

the review

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

March/April 2012



GROWING HOPE in Ypsilanti

Volunteers Step Up as
City Resources Dwindle

ST. CLAIR'S
SKATE PARK

THE SKINNY ON
RECREATION
AUTHORITIES

PARK MILLAGE
SUCCESS STORIES

the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Features

6
Bringing Home the Gold:
Michigan State Park
System Best in Nation
By Caroline Weber Kennedy

10
**Grant Writing is
Child's Play**
By Heidi Foxworthy

12
**Michigan Residents
Vote Yes on Parks**
By Desiree Stanfield

20
**Not Just Another
Skate Park**
By Trice Hawkins

24 COVER STORY
Growing Hope:
A Public/Private
Entrepreneurship Success Story
By Teresa Gillotti
and Amanda Edmonds

28
Recreation Authorities:
Intergovernmental Option
for Recreation in Michigan's
New Economy
By Harry Burkholder

36
**Increase Your
Word-of-Mouth:**
Strategies to Market
Local Events
By Rebecca Kotz

40
**Giving Local Governments
the Tools They Need to
be Successful**
By Mark Ouimet



On the Cover:
The city of Ypsilanti forged a successful partnership with a local nonprofit, Growing Hope. From the left: Teresa Gillotti, Ypsilanti city planner; Ypsilanti Mayor Paul Schreiber; and Growing Hope Executive Director Amanda Edmonds.

Cover photo by Jenny Wolff-Harrison of Jenny Wolff-Harrison Photography.

Columns

- 5 **Executive Director's Message**
- 23 **Legal Spotlight**
- 32 **Northern Field Report**
- 46 **Municipal Q&A**



When the Nation's leading local government ERP provider is headquartered right here in Michigan,

why look anywhere else?

For nearly 30 years, stable ownership, and leading technology vision has enabled New World Systems to thrive and become a trusted provider of ERP solutions in our home state of Michigan. Our consistent financial strength fuels our significant ongoing annual R&D investment.

Eight years ago, these investments led to the use of industry-leading Microsoft.NET™ technology as the foundation of our scalable and reliable web-based solutions years ahead of the competition. Today, our powerful yet straightforward software reduces paperwork, creates efficiencies, and makes access to information effortless. Working seamlessly together, our completely integrated suite of Public Administration solutions has the power to streamline your business - like it has for more than 100 other Michigan organizations and communities we serve.

Our solutions are backed by a nearly 400-employee strong software development, implementation, and support staff dedicated exclusively to serving the public sector. Their World-class stature shines bright through our 99% customer retention rate.



Learn how New World Systems is meeting the needs of Michigan municipalities and 1,000 public sector organizations nationwide, with mission-critical ERP solutions by visiting:

www.newworldsystems.com
or call our Troy, MI headquarters at 248-269-1000

Logos.NET™ fully integrated solutions for:
Financial Management | Payroll & Human Resources | Community Development | Utility Management | Business Analytics | eGov



the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 85, Number 2

Better Communities. Better Michigan.

The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. Our goals are to aid them in creating desirable and unique places through legislative and judicial advocacy; to provide educational opportunities for elected and appointed officials; and to assist municipal leaders in administering community services. Our mission is that of a nonprofit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs to passionately push change for better communities and a better Michigan.

Board of Trustees

President: Karen Majewski, Mayor, Hamtramck

Vice President: David Lossing, Mayor, Linden

Terms Expire in 2012

Susan Baldwin, Mayor, Battle Creek
Patricia Capek, Councilmember, Cedar Springs
Kathie S. Grinzinger, City Manager, Mt. Pleasant
Larry Nielsen, Village Manager, Paw Paw
Nathan Triplett, Mayor Pro Tem, East Lansing

Terms Expire in 2013

Deb Greene, Mayor Pro Tem, Rogers City
Dan Greer, Councilmember, Jackson
Jacqueline Noonan, Mayor, Utica
Amos O'Neal, Councilmember, Saginaw
Suzanne Pixley, Mayor, Eastpointe
Charles Pugh, City Council President, Detroit

Terms Expire in 2014

Lois Allen-Richardson, Mayor Pro Tem, Ypsilanti
Ricci Bandkau, Councilmember, Brighton
Dick Bolen, Mayor, Wakefield
Scott Erickson, City Manager, Ironwood
Adam J Umbrasas, Village Manager, Kingsley
Pauline Repp, Mayor, Port Huron

Editorial Board

Matt Bach, Executive Editor
Kim Cekola, Editor
Tawny Pruitt, Copy Editor
Caroline Weber Kennedy, Manager, Field Operations
Bill Mathewson, General Counsel

Advertising Information

The Review accepts display advertising. Business card-size ads are published in a special section called Municipal Marketplace.

Classified ads are available online at www.mml.org. Click on "Classifieds." For information about all MML marketing tools, visit www.mml.org/marketingkit/.

To Submit Articles

The Review relies on contributions from municipal officials, consultants, legislators, League staff and others to maintain the magazine's high quality editorial content. Please submit proposals by sending a 100-word summary and outline of the article to Kim Cekola, kcekola@mml.org. Information is also available at: www.mml.org/marketingkit/.

Subscriptions

\$24 per year for six issues. Payable in advance by check, money order, Visa/MasterCard/American Express. Make checks payable to Michigan Municipal League. Phone 734-669-6371; fax 734-669-4223 or mail new subscription requests & checks to the Michigan Municipal League, P.O. Box 7409, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7409.

The Review (ISSN 0026-2331) is published bi-monthly by the Michigan Municipal League, 1675 Green Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2530. Periodicals postage is paid at Ann Arbor MI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE REVIEW, 1675 Green Rd, ANN ARBOR MI 48105-2530.



Please recycle this magazine

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

DANIEL P. GILMARTIN

Citizens Place Great Value in Parks and Recreation

Pop quiz: What supports more than 6.5 million jobs and contributes \$730 billion to the U.S. economy every year?

Guess again if you thought it was auto manufacturing, healthcare or some other familiar "job creator" industry. The answer: recreation.

Yep, that's right. Here at home, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources reports that more than 22 million people visit our state parks and recreation areas each year, with Michigan State Park operations contributing \$640 million annually to local economies.

Want a great local example? According to the Mott Foundation, the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission pumped more than \$16 million into the Flint-area economy in 2010 alone. In a region that's taken a bad rap on nearly everything from crime to unemployment, Genesee County Parks officials have stubbornly ignored the naysayers and pushed forward with a placemaking vision to transform their region into a recreation destination.

So how is that working out so far? In 2006, a two-week kids' event called Day Out with Thomas brought families from all over the Great Lakes region and generated \$10.7 million for the local economy. In 2009, film production crews brought nearly \$5.4 million into the Flint area. In 2011, the parks convinced Chicago-based Red Frog Events to bring its hugely popular "extreme athlete" race to mid-Michigan. The two-day event drew the second-highest entry total ever for a Warrior Dash in 33 sites all across North America. Total impact to the local economy: nearly \$4.9 million. Who says play doesn't pay?

But recreation is more than just another industry. It is one more crucial piece in the placemaking puzzle. Parks and recreational facilities enrich our quality of life, create a sense of community, and act as a magnet drawing both visitors and new residents alike.

They're our playgrounds and campgrounds, our lakes and forests, our green spaces and ball fields, our bike paths and hiking trails. It's also all the things we do there—from festivals and fishing tournaments to snowmobiling and mushroom hunting.

Look at any of the "hot spots" to live, from Austin and Denver to Portland and Seattle. Sure, they've all got great buildings and amazing arts and culture. They've got mass transit and walkability, good education and green initiatives, ample resources for entrepreneurs. But now imagine them

without their fantastic parks and waterways and recreational offerings. Denver without ski slopes? Portland without bike paths? Seattle without the Pacific coast? Austin without music festivals?

Thankfully, more and more of us are realizing the value of all this to a community's quality of life and its bottom line. As you thumb through these pages, you'll find an article on successful park millages, how to market community events, recreation authorities, and a great park in St. Clair that shows the placemaking power of parks and recreation.

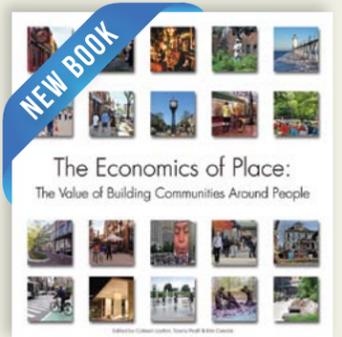
Want to learn how to apply all this to your own community? Parks and recreation funding is one of the great pre-conference sessions at the League's 2012 Capital Conference in Lansing on March 20-21. Check it out at cc.mml.org.

To paraphrase a popular quote this presidential campaign year: parks are people too. And people are what our communities are all about. 

The Economics of Place

The Michigan Municipal League believes that our communities are at the core of our state's economic turnaround, and that "place" is the huge economic driver. In 2011, the League published *The Economics of Place: The Value of Building Communities Around People*, which further details what Michigan must do to create the types of places people want to live, work, play, and raise families. The book,

available at Amazon.com and economicsofplace.com, was unveiled at the League's Convention in October during a news conference that featured Governor Rick Snyder. It's time to start talking about the importance of place as the economic development strategy that will create a positive, dynamic future for Michigan.



Daniel P. Gilmartin

Daniel P. Gilmartin
League executive director and CEO
734-669-6302, dpg@mml.org



Let **MERS** of
Michigan
point the way to
simple, smart,
budget solutions

Retirement Solutions
OPEB Solutions
Group Buying Solutions

www.mersofmich.com
517.703.9030
800.767.6377

Bringing Home the Gold:

Michigan State Park System

Best in Nation

By Caroline Weber Kennedy

Michigan received the National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal for the top state park system in the nation in 2011. *Michigan's 99 state park and recreation areas host 22 million annual visitors, providing access to more than 13,000 campsites, trails, inland lakes, rivers, and the Great Lakes.* The state system is a key partner in the Pure Michigan tourism effort that generated \$17.2 billion and created an estimated 152,600 jobs—so the gold is more than honorary, it's monetary. The award recognizes Michigan's innovative Recreation Passport Program and the state's strategic planning that delivers a high quality customer experience to every state park visitor.

Governor Rick Snyder appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel on Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation to guide the system into the future. Snyder said, "This award is a credit to the people of Michigan. For more than 90 years Michiganders have realized these unique areas are an integral part of the cultural enhancement, economic enrichment, and overall quality of life that we value. Our parks are what we make of them and the people of this state clearly prize these treasures. I commend the DNR for its outstanding stewardship of these resources and look forward to working with all stakeholders so that we have a parks system that serves our state and its visitors for generations to come."

Local governments are the key stakeholders the governor is referring to. Tourism is on the uptick in Michigan. You can help position your community to be

The Up North Trails Initiative in northern Michigan is marketing the 22-county "Up North" region as one of the premier trail destinations in the country.

attractive and inviting for this economic base. Are local businesses catering to this target market? Are your way-finding signs user-friendly and effective? Do local ordinances allow for recreational and ORV access to downtown amenities such as restaurants and entertainment venues, and are the access routes clear and welcoming? Are trailheads within walking distance to your downtown? And, don't forget that cultural heritage tourists stay longer and spend more than the average tourist, so what can visitors learn about your history and your heritage while there? Following are some exciting projects underway that can be emulated.

#1 Trail State in America

According to the Trails and Greenway Alliance, popularity for trails has skyrocketed, as people embrace trails for fitness, reconnecting with nature, commuting, and for Pure Michigan fun. Did you know that with 2,478 miles of non-motorized trails, we lead the country as the # 1 trails state in America? We connect downtowns, schools, neighborhoods, shopping and cultural destinations and natural wonders.

The Up North Trails Initiative

The Up North Trails Initiative, a collaboration of nonprofit organizations, local governments, state agencies, trail user groups, private businesses, and private citizens in northern Michigan is forging ahead toward its goal of collaboratively marketing the 22-county "Up North" region as one of the premier trail destinations in the country. The collaborative has collected more than \$11,000 in donations and has begun their marketing efforts by creating a "one stop shop" interactive website providing detailed information about all types of trail systems in northern Michigan as well as the crucial economic maximizing factors of public and private points of interest near those trail systems. This unique public-private partnership will utilize the model of the award-winning US 23 Heritage Route program to collectively market public and private recreational assets with the goal of applying that model across the state in partnership with the Pure Michigan program.

Says Denise Cline, GIS specialist and community planner at the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, "We know Michigan's extensive trail systems rival any in the nation and are excited by the level of interest and participation in this initiative.

Collaborative marketing and data centralization is an idea whose time has come! This initiative leverages our region's



The St. Ignace Events Committee jumpstarted events and activities in the city in 2007. Now activities occur every night of the week throughout the summer. In 2008, the Rendezvous at the Straits Powwow was added.

Photo courtesy of the St. Ignace Visitors Bureau.

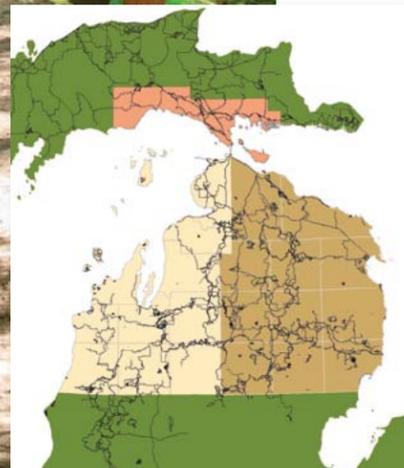


fantastic trail systems to support new opportunities for community and economic development and also fits nicely into the initiative in Michigan to eliminate the silos of economic development, recreation, and tourism."

