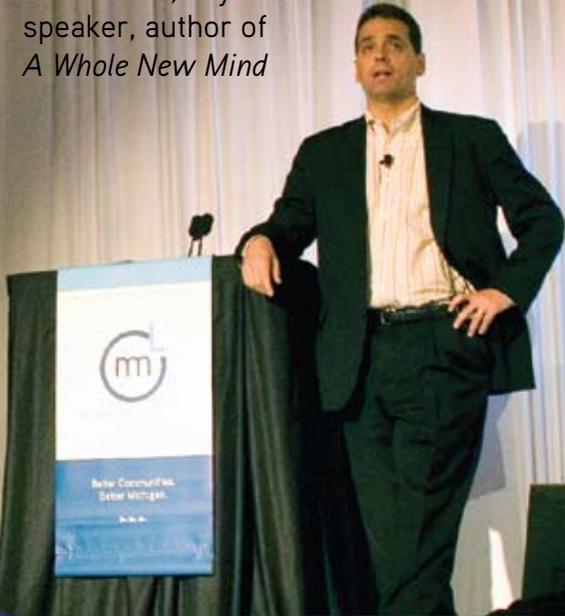
Dale Kerbyson
City Manager, Lapeer



Patricia Bureau
Councilmember, Ishpeming



Daniel Pink, keynote speaker, author of *A Whole New Mind*



Inspiring and Informing Local Officials

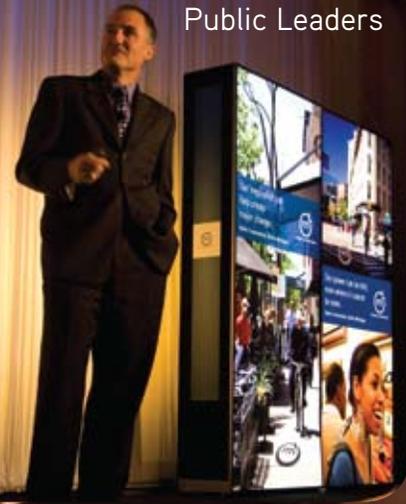
Our 110th Annual Convention on Mackinac Island was filled with dynamic keynote speakers, informative sessions, and the suspenseful Community Excellence Award "Race for the Cup."



Daniel Gilmartin kicked off the Convention with a session on the League's Public Policy Initiative.

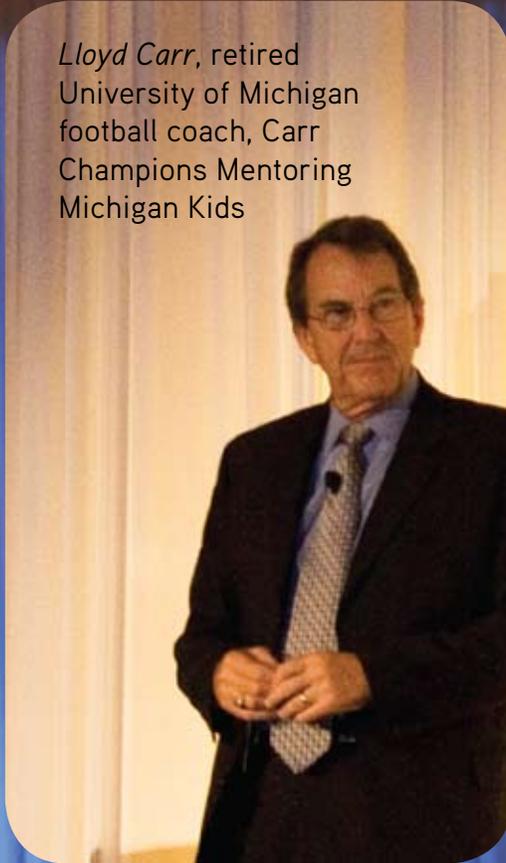


Daniel Mulhern, keynote speaker, Public Servants—Public Leaders





Lloyd Carr, retired University of Michigan football coach, Carr Champions Mentoring Michigan Kids



The MML Foundation Silent Auction



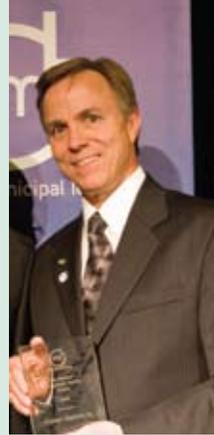
2008 Convention Awards



The Michael A. Guido Leadership and Public Service Award

Celebrating a chief elected official who personifies professionalism and leadership, is dedicated to the citizens in their community and advocates on their behalf in Lansing and Washington, DC.

Ronald F. Gillham, Mayor, Huntington Woods



The Jim Sinclair Exceptional Service Award

Celebrating a person dedicated to public service who has shown passion and commitment to the League, enthusiastically supporting its mission and promoting its purpose.

Robert Slattery, Jr., Mayor, Mount Morris

Special Awards of Merit

- Shea Charles**, City Manager, Howell
- Richard Lewis**, former City Manager, Traverse City
- Eleanor "Coco" Siewert**, Professional Registered Parliamentarian, National Association of Parliamentarians
- William Stewart**, City Manager, Coldwater

Legislator of the Year Awards

- Senator Jason Allen** (R-Traverse City)
- Representative Marie Donigan** (D-Royal Oak)



The Race for the Cup reaches the finish line with the Armory Arts Village

The Community Excellence Award ended with great fanfare—the presentation of the Cup. Each Regional finalist made an inspiring seven-minute presentation to the Convention delegation, and when the votes were tallied, the city of Jackson was pronounced the winner. Congratulations to Jackson on transforming a 175 year-old former state prison into a functioning, living, breathing, artist colony.



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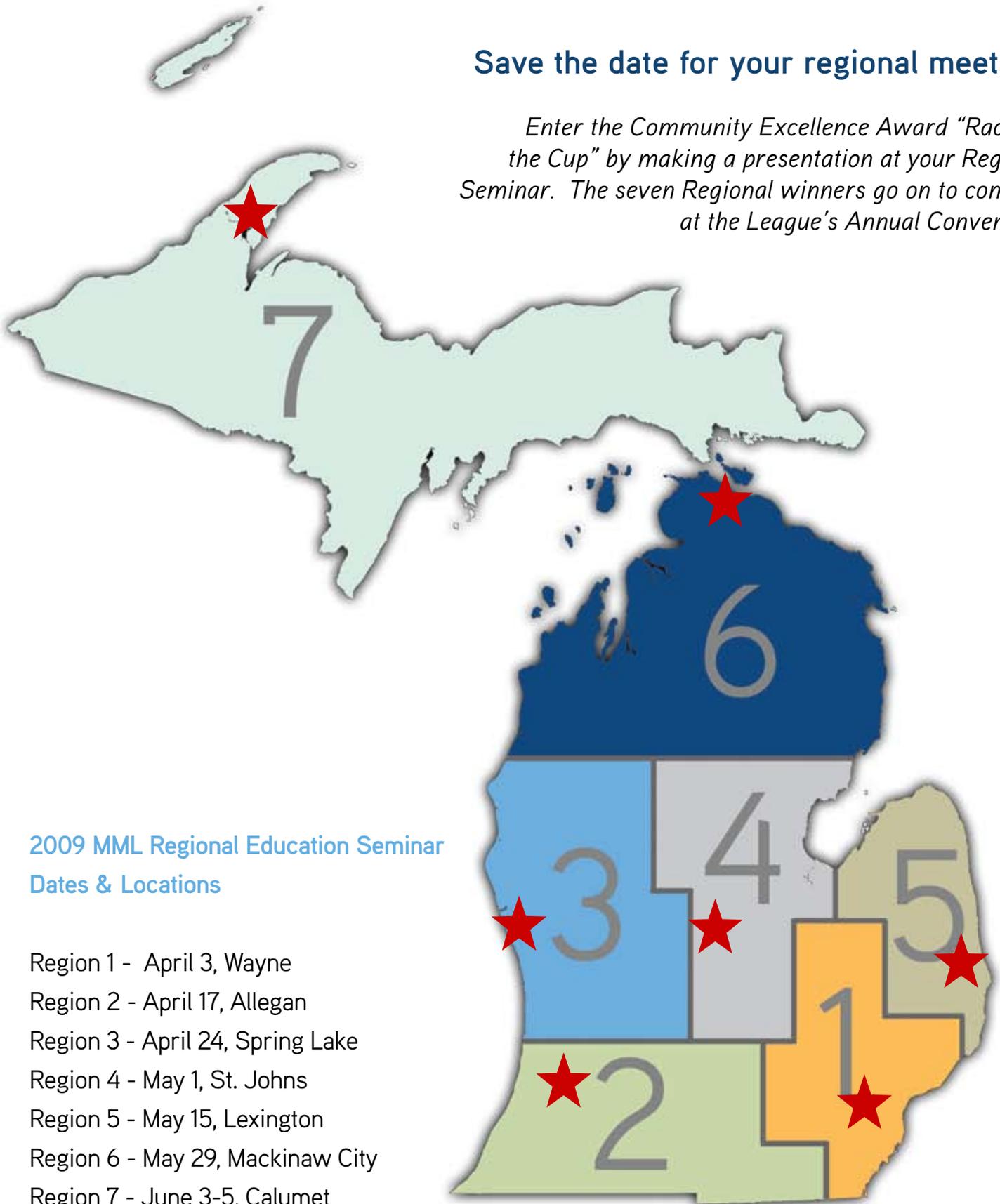
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Save the date for your regional meeting!

