



ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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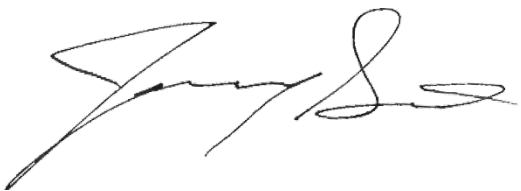
A WORD FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

2022 was a year of transition. We saw a change in leadership in the courts, the sheriff's office, and multiple departments – including your administrator. In addition, we spent the year preparing for a change from nine commissioners to five. It is my intent to continue to leverage these changes into opportunities that will streamline operations and improve services to the public.

Change will always bring its challenges; but guided well and with a strong vision, it can usher incredible improvements. One of the largest, public facing changes we've brought to bear was the new website. Not only have the aesthetics vastly improved, but we are providing the public easier access to information that matters to them. This, in conjunction with our map improvements, BS&A online, and Facebook presence, leads us in to a new level of transparency and public service.

Most of administration's activities throughout the year had been outlined for you in my bi-monthly reports; however, there are a few projects that warrant giving the board additional perspective and narrative. These projects, in particular, had significant impact either on the County's operations or on administration's time. As we look ahead, administration will continue addressing facilities, employee needs, and improving communications both outward to local units of government and internally to our team.

I want to thank the Board for the opportunity to guide the County through these many changes. I am grateful to be surrounded by a group of hard working, intelligent, and experienced individuals with the interests of the County and the public at the forefront. Tina Schrader and Margie Boyd should particularly be called out as both of them work so very diligently to assist administration, department heads, elected officials, and the public. The strength of the entire County team, from support to leadership, is why Antrim County will continue to improve and thrive.



Jeremy Scott
County Administrator

OPERATION HIGHLIGHTS

Changes in Leadership

As 2022 reached the end, we saw a number of changes in leadership: the retirements of Peter Garwood (Administration), John Strehl (Airport), Mark Stone (Dam Operator, Drain Commissioner) and the resignations of Leslie Meyers (Emergency Services) and James Hunter (Parks). With all of these moves, including a new Animal Control Director as this department moved from the sheriff's office to oversight by the administrator, a significant amount of effort in the waning months of 2022 was put towards finding replacements and establishing direction for the County for years to come. We gladly welcome all of our new leadership: Matthew Wyman (Airport), Leslie Meyers (Dam Operator), Anna Hall (Parks), and Heather Belknap (Animal Control). Some transitions are expected to be easier than others, with Janet Koch coming back to the County as Deputy Administrator while I move into the Administrator role.

New Website

Perhaps one of the most visible projects of the year was the update to the Antrim County website. While the largest part of this project rested with Information Technology, a significant portion was handled through Administration, as well as a committee put together by IT Director Valerie Craft. It started with reviewing options for website development and hosting, moved on to site planning, design, and finally content. While there were certainly a number of lessons learned for the future, the final product came out great and continues to improve as we add imagery and departments update content. It was a successful collaboration of multiple individuals to build a tool that is visually pleasing while also much easier for departments to edit and the public to utilize.

2023 Master Plan

The Planning Commission began its work on updating the County Master Plan, which was last updated in 2018. The Commission met nearly every month in 2022 in order to methodically edit and review updates to the plan. We were able to simplify and finalize much of the language; however, the work slowed towards the end of the year as we awaited new metrics from the 2020 Census. We look forward to bringing the master plan to completion in 2023 as planned.

Strategic Planning Priorities: County Facilities

Administration started the year with the daunting task of finding a direction for facilities. A great step in the right direction was onboarding our new Maintenance Director Mitch Bart, who has many years of experience. Key to establishing any direction is gathering information. We did so by working with the Maintenance Department to establish schedules and longevity of County assets, as well as inviting partner agencies to review our facilities. We started with an assessment from our workers' compensation carrier who conducted a safety-related audit of County facilities. More immediate issues were brought to light as we had the engineering firm Progressive AE come and assess the panels on the County building. MMRMA, our insurance carrier, then conducted a liability audit which further established areas of focus.

