

Kent COUNTY

June 2002

Detail

Administrator's Office

May Regional Meetings

In May, County Administrator **Daryl Delabbio**, Assistant Administrators **Al Vanderberg** and **Mary Swanson**, and Management Analyst **Erika Rosebrook** met with 47 officials from 23 cities, villages, and townships in a series of four regional meetings. **Commissioners Buege, McGuire, Morgan, and Vonk** also attended the meetings in their respective regions.

Issues discussed included updates on Millennium Park, Centralized Dispatch, Senior Services millage, and the Property Tax Administration System/Wide Area Network. Information was also provided on the status of the recommendations of the County's Urban Sprawl report, Health Care for People of Color initiative, and Parks Department governance.

Future Leaders Advisory Group (FLAG)

The County-sponsored Future Leaders Advisory Group (FLAG) recently concluded another successful year. 23 juniors and seniors from 12 area high schools served as student representatives on local government appointed boards and commissions. In addition to attending meetings for their assigned board or commission, students were offered opportunities to participate in leadership activities, including presentations by Brent Bueschel (Sparta Township Trustee) and Carol Townsend (Director, MSU West Center for Urban Affairs). For further information on student applications or to include a student representative on a board or commission, please contact **Kelly Berendsen** in the Kent County Administrator's office at 336-3512.

Township Law Agreements

The Board of Commissioners approved three township law contract amendments in May. Cannon Township requested, and the Board approved, the addition of one road patrol shift, eight hours per day, seven days per week. This doubles the contractual service provided in Cannon Township. The School Resource Officer pilot program has been completed and deemed a success. So much so that Byron Township and the Byron Center Public Schools have agreed to split the cost of the position and the Board amended the Byron Township contract to achieve that.

The most comprehensive change was the combination of the Ada, Cascade and Grand Rapids Charter Township agreements into one new East Precinct agreement. These three townships found that by combining forces, they can provide enhanced service within their communities. In addition to existing contractual positions, the townships are picking up the cost of two new Sergeant positions, a Detective and a Road Patrol position assigned to Community Policing.

The County provides Sheriff Department services as required by statute via response to calls for service and limited patrol. Townships that desire to have patrol cars dedicated to their jurisdiction contract with the County for this additional service.

Cooperative Extension

2002 Gardener Series

Over two thousand participants took part in this year's Successful Gardener Series, a jointly sponsored project between Michigan State University Extension and The Frederik Meijer Gardens. This represents over a twenty-five percent increase over last year's attendance. The increasing success is largely due to the development of a reputation for quality instruction from tenured MSU faculty and Extension professionals.

Sixteen topics were offered this year throughout the month of April on Tuesday and Thursday nights. Participants have the ability to take in two sessions per evening as each class is offered twice. Surveys indicated that participants overwhelmingly approved of the topics and speakers. 86% of the participants noted that they increased their knowledge of gardening, environmental issues and pesticide safety. An average of 80% responded that they would use the information to better themselves through their work or personal lives and that the courses met or exceeded their expectations.

The classes provide high visibility for MSU Extension in the community as mailings and advertisements reach over 15,000 households and the program is advertised via Rebecca Finneran's column in the Grand Rapids Press. During the sixteen sessions, MSU Master Gardeners are on call to moderate, check people in and answer gardening questions. To receive information on these and other classes sponsored by the MSU Extension Horticulture Department, please contact the MSU Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline at 336-3881.

Sheriff Department

Emergency Management News

The month of May has been very active for the emergency management office. On May 7, the Kent County L.E.P.C. (Local Emergency Planning Committee) held a limited full-scale exercise as part of Chemical Awareness Week. The exercise involved a simulated anhydrous Ammonia leak from the Kentwood Community Ice Arena. The simulation included Kentwood Public Schools, Dutton, Cutlerville, Cascade and Kentwood Fire Departments, the TRICOM HAZMAT Team, AMR & Life Ambulance Services and Local Hospitals. The exercise tested the School Crisis Plan, Community Response Plan and the LEPC Site Emergency Plan. Sixteen students were decontaminated in this event. The need for improved communication between school resources and emergency response agencies was evident. On May 9, the City of Grand Rapids experienced a real HAZMAT emergency. The local plans were activated and we assisted with communication issues. Local responders and hospitals made many positive comments on how the May 7 exercise better prepared them for the real event on May 9.

On May 30, a dual-purpose full-scale exercise was held utilizing the G. R. Ford International Airport Emergency Response Plan and the City of Kentwood plan. The exercise simulation included three crash sites, 15 emergency response

agencies, 61 patients and Steelcase Inc. The City of Kentwood Emergency Operations Center was activated to assist in the community response to this disaster.

Special Severe Weather Note

Kent County will be activating the outdoor warning sirens for the new national weather service warning (Severe Thunderstorm Warning with winds in excess of 70 MPH). In the past we only activated the sirens for Tornado Warnings or Chemical Emergences. The national weather service will utilize radar, remote weather stations and spotters to determine the warning. The national weather service issued one of these warnings during the 2001 storm season. The storm caused nearly a half million dollars in damage in Kalamazoo. We will continue to monitor and evaluate this new warning procedure.

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Editorial questions or submissions:

Michelle Van Sweden

County Detail Editor

Administrator's Office

336-2847

michelle.vansweden@kentcounty.org

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Kent County Administration Building

Administrator's Office

300 Monroe Avenue NW

Grand Rapids, MI 49503