Enter the Community Excellence Award "Race for the Cup" by making a presentation at your Regional Seminar. The seven Regional winners go on to compete at the League's Annual Convention!



2009 MML Regional Education Seminar Dates & Locations

- Region 1 - April 3, Wayne
- Region 2 - April 17, Allegan
- Region 3 - April 24, Spring Lake
- Region 4 - May 1, St. Johns
- Region 5 - May 15, Lexington
- Region 6 - May 29, Mackinaw City
- Region 7 - June 3-5, Calumet

The Municipal Triangle—Where Does Safety Fit?

The League's Hierarchy of Municipal Needs

By Heather Van Poucker

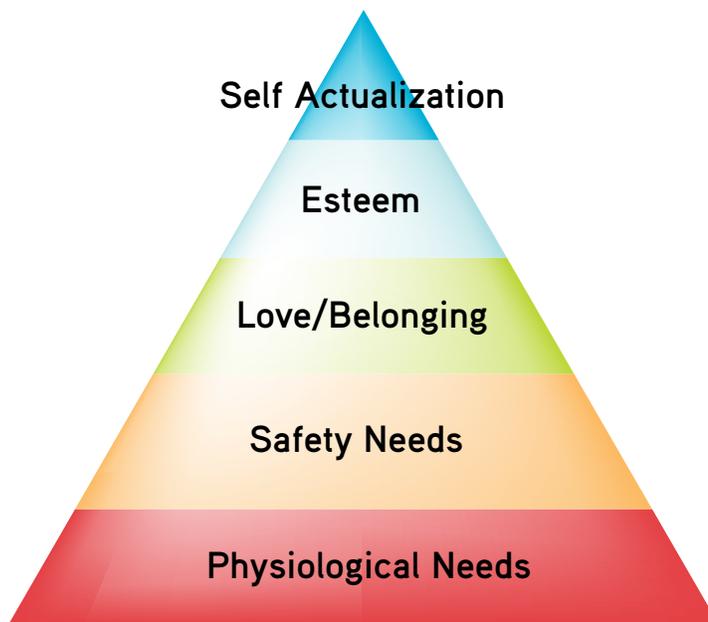
A study by CEOs for Cities indicates that college-educated young people will not consider a community for their home if it does not offer them a clean, safe place to live. Having these basic needs will not sell college-educated young people on a community, but the lack of these needs will knock a city out of the running.

Other research shows that Michigan is losing its young and talented population. Two-thirds of college graduates, ages 25-34, look for a place to live first before finding a job. So, it bears repeating, that college-educated young people, the population we need to move and stay in our communities, will not even consider calling a place home if it is not clean and safe. If our Michigan municipalities cannot provide adequately safe communities, we've lost the competition for this critical demographic before we even begin!

Have you ever heard of "Maslow's Triangle?" It was introduced by Abraham Maslow in 1943 in his paper "A Theory of Human Motivation."

Chart 1

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs



Maslow depicts human motivation through a hierarchical chart of human needs, which proceed from the basic to the more complex. (See Chart 1)

According to Maslow, basic physiological needs such as food and water come first, followed by safety and so on, and he suggests that you cannot move to the next level without satisfying the previous set of needs. Unmet basic needs means we cannot proceed to those things that bring true meaning and satisfaction in life such as friendship, love, and the creative expression of "self."

Perhaps this is too philosophical for some tastes, but it creates a stark parallel to the importance of public safety in municipal government. If we cannot provide a safe environment for our residents, they cannot realize their higher purpose in the form of a secure family, strong social network, connectedness to community and the other things that we social creatures need to thrive and which are critical to creating a sense of place and true "community." (See Chart 2)

There is good news—in a survey conducted by the Cobalt Research group, residents from small and large, urban and rural areas, gave Michigan a score of 72 out of 100 on the statement: "this is a safe place to live." 

Heather Van Poucker is manager of consulting services for the League. You may reach her at 734-669-6326 or hvanpoucker@mml.org.

"College-educated young people, the population we need to move in and stay in our communities, will not even *consider* calling a place home if it is not *clean and safe*."

Chart 2
The League's Hierarchy of Municipal Needs



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Designing for Safety and Security—A Key Element of Urban Revival

By Fred Mayer



Illustration by Breanne Bloomquist

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IT'S THE PEOPLE

The first decade of the 21st century has seen a remarkable upsurge in interest in urban living. People are seriously contemplating moving back to central cities attracted by the amenities they offer—restaurants, shopping, theaters, concerts, nightclubs, museums, sports events, not to mention the proximity to workplace, contact with diverse cultures, people and lifestyles, the vibrant pace of city life, etc.

There are trade-offs with urban living, however. Recent surveys have suggested that as the population ages and a smaller percentage have children in school, crime and personal safety is displacing public schools as the major issue for potential urban residents. The school system has a direct impact on only a small percentage of families (less than 25 percent in most places) but safety and security affect everyone.

Security and the Built Environment

Urban planners have long advocated a significant residential component for all areas of a city—even the central business district and other traditionally non-residential areas. Mixed-use development is the panacea for the current generation of urban planners, and increased security is one of the advantages of this concept. Increased “eyes on the street,” as Jane Jacobs described it in the 1960s, encourages both the reality and perception of urban security.

But there is a bit of a chicken and egg problem. In order to attract residents back to the city, they need to feel that their new environment will be safe and non-threatening. Accomplishing this involves many things, most of them outside the area of physical planning. There are, however, things which physical planners and designers can do to create the desired image.

Continued on page 18



Lighting

A vital element of nighttime security, and more significantly, the perception of security, is effective illumination. A study of campus lighting done for the University of Michigan in the 1990s, produced several important guidelines which are also applicable for general urban environments.

- **Color:** In the 1970s and 1980s many cities converted their existing mercury vapor outdoor lighting to high pressure sodium in order to save energy and money. The new fixtures produced the same level of lighting, measured in foot candles, but it was yellow, not white. This color turned out to have several drawbacks from a security point of view: it distorted colors and made landscaping and foliage appear darker and more menacing, it made facial features harder to distinguish, and it created a more intimidating psychological environment (perhaps reminiscent of London's Jack the Ripper).

Fortunately, beginning in the 1990s, metal halide luminaires became popular, and more recently LED luminaires. Both produce white light as well as being less costly and more environmentally friendly. Ideally, artificial lighting should come as close as possible to natural daylight in color for optimal safety and security.

- **Distribution:** The old philosophy was to "light the pathway" that is, walks were lighted, but the areas away from the walks were largely ignored. Now it is realized that it is important to achieve some level of illumination in all areas, not simply along the pathways.
- **Levels:** This may vary from place to place and city to city. For the U of M campus, a minimum level of one foot candle was recommended on the walks and plazas and 0.5 foot candle at all other locations.

The small urban square adds greatly to the beauty and character of downtown South Haven. Although richly landscaped, the interior is clearly visible from the street, there are multiple access points, and the farmer's market building and parking at the rear provide activity and visibility from this side as well.

