



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY NEWS

First Quarter 2017

1/2% County Sales Tax Effective January 1, 2017

By Tom Wegner, County Board Chairman and Adam Payne, County Administrator

Our transportation infrastructure is aging, and due to escalating costs and limited resources, the State, County and all local units of government are struggling to adequately maintain our roads and bridges. Most people understand that borrowing significantly more is not fiscally responsible. If we don't have the collective strength to take action, our transportation system will continue to get worse, and there will be far greater costs down the road.

We were not enthusiastic about supporting a new tax. However, the County Board strongly supports working together to problem-solve, and this revenue is needed in order to address our growing transportation needs and be fiscally responsible.

On July 19, 2016 the County Board enacted a one-half percent county sales tax to support our transportation infrastructure needs and accomplish the following objectives:

- Establish a dedicated funding source to maintain county roads and bridges to accomplish a minimum of 30 miles of County road work annually.
- Share \$1.5 million with local municipalities based on their respective equalized value. Each municipality must spend the funding on additional road maintenance and their allocation will grow on a percentage basis going forward as the annual sales tax revenue increases.
- Significantly reduce borrowing to maintain roads and bridges.
- Provide direct property tax levy relief through reduced debt service.

Maintaining our transportation system is a key community investment, and essential for economic development, employment and our quality of life. We have a collective responsibility to take care of it. Passing the buck to future generations is wrong, fiscally irresponsible, and not the kind of legacy we want to be a part of.

The Heads of Local Government, which is comprised of the chief elected official of each of our 28 municipalities, fully understands the transportation system problem we face, and voiced their support for the proposal. In addition, the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors, which is comprised of many of our communities largest employers, also voted in support of the county's transportation proposal. Like most people, they don't like taxes, but they recognize and appreciate that we needed to establish a dedicated funding source in order to maintain our transportation system.

Article continues on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE...

- 1 1/2% County Sales Tax
- 2 Sales Tax Continued
- 2 Sheboygan County Awarded Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- 3 Upgrades to the Sheboygan County Marsh
- 4 Sheboygan County Marsh continued
- 5 New District Attorney
- 5 County Employees Give Back
- 6 GHT Scholarship Winner

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www.sheboygancounty.com

For more information contact Alayne Bosman, Newsletter Editor

County Sales Tax *(continued from page 1)*

As you can imagine, we received both positive and negative feedback about our proposal, and the following were some commonly asked questions:

WHY CAN'T YOU CUT MORE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO COVER THE GROWING TRANSPORTATION COSTS?

Over the past decade, Sheboygan County has streamlined and consolidated a number of services and departments. On average, the property tax levy has increased less than 1% per year. Our staffing levels have been reduced by 38%, from 1,349 to 835, and our total payroll is less today than it was in 2005. Sheboygan County has a strong fiscal track record, and has been recognized for its responsive and cost-effective operations.

It will cost approximately \$11 million per year to keep up with our transportation system needs. If you exclude law enforcement, health and human services and our transportation departments, all of which we are experiencing demands for more service, and completely eliminated all of the remaining departments, that would equate to less than half the funding that is needed to maintain our roads and bridges. In addition, no one has suggested a specific service to cut or eliminate.

WHY NOT RAISE PROPERTY TAXES INSTEAD?

State legislators have imposed property tax caps on local units of government. Surveys have shown that property taxes are the most unpopular form of taxation. Significantly raising property taxes to cover our transportation needs would be contrary to constituent feedback, state law, and the County Board's impressive fiscal track record.

WHY THE ½% COUNTY SALES TAX?

The State provided the one-half percent county sales tax option decades ago to help alleviate the pressure on property taxpayers.

HOW MANY OTHER COUNTIES HAVE IMPLEMENTED A COUNTY SALES TAX?

62 of 72 counties have already implemented a county sales tax. We are now the 63rd.

WILL ALL OF THE ½% COUNTY SALES TAX BE USED TO MAINTAIN OUR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM?

Yes

HOW WILL REVENUE BE SHARED WITH LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES?

