

# MICHIGAN COUNTIES

Official Voice of the Michigan Association of Counties | June 2020

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

Letter from the Executive Director

Letter from MAC President

MACPAC 2020 Member List

**Calendar of Events**

**CRC Analysis**

Fiscal crisis offers counties an opportunity

**MAC News**

MAC Board votes to shift Annual Conference to virtual sessions

Candidates can now file for seats on MAC Board of Directors

Policy platform drafts now available for review by members

Three Michigan counties among honorees in NACo Achievement Awards

**MACAO Article**

Crisis teaches the value of planning and teamwork

**Affiliate Corner**

County treasurers deal with COVID-19, tax foreclosure and lower Fed rates

**Expert Corner**

DTE supports communities during COVID-19 in more ways than just delivering energy

**Best Practices**

Social media: Best practices from an early adopter

**Meet Your MAC Board**

Joe Bonovetz and Kyle Harris

**Meet the Staff**

Kristina Garner and Gabriel Zawadzki

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*\*One Region IV Seat is vacant*

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# MAC

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This message is being written in my office at MAC headquarters in downtown Lansing. It's Monday, June 15 — our first "official" day back in our offices since March 13.

I use the term "official" and not "normal," because we, like you, have learned that there really is no "normal" in a COVID-19 world. There's just a whole bunch of change and uncertainty.

Even this week, we do not have all of our staffers back in the home office. Telework remains the change for a few of them, as I'm sure it does for some of your county workers.

Change and uncertainty mark the financial picture for counties, too. If you follow our weekly Legislative Updates, you know that the Michigan Senate recently passed a resolution to urge Congress to give states more flexibility on CARES Act rescue funding. With the state staring at billions in deficits over this and the next fiscal year, no action on federal funds almost guarantees cuts to counties — deep ones.

Never have the voices of locally elected officials been more needed in the halls of Capitol Hill, and never has it been easier for you, as a MAC member, to convey messages to Congress. Simply visit our Action Center on our website to add your voice to the latest advocacy campaigns on behalf of county government.

You also are contending with the fiscal effects of the various delays and orders on collection of property taxes. On page 12 of this edition, Eaton County Treasurer Bob Robinson goes into more detail on what your colleagues in the treasurers' offices are facing right now.

Uncertainty, about the progress of the coronavirus in Michigan and efforts to combat it, also brought change to MAC's signature event, our Annual Conference. Rather than gathering in downtown Kalamazoo as long planned for this August, the MAC Board of Directors decided the prudent move was to push the conference into the virtual world. So, from Aug. 18 to Aug. 27, we will hold virtual workshops, virtual plenary sessions, a virtual Business Meeting and, yes, virtual Board elections. See page 7 for more details — but bear with us as we are adapting to ever-changing circumstances.

In all this turmoil, I did want to end my message with one steady theme: Your MAC staff continues to focus on helping you serve the residents of Michigan. Recent months have only increased my pride in the work and dedication of the MAC team. I'm lucky to have these great people on my team — and I hope you think the same.

Be safe.



**Stephan W. Currie**  
MAC Executive Director



## AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Area Agency on Aging Association of Michigan  
 C.C.E. Central Dispatch Authority  
 Community Economic Development Association of Michigan  
 Community Mental Health Association of Michigan  
 County Road Association of Michigan  
 Friend of the Court Association of the State of Michigan  
 Health Care Association of Michigan  
 Michigan Association for Local Public Health  
 Michigan Association of County Administrative Officers  
 Michigan Association of County Clerks  
 Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners  
 Michigan Association of County Parks & Recreation Officials  
 Michigan Association of County Treasurers  
 Michigan Association of County Veterans Counselors  
 Michigan Association of Equalization Directors  
 Michigan Association of Registers of Deeds  
 Michigan County Medical Care Facilities Council  
 Michigan County Social Services Association  
 Michigan Emergency Management Association  
 Michigan Judges Association  
 Michigan Works!  
 Mid-Michigan District Health Department  
 Municipal Employees Retirement System of Michigan  
 Nurse-Family Partnership  
 Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan  
 UPCAP Services Inc.  
 UPWARD Talent Council - Michigan Works  
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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As you may know, the MAC Board of Directors voted to keep this year's officers in place for a second term, which means I will serve two terms as MAC president. This is an unusual occurrence; the only similar one in our modern era was about 12 years ago when Larry Emig of Osceola County served extra time as president when his successor lost his county board seat.