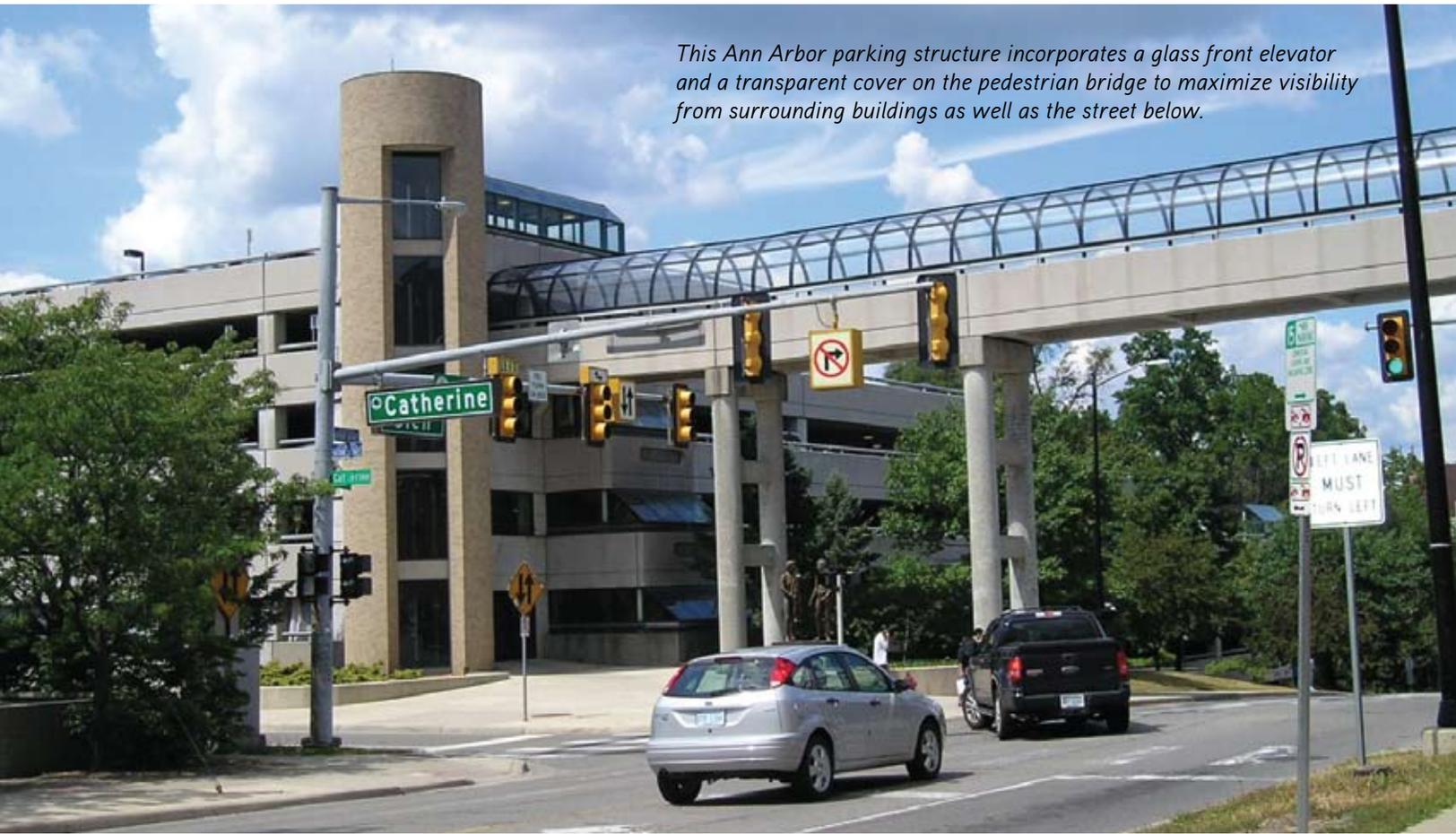
Landscaping

Attractive landscaping is essential to the creation of an appealing urban environment. Elements such as street trees, plazas and urban parks have often been referred to as the "lungs of the city." But appropriate planning and design can help to enhance the security aspects of these areas.

- **Placement of plant materials:** Zones directly adjacent to walks, seating, and gathering areas should be planted with grass, flowers or low shrubbery which cannot be used to hide behind, taller shrubs and ornamental trees should be kept back from such areas and large evergreens should be kept well back. Street trees with tall canopies are not a problem.
- **Surveillance:** Visibility should be maximized from adjoining streets and buildings. Hidden nooks and crannies should be avoided in the design of the area as should remote, hard to see rear areas.
- **Avoid creating "traps":** Access should be provided from a variety of places and directions to avoid having users trapped in a particular area. This is a classic dilemma for pedestrian overpasses and underpasses, which improve traffic safety but may create other problems. Overpasses should be designed in such a way as to make users visible from surrounding areas; underpasses should only be employed where adequate security can be provided.



This Ann Arbor parking structure incorporates a glass front elevator and a transparent cover on the pedestrian bridge to maximize visibility from surrounding buildings as well as the street below.



Parking Garages

Garages are widely employed to provide urban parking, but they can also provide security problems. Many people are reluctant to use them. Structures should be well lighted, interiors should be painted white to enhance illumination, hiding places should not be created in the design, and glass-front elevators, which allow for better visibility, should be employed.

These are only a few examples of how the physical planning of the urban environment can help to enhance both security and the perception of security. But physical planning and design can only go so far. The best assurance of urban safety and security is still the presence of uniformed police officers.

Uniformed Police Are the Best Crime Deterrent

All crime is serious, but in terms of its impact on urban revitalization, one category of crime—violent street crime—has the greatest impact. The fear of street crime is one of the greatest enemies of urban revitalization. The most effective way to overcome this fear is to maintain an effective police force, aggressively engaged in the prevention and solution of these crimes.

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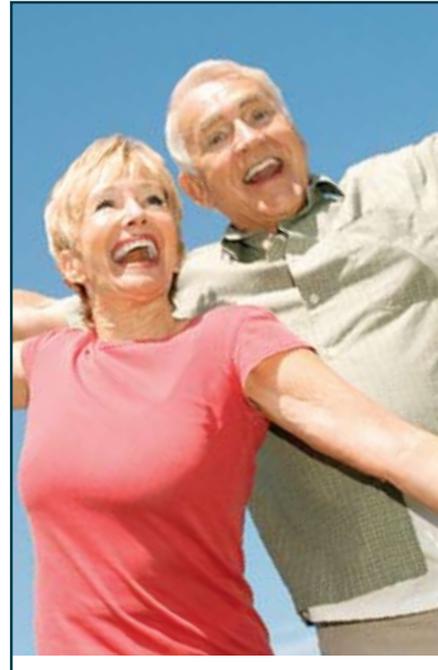




*The University of Michigan Diag and Ingalls Mall
Although designed to incorporate the recommended security
features, crimes do occasionally occur, usually late at night. The
presence of uniformed police officers is the best guarantee of
security in the urban environment.*

In an era of tight finances and budget cutting, municipal leaders have many difficult financial decisions to make. Public Safety departments are often tempting targets for cuts because of the significant portion of the budget they represent. But in making a decision to cut these vital services, city leaders must never forget that cuts in these areas will have a direct impact on their long-term efforts to revitalize their city and restore its financial, social, and physical well-being. 

Fred Mayer is a retired planner from the University of Michigan. During the course of his work at the U of M, Mr. Mayer participated in over 100 projects including new buildings, plazas, landscaping, engineering and campus infrastructure as well as the preparation of master plans for all of the university's major campuses. You may contact him at 734-761-7915 or fmayer@umich.edu.



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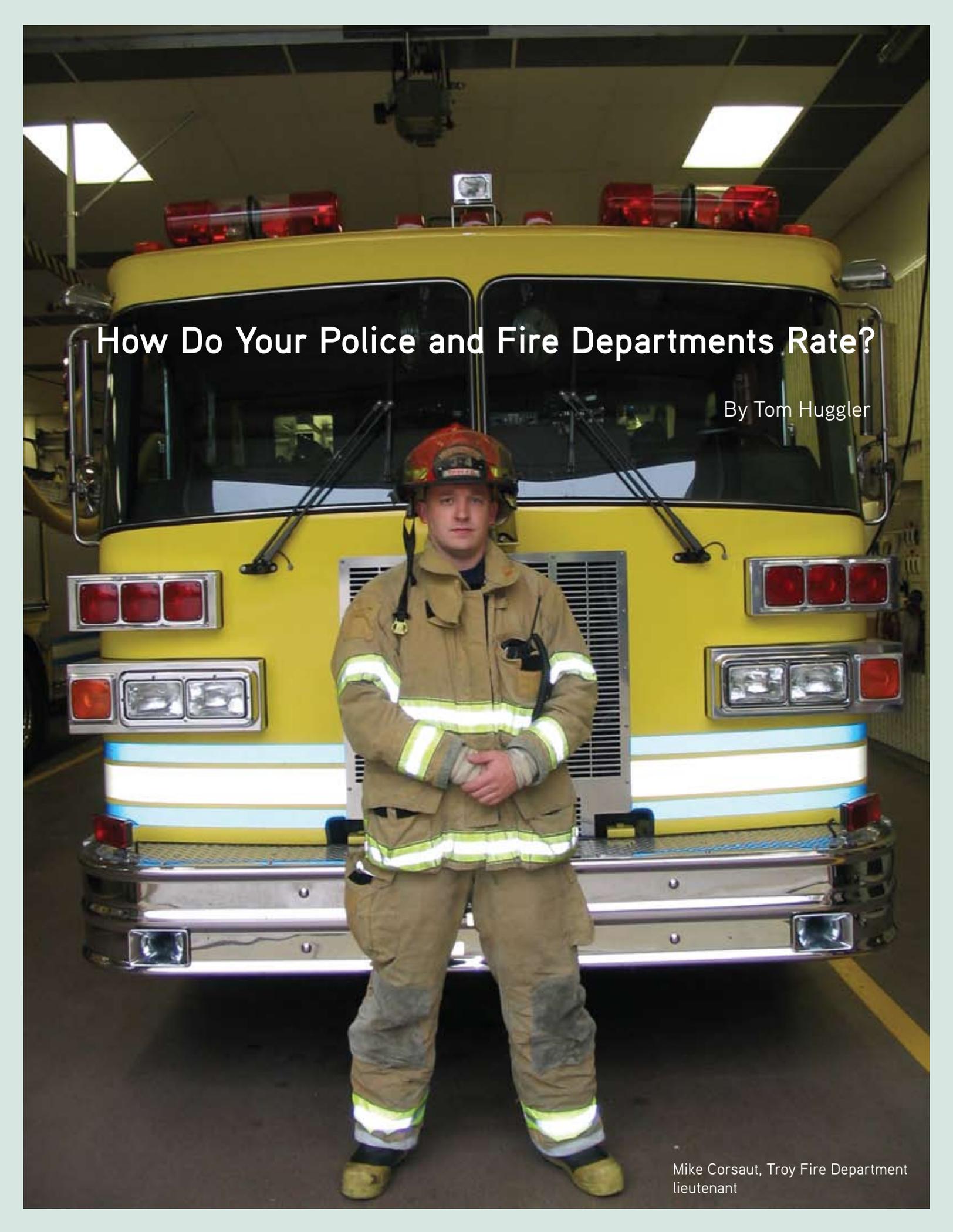
Capital Conference 2009