A cooperative agreement has been established with each municipality to assure the funds are utilized for road and bridge maintenance. The county sales tax revenue will be shared based on the municipality's respective equalized value, so it is objective and fair. As each municipality's housing grows and/or they attract more economic development, their equalized value will increase and so too will their share of the sales tax revenue. If the cooperative agreement is not followed, or the municipality does not want the revenue, those dollars will be reallocated for other transportation needs.

DO ANY OTHER COUNTIES SHARE COUNTY SALES TAX REVENUE WITH LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT?

No.

HOW DOES THE COUNTY SALES TAX GET COLLECTED?

In brief, if you are paying, or a retailer collecting, the 5% state sales tax, it is now 5.5%. The sales tax revenue is forwarded to the state, and the ½% county sales tax portion is subsequently returned to the county.

By implementing the one-half percent county sales tax, the County Board has addressed a growing problem, and we are now far better positioned to responsibly maintain our transportation system going forward. We will also assist municipalities with their transportation needs, reduce borrowing, reduce debt service, and provide property tax relief. Our compliments to the County Board and community leaders for their thoughtful problem-solving and support.

Sheboygan County Awarded Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting

By Adam Payne, County Administrator

The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting has been awarded to Sheboygan County by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its comprehensive annual financial report for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2015. The GFOA Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of government accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management team.

This award program was established to encourage and assist state and local governments to go above and beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles and prepare annual financial reports that demonstrate the spirit of transparency and full disclosure. Reports submitted for consideration are reviewed by selected members of the GFOA professional staff and the GFOA Special Review Committee including individuals with expertise in public sector financial reporting such as financial statement preparers, independent auditors, academics, and other finance professionals.

Sheboygan County's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report represents the culmination of all budgeting and accounting activities engaged in by the Sheboygan County management team throughout the year 2015, covering all funds of the County. Sheboygan County has a strong management team in place, and I commend the Finance Department for their leadership in preparing the financial reports and assuring transparency and full disclosure to the citizens of Sheboygan County.

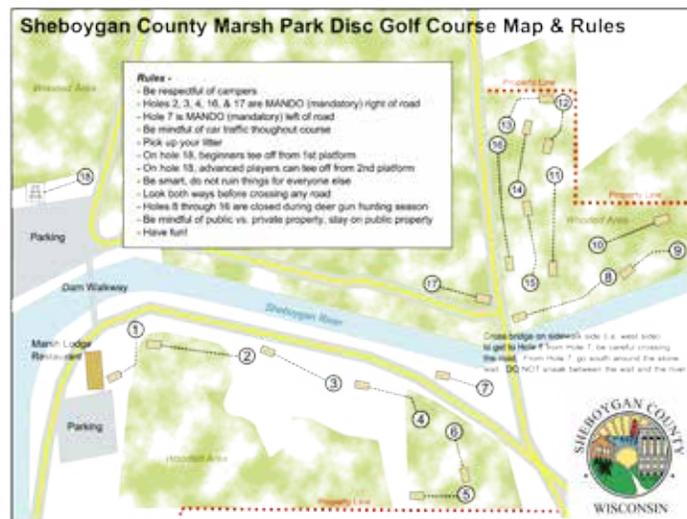
This is the third consecutive year that Sheboygan County has received this prestigious recognition. As Finance Committee Chairman Greg Weggeman said, "Most counties don't qualify for a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. This award is a credit to our staff, management and County Board teamwork and a culture of continuous improvement."

Upgrades to the Sheboygan Marsh Park

By Aaron Brault, Planning & Conservation Director

This past year saw a number of exciting projects move forward at the Broughton Sheboygan County Marsh. Two of these projects were in response to one of the biggest complaints we typically receive from visitors to the Marsh, and that is, once you climb the tower a few times and cast a line in the water, there is not much for the campers to do ... especially for the children.