In addition, we found ourselves in quite a rush at the beginning of the year as the handover of the health department building grew closer. It was key during this time to identify the best possible use for this space while also ensuring that the Health Department had the space they would need. We simultaneously worked on possible layouts to move the sheriff's office out of the annex building while exploring options with North Country Community Mental Health (CMH) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). In the end, neither CMH nor DHHS felt the space would be sufficient. Committing to a plan of moving the Sheriff's Office, we worked closely with the sheriff to identify space needs and optimize the minimal space. The project was presented to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee with just enough time to get rough estimates on the cost of the project.

Even with all of the concerns at other facilities, the County building became a front and center issue as we were advised that the exterior panels had become a safety threat that would need to be addressed much sooner than previously anticipated. Once the original estimate provided by the architects was approved by the Board at \$3.45 million, we went to work on contracts, designs, and finding a construction manager (CM). We continued through the end of the year to work out changes and a contract with Spence Brothers, the chosen CM, even as they began working on a control estimate for the project. It is expected that we will go out for bids early in 2023 with work to begin in the spring and hopefully conclude in the fall.

The aging buildings occupied by the Sheriff's Office have been identified for years as facilities requiring action, and Sheriff's Office employees also identified their buildings as a significant morale issue during 2022 union negotiations. Both the workers' compensation and MMRMA audits identified the sheriff's facilities as the high

priority we already believed them to be. No matter what the direction the Board ultimately chooses for these facilities, we identified the Health Department building move as a first and necessary step to moving forward. As that project moved through budgeting approval, the Board also approved a contract with Progressive AE to develop construction and bidding documents for the health department building. Meanwhile, with the intent of bringing new public safety facilities to a vote of the people via bond or millage, the Board authorized bringing Byce & Associates back to provide a basic design and graphics for the proposed facility. This was at a cost far less than originally estimated, likely due to their familiarity and previous work on the County's facilities. We expect these to be completed early in 2023.

Strategic Planning Priorities: Valuing Employees (Morale)

We continued our longevity awards and extended them to those meeting the 10-year milestone. In addition to longevity, we held our second annual peer vote Trillium Awards for Customer Service, Teamwork, and Leadership. We split discussion with employees up between human resources and myself, to take the opportunity to see in which types of things our staff sees value. Some of those things were Antrim County merchandise and clothing and a more pleasant break room in the County building, both of which we implemented right away. Another area that was identified through our communications was frustration with parking. After some research, we discovered that the existing parking ordinance allowed for some opportunities for better enforcement. With some minor changes in signing and printing and handing out "courtesy tickets", we have already seen a positive change.

County Building Changes

A number of small but impactful changes were made to the County building this year, including wall construction and door movement in the second floor southwest corridor. The changes to Human Resources, Grass River Natural Area, Inc., and the Building Department allowed us to open up under-utilized space. We also completed a signage project which saw new signs designed, made, and put together out of this office at a significant cost savings to the County. In addition to looking more professional, we have had a lot of positive feedback and significantly fewer confused members of the public as they navigate to our offices.

Negotiations

Antrim County Transportation held a vote to join the Fraternal Order of Police Union this year after the

Teamsters withdrew. Because this is a new union, it required us to develop a new contract. While we were able to use some of the past contracts as a starting point, much of the time spent on these negotiations involved hashing out the many details involved. While each bargaining unit is unique, both Human Resources and Administration prioritize similar language whenever possible.

Land Acquisitions & Disposals

Throughout the year, we found ourselves focusing on various changes with Antrim County properties. Cooperation with other units of government, particularly townships, played a big role in moving properties strategically to best serve the public. With thanks to both Forest Home Township and Kearney Township, we were able to finalize the quitclaim deeds for the Commission on Aging property, taking full possession of the building as we continue to update the building and serve County seniors. Working with Custer Township, we took possession of the public lands on the south side of Lake of the Woods, applying our standards of maintenance to a property that had become difficult for the township to maintain. And, we had two parcels along the west side of Torch Lake, one of which we deeded over to Milton Township; we will continue to explore further possibilities with the other property throughout 2023.

Partnerships didn't end with just townships. We also worked with the State to take over and avoid possible complications with an island northeast of the Bellaire Dam. In addition, Administration put a great deal of effort into working with the Village of Bellaire to trade two properties to the benefit of both entities. You are certainly aware of this project, but it is a great example of two governmental entities working together for the good of the public. With the consolidation of Richardi Park for the Village and taking ownership of the parking lot adjoining the Health Department building for the County. The deeds and an easement were executed and recorded in March 2023.