michigan municipal league

2009 Capital Conference
Lansing Center

March 3-4

A firefighter in full gear, including a helmet and reflective jacket, stands in front of a yellow fire truck. The truck has multiple sets of red emergency lights on top and front. The scene is set in a fire station garage with overhead lights.

How Do Your Police and Fire Departments Rate?

By Tom Huggler

Mike Corsaut, Troy Fire Department
lieutenant

“We have to continually reassess our operations. We’re not only looking at alternate fuels for our vehicles, we’re looking at alternate vehicles. For example, we’re increasing motorcycle use for road patrols, and are also relying on bicycle patrols.”

—Terrence Collins, Police Chief, City of Adrian

The “Halo Effect” and Best Practices

In the seven years since 9-11, first responders have enjoyed hero status, which may help explain their relatively high ratings in the survey. Unless another national tragedy occurs and until the economy—especially in Michigan—turns around, maintaining public support will be more challenging. Departments that implement best practices can help determine their own future.

“We have to continually reassess our operations,” said Terrence Collins, police chief for the city of Adrian. “We’re not only looking at alternate fuels for our vehicles, we’re looking at alternate vehicles. For example, we’re increasing motorcycle use for road patrols, and are also relying on bicycle patrols.” Collins said pooling resources between Lenawee and Jackson counties is helping to maintain training programs, and he is relying on the all-volunteer reserve force for pre-school safety and elderly citizen-prevention programs.

In Iron Mountain, the city’s fire prevention program was the envy of the Upper Peninsula, if not all of Michigan. Dating to 1992, the program annually reached thousands of elementary school children who visited the station. The children watched a safety video, saw demonstrations, and even saw fire trucks and equipment up close. “We raised \$30,000 to build a small house with props for this purpose,” said Lt. Kevin Pirlot, a 17-year veteran. “The program was so popular it took us three weeks to accommodate all the students.”

Continued on page 25

Survey Ratings for Michigan’s Police and Fire Departments

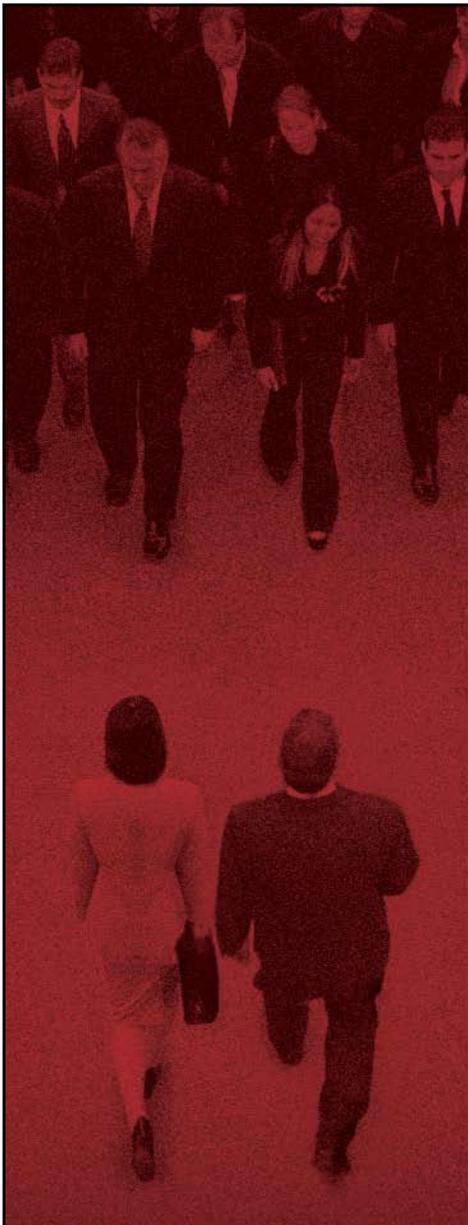
- Fire Department 72
- Adequate Coverage 65
- Fire Prevention Education 67
- Quick Response 76
- Police Department 63
- Respectful Treatment 63
- Fair/Equitable Enforcement 63
- Safety Education 63
- Quick Response 65

Source: Cobalt Citizen Satisfaction Index, 2008 Michigan baseline survey

“Pinch ‘til you wince” is how some public safety heads describe budget mandates to delete or adjust programs to balance the spreadsheet. Soaring fuel costs can cut the “routine” out of police car patrols. That class in multi-cultural diversity for your officers must wait until next year. Career fire fighters will get the off-site specialized training they need, but volunteers won’t. You hope the skeleton crew answering the next alarm won’t violate OSHA’s “two-in, two-out” rule.

Faced with such realities, local fire and police departments fared favorably during a statewide random citizen satisfaction survey last spring. The Cobalt Citizen Satisfaction Index 2008 Michigan baseline survey, which rated residents’ home communities in many ways, had a margin of error of plus or minus two points. On a scale of zero to 100, with 100 being “very satisfied,” respondents rated their fire departments at 72 and their police departments at 63. By comparison, overall citizen satisfaction with their community rated only 50.





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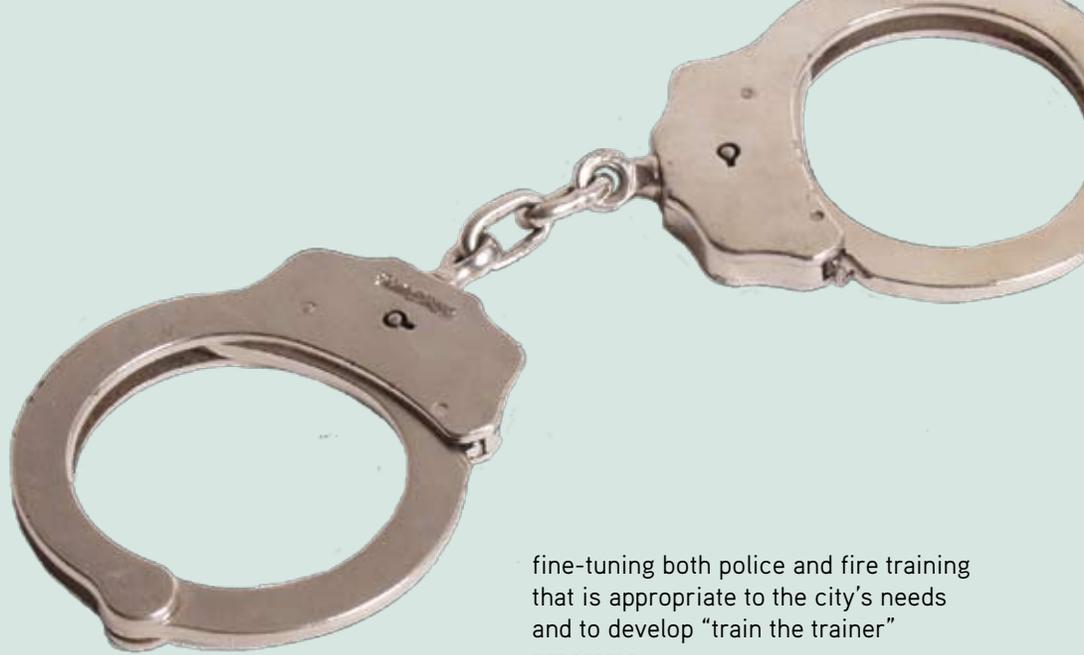
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The loss of four full-time positions to a core staff of ten has forced deep cuts in the program. Although the fire department still offers in-station safety seminars on school days by request only, most of the community outreach effort now occurs on weekends at shopping malls and farmer's markets. "In Michigan's Police and Fire Departments Survey ratings, lack of manpower is always an issue," Pirlot explained. "That's largely why Iron Mountain is transitioning to a public safety department."