But, of course, these are unusual times.

With both of our physical conferences having been cancelled and converted to virtual sessions, and commissioners across the state meeting virtually this spring, it has been impossible for me to fulfill the obligations of the role. While we don't know what next year will bring, I think the thought process was that two limited years would amount to one regular year of service.

We have all settled into the new way of conducting business but are still anxious about the future. This is because we are dealing with so many unknowns.

We really have no way of knowing for sure where our finances will be in the coming years. All the projects we have planned and many of our goals are put on hold. In my county (Macomb), we were hoping to pass a millage to build a new jail, with expanded capacity for evaluation of mental health and drug dependency issues. I do not see that happening now.

Our intent was to improve areas of our justice system that today's protestors would appreciate. Now, we will have to look for new and more inventive ways to improve services, while working with a leaner budget. Every county has its own unique set of problems. The historic events of this year will force all of us to think differently and to forge new paths into the future. This is where we earn our stripes, so to speak.

Out of difficult times comes some of the most innovative ways of conducting government. We always seem to rise to the challenge and come away with a more improved government.

It is clear that residents are looking to us to make changes. It is clear that they are anxious and fearful of the future.

We will continue to communicate with each other, and network with counties across the nation to help one another get through the next few years. We will speak with one voice in reminding the state and federal governments that we are the front line in dealing with the pandemic, as well as implementing the justice reforms that will come down the road.

I am proud to be part of such a dedicated group of individuals. I hope I will get an opportunity to come and see you at work in your counties next year. Thank you for everything you do.



**Veronia Klinefelt**  
 President, MAC Board of Directors





# MACPAC 2020 MEMBERS

### Platinum Level

Brian Cote  
Kenneth Borton  
Wexford County  
Otsego County

### Gold Level

Kenneth Borton  
Veronica Klinefelt  
Douglas Johnson  
Otsego County  
Macomb County  
Otsego County

### Silver Level

Stephen Adamini  
Joseph Bonovetz  
Marquette County  
Gogebic County

Vaughn Begick  
Howard Heidemann  
Randall Peat  
Stan Ponstein

### Members

Eileen Kowall  
Jim Talen  
Rillastine Wilkins  
Raymond Steinke  
Robert Hoffman  
Karen Alholm

Bay County  
St. Clair County  
Van Buren County  
Kent County

Oakland County  
Kent County  
Muskegon County  
Mecosta County  
Oakland County  
Marquette County

Barbara Kramer  
Theresa Nelson  
Paul Schincariol  
Gail Patterson-Gladney  
Ronald Reinhardt  
Ernie Krygier

Dickinson County  
Delta County  
Van Buren County  
Van Buren County  
Charlevoix County  
Bay County

Thank you to all MACPAC members. To support MACPAC, please visit our website, [micounties.org](http://micounties.org).

# MAC EVENTS CALENDAR

### June 24

**Camp Counties: Using Tech to Get a Handle on Your Court Records**  
11 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
Webinar

### July 8

**Camp Counties: How Will COVID Affect Community and Work Life in the Months Ahead?**  
11 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
Webinar

### July 13

**NACo Membership Town Hall**  
4 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
Webinar

### July 15

**Camp Counties: Basic Steps for Counties to Enhance Election Security**  
11 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
Webinar

### July 20

**Northern Michigan Counties Association Meeting**  
9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
Virtual

**NACo Annual Business Meeting**  
2 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
Webinar

**Aug. 18-27**  
**2020 Virtual Michigan Counties Annual Conference**  
Virtual

**For latest event listings, click here.**



## Take good care of the company you keep.

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# CRC ANALYSIS

## FISCAL CRISIS OFFERS COUNTIES AN OPPORTUNITY

By Eric Lupher/President, Citizens Research Council

Here we go again!

The economy has turned south, and local governments are under growing pressure to maintain both balanced budgets and the services their residents expect.

If it feels like we just went through this, it's because we did. While the Great Recession was ten years ago, local government finances remained troubled long after it ended. Property values took years to return to 2007 levels (some have yet to get there). Many local governments are just now returning to some level of pre-recession normalcy. Had the just-ended period of growth not lasted as long as it did, recovery from the Great Recession may have bled right into the next one.