St. Ignace Events Committee

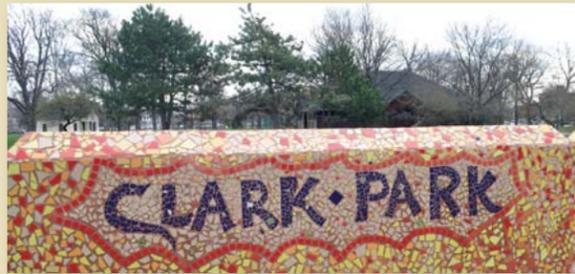
The St. Ignace Events Committee is a loose-knit group consisting of representatives from the Visitor's Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, and city along with business owners and community members with a passion for creating and

sustaining events and activities in St. Ignace. A Visitor's Bureau Board brainstorming session several years ago cited the #1 need in this tourist community as events and activities. In February 2007, U.P. Pond Hockey started it all—an event that drew less than 30 six-member teams—five years later had to be capped at 160 teams. In July of 2007, the Fish Feast was introduced at the beautiful, new downtown marina. Several local restaurants cook and sell their Great Lakes fish specialties on-site, with spirits, live music, and kid's activities.



Citizens Keep Neighborhood Parks Going

When the city of Detroit determined that it no longer had the budget to operate Clark Park, citizens came together and refused to allow it to be closed. They took over programming and operations while the city agreed to mow and provide lights. It is now bustling with youth soccer, baseball, tennis, hockey, and many other programs. It would have joined the numerous ranks of abandoned land had citizens not stood up and taken responsibility for such an incredible asset.



Another city park, Roosevelt Park, lies in the shadow of the historically brilliant and infamously abandoned Michigan Central Station. Members of the community reached out to others for program ideas after Daimler Financial generously offered to bring sixty volunteers and \$20,000 to do a project in the park. Each year, the budget, number of volunteers, and their impact has grown. Following the city's master plan, community members have started to plan and design phases of the park based on community needs. The plan is to remain flexible and organic in order to adapt to the changing needs of the community. Over \$600,000 of private dollars and in-kind donations has been dedicated to the park with more coming in.



The first Fish Feast was held in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the Mackinac Bridge and continues to be a hit. In August 2008, the Rendezvous at the Straits Powwow was added to the events calendar, and in August 2009 the Bayside Music Festival was added.

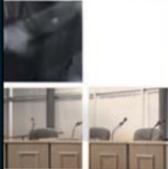


Activities occur every night of the week throughout the summer months. Ferry cruises on Mondays; wine tasting and historic walking tours on Tuesday; waterfront musical entertainment on Wednesdays and Thursdays; downtown fab Fridays; fireworks every Saturday; and outdoor movies on Sundays.

Says Dave Lorenz, manager, for Public, Media and Industry Relations of Travel Michigan, "Consider the Woodward Dream Cruise, a multi-jurisdictional event. It's easy to see that events big and small provide positive outcomes for communities in multiple ways—direct financial impact, which retains and builds jobs and generates income and sales taxes to support great places." 

Caroline Weber Kennedy is manager of field operations for the League. You may contact her at 906-428-0100 or ckennedy@mml.org

THE LAW OFFICES OF
SHIFMAN & CARLSON, P.C.
Representing Cities and School Districts
for over 40 years.

		Experienced in: General Counsel Services Bonds and Finance Discrimination Special Education Issues Elections Construction Employee Relations
		
		Location: 31700 Middlebelt Road Suite 126 Farmington Hills, MI 48334 Just north of Northwestern Highway on Middlebelt.

www.shifmancarlsonlaw.com
800-799-8851 | 248-406-0620

Yes, this is one way to deal with the coverage gaps and poor service that "cheap" insurance can leave you with.



May we suggest something a bit more productive?

 **The Liability & Property Pool. You own it.**



Photo courtesy of Friends of the Bay City State Recreation Area.

Grant Writing is Child's Play

By Heidi Foxworthy

“Grant writing is child’s play,” or at least it can be. Several municipalities in our lovely state have utilized the grant process to develop multi-generational recreation places, including the Bay City State Park Spray by the Bay, and Marshbank Park in West Bloomfield. The current trends in childhood obesity, autism, sensory integration, importance of natural spaces, accessibility, and sustainability have created an increased awareness of the importance of innovative outdoor spaces for children’s development. Several grants are available to help address these issues. What should you do to capitalize on these opportunities? There are several steps in the grant writing process including:

- 1. Identify the need and provide a solution for that need.** “Well-identified, high-priority needs boost the priority of your project,” according to the National Parks Service. You may want to conduct a needs assessment of your community. Support that need with evidence. What percentage of the population is unable to access the current play structure? How many children are obese, have autism, or some other disability in your community? Meet with your local intermediate school district and solicit their input.
- 2. Identify partnership opportunities.** Could the local community schools provide park activities to encourage utilization of the park? Are there opportunities to partner with occupational therapists to educate families of children with autism how the park equipment benefits children? Are there other unique and innovative opportunities that relate to your

community like programming days at the park for the disabled? Are local businesses willing to support the project with donations or “in kind” services?

- 3. Identify potential funding sources.** It is important to meet the needs of the funding source. Point out how your project connects with their interests. What sets you apart from others?
- 4. Determine grantor funding level and stick with that budget.** A consultant will assist with the design process in helping to choose equipment and fully understand realistic budgets to meet your objectives and provide innovative design solutions. There is no charge for this service from Superior Play.
- 5. Get a copy of a successful grant from the agency to which you are applying.**
- 6. Write the grant.** Be sure to include all of the elements required by the grantor, including: who you are, the problem you are trying to address, the solution, your plan, your budget and how you will evaluate success of the project. Again, be sure you are addressing the criteria of the grantor.

7. Critique the grant writing before submission. Review the grant with peers and as many different departments as possible. Multiple perspectives can provide a more robust grant application and creates greater buy-in within your organization and community.

8. Get awarded and implement the grant. Provide the necessary reports and inspections during the projects construction and at completion.

9. Publicize & celebrate the success. Be sure to recognize the grantor.

If you are seeking funds for a playground, spray park, skatepark, or some other large equipment purchase, involve a recreation consultant from a playground manufacturer early in the process. They can assist with site analysis, safety standard considerations, and providing information relating to ADA guidelines, recycle content, and LEED information. Consultants can also offer customized, innovative design capabilities which can help set your park project apart and

create a destination location. Consultants can help you pursue funding options such as state and federal purchasing programs like MiDeal, HGAC Buy, NJPA, GSA, and leasing as well as fundraising opportunities. After your project is completed, they can help you celebrate by providing support for press releases and grand opening events.

Spray by the Bay

The Friends of Bay City State Recreation Area, an educational nonprofit organization, raised \$300,000 to build a spray park, including donated materials and services. Cathy Washabaugh, a member of Friends of Bay City State Recreation Area says, “We worked with Superior Play for more than four years in developing spray parks of varying sizes that we could afford.”

“We needed an initial design and cost estimate in order to pursue grants. Every foundation or organization wants to see a picture of what you are proposing and how you plan on using their funds. Success builds on success. As other groups see that you are realizing your

goals, they will jump on board. Begin by targeting the largest potential donors first. Ultimately, you will want to have something at every price point so that everyone can participate.”

The Spray Park was an instant success with the community—the usually empty parking lot immediately overflowed with users. Through a \$300,000 donation from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the “Friends” are now planning for phase two of the spray park, which will nearly double the size.

For a sample needs assessment survey, email the author at heidi@superiorplaymi.com. For a list of recreation grant opportunities, please visit superiorplaymi.com/grant-opportunities.htm.

Heidi Foxworthy is the marketing manager for Superior Play. You may contact her at 810-229-6245 or heidi@superiorplaymi.com.

Count on Us. Count on More.

For most people, it’s just a briefcase. For our clients, it’s a symbol of expertise, courage, and unwavering service. For Clark Hill attorneys and other professionals, it represents a toolkit of integrated resources, networks, and talented teams—all centered on anticipating and responding to your ever-changing business needs and challenges.

With Clark Hill at your side, you can be assured that we will be there, always, when and where you need us, giving you the competitive edge to stay ahead and win in the marketplace.

800.949.3124 | clarkhill.com

CLARK HILL

© 2011 Clark Hill PLC

ARIZONA ILLINOIS MICHIGAN WASHINGTON DC



Vote Yes on Parks

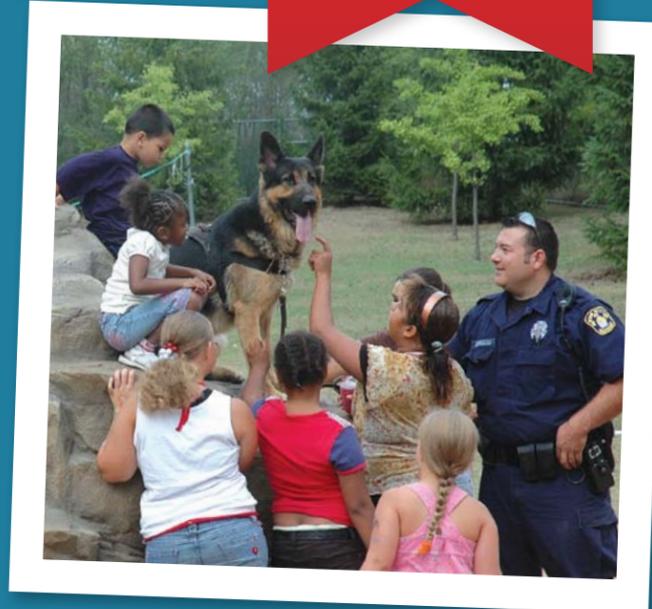
Top Strategies from Successful Millage Campaigns

By Desiree Stanfield

Despite Michigan's downturned economy, voters spoke volumes when they approved millages for four parks and recreation agencies in the August 2010 primary election.

"People realize parks provide value not only for themselves, but also for the community as a whole," Michigan Recreation and Parks Association past President Linda Walter said. "We enhance neighborhood stability, generate economic impact with facilities, create connections through programs, and make communities a more desirable place to live, work, and play."

The city of Lansing and Oakland, Saginaw, and St. Clair County parks and recreation departments each received resounding support at the ballot box in August. Read on to learn about each organization's top five millage campaign successes.



Along with the parks millage, Lansing had library and bus system millages on the ballot—but the parks millage passed by the highest margin.

CITY OF LANSING

Pop. 113,712
www.lansingmi.gov/parks

Facilities: 114 parks (includes three cemeteries, one municipal golf course, four community centers, two outdoor/one indoor swimming pools, artificial ice rink, nature center and Turner Dodge historic home)

Annual cost: \$50 for a home with a market value of \$100,000 (1 mil)

The Lansing Department of Parks and Recreation started with the purchase of the city cemetery in 1852. The first park millage was approved in 1990 and received five renewals. According to then Director Murdock Jemerson (Jemerson retired, Brett Kaschinske is the new director), the 2010 millage vote had the largest margin with a 73 percent approval.

"We started our communication efforts with a mailing to all absentee voters in early July. Getting absentee voters has been the key to the success of our park millage campaigns," Jemerson said. "We always have a letter endorsing the millage signed by one or two very influential senior citizens because seniors vote."

Awareness efforts were coordinated by a separate citizens group called "The Committee to Save Lansing Parks,"

which raised approximately \$4,000 through friends groups, fundraisers, and private donations. The funds were used to purchase campaign yard signs, two postcard mailers and campaign literature.

"The parks millage brings in \$2.3 million annually," said Jemerson. "Approximately half of that goes to general fund operations and the other half goes to capital improvements for the parks system."

Top 5 Successes

1. Mailed postcards to absentee and primary voters.
2. Communicated to youth and adult sports program participants.
3. Delivered literature door to door.
4. Installed yard signs to create awareness.
5. Encouraged senior citizens to write support letters.

The committee focused on educating citizens that the millage was a renewal of an existing tax. "We had two other millage proposals on this ballot for the library and bus system, so we wanted to make sure everyone knew the one for parks wasn't an increase," he said. "The two other millages also passed, but the parks millage had the highest margin."

OAKLAND COUNTY

pop. 1.2 million
DestinationOakland.com

Facilities: 13 parks and golf courses with 7,000 acres; 68 miles of trails, day-use parks, campgrounds, waterparks, nature centers and golf courses

Annual cost: \$21 for a home with a market value of \$175,000 (.245 mil)

Oakland County Parks and Recreation began welcoming guests in 1966 with the acquisition of a former family farm/summer home of wealthy Detroiters. The 269-acre parcel was named Addison Oaks County Park and repurposed as a day-use park, campground, and banquet center.

The following year, a five-year .25 millage was established to operate, maintain, improve, and acquire parks and recreation areas. In 1980, the renewal was extended to a 10-year .25 millage. Due to economic concerns facing the area, the parks commission recommended renewal of the existing reduced .2415 millage in 2010.

In August 2010, voters cast their ballots in support with a 76.46 percent approval rating, the highest ever in parks history.