There were certainly additional properties that were considered throughout the year as we fielded and brought to the Board a handful of small offers, including one from Tractor Supply. The aforementioned Health Department building brought a number of challenges and opportunities, not only with its acquisition, but as we worked with the new owners of the property to the north to terminate the condo deed and establish appropriate accesses. Likely fresh in your minds was the completion of Antrim County's first PACE program project with the Elk Lake Inn. It took a fair amount of research and work to get this together, but this kind of project is great for economic development.

And finally, it was sad to see the staple that was Nifty Thrifty close its doors; but it was, at least, encouraging to see ideas that were presented as offers came in for the Maltby building. It will be exciting to see what this property becomes for downtown Bellaire and to see what new property opportunities arise in the coming year.

Staff Training

With conferences and trainings opening up, we were able to take advantage of more in-person opportunities as opposed to the previous two years. We attended the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC) legislative and annual conferences and the Michigan Association of Administrative Officials (MACAO) annual conference. Both MAC and MACAO are excellent resources for learning best practices of other counties and legislative direction of the State. As the deputy administrator, I participated in several webinars and trainings for ArcGIS, housing, Zoom, and broadband. I earned my International City and County Management Association (ICMA) certification in Local Government Management. Additionally, I attended Michigan Certified Assessing Technician (MCAT) training and Effective Board Meetings and Good Governance training from MSU Extension.

As a part of valuing employees, we setup ICMA effective supervisory practices training for all of the elected officials and department heads. Margie was able to attend a short course on very basic use of Zoom, Energy Star portfolio management (level1), and began records retention courses offered by the State. Perhaps the most immediately applicable training we received was Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) training from the Michigan State Police. Tina, Margie, Pete, and I attended along with several individuals from the sheriff's office.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Coordinator

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges of the year was the transition of the FOIA coordinator role from the prosecuting attorney's office to administration beginning July 1. With an already full slate, adopting the role of FOIA coordinator required a significant amount of maneuvering to our office workflow. Many hours were spent training, reading the Freedom of Information Act, researching, and consulting with legal counsel. In a relatively short time, largely thanks to Margie and Tina, we were able to develop procedures, create efficient workflows, and build document templates which simplified the process for all involved; all of this took place as we set up administration as a central resource for our departments and offices. As the year ended, I believe we landed in a much better place with FOIA than where we started. It still takes a significant amount of time, but we all feel more confident about the process moving forward.

2023 GOALS

Implement Strategic Planning Priorities – Facilities Issues

- Finish plan and develop an RFQ for health department renovations for the sheriff's office and employees.
- Work with general contractor and maintenance to complete the health department building renovations.
- Select materials and finalize designs, plans, and budgets for the County building exterior project.
- Manage and bring the County building exterior project to completion, working with Spence Brothers and Progressive AE.
- Support the sheriff and employee representative of each sheriff office division (road, jail, dispatch) in developing a public proposal for the public safety center.

New Department Heads

- Work with airport director to identify new opportunities, efficiencies, and best practices at the airport.
- Build communication and create procedures for animal control with new director.
- Bring on a deputy administrator and develop a workflow.
- Work with the new parks director, particularly in areas of interagency and public communication.
- Solidify procedures and develop new processes with the new emergency services coordinator.

Implement Strategic Planning Priorities – Valuing Employees

- Continue engaging with employees on appreciation and morale.
- Finish developing a survey to identify employee priorities and present any financial or policy-based changes to the Board.
- Maintain and expand the longevity awards to additional milestones.
- Sustain employee peer awards, improving on processes when possible.

Board Room Improvements

- Procure and install modular and mobile tables in order to greatly increase the room's function and adaptability.
- Change over the equipment, removing unnecessary and overcomplicated components while better utilizing current equipment.
- Improve aesthetics of the room, simplifying and cleaning up the layout.

Improve Communications

- Reach out and develop new pathways of communication with townships and villages.
- Utilize website, Facebook, news organizations, and local units to communicate to the public.

- Move away from departmental silos, communicating regularly with department heads and elected officials and encouraging more collaboration.
- Position the County as a hub for broadband information, giving businesses, organizations, and units of government a central location for information and connection.

Continuing Projects

- Administration office staff continues to work on record digitization related to committee minutes, contracts, lawsuits, and other historical administrative information into Laserfiche.
- Continue learning and looking for opportunities to improve the FOIA process.