Goal: Streamline Expenses, Improve Efficiency

Local governments that have combined police and fire operations into a single department of public safety may see cost savings and improved efficiency. For eight years David Bulling has directed the public safety department for the city of Ionia whose career and volunteer firefighters also serve two adjoining townships. Bulling plans most educational efforts during Fire Prevention Week but also provides special classes and presentations when asked by groups like the Commission on Aging.



"Our main goal, of course, is to prevent incidents," Bulling said. "Our part-time fire inspector does that. If we had the money, though, he would be full-time."

Other best practices include citizen surveys each quarter to measure constituent feedback and having police officers participate in off-site cultural diversity training programs every other year. Bulling would like to offer training in house and do it every year. His deputy director puts much time into

fine-tuning both police and fire training that is appropriate to the city's needs and to develop "train the trainer" programs.

In Ishpeming, police Chief James Bjorne, who has struggled with reduced manpower since losing 22 percent of his force in 2003, plans to implement a Neighborhood Watch program in the 8.6 square-mile city, which continues to benefit from 24-hour police protection despite the cuts.

"It's all part of trying to do more with less," said Bjorne, who has seen D.A.R.E. and Eddie Eagle gun safety programs scrapped in recent years. "Even though we have been reduced to a reactive force, we still try to do proactive things." Bjorne said focusing his limited resources on specific problems such as illegal drug distribution and traffic enforcement in an accident-prone stretch of US-41 have helped improve how citizens view the department.

"Our main goal, of course, is to prevent incidents."

-David Bulling, Public Safety Director, City of Ionia

Continued on page 27





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Making Them Effective

Actively communicate program availability and schedules through media and local organizations such as schools, churches, clubs and businesses

Use community events, festivals and gatherings to ensure attendance

Tap sponsorships or ready-to-use programs from outside organizations and companies

Build programs for both kids and adults

Source: Cobalt Community Research, Lansing-area focus group

Tom Huggler is a freelance writer who lives in Sunfield, Michigan. You may reach him at 517-566-7334 (home), or 989-714-1407 (cell), or by email at HugglerTom@cs.com or cyclops1@centurytel.net.



“Even though we have been reduced to a reactive force, we still try to do proactive things.”

*-James Bjorne, Police Chief,
City of Ishpeming*

Change...and Help Are on the Way

William SaintAmour, executive director of Lansing-based Cobalt Community Research which conducted the citizen satisfaction survey, said results of a national poll of 1,500 local governments indicate change is coming. When asked, “What changes do you expect to happen in the next two years?” ten percent of respondents said they plan to explore consolidation and to share services.

Cobalt Community Research is a 501c3 non-profit coalition created to help local governments adapt to Michigan’s changing economic, demographic, and social landscape through high quality, affordable surveys, focus groups, and facilitated meetings. For more information, visit cobaltcommunityresearch.org, or call 877-888-0209. 



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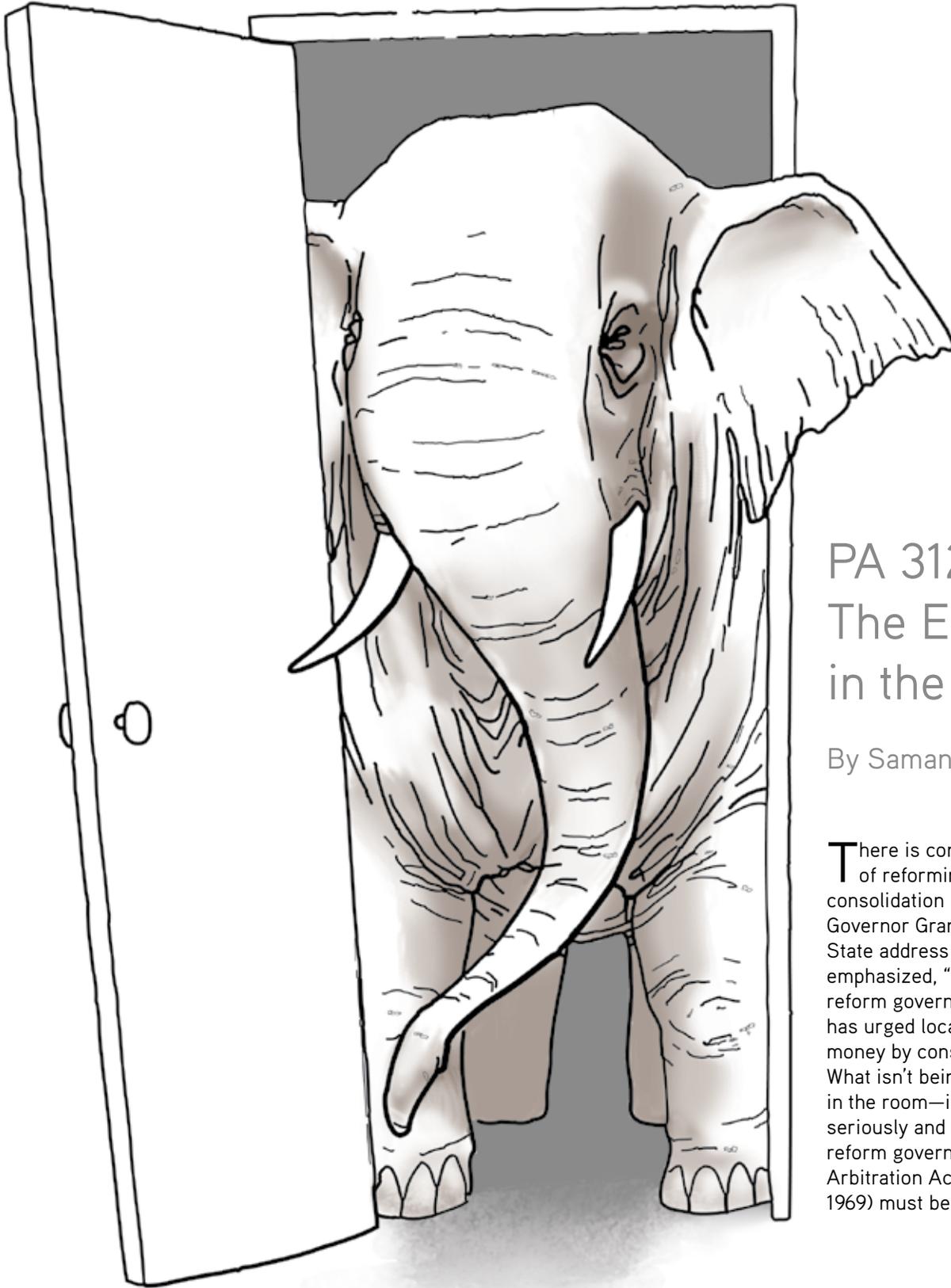
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PA 312— The Elephant in the Room

By Samantha Jones

There is constant talk in Lansing of reforming local government—consolidation is the newest rage. In Governor Granholm’s State of the State address in January 2008, she emphasized, “We must continue to reform government.” The governor has urged local governments to save money by consolidating services. What isn’t being said—the elephant in the room—is that in order to seriously and comprehensively reform government, the Police-Fire Arbitration Act (Public Act 312 of 1969) must be examined and amended.

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PA 312—What is it?

Public Act (PA) 312 requires compulsory arbitration of labor disputes between public safety workers and municipalities. Police officers and firefighters are prohibited by law from striking in a labor dispute, so disputes are sent to binding arbitration. Usually interest arbitration centers on the “big three”: wage rates, pension benefits, and health insurance. If negotiations are unsuccessful, the law provides for a state-appointed arbitrator to decide the terms of a labor contract. The arbitrator determines all or part of the contract between the parties—wages, benefits, and contract language may be issues the arbitrator will determine. This is the “arbitration award.”

Unintended Consequences

The Police-Fire Arbitration Act was authored by former Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young when he was a state legislator. Later, as the mayor of Detroit, Young publicly stated that the Act was a catastrophe, “We know that compulsory arbitration has been a failure. Arbitration awards have caused more damage to public service in Detroit than the strikes they were designed to prevent.”