"The millage accounts for nearly 60 percent of our operating monies. For the 2011 budget of \$25 million, approximately \$12.8 million will come from millage revenues and the rest from charges for services, planned use of balance, investments and other income," Director Dan Stencil said.

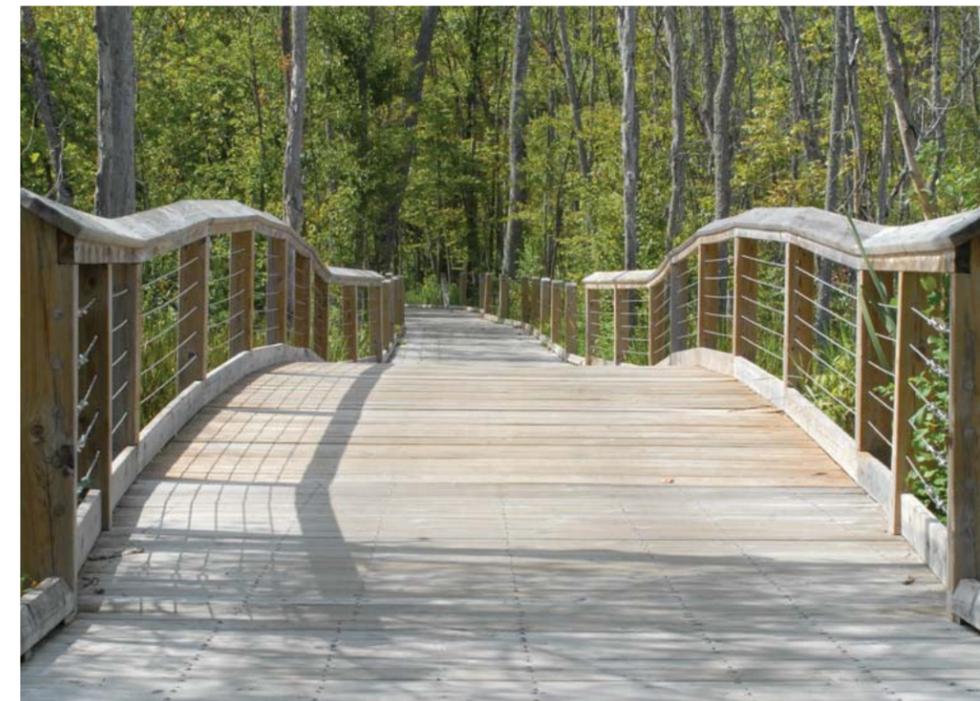
The millage awareness effort started 18 months prior to the vote. The millage team included staff from operations, planning, recreation programs and services, communications and marketing. The group met monthly, then weekly six months prior to the primary. An e-newsletter sent weekly to all full-time and part-time staff included a countdown clock plus calls to action such as gathering names and addresses for mailings and locations for yard signs.

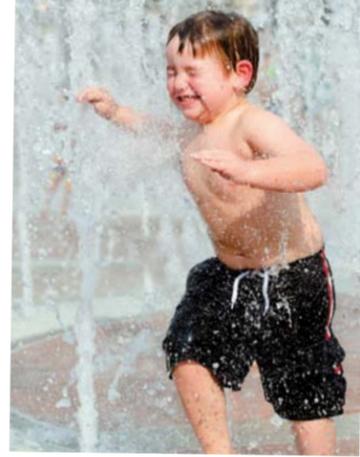
In August 2010, voters in Oakland County cast their ballots in support of the parks millage with a 76 percent approval rating—the highest ever in parks history.

Top 5 Successes

1. Conducted face-to-face visits with nearly all of the county's 62 cities, villages, and townships over a three-month period.
2. Engaged staff to educate park users, special interest groups, and volunteers starting six months before the vote.
3. Created "What You Value" communication pieces that explained the renewal and distributed to staff, park users, local businesses, and absentee voters.
4. Used emails to park users and social media efforts including Facebook and Twitter.
5. Received support from Citizens for Oakland County Parks and Recreation, a group that formed an honorary committee with political leaders, placed newspaper ads, and bought its own yard signs.

"Customer service and operations standards are of utmost importance every single day. That's what keeps visitors returning and using word of mouth to share their experiences," Stencil said. "If the grass isn't cut or the bathrooms aren't clean, you can bet what your guests are saying isn't favorable. You should have the mindset that every day is millage day."





St. Clair County parks millage funds get distributed to the local units of government in the county on a per capita basis. Literally every park in the county has been improved by the millage.

ST. CLAIR COUNTY

pop. 164,235

stclaircountyparks.org

Facilities: Six parks comprising 805 acres with county fair facilities, a historic village, splashpad, pavilions, beach, trails, and Fort Gratiot Light Station—the oldest lighthouse in Michigan

Annual cost: \$25 for a home with a market value of \$100,000 (0.4954 mil)

St. Clair County Parks has seen increased support for its millage over the years. In 1994, it passed at 52 percent; in August 2010, it was renewed for six additional years with 71.49 percent approval rating.

Staff started preparing for the vote in December 2009. A newsletter was mailed to 72,000 addresses and posted on the system's website and Facebook. "Our mid-July issue focused on how the parks system invested millage funds the previous six years," said Director Mark Brochu. "We also told voters what projects listed in the master recreation plan would be pursued if the millage renewal passed."

These projects included paved mountain biking and equestrian trails, canoe and kayak launches, building maintenance, and parking improvements.

Another approach focused on the tourism impact of county parks on the local community. According to the Blue Water Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, visitors to St. Clair County spend an average of \$116 per day and \$366 per person for overnight stays.

"One of our strongest selling points is our program that distributes 25 percent of the millage funds collected each year to all of the local units of government on a per capita

basis. Literally every park in St. Clair County has been improved by the county parks millage," Brochu said. "We demonstrated to our residents not only the significant impact we make in their quality of life, but also the value we provide to the local economy."

Top 5 Successes

1. Strategic yard sign placement: quality locations over quantity of signs.
2. Ordered car window clings, provided by a "People for Parks" group that ran a "Vote Yes" campaign. The group also paid for the yard signs, radio ads, and parade entry fees.
3. Aired radio ads the week prior to the election on two stations. The message was that every community in St. Clair County benefits from the county parks millage.
4. Participated in the two largest summer parades—the Port Huron Rotary Parade and the Yale Bologna Festival Parade.
5. Encouraged citizens to write support letters to local newspapers.

Previously, funds were used to purchase newspaper ads. Since the daily and weekly papers supported the renewal, staff decided to forgo spending money on ad space.

"We believe that due to the poor economy, many of our supporters truly believed that our millage might not be renewed and that the county board, which does not contribute to the parks and recreation budget, could not give any money to parks. Those supporters made extra efforts to make sure that they voted," Brochu said.

SAGINAW COUNTY

pop. 210,000

saginawcounty.com/parks

Facilities: Six parks with 683 acres featuring a lake, two nature preserves, one rail trail and two passive recreation parks (pavilions, fishing, etc.)

Annual cost: \$8 for a home with a market value of \$100,000 (.1615 mil)

The Saginaw County Parks and Recreation Commission was formed in 1969 and currently manages six regional parks including the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail. The system has had a millage in place since 1990; it has passed three times—November 1990, August 2000, and August 2010.

It failed once in August 1990, when it was placed on the ballot as a combined millage including the Parks and Recreation Commission; Hartley Outdoor Education Center; Historical Society of Saginaw County; and Saginaw Community Enrichment Commission. According to Director John Schmude, voters were confused on what exactly they were voting for and how much money would be going to each of the entities.

In August 2010, voters approved the millage renewal by 68 percent. The system's 2010 budget is projected at \$901,869 of which \$813,547 is millage funded.

Schmude said there was no friends group in place, but there was a nominating committee with a budget of \$1,775. The group included parks commission members and individuals from the public. The group started meeting biweekly in May.

"The millage campaign committee put the majority of funds into yard signs and 4' x 8' signs," Schmude said. "The most creative idea was forming an impromptu 'Moms for Parks' press conference which generated coverage from a local TV station and a few local newspapers."

Top 5 Successes

1. Erected campaign signage—yard signs and 4x8 foot signs.
2. Held a "Moms for Parks" press conference two days before the election.
3. Encouraged a letter-writing campaign to the local newspaper.
4. Made presentations to service clubs.
5. Created a website to promote awareness of the campaign.

"The next time around we'll seek endorsements from the chamber of commerce, local unions, and other groups. We learned a lesson that we need to reach people where they are active, not only in our parks, but in other places as well," Schmude said.

Whether an agency's next millage renewal is five or 10 years away, park leaders say that the most important take-away from the 2010 victories is that elections are not won or lost within the course of an election cycle.

At Oakland County Parks and Recreation, "we're fond of saying 'every day is millage day,'" Executive Officer Dan Stencil said. "What matters is how we are providing the essential services that make people visit us today and vote for us tomorrow." 

Desiree Stanfield is communications supervisor for the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Department. You may reach her at 248-858-4627 or stanfieldd@oakgov.com.

Reprinted with permission from *MRPA PROfessional* Vol 3, Issue 1, 2011.



In August 2010, voters approved the Saginaw County park millage by 68 percent. The campaign committee's most creative idea was forming an impromptu "Moms for Parks" press conference.

CAPITAL CONFERENCE

March 20-21, 2012 • Lansing, Michigan

Are state lawmakers really going to cut another huge chunk of tax revenues to Michigan's cities, villages and urban townships? Will decisions in Lansing and Washington result in more roadblocks or resources for local initiatives? How will the next state budget affect your community's bottom line?

From EVIP to the personal property tax on business, the legislative arena can be the birthplace of bold new ideas and initiatives... and a battlefield for issues that impact the fate and future of every municipality in the state.

The big question is: What happens next? And what can you do to be a part of it?

REGISTER NOW and take *your* place in Lansing at the League's 2012 Capital Conference!



Conference Sessions

Personal Property Tax and Much More

Are state lawmakers really going to cut another huge chunk of the tax revenues to Michigan's cities, villages and urban townships? Find out the latest on the effort by the Michigan Legislature to eliminate the personal property tax and the League's fight to get a full, guaranteed replacement.

Brownfield Tax Credits: Now What?

The year 2011 was a bumpy one for tax credits in Michigan as lawmakers at one point cut them out and then took action to restore them—well at least, partly. Get the latest on Brownfield Tax Credits, Historic Tax Credits, and other tax credits and what's in store for these in the future.

Legislative Ins and Outs

Are you sometimes confused by what's happening in Lansing or how it all works? Don't worry, you're not alone. The League's Lansing staff will help clear the air by explaining the basics of our most common battles. We'll explain all about revenue sharing and its successor—EVIP (Economic Vitality Incentive Program). This session is for members who are just diving into the Lansing arena, as well as veterans seeking a refresher.

Regional Roundtables

On March 20, 2012, the League is again offering the Regional Roundtables, a free opportunity to get together with other members from your region. These sessions will take place immediately following the Welcoming General Session at Capital Conference, from 3:45-5:15 pm, in Lansing. Don't miss this chance to participate in community updates, hear hot legislative issues, enter your community's project in the Community Excellence Awards, and more!

To find out more about your region or the League's upcoming Region Meet Ups, visit mml.org.

Community Excellence Awards

Enter on March 20, 2012, at your Regional Roundtable!

We've simplified the presentation process to keep this program accessible, as well as relocated the first round to your Regional Roundtable at Capital Conference. All Community Excellence Award (CEA) presentations will be limited to an "elevator pitch" format and will be presented at their Roundtable on March 20, 2012. Communities entering will have five minutes to passionately present their project—no videos, no PowerPoints, nothing but your project and power of persuasion!

Regional winners, who will be voted on by their peers on March 20, will compete at our Annual Convention and typically prepare more spectacular videos and/or PowerPoint presentations for that venue.

Legislative Reception

Wednesday, March 21, 4:30-6:30 pm

This reception is an exceptional opportunity to network with senators, representatives, key legislative staff members, and other top state officials and hear their perspectives on state issues in a relaxed setting.

Register at CC.MML.ORG

AGENDA AT-A-GLANCE

Tuesday, March 20

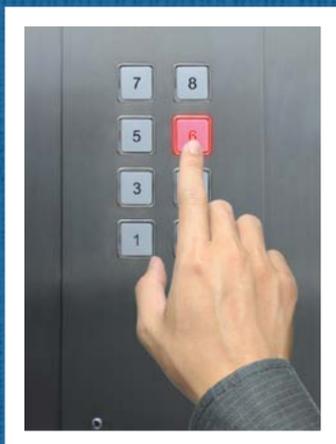
- 9:00 am-12:00 pm Pre-Conference Workshops
- 9:00 am-4:30 pm MAMA Municipal Law Program
- 10:00 am-1:00 pm Board of Trustees Meeting & Lunch
- 12:00-6:00 pm Registration Open
- 1:15-2:15 pm Governance Committee Meeting
- 2:30-3:30 pm Capital Conference Welcome
- 3:45-5:15 pm Regional Roundtables
- 5:30-7:30 pm MML Liability & Property Pool Capital Conference Kick Off Party

Wednesday, March 21

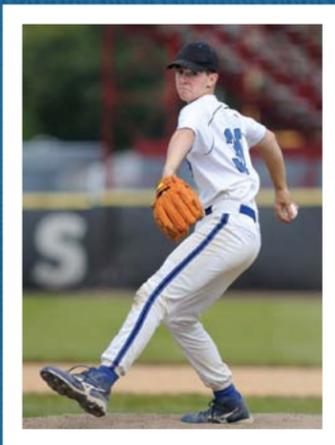
- 7:30 am-4:00 pm Registration Open
- 7:30 am-3:15 pm Spring Expo: Connect, Get Inspired!
- 7:30-8:30 am Continental Breakfast in Exhibit Hall
- MWIM Eggs & Issues Breakfast
- 8:30-9:45 am General Session
- 9:45-10:15 am Networking Break
- 10:15-11:30 am Concurrent Sessions
- 11:30-11:45 am Networking Break in the Expo Hall
- 11:45 am-1:00 pm Awards Luncheon
- 1:00-1:45 pm Networking Break in the Expo Hall
- MBC-LEO Annual Meeting
- 1:45-2:45 pm General Session
- 2:45-3:15 pm Networking Break in Expo Hall
- 3:15-4:30 pm General Session
- 4:30-6:30 pm Legislative Reception

Register at CC.MML.ORG

2012 Community Excellence Awards



Elevator



Pitch



How to Enter



*2011 Winners
City of Clare, Cops & Doughnuts*

Add your name to the traveling Cup!