Counties and local governments are facing fiscal pressures for different reasons than the loss of property value caused by the last recession. The COVID pandemic caused a policy-induced recession, affecting fees, charges, and some tax revenues. Additionally, state revenue sharing will be in peril as the state struggles to balance its own budgets.

As you have probably heard more than once by now, let's not let a crisis go to waste. Let's use this opportunity to examine the level of services provided in the proper levels of government.

Governments provide public services for several reasons. The most common is to address market failures. We levy taxes to pay for public goods, products that can be consumed without excluding consumption by others, such as parks, roadways, and streetlights.

We also grant government police powers, to protect our people and property, but also to minimize the harm of market failures, when the price of a product does not reflect the value or impact to the purchaser or others. We protect against externalities, when the actions of one affects others in the form of pollution or congestion, by endowing governments with planning and zoning powers. Market failures may cause us to underestimate the value of a service. Universal education builds wealth throughout a society that far exceeds the amount some families would be willing to pay. Market failures also may cause us to underestimate the cost of something, so government public health efforts attempt to dissuade people from smoking.

At their core, governments do three things: they provide services to people, they provide services to property, and they provide functions that make the business side of the



Lupher



MAC strongly supports the work of the **Citizens Research Council of Michigan**, a nonpartisan, independent public policy research organization. MAC Executive Director Stephan Currie currently sits on the CRC Board.

entity go. Police protection, roads, and parks benefit people. They help residents and visitors to feel safe and create quality of life. Fire protection and refuse collection benefit properties. They increase their value, which benefits people, but the ability to provide those services depends on the number of properties, not the people within them.

If governments are created to serve these purposes, how do we account for staffing differences among them? Population thresholds play a role in determining service levels, but the density of people and buildings is far more significant. Higher population densities create greater opportunities for market failures to affect residents and visitors. With higher population densities come more traffic, more commerce, more interaction between people, and therefore more need for policing. It creates more need to have green space set aside for parks, more libraries and other cultural amenities.

Building density creates different issues. Planning and zoning take on added significance when buildings, and the people within them, are close together. Fire protection takes on added significance because fires can easily spread. Denser communities are less able to rely on wells and septic systems and must rely more on municipal water and sewer systems.

Often population sizes affect the level of specialization in government service provision. In many of our smaller counties and municipal governments, employees are asked to wear multiple hats. They have time to perform a number of related tasks during the workday. With increasing population sizes, the workload increases and specialization is necessary.

So what does all this mean for you, as leaders in county governments?

This recession offers the opportunity for each of your counties to work with the cities, villages, and townships to maintain services with the resources available.

**Continued on page 6**

# CRC ANALYSIS

## FISCAL CRISIS OFFERS COUNTIES AN OPPORTUNITY

from page 5

I encourage you, when examining the service model in your county, to consider all aspects of each service. While the need to arrive promptly at a fire would suggest organization at the county level may be too big, other aspects of fire protection — training, investigations, equipment purchasing, specialized units — may fit with bigger geographies.

Ask your department heads and their counterparts in local governments to think beyond the dotted lines on the maps. Can you capitalize on population and building densities in some regions of the county to

reorganize service deliveries in such a way that they will benefit sparser regions? Can you collaborate on services and functions sufficiently to afford the benefits of higher levels of specialization?

What do you need to make it happen? Better data communication capacity? A willingness to compromise on service levels? An understanding that the status quo isn't an option? A political willingness to work together? The Citizens Research Council stands ready to assist in any way we can.



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## MAC NEWS

# MAC BOARD VOTES TO SHIFT ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO VIRTUAL SESSIONS

The 2020 MAC Annual Conference will be a virtual event stretching across several days between Aug. 18-27, the MAC Board of Directors decided during a meeting on June 5.

Included in the event will be MAC's Annual Business Meeting, during which policy platforms will be reviewed by the membership; elections for seats on the Board of Directors, a variety of policy workshops (see below), plenary sessions featuring exciting speakers and an exhibitor event on Aug. 19.

"With counties and vendors alike still sorting through the budget problems caused by COVID, we had a real concern that attendance would drop, and the event would be costly for MAC," said Board President Veronica Klinefelt of Macomb County. "Based on the success of the Virtual Legislative Conference and the continuing research of our MAC staff, the Board saw a virtual event as the better option."