While originally enacted to help protect public safety workers and the public from strikes, the result of PA 312 has been, and continues to be, devastating to municipalities.



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Public Safety— Half of a Municipal Budget

Human resources account for more than 75 percent of the budget expenditures for a municipality, and over 50 percent of that is typically for public safety personnel. PA 312 removes control of these costs from local elected officials, and this, as well as merely the threat of being taken to PA 312, are barriers to fiscal efficiency for local leaders. Economists who have studied the impact of PA 312 indicated that the law adds 5 to 10 percent to the cost of police and fire labor contracts.

League Pushing for Reform

The League is committed to pushing PA 312 reform in the Legislature. Last fall, as part of the state budget negotiations, PA 312 reforms were on the table for the first time. Legislators are very sensitive to their standing with police and fire unions, who are against any changes to Act 312. Ultimately, the Legislature chose other reforms—but those negotiations reopened the conversation about reforming PA 312, previously a taboo subject.





Police officers at a training session.

Reform #1: Ability to Pay

There are several reforms to the Act that are critical to lower communities' costs. An arbitrator must be compelled to consider a community's actual ability to pay the award. This includes prohibiting consideration of unused millage or assessment capacity or raiding funds earmarked for a different purpose. Outside officials shouldn't be able to require that local officials raise the taxes of their residents, and communities should be able to save for an expensive municipal project without fear that those funds will be considered in a PA 312 negotiation.

Reform #2: Internal Comparables

Arbitrators should be required to place more significance on internal comparables rather than external ones. This would allow a decision to better

reflect the local ability and willingness to pay employees and demonstrate what a community feels is appropriate to pay all of its employees. In addition, the Act should amend the definition of comparable communities so that it includes communities with similar characteristics such as organizational structure, population, and taxable value.

Reform #3: Pensions and Healthcare

The Act should also be amended to prohibit awards that change pensions or retiree health care and result in an increase in the unfunded accrued liability of a local unit.

Reform #4: Catastrophic Financial Events

Many times a community is faced with a catastrophic economic event that dramatically changes its financial

viability. For example, if a city had a GM plant close, causing a huge hit to its tax base, it would still be legally obligated to pay out a PA 312 award. Consequently, the burden of Act 312 awards can cause cuts and/or layoffs in other departments. When a community is forced to abide by an arbitrator's decision and a catastrophic event occurs, the parties should be able to return to arbitration to reconsider the economic facts.

Devastating Results

In talking to local officials, there are a number of devastating examples of PA 312 awards across the state. One of the most egregious, perhaps, occurred in Detroit while Young was mayor. In 1978, labor negotiations broke down, necessitating a PA 312 arbitration to come into play. The city lost the case, and it was compelled to pay an additional \$80 million per year in salaries and benefits. The financial drain resulted in the city laying off 1,400 police officers. The next year, crime rose 15 percent. Could 1,400 extra officers have helped?

The governor and Legislature are right: we do need to continue to reform government. But if the leadership in Lansing is serious about genuine reform, PA 312 should be at the top of the list. Municipalities must retain control over their most costly asset, public safety staffing. 

Samantha Jones is a legislative associate for the League. You may reach her at 517-908-0306 or sjones@mml.org.



Disbanding a Police Department— Mount Clemens' Story

By Doug Anderson



Mount Clemens was facing serious financial difficulties prior to the disbandment of our police department. At that time, the city commission directed administration to negotiate police enforcement through our county's sheriff office. During negotiations, the Macomb County Sheriff's Office agreed to employ the majority of our current police officers. The city entered into a five-year contract with the county sheriff to provide police coverage to the city of Mount Clemens. We did not reduce manpower to the city. The cost savings was substantial—approximately \$1,000,000 the first year of the five-year contract period.

During the first three years, the sheriff's office has done a remarkable job. They cracked down on prostitution and drugs, are getting into our neighborhoods with community policing and bike patrols, and are hosting town hall meetings on crime. These are just a few of the things that the sheriff's office has done—and crime statistics are down.

During this same period, our Community Center closed for financial reasons. We have since re-opened it by collaborating with our local YMCA on recreational activities, such as baseball, soccer, summer day camps for kids, and a gathering spot for our senior citizens.

I think Mount Clemens is on the right track by collaborating services with outside sources. It is something that all municipalities may have to consider, sooner rather than later.

Collaborations with other local units of government in the future are being considered. It is my opinion that Mount Clemens is taking the appropriate steps to remain financially stable and still provide services to residents at a shared cost. That is something that all residents deserve.

Continued on page 32



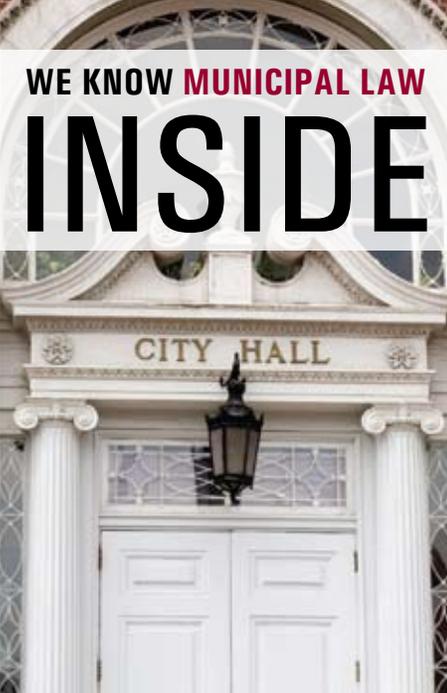
City officials' thoughts on disbanding the Mount Clemens Police Department

Commissioner Karan Bates-Gasior

"It was a very difficult and emotional decision. Having friends and neighbors on the force made the decision even more challenging. Emotions ran very high from those supporting both sides. I couldn't go anywhere without people wanting to share their opinions. I felt the decision to disband the department was in the best interest of the city financially. We simply couldn't afford the department anymore. That decision helped us turn a corner. Most people have been thrilled with the results of the change. There are a few who continue to rant. Many who were opposed have converted to the other side. I'm pleased with the end result."

Commissioner Gerald Cottrell

When considering the public reaction to the disbanding of our police department, it is important to remember that there were no residency requirements. Consequently, very few of the officers resided in the city. The vocal few who did attend city commission meetings were primarily composed of the friends and families of those officers and the retired officers still residing in the city. While a portion of the community supported the concept of ownership of "our" department, most realized the financial impact—our public safety departments comprised about half of the general fund budget and was still inadequate to support all of the services needed. And, those costs were growing.



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We had already closed our city jail because of the inability to provide separate facilities for male and female prisoners and the high cost of liability insurance to house those prisoners. We were faced with several lawsuits associated with our police department. The insurance premiums and legal fees related to those lawsuits along with a projected cost to buy into a countywide emergency radio network were staggering. It was projected that those increases alone would easily lead the city into financial crisis that could result in receivership by the state.

The benefits to Mount Clemens with this cooperative agreement between the city and the county were immediate and will be long lasting. The annual cost for police services is a negotiated fixed number that can be budgeted without any unforeseen add-ons. No new squad cars, no unforeseen overtime, no new uniforms, no new training—the list goes on and on. All of the Mount Clemens Police Department officers who chose to were offered a position with the Macomb County Sheriff's Office. Those who were vested in the city's retirement program maintained their contractual rights. The sheriff offers many, many services that the city could have never provided. The issue of officer liability is no longer a concern of the city, and we have realized a drop in insurance rates that allows us to re-allocate general fund resources to other needed services. Health care and overtime costs for that department are gone.

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And, as time passes, a real burden to the general fund for retiree pension and health care costs will be gone forever.

With everyone experiencing declining revenues, combining services between local governments will become increasingly necessary for all to survive. Looking beyond local politics for both the elected officials and the unions is necessary to enter into meaningful and successful negotiations. The citizens continue to expect local governments to provide services and the only way that we will be successful is to pool our resources.

“...the sheriff’s office has done a remarkable job... [they] are getting into our neighborhoods with community policing and bike patrols, and are hosting town hall meetings on crime.”

-City Manager Doug Anderson



Doug Anderson is manager of the city of Mount Clemens. You may reach him at 586-469-6818 x315 or danderson@cityofmountclemens.com.





ICMA-RC Update

By John McCann

Self-Directed Deferred Retirement Option Programs

By Gordon Tiffany, CFP, Guest Columnist

Deferred Retirement Option Plans (DROP) were conceived as a tool to help retain valued employees, especially police officers and firefighters, who would otherwise retire. Many public retirement systems were designed in the days of labor surplus and effectively encourage retirement at an age when many workers are still willing and able to work and may be at their peak value to the organization. Retention of these employees may be facilitated by a well-designed DROP feature.