The prestigious Community Excellence Award Cup is bestowed each year to one Michigan municipality, based on ballots voted on by their local government peers. The winner's name will be engraved on the Cup and that community will have it for one year to showcase.

Enter the 2012 CEAs by attending your Regional Roundtable at the Capital Conference on March 20 in Lansing. Be prepared to give a five minute "elevator pitch" style presentation to your peers in our region. Voting takes place on-site—the Regional winner will be announced on the 20th. The seven Regional winners will compete for the Cup at the Annual Convention in October on Mackinac Island.

Go to mml.org to enter

CEA VITALS

- Regional Roundtable
- March 20
- Lansing
- 5 minute elevator pitch

League Annual Convention
October 3-5, 2012, Mackinac Island
7 Winners Vie for the Cup



Plans to cover groups and individuals.
A promise to cover everyone.

We have a broad range of group plan options, including PPO, Flexible Blue (HSA), HMO, Dental and Vision. We also offer affordable individual health care for you and your family, at any stage of your life.

Blues group and individual members have unparalleled statewide and nationwide access to the doctors and hospitals they need.

The League has provided employee benefit services to its members since 1987. For more information, contact your local agent or the League Risk Management Department at 800-653-2483.



Nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

The League's RFP Sharing Service

Don't know where to send your RFPs?

Through our new RFP Sharing Service, the League makes sending RFPs easy.

- ▶ League members, email your RFP to rfpsharing@mml.org
- ▶ The League will send your RFP to prospective bidders in the Business Alliance Program

It's that easy.



For more information, contact Terri Murphy at 800-653-2483 or tmurphy@mml.org

not just another skate park



By Trice Hawkins

St. Clair was faced with a problem—the popularity of non-traditional risk-taking sports and the lack of a gathering place for these activities to take place. The result was the unwelcome presence of skateboarders on our sidewalks and school properties and in our driveways and parking lots. Without a facility, where were the skateboarders to go?

The Park and Recreation Department, members of the community, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Rotary Club requested our city council address the situation.

They suggested a skate park, which would provide a safer environment than sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, and streets. City council approved a Skatepark Committee in 2007, whose mission was to plan a park that was safe for skateboarding and biking, but that also had a community atmosphere. The decision to design for both skateboards and bikes was based on the fact that most kids own a bike, trends are always changing, and other area skateparks did not allow bikes.

The Committee researched community need, site locations, existing skateparks, safety, liability, maintenance, and funding. They conducted site visits, met with vendors, and solicited design ideas from local skateboarders. In September 2008 city council approved the location for the future skate park, site plan preparation, and the pursuing of funds.

Because of skateboarding's unwelcome history in our city, we needed to promote this as an intergenerational project to dispel inaccurate stereotypes, share talents and resources, and provide unified community support. Student involvement



St. Clair,
pop. 5,485

and ownership in the park was needed. Two learning labs involving students, civic leaders, and American Ramp Company (ARC) designers resulted in our park layout. Students learned fiscal responsibility and were selective about what components to include. Students also attended council meetings, participated in civic fundraisers, and made presentations to foundations and school organizations.

DESIGN

Student involvement in the design, planning, and construction helped ensure proper use and the greatest impact on our community. Our community skate-bike park design criteria included: multi-use, both skate and bike; a 20' x 80' concrete surface; modular ramps/components; fencing enclosure; landscaping; drinking fountain; seating; parking; security lighting; and option for a dirt pump track. The concrete and fencing was installed in 2009, and skatepark components in 2010. The decision for a concrete or modular skatepark is a community decision—all options should be considered. We contracted the Michigan-based action sport design team Creative Consulting Services (CCS) to provide our pump track design in spring 2011.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Partnerships dedicated to improving the quality of life and providing new recreational opportunities were pursued. The Rotary of St. Clair committed to this project by establishing a Fundraising Steering Committee and designating their funds. It truly made this project possible. With the help of the Rotary Club and Steering Committee Chairperson Douglas Murphy, year-to-date we have received over \$180,000 in donations. The largest portion of funds was received from local and county foundations. Local distribution of the St. Clair County parks and recreation millage and skate park grant funds (\$90,000) were also used.

Student and parent organizations conducted fundraisers. The school donations were combined to purchase the drinking fountain at the park. Our project also included a Home Depot Foundation community build which included a one-day beautification project. Home Depot provided the funding and employees to plant trees, bushes, and flowers; and to construct flower boxes and benches. Community volunteers were also recruited.

CULTURAL ARTS

Incorporating student public art provided an opportunity for individuality and creative expression. It also deters graffiti and other forms of vandalism. Local artist, art teacher, and skateboarder Jason Stier served on our Skate-Bike Park Committee and encouraged student public artwork to enhance our park design. Students painted murals and trash cans for the park. The city recreation department and St. Clair Art Association co-sponsored a skateboard design contest for park benches. We also co-sponsored a skate-bike park video contest with the St. Clair Chamber of Commerce.





A customized archway designed by Jason Stier made entirely of recycled parts including bicycle and skateboard parts and a discarded utility pole. All labor was donated, including the design, welding, painting, and masonry work. Two local foundations sponsored a customized metal and concrete "Freighter" sculpture. This one-of-a-kind component and artwork helps to establish our park as a destination site.

PROGRAMMING

Programming and providing special events help to sustain the park and generate continued public support. A grand opening and skate-bike competition was held on June 19, 2010. The Recreation Department sponsors an annual Fall Grind Event. Competitions include events for skateboards, bikes, in-line skates, and scooters. Free Flow, Best Trick, and S.K.A.T.E. events are popular. Local skateboarders and bikers are recruited as volunteers to help with events and judging.

On June 18, 2011, with the help of local sponsors, we were included on the Adrenaline Game Alliance Nation Summer Tour. Our Summer Jam Event was a state qualifier for the Meijer State Games and allowed us to showcase our park and local talent.

Our skatepark provides a great place to ride. For non-skaters, it's a place to go and watch the action. A skatepark often provides the first opportunity most people have to see skateboarding live. It makes skateboarding much more real and fosters a greater appreciation for it.

RECOGNITIONS

Our Skate-Bike Park won the 2011 Facility Design award from the Michigan Recreation and Park Association (MRPA). This award is presented to MRPA agency members in honor of outstanding landscape, facility/architectural and park design. In addition, the Rotary Club of St. Clair awarded St. Clair Recreation Director, Trice Hawkins, and students Jordan Huffman and Walker Child with its 2011 Merit Award; and Rotarian Douglas Murphy received the Citizen/Rotarian of the Year.

Community, design, and incorporating cultural arts made our park a success. 

Trice Hawkins is the recreation director for the city of St. Clair. You may reach her at 810-329-7121 x215 or phawkins@cityofstclair.com.

Legal Spotlight

A column by Sue Jeffers

Is a utility tractor used as a festival shuttle a motor vehicle?

FACTS:

Sterling Heights used a Gator utility tractor as a trailer shuttle to transport festivalgoers visiting the city's festival in its downtown. The streets were closed off, and people would use the shuttle to get from the parking area to the festival area via public roads that had been closed to public traffic for the festival. Richard Yousif, a minor, fell off the passenger trailer and was injured when the driver allegedly turned too sharply. The city was sued for the injuries sustained by Yousif.

The lawsuit was based on the assertion that the Gator utility tractor is a motor vehicle under the motor vehicle exception to governmental immunity, MCL 691.1405. The city argued that the utility tractor was not a motor vehicle and that governmental immunity should apply.

The statute upon which liability for a municipality is based states:

Governmental agencies shall be liable for bodily injury and property damage resulting from the negligent operation by any officer, agent, or employee of the governmental agency, of a motor vehicle of which the governmental agency is owner...

There have been previous Michigan court cases which have defined what is and what is not a motor vehicle. In *Stanton v Battle Creek*, the Michigan Supreme Court held that a forklift was not a motor vehicle since it was a piece of industrial equipment and was "not similar to an automobile, truck, or bus."

After *Stanton*, subsequent court of appeals' decisions held that a broom tractor, a tractor mower, and a hydraulic grader were all motor vehicles, resulting in liability for the governmental agency.

But, in *Overall v Howard*, the Michigan Supreme Court reversed a decision of the court of appeals which had held that a golf cart was a motor vehicle. The Supreme Court held that a golf cart driven by an athletic trainer at a football game was not a motor vehicle for reasons stated by the dissenting opinion in the court of appeals' decision. (The dissent had claimed that the golf cart more clearly resembled the *Stanton* forklift which was determined not to be a motor vehicle than other types of conveyances which had been determined to be motor vehicles.)

QUESTION:

Is a Gator utility tractor a motor vehicle for purposes of governmental liability?

Answer according to the trial court:

Yes. The utility tractor is a motor vehicle.

Answer according to the court of appeals:

Yes. The utility tractor is a motor vehicle primarily because it was being used as a means of transportation. "It was transporting passengers from one location to another, just like a shuttle bus." Although the utility tractor was not designed for use on public roadways and cannot travel at speeds comparable to other vehicles, the court noted that it was being driven and operated in a way identical to that of a car, bus, or truck and not that of a piece of equipment. 

Yousif v City of Sterling Heights, No. 288302 (2009) (unpublished)

This column highlights a recent judicial decision or Michigan Municipal League Legal Defense Fund case that impacts municipalities. The information in this column should not be considered a legal opinion or to constitute legal advice.

Sue Jeffers is a legal consultant to the League. You may reach her at sjeffers@mml.org.

Capital Projects + Infrastructure

Construction Agreements + Litigation

Downtown/Economic Development

Elections

Environmental + Regulatory

LAW +

Hospitals + Housing

Intergovernmental Agreements

Labor + Employee Benefits

Local, State + Federal Tax

OMA/FOIA

Real Estate

Tax Increment Financing



THE LAW FIRM FOR MUNICIPALITIES

From innovative projects and municipal bonds to collaborative agreements and tax increment financing, cities and villages and their attorneys throughout Michigan rely on Miller Canfield's 160 year collective wisdom and diverse expertise. We are where you are. Local firm. Global resources.

**MILLER
CANFIELD**

millercanfield.com/PublicLaw

DETROIT • ANN ARBOR • TROY • LANSING • KALAMAZOO • GRAND RAPIDS • CHICAGO



A Public/Private Entrepreneurship Success Story



Growing Hope

By Teresa Gillotti and Amanda Edmonds

Like many communities in Michigan, Ypsilanti is working to build a new story. This small, dense, urban community is 15 miles from Detroit Metro airport, 10 miles from Ann Arbor, and home to Eastern Michigan University. Located within a stone's throw of the Willow Run factory, it is also home to at least two shuttered manufacturing plants. Historically, Ypsilanti was a blue-collar working town. But, like many Michigan communities, the dominance of the automotive industry as the economic center of a community is fading. Local health care systems and universities are the major employers. Since 2001, Ypsilanti lost close to 1,600 manufacturing jobs; considering the city's population at that time was 22,362, it represented 7 percent of the total population. Through the Michigan Municipal League's Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3) pilot project, Ypsilanti chose to pursue an entrepreneurship focus—further exploring how to nurture the seeds of entrepreneurship and move Ypsilanti into the new economy.

As part of the 21c3 pilot project, the city worked with the League and Michigan State University Extension (MSU-Extension) to assess existing entrepreneurial resources and efforts, identifying possible gaps. The Ypsilanti business community benefits from such institutional supports as the SPARK East business incubator, EMU College of Business Entrepreneurship program, Ypsilanti/Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce, and the Small Business Technology Development Center (SBTDC)—all located in Ypsilanti's Historic Downtown.

Sometimes a Supporting Role Is More Important Than the Lead

In 2009, Spur Studios popped up in Ypsilanti, providing affordable studio and work space to bands, graphic artists, painters, and others, without public funding. The city considered finding ways to further support arts entre-

preneurship, but felt an opportunity for this pilot project was to support the burgeoning agriculture/food business entrepreneurship that has been growing through the efforts of local, grassroots nonprofit Growing Hope.