I'm pleased to share the County's first **foot golf course**, was installed this summer. Foot golf is a rapidly growing activity in the US and is essentially played in a similar fashion as regular golf though players use a soccer ball and their feet to advance to the hole. It was simple to install, the cost was negligible, long-term maintenance costs are slim, and it is a great activity for the entire family. To cap that project off, we were able to coordinate with an Eagle Scout candidate to design and construct the kiosk that houses the course layout and rules signage. That scout was none other than Transportation Department employee Dean Mertes' son Joseph. Joseph did a wonderful job and his project will likely be copied by another Eagle Scout candidate for an additional kiosk at the Marsh that will house the signage for the second project that was completed, an 18-hole disc golf course.



The **disc golf course**, completed in October, runs through a different area of the property than the foot golf course. The disc course, designed and constructed with the help of the Sheboygan Eagles local disc golf club, is not a very long course, but can prove quite challenging. The longer holes tend to be in open areas and the short holes tend to be in wooded areas with very tight site lines and in some cases, varied terrain. Sheboygan County can boast in the disc golf world that it has the only tee shot from an observation tower in the State...at least, that we are aware of! Beginners tee off from the first platform and more advanced players are supposed to tee off from the second platform to end their round. Thus far, the course has been very popular and has brought a new generation and demographic to

our County Park. Accordingly, our Marsh restaurant and camping vendor has been quite pleased.

Both the foot golf and disc golf course were paid for using retained fees generated by camp reservations.

A couple of other projects took place or are in the works at our County park as well. The Friends of the Marsh began their silent campaign in 2016 to raise funds for a new **multi-purpose education building**. The goal is to construct a LEED Platinum level building, the first in the County that will perhaps have net-zero energy consumption. To date, the silent fundraising campaign has been quite successful and we are hopeful we can begin construction in 2018.



For years, the south camp area housed permanent campers. During the previous 2010 contract negotiation with the vendor it was agreed that the permanent campers needed to be removed by last March. Overall, that process went smoothly, and thanks to our Transportation Department and Planning & Conservation Department staff, that area was rehabbed and opened to everyone for camping. In my opinion, it is the nicest area to camp in the entire park.

Lastly, as you may be aware, a significant problem we deal with at the Marsh about every five years are enormous amounts of floating cattail mats that clog up behind the dam. To help control the issue, our management plan calls for a **drawdown** of the Marsh water level every five years. After a drawdown, we typically see little to no floating mats clogging up the dam for at least three years. After that, the need to remove the mats inches up each year. If conditions are right (i.e. high westerly winds and significant rainfall events that rapidly raise the water in the 131 square mile drainage basin upstream of the dam), sometimes the mass of material that needs to be removed explodes. The next drawdown will take place in 2017 as 2016 was the fifth year since the last drawdown. We will start to drain the system once the ice is out come spring.

Our Transportation Department along with the local Plymouth Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources office staff and Chris Martin from the Planning & Conservation Department deserve a lot of credit for removing the mass of vegetation when needed. It is truly a team effort. The one positive aspect of all that material, is that it helps reclaim one of the County's old gravel pits with free material.

The Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park is truly a great amenity for our County. I encourage you to get out there for a visit and check out everything going on.

New District Attorney

By Joel Urmanski

On January 02, 2017, I took office as Sheboygan County District Attorney, replacing the infamous Joe DeCecco. This is a job and opportunity that I have been working toward for many years.

I decided that I wanted to be a prosecutor well before law school. I was drawn to the job by a sense of right and wrong as well as a desire to give victims a voice. I believe that there is a victim in every crime, whether that is a single, identified victim or the community as a whole. Giving a voice to victims and representing what is right and demanded by society is a great honor and responsibility.

While in law school I spent time volunteering and researching for various judges in Milwaukee County. Afterwards, I spent approximately one year interning in the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office. After graduation from Marquette Law School in the spring of 2006, I was hired as an Assistant District Attorney in Sheboygan and have been working in the Office since June of 2006.