How a Drop Works

Under a DROP, an employee who is eligible to retire and receive benefits under the defined benefit plan instead elects to continue working (for a defined period). No additional service credit is earned toward the defined benefit pension formula. From the point of view of the pension system, the employee is retired and benefits are being paid. However, instead of being paid to the employee, the pension payments are made to a tax sheltered account and invested during the DROP period.

At the end of the DROP period and upon actual retirement from employment, the DROP account is available to the employee in addition to the pension that the employee had earned based on years of service and, usually, compensation at the time the DROP period began.

At actual retirement, the DROP account is available to the employee as a lump sum or paid in any form the plan allows, in addition to the previously earned regular pension benefit. The DROP feature gives the employee the option of trading a portion of the secure, formula-driven pension income for an account under his or her own control.

A Typical Plan

An employee is eligible to retire and take a monthly pension of \$2,000. With a DROP, the employee has three options:

1. Retire and begin receiving pension payments.
2. Continue working in the defined benefit plan earning more pension service credits.
3. Go into DROP.

If he elects #3, his \$2,000 monthly pension is paid into a DROP account, which operates like a defined contribution account. He earns no more pension benefits but has an account growing due to both contributions and investment earnings.

At the end of the DROP period (typically three to five years) he retires, begins receiving the \$2,000 pension, and has a DROP account worth perhaps \$144,000 (7 percent for five years).

Employee Advantages

- Any balance in the account at the time of the employee's death will go to the account's beneficiary (unlike defined benefit pensions that may leave nothing except a spouse's survivor pension).
- The DROP account might fund regular withdrawals, especially if it has strong investment return, which, along with the pension payments, will exceed what would otherwise have been the pension alone.
- As an optional feature, the employee loses nothing when a DROP plan is added. Many employees appreciate the empowerment and planning flexibility.
- Depending on specifics of the pension plan design, a DROP may allow employees who may be at or near the maximum benefit to earn retirement benefits in the form of a defined contribution to augment their pension payment.
- By knowing their retirement date early, employees will be better prepared financially and emotionally to transition to their new life.

Employer Advantages

- Succession planning is made more realistic when both the employee and employer know well ahead of time when an employee will leave service.
- The organization's financial forecasting is significantly aided when management can accurately predict retirements.

Gordon Tiffany, CFP®, is director of retirement and financial education for ICMA-RC. You may reach Gordon at 360-573-0172 or gtiffany@icmarc.org. 

John McCann is regional vice president for the Great Lakes/Midwest Regions for ICMA-RC. You may reach John at 734-996-9143 or jmccann@icmarc.org.

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Field Report

By Caroline Weber Kennedy

Mackinaw City—Building a Sense of Place

The prevailing theme of this issue of our publication is public safety. One thing northern Michigan is fortunate to be known for is a generally freeing sense of safety wherever you roam—Upper Peninsula and northern-Lower alike. A long-standing focus on outdoor activities, recreation and events is a key ingredient to successfully curbing potential tendencies toward misspent youth. Such opportunities create shared experiences among local families, building a greater sense of community and, one can argue, contributing greatly toward the ever-important “sense of place” we strive for. What creates a distinct sense of place from a successful sense of community then is a narrowed focus on what makes your community unique.

Cultural Economic Development in Mackinaw City

Mackinaw City is known for a number of unique features—the dual coastlines of Lakes Michigan and Huron, ferry service to Mackinac Island, the “Mighty Mac” bridge and the annual Labor Day Bridge Walk. Fort Michilimackinaw is perhaps more distinctly Mackinaw City’s own. The fort was originally established as a French trading and supply post with the native people. It was relinquished to the British when the British won control of Canada in the French and Indian War. The Ottawa and Chippewa found the British harsh in comparison to the French, and as part of Pontiac’s Rebellion, the Chippewa staged a ball game outside the fort, gaining access to attack and kill many of the British occupants. (This is not the type of shared outdoor activity I referred to earlier when creating a sense of safety and community. They’ve come a long way.) The British later abandoned the fort in favor of Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island.



Jerry Prior woodcarving of Major Arent DePeyster, an early commander of Fort Michilimackinaw.





Maximizing Features

One of Mackinaw City's most enjoyable features that capitalizes on the fort's history to create its own unique sense of place, is its prominent walking trail, the Mackinaw City Historical Pathway, created in two phases from 1996-1999. The pathway extends three miles and contains 42 easily visible and accessible displays. You can be almost anywhere in the village and simply "stumble onto the fun" of this cultural, historical trail. Prominent among the displays are the unique wood carvings of local artist Jerry Prior. Prior grew up in the village and after retiring in the early '90s began carving life-size historical figures in prominent areas throughout the village, along the pathway.

Building on a Good Foundation

Without the foresight of local officials in creating the pathway, would the artist have been so inspired to contribute to the community? Even so, would a collection of carvings in a single area be as effective and valuable as this absorbing, community-wide experience? During most seasons, you will find a work-in-progress surrounded by scaffold and the fresh scent of wood shavings. For as often as I pass through this village of 859 residents, with only an IGA for groceries, I am always titillated by what might actually be new along the historical trail. In summary, this tiny village achieved success in cultural economic development though having combined its cultural history with the outdoor recreational/educational trail, and stunning local art, establishing a unique sense of place that changes just enough to be always fresh and intriguing. Take this time to reflect upon what your community has and how your efforts can lead from good to great in your quest to maximize your cultural economic development. 



Jerry Prior woodcarving of local Mackinaw City philanthropist Perry Darrow.



League Training—November & December Programs

3 Dates, 3 Locations!

Geographic Information for Michigan Communities—Building the National Spatial Data

Friday, November 7, 2008 (08K-02)

Monday, November 10, 2008 (08K-03)

Wednesday, December 10, 2008 (08L-01)

The Michigan Council of Local Governments (MCOGL), which includes the Michigan Municipal League (MML), Michigan Association of Counties (MAC), the Michigan Township Association (MTA), the Michigan Association of Regions, and the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) are partnering with the U.S. Geological Survey on an initiative called the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). The principal goal of NSDI is to work with stakeholder communities to create an environment where geographic data sets (roads, parcels, and drains, for example) are created and maintained at the local level, but systematically supported by resources from all levels of government.

Upon completion of the program attendees will:

1. Describe what NSDI is and what it can do for their community.
2. List the benefits for their Michigan community.
3. Identify possible strategies for implementing durable, mutually beneficial regional or state-wide coordination.

- Check-in 9:30 am; Begin 10:00 am; Lunch; Adjourn 3:00 pm

- Dates and Locations:

November 7-

Holiday Inn, Marquette, 906-225-1351

November 10-

Lansing Community College West Campus, Lansing, 517-267-5452

December 10-

Treetops Resort, Gaylord, 1-888-Treetops

- Speakers: A panel of experienced speakers
- Cost: Free
- Credits: CEU .4, EOA 4

Arts and Culture as an Economic Development Strategy

Monday, November 10, 2008

From the museum and hometown festival to the local art gallery and library, communities across our state are blessed with places that allow us to explore our cultural heritage. These places produce a direct economic benefit resulting in jobs, a stronger tax base, downtown and neighborhood revitalization, and tourism. The art and culture community is a key component to attracting and retaining people and businesses essential to Michigan's economic resurgence. Thanks to a grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the League and its Foundation are pleased to be partnering with the Department of History, Arts and Libraries in an effort to increase awareness among local officials as to the importance of the art and culture community to an overall economic development strategy. Join us for a forum featuring local government and art and culture representatives from across the region as they discuss their efforts.

Upon completion of the program attendees will be able to:

1. Determine their community's cultural assets.
2. Determine the strength of a community's assets to either develop a strategy alone or in collaboration with other communities.
3. Complete a community readiness audit.
4. Determine the source of cultural economic development leadership.
5. Create a cultural economic development strategy.

- Check-in 9:00 am; Begin 9:45 am; Lunch; Adjourn 3:30 pm

- Lovett Hall Ballroom, The Henry Ford, Dearborn, 313-982-6001

- Speakers: A panel of experienced speakers

- Cost: Free

- Credits: CEU .45, EOA 5, CC3



Meet a Millennial



Ryan Batey, MSU graduate student

I am Ryan Batey, and my personal story is presumably quite similar to that of most native Michiganders in their mid 20s. I have attended Michigan public schools my entire life, and continue to do so as a graduate student at Michigan State University. I have complained all my life about Michigan's unpredictable weather, but realize that there is something about gloomy mid-February days that give way to summer sunsets over the Au Sable River that will forever resonate in my soul. Not to mitigate my reasons for staying, but my current residency

in Michigan, as with most fellow classmates, is probably more of a result of growing up here than of a thoughtful decision making process of what state best serves my needs.