A food- and garden-based nonprofit who founded and manages the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market (DYFM), supports local community and school gardens, educates young people about healthy food, and helps low-income families grow food at home in raised bed gardens. Growing Hope has been rooted in Ypsilanti since 2003. Growing Hope realized that the DYFM was not only a source for healthy food, but also a business incubator, and its vendors represent a socio-economically diverse mix of growers, bakers, crafters, and other food-based entrepreneurs, many of whom are very small in scale. By partnering with the city through the League's 21c3 program, and leveraging support through a grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), Growing Hope was able to expand its business development and marketing support for these vendors.



Ypsilanti has found, through necessity, that volunteer-driven services can be the answer to dwindling city resources. The city is no longer the leader—it acts as a facilitator and supportive partner.



Half of DYFM vendors make less than \$25,000 a year, and 80 percent make less than \$50,000 a year

Teaching Business Practices to Market Vendors

In 2010-2011, Growing Hope partnered with the SBTDC and MSU-Extension to facilitate 11 workshops for current and prospective market vendors. Topics were chosen based on feedback from an annual vendor survey. Workshops included Market Vendor 101, Writing a Business Plan Parts I and II, Business Finances and Accounting, Financing Your Business, Cottage Food Law, and Web Marketing and Social Media. Eighty-seven percent of participants agreed that the workshop allowed them to acquire practical skills and/or knowledge to manage their business more effectively and efficiently. At least three new businesses were launched by attendees in 2011, and many more expanded.

Vendor Directory

Funds from 21c3 were also used to create a vendor directory. The colorful, professional directory highlights growers, crafters, bakers, and other vendors, and provides an introduction between vendors and other businesses, in hopes that their (often very small) businesses would gain some further legitimacy in the eyes of new potential outlets, including small retail and larger distribution outlets. We distributed much of the first printing of the directory in July 2011 to the vendors themselves. For many who don't even have business cards, let alone brochures or other marketing materials, the directory provided them professional material to solicit additional business.

Further distribution to restaurants and retailers, as well as an annual directory update, are in the works for 2012. Other MEDC funds supported creating permanent signage for vendors—another way to help professionalize and legitimize vendors' small businesses—and producing pole banners to

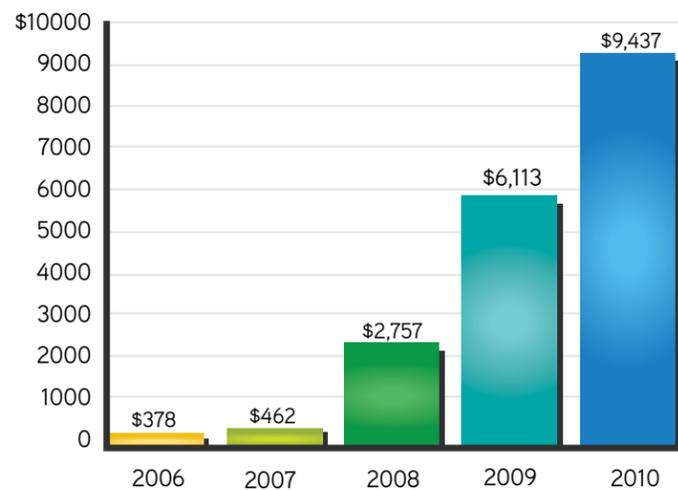
hang throughout Ypsilanti's downtown. They also supported an affordable tent and table rental service, which brings both income to sustain the market and removal of a barrier to market vendors by providing an affordable and easy means to begin vending at the DYFM.

Market Growers Cooperative Study

The 21c3 pilot project funds also supported a feasibility study for a Market Gardener Cooperative program, now known as Ypsilanti Growers Cooperative. This model provides new market opportunities for small-scale and part-time growers (mostly at the scale of home and community gardeners). Similar efforts in Flint and Detroit, as well as community input, helped shape the current effort. A core group of growers has been meeting to develop a co-op structure, membership guidelines, branding, and marketing as well as identify training needs. The new cooperative will be up and running in 2012. 21c3 funds paid for the study and key infrastructure including a wash/pack station, storage, supplies, etc., to support this new venture.

While the direct focus of the pilot project was on the vendor entrepreneurs, the results can also be seen in the overall viability of the market and its ability to provide healthy, affordable, local food to the residents of Ypsilanti. In 2011, market sales continued to grow—\$109,000 in total sales among all vendors (up from \$22,000 in the markets' first year in 2006). Sales with food assistance programs (EBT/SNAP/food stamps, Project FRESH, Double Up Food Bucks, et al) made up nearly 28 percent of total sales. And, 2011 saw record numbers of customers visiting the market, consistently bringing more than 800

Yearly Comparison of EBT Sales at the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market



The Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market was established in 2006 to increase healthy food access while helping to revitalize our downtown and support our local food and agricultural economy.

Nineteen percent of Ypsilanti residents participated in food assistance programs and 24 percent lived below poverty level compared to 11 percent and 13 percent, respectively, at the state level (U.S. Census 2006-08).

people into downtown Ypsilanti on any given Tuesday between May and October. That's the size of a festival, once a week.

Building on existing entrepreneurial activity, the seed money utilized through the 21c3 pilot project continues to grow as Growing Hope and its partners provide a variety of supports to the startup food-based entrepreneurs. Beyond individual successes, expanding and diversifying the farmers market, connecting vendors to larger markets, and providing vibrant events for the downtown—food business entrepreneurship is a sector that continues to flower in Ypsilanti. This grant opportunity solidified what these networks of engaged citizens could accomplish.

Ypsilanti has found, through necessity, that volunteer-driven services can be the answer to dwindling city resources. Both its parks and recreation function and the farmers market are powered through volunteers and nonprofit organizations with great success. The city's role is to enable these groups and support their endeavors. The city is no longer the leader—it acts as a facilitator and supportive partner. 



Teresa Gillotti is a planner for the city of Ypsilanti. You may reach her at 734-483-9646 or tgillotti@cityofypsilanti.com.



Amanda Edmonds is the executive director of Growing Hope. You may reach her at 734-330-7576 or amanda@growinghope.net.

About 21c3

The Michigan Municipal League identified eight essential assets that make communities vibrant places in the 21st century. Research shows that physical design & walkability, green initiatives, cultural economic development, entrepreneurship, multiculturalism, messaging & technology, transit, and education are essential to a community's livelihood.

Pilot Projects

Experts agree that investing in communities is one of the most critical elements of any long-term economic development strategy. We believe this is especially true in Michigan, and that "place" matters more than ever.

To prove it, we began our pilot project series. Five pilot communities—Alpena, Lapeer, Lathrup Village, Sault Ste. Marie, and Ypsilanti—have put theory into action to demonstrate the impact of these principals and their applicability regardless of size or location. Through their demonstration projects, communities across the state will better understand how to leverage a unique sense of place in a community to enhance quality of life and attract the people and businesses that will fuel the 21st century economy.

Legal counsel that helps local governments work effectively.



Our Local Government Law practice group works with local governments and public authorities to ensure the efficient and cost-effective delivery of vital public services. We provide specialized legal expertise in areas as diverse as zoning and land use planning, bond issues, special assessments, tax increment financing, DDA's and other public authorities, labor contracts and arbitration, employee benefits, elections, environmental regulation and many other matters affecting local governments. For more than 50 years, skilled Mika Meyers attorneys have helped public-sector entities meet the ever-increasing demands of their constituents and communities.



For more information on how our Local Government Law team can assist your community, visit mmbjlaw.com.

Mika Meyers Beckett & Jones PLC

900 Monroe Ave NW Grand Rapids, MI 49503
mmbjlaw.com 616-632-8000

Recreation Authorities:

Intergovernmental Option for Recreation in Michigan's New Economy

By Harry Burkholder

In past years, local governments have used a number of strategies to provide for and fund park and recreation services, including contracting with the private sector, applying for local, state, and federal grants, and mobilizing community volunteers. To obtain greater efficiencies, municipalities are working across jurisdictional boundaries to provide for and finance community parks and recreation. Parks and recreation facilities tend to serve people across large geographical areas and contribute to the community's overall sense of place. Additionally, recreation infrastructure extends well beyond municipal boundaries, especially for trail systems that often traverse multiple jurisdictions.

On the other hand, local governments are reluctant to give up autonomy in the management and development of parks and recreation facilities. Some local leaders may feel special ownership of the parks in which governments have invested. Such feelings can make it difficult to discuss shared control or joint operation options. Either way, inter-jurisdictional cooperation requires work.

Legal Tools and Levels of Cooperation

State enabling legislation (see chart on next page) allows local governments to work across jurisdictional boundaries to provide for park and recreation services. Two or more units can develop and adopt a joint recreation plan or establish a recreation authority, seek a millage, and oversee the development and operation of municipal recreation facilities. The unique provisions of various state statutes allow local governments to establish a cooperative arrangement that best fits the specific needs and desires of their community. Taking a non-legislative approach to cooperation, local jurisdictions can share equipment and services to provide for park maintenance and support recreational programs. Recreational authorities are the focus of this article.

Recreational Authorities Act: PA 321 of 2000

The Recreational Authority Act allows two or more villages, cities, townships, or counties to establish a recreation authority for the acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance, or improvement of one or more of the following:

- public swimming pool
- public recreation center
- public auditorium
- public conference center
- public park (see definition of "public park")
- public museum
- public historical farm

The Act also allows the Recreational Authority to acquire and hold real and personal property inside or outside the territory of the Authority through purchase, lease, land contract, installment contracts, bequest, and other means.

To establish a recreation authority, each of the participating municipalities must first prepare and adopt Articles of Incorporation—the formal document that is filed with the state.

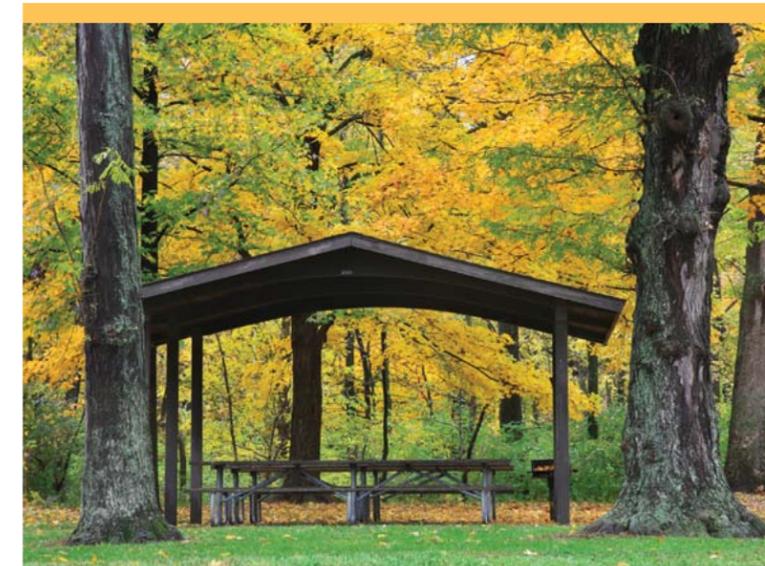
The Recreational Authorities Act provides a number of ways in which the Authority can be funded, including grants, fees, and revenue as appropriated by the Michigan Legislature or participating municipalities. The recreation authority may also borrow money and issue bonds to finance the acquisition, construction, and improvement of recreation facilities.

The Recreational Authority may also levy a tax of up to 1-mill for no more than 20 years. The Authority may levy the tax only upon the approval of a majority of the electors in each participating municipality, voting during a statewide or primary election.

To date, citizens have supported millages for six Recreational Authorities established under Act 321. Due to the current economic and political environment in many Michigan communities, most citizens believe it can be very difficult for a local entity to get a new millage approved. However, recent election trends demonstrate voters in many Michigan communities are willing to support and pay for important parks and recreation facilities. That said, it can be especially difficult for

a Recreational Authority under Act 321 to get a millage passed because it requires the approval of voters in each participating municipality.

In 2008, the Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority put forward a .20 millage proposal to improve the 48-mile Iron Ore Heritage Trail in the greater Marquette region. Unfortunately, the majority of voters in two of the ten participating jurisdictions disapproved, killing the millage. Despite overwhelming support in eight of the participating jurisdictions, the proposal was defeated in two of the least populated jurisdictions by a total of just 38 votes. In 2010, a reconstituted Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority was able to get a millage proposal adopted by each of the eight participating units of government. According to Carol Fulsher, the executive director of the Iron Ore Heritage Recreation Authority, the flexibility of the Recreational Authority Act "allowed us to re-create a multi-jurisdictional authority that was better equipped to secure millage funding for future trail developments. The Act allows other local jurisdictions to join us if their voters also approve the millage."