As an Assistant District Attorney I handled thousands of cases ranging from speeding violations to homicide cases. I also volunteered for and am still the sole prosecutor for the Sheboygan Area Veterans Treatment Court. In addition to prosecuting cases, I took advantage of being an Assistant District Attorney to get into the community and be proactive to deter crime. I was fortunate enough to be invited by Safe Harbor to enter high schools across the County as well as Lakeland University and UW-Sheboygan to talk to students about topics such as healthy relationships, sexting, sexual assaults and human trafficking. I also spent time training officers on various topics, including trauma informed care.

As District Attorney I have many plans for improvements, each focused on increasing the effectiveness of the Office. Thanks to the County Administrator and County Board, one plan has already begun. On January 03, 2017, the District Attorney's Office added a new, County-funded prosecutor. This new prosecutor has many duties, but the primary is handling all juvenile delinquency cases. The new position will allow Deputy District Attorney Christopher Stock to focus on juvenile cases directly tied to the permanence and safety of children in our County. I have also instituted a program with Safe Harbor to educate victims of the most serious domestic violence cases about the dynamics of domestic violence, connect them with resources and to promote safety. I am also in the midst of meeting with public and private service providers to enhance prosecutors' use of treatment alternatives as a part of resolving cases. Some of these and other initiatives will take time to develop, but each should benefit the County.

I also hope to increase the communication and collaboration between the District Attorney's Office and other departments. I have already had meetings with members of the Department of Human Services and Corporation Counsel to discuss how collaboration can make the District Attorney's Office more effective. As you have ideas on how the District Attorney's Office can better help you and your department, please do not hesitate to contact me.



County Employees Give Back

By Adam Payne, County Administrator

Thank you to all of the employees who donated to United Way this year – I sincerely appreciate it!

This year's winners of my bagels and coffee challenge include: County Clerk, Finance, Health & Human Services, Planning & Conservation and Register of Deeds. Congratulations to those departments for increasing the number of employees who contributed and the amount donated.

In addition to your individual pledges, the Human Resources Department also coordinated "A Time for Thanks and a Time for Giving" wellness challenge in our overall campaign efforts. This challenge encouraged our employees to donate to others to address the well-being of one's mind and spirit.

Over the course of three weeks, nearly 3,000 items were donated with all 19 Sheboygan County Departments participating. 748 items were donated to Safe Harbor, 1,032 items were donated to Salvation Army, and 1,186 items were donated to the Boys and Girls Club. Food, clothing, school supplies and many other items were generously donated.

In summary, our employees contributed approximately \$27,720.08 in monetary donations to United Way. In addition, we estimate the donated items referenced above to be in the \$7,500 range for a grand total of **\$35,135.08** for the Sheboygan County Campaign.

I am very proud of our organization and appreciate your generosity. Sheboygan County government has a critically important role helping people in need, and together, we help make good things happen!

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Miranda has been active in community projects throughout high school and college with the Plymouth Rotary Club, Silver Creek Volunteer Fire Department and is the founder of the Creek Kids Milwaukee.

Miranda is a senior at Concordia University, Mequon, Wisconsin majoring in Radiology Technology. She is currently conducting her clinical studies with Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Milwaukee. Miranda is a senior at Concordia University, Mequon, Wisconsin are studying in the medical field. (GHT) to college students who by the WCA Group Health Trust \$2,000 scholarships awarded recently received one of five Center of Sheboygan County), the Aging & Disability Resource Hurley (Caregiver Coordinator at Miranda Hurley, daughter of Lisa



GHT Scholarship Winner
By Lisa Hurley, ADRC

Care Food Drive to benefit the Random Lake Area Interfaith Food Pantry. In addition, she is a volunteer and advocate for bone marrow donation through Be The Match organization since her donation in February 2016. She donated her bone marrow to a gentleman in early 70s with blood cancer. She is hoping for a positive outcome for her recipient and the opportunity to meet and learn more about him following the one year anniversary of the donation. The GHT board of directors allocates \$10,000 per year for these scholarships, each worth \$2,000, as a way to give back to the members and communities that have made the GHT a success. The WCA Group Health Trust is a resource for assisting Wisconsin counties including Sheboygan County, local units of government and school districts in fulfilling their employee health benefit obligations in a fiscally responsible manner.