I do not feel qualified to talk on the subject of what Michigan is missing; however, I can offer up a simple observation. There doesn't seem to be any center, or heartbeat of the state—no sense that once people make it to a certain occupational or financial level that they will move up—like to the bustling streets of Grand Rapids or Detroit. Detroit may be the economic center, but I would be hard-pressed to assert it as the cultural heart of the state. All roads probably don't lead to anywhere in Michigan—more likely they lead to Chicago, or—if adventurous Michiganders heed Horace Greeley's advice—then to the west.

It may be true that people want to live in a cultural hotspot, to feel like they are a part of something that will later be imitated across the country, and I would include myself in this group. California and New York seem to be widely envied states but they don't have a monopoly on this issue, and it very well could be only a perception problem for Michigan. There is no reason to believe that cities like Ann Arbor or Traverse City can't be the environmentally greenest cities in the country, or that Royal Oak or East Lansing the least polluted. These are the issues that matter to young, educated citizens, and these are the issues that matter to me.



Ryan returning to his apartment above the colorful Green River Café in downtown East Lansing.

If a Michigan city were to come out and publicly state that it wanted to be the national leader on one of these issues, and needed everyone's help to make that stated goal a reality, it might actually inspire people. It is my belief that Michiganders want to be inspired, because we are tired of only hearing bad news coming out about the state that we love so much. I want to use public transportation, recycle everything possible, have clean rivers and parks, and live in a place that has similar goals. Inspiring the citizens on one of these issues will help alter people's perceptions of Michigan from a decaying state to one that is involved in some neat and interesting projects.

If the perception changed and Michigan began to be viewed as a leader on some of these issues, I believe that it is possible that the tide would turn and Michigan could begin retaining many of its high potential sons and daughters.





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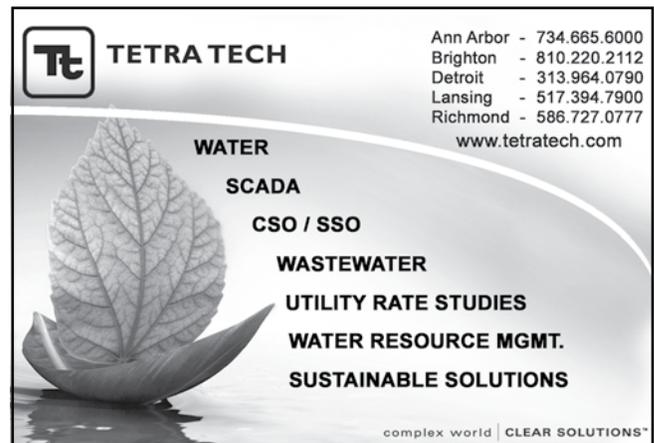
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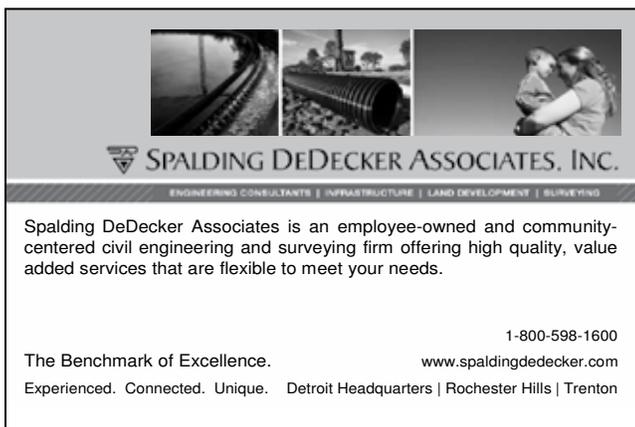


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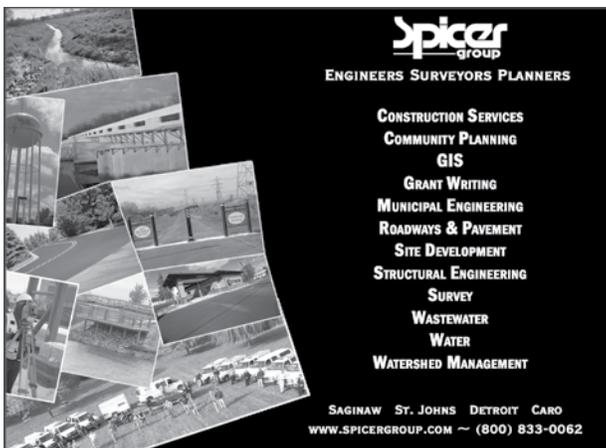


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Municipal Q&A

Coordinated by Mary Charles

Q: We have just heard that our police department is responsible for training school crossing guards. Is that correct?

Yes. MCL 257.613c makes school crossing guards the responsibility of the local law enforcement agency. It also requires that guards have four hours of training before beginning their duties and two hours of additional training before each school year begins.

AAA of Michigan provides training guidelines and assistance for local governments. If you call AAA at 1-800-646-4222, a representative will put you in touch with the safety consultant for your area.

Q: Our village elections are being held November 4 in conjunction with the general elections. When will the newly elected officials take office?

If you are a general law village, they will take office on November 20 after their election and qualification. (MCL 62.5(a)) Qualification means they have taken the oath of office and filed the required bond or security with the village clerk. (MCL 62.8)

If you are a home rule village, you will need to check your village charter.

Q: We have let bids for a street paving project. The city would like to award a contract prior to the next regular council meeting. Would it be OK if the engineer opened the bids and faxed the list to the clerk who will then call the councilmembers and they can vote on awarding the bid?

No, No, No, No, No. Telephone polling of the council is a violation of the Open Meetings Act. You will need to hold a special meeting with proper notice at least 18 hours before the meeting. All that needs to be included in the notice is the time, date, and place of the meeting. (MCL 15.265.)

Q: “Someone” told us there are new rules regarding utility billings, even for a community as small as ours. Does the League have any information on this?

Otherwise known as the “Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act” (FACTA), this federal law becomes effective November 1, 2008 and with it new regulations that require financial institutions and creditors to develop and implement written identity theft prevention programs. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), in cases where government entities defer payment for goods or services, they are to be considered creditors. To comply with the regulations—known as the Red Flags Rules—one must provide for the identification, detection, and response to patterns, practices, or specific

activities (known as “red flags”) that could indicate identity theft. The FTC has taken the position that FACTA applies to municipal utilities, including water, sewer, and electric.

There is a new page on our website with additional information: http://www.mml.org/advocacy/bills/federal_bills.htm

Q: Are villages required to have a street commissioner?

An amendment to the General Law Village Act in 1998 repealed the street commissioner position for general law villages. However, if a village (or any municipality) receives Act 51 funds from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), it will have to designate someone the “street administrator” to comply with ACT 51 regulations.

Q: Are cities required to have their own police force?

No, cities are not required to have their own police force. However, they are required, under the Home Rule City Act, to provide for the “public peace and health and for the safety of persons and property.” A city may fulfill this by funding its own police department, by creating a joint police department with another municipality, by creating a public safety department, or by contracting the service from another police provider. 

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If you are looking to visit East Jordan for the very first time, or are a frequent guest, you are cordially invited to get “on out”—outside that is! Nestled in the northwest region of Pure Michigan, our city features some of the state’s most spectacular nature-based recreational amenities. From a moonlight paddle on the wild and scenic Jordan River to a kayak adventure on the Jordan or Lake St. Clair, outside experiences are aplenty. From bird watching, hiking, fly-fishing, camping, stargazing, or photography, a true natural experience awaits visitors and residents throughout every season. Pick your activity and enjoy making it a memory.

Entrepreneurs are invited to seek out the opportunity to “give birth” to their visions of owning their own business in a small town “up north.” Several organizations have teamed up to provide small business counseling, mentoring, incubator space to launch a business idea, business resource library materials and “How to Start a Business” classes. The area offers available space in the central business district as well as available real estate for home-based businesses. Service,

retail, artistic and agricultural business plans will find clients and demand in this region. High speed internet and other technological requests are now able to be fulfilled in the community. Why not live in your natural dream area while maintaining the ability to do business worldwide? Interested entrepreneurs are invited to contact the East Jordan Chamber of Commerce office for more information and assistance.

East Jordan is celebrating its industrial heritage at the community’s pride and joy festival—the Jordan Valley Freedom Festival—the third weekend in June and will continue the jubilation the entire year. Home to three locally owned, multi-generational industries—East Jordan Plastics, Brunette Foods, and the East Jordan Iron Works—the town is a superb example of nature and industry in harmony. The entire community salutes and congratulates the East Jordan Iron Works, Inc. and the Malpass Family on the 125th Anniversary of the Iron Works. East Jordan is proud to be the home to this global industry for its 125 years. 

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