DEFINITION OF "PUBLIC PARK"

An area of land or water dedicated to one or more of the following uses:

1. **Recreational Purposes** – including, but not limited to: landscaped tracts, picnic grounds, playgrounds, athletic fields, camps, campgrounds, zoological and botanical gardens, living historical farms, boating, hunting, fishing and birding areas, swimming areas, and foot, bicycle and bridle paths.
2. **Open or scenic space.**
3. **Environmental, conservation, nature or wildlife areas.**

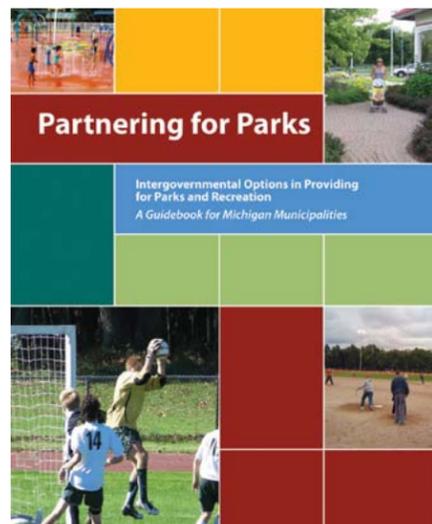
Michigan Enabling Legislation for Joint Provision of Recreation

ACT	TITLE	GOVERNMENT UNITS	GOVERNING BODY
PA 156 of 1917	Recreation and Playgrounds	Cities, Villages, Townships Counties and School Districts	Recreation Board
PA 312 of 1929	Metropolitan District Act	Cities, Villages, Townships, Counties and Parts Thereof	Charter Commission
PA 261 of 1965	County and Regional Parks	Counties	Parks and Recreation Commission
PA 292 of 1989	Metropolitan Councils Act	Cities, Counties, Villages, and Townships	Metropolitan Area Council
PA 451 of 1994 part 721	Michigan Trailways	Counties, Cities, Villages, and Townships	Michigan Trailway Management Council
PA 7 of 1967	Urban Cooperation Act	Counties, Cities, Villages, and Townships	Recreation Board

Recreation Authorities are just one of many intergovernmental arrangements for cooperation on parks and recreation services. The unique provisions of the various state statutes allow local governments to use what best fits the needs and desires of their communities.

Programming Limitations?

Act 321 of 2000 specifically allows local governments to collaborate in the provision of recreation facilities. Act 321 does not explicitly allow for the provision of recreational programming. However, a number of the current Recreational Authorities provide a wide range of recreational programs to their citizens. It appears Recreational Authorities are providing for recreational programming as part of facility "operation" as defined in the Act. We recommend consulting with a municipal attorney if there are any questions concerning Act 321 of 2000 and the provision of recreation programming.



This guidebook, a joint project by MRPA and LIAA, demonstrates to local governments the variety of ways to pool their resources and share the benefits of community-wide park and recreation services. It includes administrative tools, describes the legal tools for cooperation, and gives funding options and strategies.

Getting Started

Establishing a new inter-jurisdictional body capable of overseeing and financing a wide range of park and recreation services is not easy—it requires time, patience, and a strong commitment to work together. One question that often arises is, "Do we draft a plan and then create an inter-jurisdictional body?" or "Do we establish a body then draft a plan?" There is no right or wrong answer. However, completing a comprehensive community-wide planning process prior to establishing a formal inter-jurisdictional body provides local officials an opportunity to better define the mission of the collaborative and build trust. Local officials should review the following steps as they consider moving forward with joint planning activities.

Step One

Local officials from each municipality should meet to assess if they will be able to work together. During early discussions, local officials should consider previous collaborative experiences, staff requirements, available resources, and the potential cost of a comprehensive planning process and establish a basic understanding of the goals of the new inter-jurisdictional body.

Step Two

Once local officials have agreed they can work together, a steering committee should be appointed to oversee the development of a community-wide or directed recreation plan, evaluating options for collaboration, informing the community, and helping draft the inter-jurisdictional agreement.

CAPITAL CONFERENCE

The League is offering a three-hour education seminar: Recreation Authorities and Other Funding for Parks & Recreation on March 20. You will learn about the current environment of parks and recreation, state enabling legislation, and how to start a recreation authority in your area. See mml.org for details.

Step Three

The steering committee should agree upon the rules of engagement and discuss the potential goals of the new inter-jurisdictional body. When ready, the steering committee should take steps to initiate a community-wide planning process, assess the recreational needs and assets of the community, collect public input, and formulate the recreational goals of the community. The results of the community planning process are formally stated in a recreation plan that establishes a framework under which the inter-jurisdictional body can provide for community-wide parks and recreation.

The Michigan Recreation and Parks Association, private consulting firms, nonprofit organizations, and community foundations can assist municipalities with each of these steps.

Newaygo Community Recreation and Natural Resources Conservation Plan

In November 2004, the city of Newaygo and Brooks, Everett, and Garfield Townships adopted formal resolutions committing to the cooperative development of a joint recreation and natural resources conservation plan. Local leaders were concerned over the limited availability of recreation facilities throughout the Newaygo community. Previous planning efforts also revealed community-wide interest in new sports facilities (soccer and baseball), paved trails, and nature areas. In addition, local officials acknowledged the strong connection between natural resources, community identity, and quality of life. With a grant from the Partnerships for Change Program and the Fremont Area Community Foundation, the four municipalities agreed to develop the Newaygo Community Recreation and Natural Resources Conservation Plan.

The four jurisdictions determined that establishing a Recreation Authority would provide the most flexibility in which park updates, maintenance, improvements, development, negotiations, and programming could be administered and funded. Articles of Incorporation were adopted, thereby establishing the Newaygo Community Recreation Authority in May of 2006. Later that year, the Recreation Authority adopted the community-wide Recreation and Natural Resources Conservation Plan. The plan was submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for approval and certification, which made the authority eligible for state grant funding.

In June of 2007, Everett Township withdrew from the authority. Undaunted, the three remaining jurisdictions adopted revised Articles of Incorporation and pursued grant opportunities for park improvements and the development of

additional non-motorized trails. As a result, the Authority has leveraged over \$309,500 in additional grant funding to improve a number of facilities (e.g. tennis courts, swimming pond, soccer fields, and skate park) and the renovation of the lodge at the Winter Sports Park into a primary trail head.

Due to these positive developments, the Authority amended the plan to include: improved recreational facilities, greater access to nature-based recreation, and more effective programming for the citizens of the Newaygo community. In addition, neighboring Croton Township agreed to join the authority in 2011.

Conclusion

Community parks and recreation programs are extremely important public services, contributing to our quality of life as well as our attachment to a place. One of the most important and effective strategies for maintaining community parks and recreation services in this difficult economy is inter-jurisdictional cooperation. This gives local governments a wide variety of ways to pool their resources and share the benefits of community-wide park and recreation services. 

Harry Burkholder, AICP, is a community planner for the Land Information Access Association. You may reach him at 231-929-3696 or burkholder@liaa.org.



Beckett & Raeder
Landscape Architecture
Planning, Engineering &
Environmental Services

- Community Planning
- Parks & Recreation Master Plans
- Park Design Plans & Implementation
- Bike Trail & Design
- Civil Engineering
- Environmental & Ecological Services
- Grant Solicitation & Administration



Ann Arbor
734-663-2622


Petoskey
231.347.2523
www.bria2.com

Traverse City
231.933.8400

100 Years to Live

The city functions as facilitator between its best assets and its residents.

Northern Field Report By Caroline Weber Kennedy

Pause a moment and ask yourself, “What do I love most about my community?” “What do I love most about my other favorite places?” I live “up north,” so most of you would wager that what I love is the great outdoors, and you’d be right. I’m able to enjoy it daily because my city is the link between the necessities of my daily family life and daily fulfillment. Everything we need is close at hand, providing me with leisure time! And they’ve made leisure activities easy to access, too. In 2004, an alternative band topped the charts with a lyric: “When you only got 100 years to live.” This is my panic button. I’ve got places to go, things to do, and time flies—whether I’m having fun or not. I need the ability to accomplish what needs to be done and to enjoy life—daily.

So, Gladstone, Michigan, population 5,032 in the wild U.P. gives me the most bang for my buck when it comes to how I’m going to spend my 100 years. Whether my elected officials realize it or not, I moved here for location, parks, and recreation. And in these difficult economic times, this makes total sense—dollars and sense. According to Dr. John Crompton of Texas A&M University, parks can increase proximate property values by up to 15 percent.

Quality of Life Is the Currency I Value

Out my front door 100 feet straight ahead is the city boardwalk, extending along scenic Little Bay de Noc nearly from one end of town to the other. You can walk, run, bike, rollerblade, or skateboard it. It traverses wetlands supporting abundant wildlife—featuring morning birdsong, and evening frog concerts with an occasional loon on open mic night (like most places). Michigan’s adult obesity rate has increased 77 percent since 1995. However, access to places for physical activity has shown a 25.6 percent increase in the number of people exercising three or more days per week.

A few steps off the boardwalk and you’re on the beach. We jet ski and putter the pontoon to Escanaba or up the Whitefish River. More ambitious athletes kayak, paddleboard, wind- and ice-surf. But the point is, the city is the connection between my daily necessities and fulfillment. They provide and maintain the boardwalk, parking, beaches, boat launches, a yacht harbor, a fishing pier, ball fields, playground, skate park, and tubing and ski hill. The city functions as facilitator between its best assets and its residents. This is government at its best—using my tax dollars in a currency I love—improving my quality of life. And I am not alone; check successful recent millage campaigns for parks and recreation, (p. 12-15).

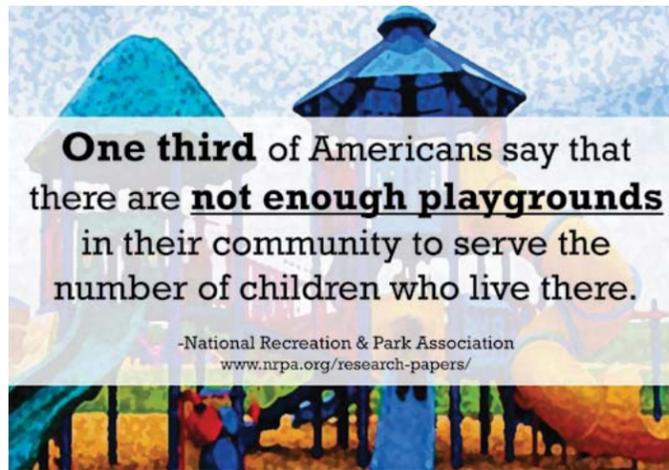
Host the Party

Paraphrasing Sean Stafford, assistant professor of Organizations and Strategy at University of Chicago School of Business, the role of government is not to be the life of the party, but to host the party. Stafford’s reference was to economic revitalization—bringing the right people together; helping make the right connections. This can be applied for every community asset. How do we capitalize on what we have? Park systems and recreation programs provide a wider range of benefits than we typically acknowledge. This city function is often the catalyst for greater things—utilizing small projects to institute big change. Parks, trail systems, recreation and events connect the other necessary pieces of our lives to make our days complete.



Above: Gladstone city ski hill has three tube runs, a lift, and a snowboard terrain park in addition to skiing.

Left: The scenic city boardwalk in Gladstone runs from nearly one end of Little Bay de Noc to the other.



Emotions = Economics

After my 6,205 days of captivity elsewhere, I moved back to this area because I had great memories. Research shows our brain's amygdala and hippocampus successfully encode emotional material for memory. If we have a great time somewhere, we'll remember and want to return. That's why events and community branding are so important—especially economically. I recall Fourth of July celebrations with lumberjack and log-rolling contests in the lagoon. It's this great combination of patriotism, heritage, skills, and fun. We came back again and again (spending money). The city is the

host, highlighting its history and heritage in its most enjoyable venue; creating a memorable experience by teaching and touching our emotions. Quality of life is key when we've only got 100 years to live. Decision makers statewide often under-value these commodities.

Kids Learn Healthy Lifestyles Through Recreation

My kids ride their bikes to our city rec programs and reach the skate park, fishing pier, and public beach the same way. They're learning competitive skills, teamwork, discipline, sportsmanship and confidence. They develop alternative interests to "hanging out" and are empowered to try new things. They're growing healthy and learning life lessons. And every community can do this—better connect their residents with their assets, bit by bit, and create events to promote them. We have even greater economic potential for downtown via running and biking events, a farmers market, and summer concert series—all run by the parks and rec department. Gladstone has an entire fascinating history that's linked to our rail yards, but we still need to tell the story. These are all commodities to be nurtured. They create emotional memories, and that's as good as money in the bank.

Caroline Weber Kennedy is manager of field operations for the League. You may contact her at 906-428-0100 or ckennedy@mml.org.



We can help you keep the doors open, improve service and save money

Get what you need when you need it

- Building department management and staffing
- Zoning and code enforcement
- Building plan review
- Economic development
- Program and grant administration, and more

Reduce overhead
Get specialists' *experience and knowledge*
Fill vacancies or supplement existing staff

 **CARLISLE/WORTMAN ASSOCIATES, Inc.**
Ann Arbor, Clarkston • www.cwaplan.com • 734-662-2200
contact: Doug Lewan • dlewan@cwaplan.com



SAFEbuilt ✓

YOU WANT YOUR COMMUNITY TO BE THE BEST.

SAFEbuilt does too.

Our local expertise, proven processes, and uncompromising service help streamline your building department – just as we've done for more than 120 communities nationwide – and that lets you capitalize on opportunities to make life better for your residents.

Together, we'll make good things happen here.
SAFEbuilt.com | 248.457.4532



The strength behind our clients.®

Municipal officials across Michigan say they appreciate Plunkett Cooney's fearless determination to achieve the right result whether in council chambers or the courtroom.

Since 1913, Plunkett Cooney has been recognized as a leader in municipal law with distinctive expertise in such areas as civil rights, collective bargaining, employment law, elected officials' liability, election law, police liability, Open Meetings Act and FOIA, and zoning/land use.

ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS AT LAW
Michael S. Bogren
Governmental Law Practice Group Leader
(269) 226-8822 • mbogren@plunkettcooney.com

PLUNKETT COONEY
DETERMINED. DISTINCTIVE. FEARLESS.™

BLOOMFIELD HILLS DETROIT EAST LANSING FLINT GRAND RAPIDS KALAMAZOO MARQUETTE MT. CLEMENS PETOSKEY



Increase Your Word-of-Mouth: Strategies to Market Local Events

By Rebecca Kotz

Are you looking for ways to boost the “buzz” and attendance of your community events in 2012? Fun local events such as “Chill on the Hill” and the “Taste of Downtown” endear citizens and vacationers to your community, and bring in dollars to your businesses and families to your neighborhoods. If your budget is tight this year, you may be squeezed for the resources to properly promote your local events and festivals. Before you risk weakening your community brand by cutting your marketing budget or cancelling your next event, reinvent your marketing plan and focus on “word-of-mouth” strategies.



Develop a Three-Stage Event Marketing Plan
Develop a marketing plan that encompasses all three stages of event marketing to create a cycle of awareness, anticipation, engagement, and re-engagement that increases attendance and further promotes your event for years to come.

Stage 1: Pre-Event Marketing
The purpose of the pre-event marketing is to build awareness, buzz, excitement, and anticipation prior to the event to increase positive word-of-mouth marketing and attendance. You can use tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, email campaigns, radio ads, newspaper advertising, and other media.

Stage 2: During Event Marketing
A positive event experience is greatly influenced by how attendees interact with each other during the event. Marketing during an event allows attendees (as well as non-attendees) to interact with each other and discuss what’s happening. You may be thinking “why should we market to people who aren’t attending?” It’s the best way to engage non-attendees in the fun they missed and show them why they want to attend next time! You can use text messaging, live Tweeting, Facebook, and other media.

Stage 3: Post-Event Marketing
Many event marketers think about pre-event marketing and plan to engage people during the event, but completely ignore

the possibilities of post-event marketing. The first few days and weeks after an event is a critical time to remind people about what they experienced and to re-engage them. You can create a Facebook photo contest, a Twitter eBook, Facebook “like” campaign, and other creative strategies.

Use Word-of-Mouth Strategies
To effectively execute a three-stage event marketing plan, creatively utilize the marketing tools and technologies that will best captivate your specific target audience. While each event and community is different, and your specific strategies may vary, here are six must-have social media and marketing tactics to encourage word-of-mouth and promote your next event:

1. **Design a comprehensive website or landing page dedicated** to this event that includes event information and activities, registration, video, Twitter stream, Facebook activity and more. Include social media sharing buttons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google, and more to encourage additional sharing.
2. **Post short, fun videos on YouTube** before an event to increase awareness and hype-up the event, during an event to showcase what’s happening as it happens, and after an event to show highlights or reengage with a thank-you message to attendees, volunteers and sponsors.



3. **Use a Twitter hashtag** for your event and promote it in all your online and print marketing. Ask sponsors, volunteers, and attendees to use the event hashtag in their tweets when promoting and discussing the event. Pull these tweets to display on your website or landing page. Then print posters with the hashtag to display during the event to encourage attendees to tweet about the event throughout. If possible, broadcast or display those tweets in real-time for attendees to read at the event.



Develop a marketing plan that encompasses all three stages of event marketing to create a cycle of awareness, anticipation, engagement, and re-engagement that increases attendance and further promotes your event for years to come.

4. **Promote on Facebook** with a Facebook Event and Facebook Advertising that targets your specific demographics for location, age, gender, interests, etc. (If your event is large enough, also create a separate Facebook Page just for the event.) Encourage participation such as posting comments, photos, videos, and questions on the Facebook event page. Be creative with your Facebook Advertising to encourage "likes" which will help increase your reach.

5. **Publish a blog for the event** and invite sponsors, volunteers, and others to create blog posts. Encourage attendees and the community to read and actively comment on the blog posts.



6. **Create a QR Code** that when scanned (on an iPhone, Android phone, or other smartphone), your website, landing page, or an event page appears. Include this QR code in all print marketing and advertising, including posters displayed in the storefronts of local businesses. There are numerous websites that provide QR codes for free or at a monthly rate, depending on what you need to do with it. A few sources include Kaywa, Google, Qurify, Delivr, and numerous others. To scan on your phone, download apps such as RedLaser, ScanLife, Barcode

Scanner, Shop Savvy or i-Nigma. To try scanning a QR code, if you scan the one in this article you'll be directed to a page on our website with a special discount.

Event Marketing: YMCA Camp Copneconic

YMCA Camp Copneconic in Fenton, Michigan has numerous camps throughout the year, but focuses mainly on their summer camps. In 2011, GEMS Solutions provided event marketing services to help build their attendance for their "open houses" and therefore increase registration for their summer camps. To learn about what we did, visit www.gems-solutions.com/resources.

For more ideas, download our free electronic book *Event Marketing Through Social Media, the Web, and Beyond* at gems-solutions.com/resources. GEMS Solutions LLC is a Michigan website design, social media, and marketing company. Our philosophy "empowering you to harness the power of the web" is based on our belief that marketing must focus on driving web traffic, capturing leads, and increasing results. To learn more about GEMS Solutions and request a marketing consultation at a special discount rate exclusive to League members, go to gems-solutions.com/municipal or scan the QR code on your smartphone. 

Rebecca Kotz is president of GEMS Solutions, LLC. You may contact her at 810-820-0740 or rkotz@gems-solutions.com.

Trusted professionals
delivering America's
infrastructure solutions





WADE TRIM

Engineering | Landscape Architecture
Operations | Planning | Sciences | Surveying

800.482.2864 • www.wadetrim.com

How does a software company go from 0% to 97% market share? By doing things right.

The majority of municipalities in Michigan are running BS&A applications. Included in this are nearly 450 financial management and over 450 community development installations...more than any other software provider in the state. Michigan communities have learned our industry leading applications provide affordable and innovative solutions backed by unmatched service and support.

Financial Management Suite
Community Development Suite
Assessing & Property Tax Suite

Service, Support, Solutions...Satisfaction



BS&A

SOFTWARE

(855) BSA-SOFT www.bsasoftware.com

Affiliate Spotlight

MAMA

**Michigan
Association
of Municipal
Attorneys**

The Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys (MAMA) is a specialized organization that provides a variety of services for municipal attorneys practicing in Michigan. Since its inception, MAMA has provided educational programs and information sharing designed for attorneys in public and private practice who counsel Michigan's local communities. In 2010, the Academy of Municipal Attorneys was established for those who want to attain and be recognized for the highest level of accomplishment in municipal law.

Member services include the MAMA Listserv, which is a great networking and research tool, the Municipal Legal Briefs, and regularly scheduled educational seminars.

Academy of Municipal Attorneys (AMA)

Participation in the AMA involves both an educational component and a practice component to achieve the purposes of the program. The educational component seeks to train and educate the applicant in not only the basic elements of municipal law, but also to encourage academic and scholarly excellence in municipal law. The practice component seeks to recognize the implementation of the academic component by applying the academic program to effective and competent legal practice. In addition, membership in the AMA seeks to encourage opportunities for dialogue, friendship, and fellowship with social opportunities to promote the academy.

Listserv

The listserv is an email-based discussion forum that facilitates communication among Michigan municipal attorneys. The e-group is designed to improve communication among members, offer a forum for exchanging ideas, and allow municipal attorneys to benefit from the experience, knowledge, and wisdom of their peers. To maximize its value to Michigan's municipal attorneys, participation is restricted to members of MAMA.

Legal Briefs

The Municipal Legal Briefs is a newsletter published by the League in partnership with the MAMA. It is published quarterly as a benefit to MAMA members. The Briefs contain articles of interest to municipal attorneys as well as summaries of cases affecting Michigan municipal law and local units of government. The core summaries are provided by

Kester So, a partner in the Lansing office of Dickinson Wright. Non-members may purchase subscriptions to the Legal Briefs.

The League's Legal Defense Fund

The MML Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is an advocacy program for Michigan's local governments in the courtrooms. MAMA assists the Defense Fund, as the MAMA board of directors serves as members of the LDF board, along with the League president and executive director/CEO. It provides support and assistance to municipalities, and their attorneys, in court cases where the issues have a broad impact on both the municipality involved in the case, and on other municipalities in the state. League General Counsel William Mathewson is the LDF administrator. 

For more information, go to mama-online.org/, or contact William Mathewson, MAMA secretary/treasurer at 734-662-3246.



Don Schmidt and Bill Beach, of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, are both longtime MAMA members and League presenters.



MAMA President Randall Brown, Portage City Attorney

Upcoming Events

March 20, 2012

26th Annual Advanced Institute, Lansing Center, Lansing

June 22-23, 2012

14th Annual MAMA-PCLS Summer Educational Conference, Boyne Highlands, Boyne Falls

By Mark Ouimet

Giving Local Governments the Tools They Need to be Successful

As chair of the House Local, Governmental and Regional Affairs Committee, one of my main priorities at the Capitol is to give local governments the tools they need in order to be successful.

But here's the challenge: Michigan's local governments are facing the same budget difficulties the state has been experiencing. Retirement costs for employees, declining property tax revenues, and population loss are making it difficult for all governments.

I want everyone in the Michigan Municipal League family to know that we're doing everything we can, both in the committee and the House, to partner with cities to help them manage the immense challenges they face. We'd also like to present our cities with new opportunities for growth.

Consolidating Services

One issue that has been on our docket over the last year is urban cooperation. A set of bills that passed through the committee promotes consolidating or sharing services. We all know that employee wage and benefit protections limited Michigan locals from consolidating services. We removed these obstacles, and our Urban Cooperation

Package, which is now law, is making it more financially attractive for local entities to work together.

Many Michigan municipalities have saved costs by consolidating services. For example, the range of emergency dispatch centers used to overlap, but now they can become highly efficient partnerships. Smaller townships with their own fire departments used to have to purchase expensive ladder trucks designed to serve small and medium-sized cities, but now they can split the cost with their neighbors without service interruptions. These are common-sense changes that help people work together and save taxpayer money. We need more of this in Michigan.

PA 312 Reform

The House also tackled reforms to PA 312 last year. PA 312 put too much power in the hands of an arbitrator who may or may not have considered what the municipality could afford. Our reform, PA 116 of 2011, puts the interests of the resident back at the forefront of these important negotiations.

As costs continue to skyrocket, local governments need every available option to stay fiscally sound and keep essential services, such as public safety,

available. Our first responders are still allowed to collectively bargain like all other public employees, including teachers, under the new law passed last year.

Our local municipalities were facing an impossible choice—either lay off police and firefighters or increase taxes on struggling Michigan families. Making these changes to PA 312 was the right thing to do.

In 2012, we'll continue to look at ways to give local governments the tools necessary to be more successful. As

with the 2011 legislative session, I'll seek bipartisan solutions to our challenges. Having been in the minority party during my entire tenure at the local level, I make sure to always allow debate and input from both sides of the aisle and will continue to do so this year. We need all hands on deck to solve our state's challenges, and that means bringing every-one to the table.

Personal Property Tax Reform

Many of you have heard the Legislature may consider personal property tax reforms this year. It has always been my intention to find some type of replacement revenue if, in fact, the Legislature votes to reform the personal property tax. This is a huge issue for Michigan local governments and I will continue to seek input from my local elected officials if this issue moves through the legislative process.

Our first priority is to make Michigan more conducive for job creation. To help in this process, we must end the double

taxation of local job creators. Michigan should never punish small businesses for making long-term investments in our communities.

I'll work to make sure local governments are not undermined in any way. If PPT reforms take place, we will make them in a way that works for everyone.

In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any thoughts as we enter the 2012 legislative session. As a former city councilmember and county commissioner, I know the struggles local municipalities face and am always willing to work together with all stakeholders to find creative solutions. 

Rep. Mark Ouimet, R-Scio Township served as a member of the Ann Arbor City Council from 1988-1992 and was a member of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners from 2004-2010. He can be reached toll free at 855-627-5052 (855-MARK052) or markouimet@house.mi.gov.



We need all hands on deck to solve our state's challenges, and that means bringing every-one to the table.



all things WIRELESS
cell tower regulation, leasing, buyouts, management
exclusively municipal

MUNICIPAL WIRELESS INFORMATION REVIEW AND EXPERTISE

MCKenna ASSOCIATES


Northville, MI • Kalamazoo, MI
888-226-4326 www.mcka.com



You expect your plumber to know how to fix a leak.

Don't expect your residents to settle for less than the best either. Attend a League training session. Go to mml.org for details.



Municipal Marketplace

**Your Community . . .
Our Passion**

- Grant Writing
- Streetscape
- Infrastructure
- Transportation
- Facility Planning & Architecture
- Recreational Planning
- Downtown Development

1.800.494.5202
www.fveng.com

**FLEIS & VANDENBRINK
ENGINEERING, INC.**

Engineers • Surveyors • Planners • Landscape Architects

- Water
- Wastewater
- Storm Water
- Inspection
- Infrastructure
- Roads
- Surveying
- Wetland and Water Resources
- Landscape Architecture
- Municipal / Public Facilities
- Construction Engineering
- Site Plan Reviews

Solutions for Your Community

Rochester Hills 248/852-3100 Detroit 313/962-4442 Macomb County 586/781-8950

GWE
Giffels-Webster
ENGINEERS

www.giffelswebster.com

HRC
HUBBELL, ROTH & CLARK, INC.
Consulting Engineers
TRUSTED ENGINEERS, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTISTS, ARCHITECTS

A Tradition of Personal Service & Successful Projects
Established in 1915

Engineering. Environment. Excellence. (248) 454-6300
www.hrc-engr.com

Architects. Engineers. Planners.

OHM
Advancing Communities

Advancing Communities
Through Place Making

BIRD HOUK
A DIVISION OF OHM

888.522.6711 | ohm-advisors.com

Dealing with testing requirements can hold up your projects and distract you from the big picture.

Let P&N make your job easier by taking care of the details. We've been doing analytical testing since 1974, and you can count on us for high quality, well-documented, scientifically-sound data.

Prein&Newhof
www.preinnewhof.com (616) 364-7000

SPALDING DEDECKER ASSOCIATES, INC.
AND
DBA DIETRICH, BAILEY AND ASSOCIATES, PC

Engineering Consultants Infrastructure
Land Development
Surveying
Landscape Architecture

Rochester Hills (800) 598-1600
Plymouth
Detroit www.sda-eng.com

Spicer group
ENGINEERS SURVEYORS PLANNERS

CONSTRUCTION SERVICES
COMMUNITY PLANNING
GIS
GRANT WRITING
MUNICIPAL ENGINEERING
ROADWAYS & PAVEMENT
SITE DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING
SURVEY
WASTEWATER
WATER
WATER RESOURCES

www.SPICERGROUP.COM ~ (800) 833-0062

Tt TETRA TECH SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Water • Wastewater • CSO / SSO
Rate Studies • Energy Management
Watershed Management
Environmental Services
Roads and Bridges

Ann Arbor - 734.665.8000
Brighton - 810.220.2112
Detroit - 313.954.0750
Lansing - 517.394.7900
Port Huron - 810.956.9300
www.tetratech.com

complex world CLEAR SOLUTIONS™

Practical Solutions Based on Common Sense

Water & Wastewater Design ■ Wetland Management & Mitigation
 Municipal Engineering ■
 Master Plans ■ Roadway & Bridge Design ■
 Construction Observation ■ Architectural Design ■
 Surveying ■

WIGHTMAN & ASSOCIATES, INC.
 ENGINEERING • SURVEYING • ARCHITECTURE

2303 Pipestone Road Phone: 269.927.0100
 Benton Harbor, MI 49022 Toll Free: 877.927.0109
 www.wightman-assoc.com Fax: 269.927.1300

Environmental Consultants

United Water

Water & Wastewater Operation and Maintenance Services

For more information, visit unitedwater.com or call 616-940-2405.

Financial Services

EXPERTISE YOU CAN COUNT ON. SOLUTIONS YOU CAN TRUST.

Since 1924, we've served the unique financial, operational, technology and real estate needs of our governmental clients. We have the experience, expertise, and independence to help you assess your current situation and chart a course for the future.

plante moran
 CPAs / Business Advisors
THRIVE.
plantemoran.com

Liner Services

Martindale Liner Services, Inc.
 Your One Stop Liner Source

Installation and Repair of HDPE, PVC, PPE, etc.
 Wastewater Treatment

PO Box 2002, Kalkaska, MI 49646 - 231.384.5119 fax 231.258.4782 - mlsincorporated@gmail.com

Planning & Zoning

Cynthia E. Winland, AICP, PCP

planning zoning

P.O. Box 1184
 midland, mi 48641
 989.839.2031
 fax 989.839.4995
 c.winland@crescentplanning.com
 www.crescentplanning.com

LSL Planning, Inc.

Master Plans
 Zoning Ordinances
 Form-Based Codes
 Downtown Strategies
 Economic Development
 Planning Commission Staffing
 Access Management
 Complete Streets

Grand Rapids
 Royal Oak
 Indianapolis
 Atlanta

www.LSLPlanning.com
 248.586.0505

Community Planning and Design

Economic Development
 Landscape Architecture
 Public Participation
 Wireless Services
 Urban Design
 Public Relations
 Zoning Administration
 Downtown Revitalization
 Zoning & Form-Based Codes
 Building Department Administration

McKenna ASSOCIATES

NORTHVILLE • KALAMAZOO • www.mcka.com • 888.226.4326

Williams & Works
 engineers . planners . surveyors

a tradition of service

616.224.1500 Phone
 800.224.1590 Toll Free

www.williams-works.com

Retirement

MERS
 Municipal Employees' Retirement System

Let **MERS of Michigan** point the way to **simple, smart, retirement solutions**

www.mersofmich.com • 517.703.9030 • 800.767.2308

The Review readership is over 30,000. For less than \$70 per issue tell our readers who you are by placing your ad here!

Details at www.mml.org/marketingkit/

Architects

Architects. Engineers. Planners.

OHM
 Advancing Communities

Advancing Communities Through Place Making

888.522.6711 | ohm-advisors.com

Attorneys

FOSTER SWIFT
 FOSTER SWIFT COLLINS & SMITH, P.C. ATTORNEYS

Providing comprehensive legal services for municipalities across Michigan.

- Annexation
- Environmental
- Eminent Domain/Condemnation
- FOIA & OMA
- Labor & Employment Relations
- Library Law
- Litigation & Appeals
- Ordinance Drafting & Enforcement
- Police & Fire/Public Safety
- Public Works
- Public Finance/Bonds
- Tax Appeals
- Zoning & Land Use

HOW CAN WE ASSIST?
 Contact: Ronald Richards Jr.
 P: 517.371.8154
 E: rrichards@fosterswift.com

LANSING | FARMINGTON HILLS | GRAND RAPIDS | DETROIT | MARQUETTE | HOLLAND

Meeting All of Your Legal Needs

- Bankruptcy
- Estate Planning
- Municipal Law
- Real Estate Law
- Business Law
- Family Law
- Litigation
- Probate

248.869.0030

GEP & S
 GROTH ELOWSKY KELLEY PAWLAK & SEGLUND, PLC
 28345 Beck Road, Suite 306, Wixom, MI 48393
www.michlaw.biz

THE LAW OFFICES OF
SHIFMAN & CARLSON, P.C.

Representing Cities and School Districts for over 40 years.

Experienced in:
 General Counsel Services
 Bonds and Finance
 Discrimination
 Special Education Issues
 Elections
 Construction
 Employee Relations

Location:
 31700 Middlebelt Road, Suite 126
 Farmington Hills, MI 48334
 Just north of Northwestern Highway on Middlebelt.

www.shifmancarlsonlaw.com | 800-799-8851 | 248-406-0620

Benefits

MERS
 Municipal Employees' Retirement System

Let **MERS of Michigan** point the way to **simple, smart, retirement solutions**

www.mersofmich.com • 517.703.9030 • 800.767.2308

Engineers & Engineering

ABONMARCHE
 Confidence By Design

Engineering ♦ Architecture ♦ Marina/Waterfront
 Surveying ♦ Landscape Architecture ♦ Planning

Benton Harbor, MI 49022 Phone: 269.927.2295
 Manistee, MI 49660 T: 231.723.1198
www.abonmarche.com

ANDERSON, ECKSTEIN AND WESTRICK, INC.
 Civil Engineers • Surveyors • Architects

Engineering Strong Communities

www.aewinc.com
 51301 Schoenherr Road • Shelby Township • Michigan 48315 • (586) 726-1234

CECO

Riverview, Michigan
 Phone (734) 285-7510
 Fax (734) 285-7572
www.charlesraines.com

C. E. RAINES COMPANY
 Civil Engineers/Land Surveyors
 43 Years of Municipal Service

ftch fishbeck, thompson, carr & huber
 engineers • scientists • architects • constructors

1-800-456-3824 www.ftch.com

innovation and excellence in everything we do

Williams & Works
 engineers . planners . surveyors

a tradition of service

www.williams-works.com

616.224.1500 Phone
 800.224.1590 Toll Free

Events and Seasonal Employees

Q: We have employees who only work during the summer. Do we qualify as a seasonal employer?

A: Experts with the League's Unemployment Compensation Fund provided an answer to this and the following question.

The law recently changed in regard to being designated as a seasonal employer. Previously, the industry in which the employer operated had to be seasonal to qualify. However, this is no longer a requirement. You should complete an "Application for Designation as Seasonal Employer" not less than 20 days before the beginning of your season with the state of Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs: michigan.gov/documents/uia_UC1155_76087_7.pdf.

You must also post a notice to workers at the time of application that you have applied for seasonal designation; post a notice to workers once the seasonal designation has been granted with the beginning and ending dates of the season; that benefits may be paid if the work for next season does not become available, and notify a worker in writing at the time of hire that they are a seasonal employee. Finally, you must also provide "reasonable assurance" that the employee will return to work in the next season.

Members of the League's Unemployment Fund should address issues such as this to the third-party administrator TALX Corporation. Contact Mike Pennanen at 800-510-6160 x2950 or mpennanen@talx.com.

Q: The state recently changed the taxable wage base from \$9,000 to \$9,500. Does this change apply to members of the Unemployment Fund as well?

A: Yes, all members should start using \$9,500 as the taxable wage to calculate their contribution payments starting with the first quarter of 2012.

Q: When we hold special events, there is a drain on tax-supported services such as police and DPW. How do other communities address this?

A: Experts with the League's Property & Liability Pool provided an answer to this and the following question. To partially address the problem, consider adopting a special events policy and/or ordinance. The League can send samples from other communities. Sometimes a permit or license is required and a fee is charged. The permit application can require the applicant's plans for police and fire protection, health and sanitation facilities, parking facilities, and electricity needs. Permits from other agencies, i.e. health department, may be required. Proof of insurance coverage is usually

required. At least one special events ordinance in our files requires the applicant to reimburse the city any costs incurred by the city as a result of the event, unless waived by the city council.

Q: A community group asked to hold an event at city hall. Are there 'best practices' we should be aware of?

A: Municipalities can effectively manage the use of their facilities with a written agreement or contract. No single form will meet every need, but all contracts or agreements should contain:

- Date(s) and time(s) of the event
- Location(s) of the event
- Exact premises involved
- Name(s) of the individuals/groups involved
- The exact reason for the agreement
(in this case, rental of a municipal facility)
- Compensation and/or consideration
- Hold harmless/indemnity language
- Signatures of all parties involved.

Municipalities should seek legal counsel when developing such agreements or contracts, and before entering a rental agreement, may wish to require the individual/group renting the facility to provide evidence of insurance. In addition, the municipality should consider having groups/individuals renting municipal facilities sign documents that address:

1. Clean up instructions and responsibilities.
2. Pick up and return of municipal keys.
3. Forfeiture of deposit if the individual/group does not meet all conditions.
4. Permanent or temporary alterations to municipal facilities.

Q: Can we make a donation to our local Little League team?

A: It is quite difficult to meet the standard of "public purpose" for this expenditure. The Michigan Supreme Court has held that an improper "lending of credit" occurs when a municipality gives something of value without getting something of specific value in return.

See the League's One-Pager Plus Fact Sheet on municipal expenditures at mml.org.

The Information & Policy Research Department provides member officials with research assistance on a vast array of municipal topics. Send your municipal inquiries to info@mml.org, or call our information department at 1-800-653-2483.

Your community can purchase a brand new NFPA-1901 compliant Class A firefighting engine for under \$240,000.00



The days of unlimited funds for fire apparatus purchases are gone. Be budget wise and consider the SilverFox® for a tremendous value at an affordable price.

No more basic is a fire engine than a tool box with a box of water inside that is capable of delivering fire fighters to put the wet stuff on the red stuff. Why is your department spending 350,000 to 400,000 dollars to purchase an engine?

Contact Joe Merrill today and find out the rest of the story.

888-526-2922

www.firetrucks.com

Celebrating the

2011 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARD Finalists



Vassar

The community of Vassar, the Cork Pine City, became a city on September 28, 1944, and has a rich history of logging on the Cass River, which flows through the city's historic downtown. When traveling through Vassar along the M-15 Heritage Route, the hill, which is lined with petunias in the spring and summer, has become an identifiable landmark for the community. In October of 1994, the M-15 hill gave way for the first Pumpkin Roll. Thousands of people, both young and old, continue to come to Vassar each year in October to roll pumpkins down the hill for a chance at winning a prize.

In 2011, another community event vision became a reality—incorporating the use of the hill into a new winter event. Chill on the Hill was born, allowing community members and visitors a great day of sledding on M-15. Community organizations, volunteers, and businesses came together to solidify plans to engineer one great

snow hill for a fun-filled, memorable day of sledding for kids of all ages. Snow was collected from city streets, then stored and piled for use in creating a grand snow hill. Our very first Chill on the Hill was a success, with thousands of individuals sliding down the hill!

The 2nd Annual Chill on the Hill was scheduled for February 4. Due to the fickleness of Mother Nature, the event had to be canceled. The city had planned to improve the snow hill (making it faster), use commercial grade tubes, and erect a larger warming tent. The one-time charge for sliding down the hill was to be only \$1.00, the same as last year, allowing everyone to

join in the fun. Plans also included accommodations for our younger participants with the creation of a bunny hill and activities for the little ones, such as a snowman building contest. Next year's event will be bigger and better.



Vassar,
pop. 2,697

The use of the hill on M-15 Heritage Route in Vassar for these public events has enabled the community to turn the highway that runs through its downtown into an asset.

Come visit Vassar and enjoy its family-oriented atmosphere, friendly people, and community pride. Check them out at www.cityofvassar.org/. 