The Board approved the draft platforms for the membership vote this week. Those drafts soon will be made available on MAC's website and sent electronically to all counties for members' review in advance of the Annual Business Meeting.

Since this year's session will be done electronically, the Board also voted to require that all member amendments for the platforms be submitted in writing to MAC by 5 p.m. on Aug. 7. Amendments will not be accepted from "the floor" during the virtual meeting on Aug. 18.

Full details about the virtual conference, including exact dates, speakers and registration, will be released in early July.

Tentative workshop topics for the conference are:

### **Cybersecurity: Threats, Prevention and Preparation**

The threat of cyber breaches continues to grow every year. Individuals, units of government, even Fortune 500 companies are the subject of hacking attempts every day, the target of malicious intent. Malware, phishing, baiting: how do we protect ourselves from these unseen and unheard from hackers? In this breakout, learn more about how to protect your sensitive information financial interests from cyber warfare.

### **Transportation Funding 101**

The state of Michigan has an expansive and diverse network of transportation: automobiles, aviation, rail, biking, boating, public transportation and on and on. Between state



trunklines, county roads, city roads, gas taxes, registration taxes, the MTF, CTF it can get confusing. This workshop will give you a refresher on the basic flow of tax dollars towards infrastructure and where counties fit into our state structure.

### **Family First Act: What Does It Mean for Your County?**

Hear from state leaders as they work to implement federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) in Michigan. The FFPSA legislation provides foster care entitlement funding for a limited set of prevention services for up to 12 months for families and children at risk of entering or re-entering the foster care system. Eligible services consist of mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment and in-home parent skill-based programs, including parent education and counseling. Child Services Agency leaders will discuss everything counties need to know about FFPSA, and how it may impact your county.

### **Boosting Quality of Life for Your Veterans**

Michigan veteran populations are facing more challenges than ever due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency and county veteran counselors support veterans in navigating benefits, fighting homelessness and ensuring a quality of life for families. The webinar will focus on collaborative efforts to support our veteran population through these difficult times and beyond. Explore innovative opportunities with state and local leaders to ensure Michigan is a great place for veterans and their families to call home.

### **COVID-19: Developing a Long-term Strategy for Your County Facilities**

This workshop, presented by the Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority (MMRMA), will focus on best practices, lessons learned, innovative techniques and new equipment that MAC members may want to consider for their facilities.

### **Legal Loopholes: Charitable Exemptions in Michigan Tax Law**

The last few decades in Michigan, local governments have seen revenue decline due to an increase in charitable tax exemptions. Private companies, with help from the state government and the Michigan Supreme Court, have utilized legal loopholes to classify for-profit businesses as 'charitable

**Continued on page 8**

## MACNEWS

### MAC BOARD VOTES TO SHIFT ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO VIRTUAL SESSIONS

from page 7

institutions,' and avoided paying part, or all, of their property tax bill. Hear how this has negatively affected local governments and how these loopholes are exploited in this breakout.

#### Managing Emergencies: Where's the Money?

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Michigan Emergency Management Association (MEMA) were created to help in critical times like these. In order to maximize efficiency and funding reimbursements, hear from FEMA and MEMA on how to track records, apply for financial assistance, what constitutes "reimbursable" and what future emergency management will look like.

The conference originally was scheduled for Aug. 16-19 at the Radisson Hotel in downtown Kalamazoo. MAC has arranged with the venue to reset that in-person event to 2023.

**MAC's conferences** in 2021 are scheduled for April 27-29 in Lansing (Legislative) and Sept. 26-28 at the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island (Annual).

For the latest conference-related news, visit **MAC's website**.

## POLICY PLATFORM DRAFTS NOW AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW BY MEMBERS

Platforms that would guide MAC's policy advocacy for the coming year are **now available for review on MAC's website**.

The drafts were crafted by the association's policy committees and reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors at its June 5 session.

MAC also will be sending the platforms electronically to counties to share with commissioners.

Since this year's session will be done electronically, the Board also voted to require that all member amendments for the platforms be submitted in writing to MAC by 5 p.m. on Aug. 7. Amendments will not be accepted from "the floor" during the virtual meeting, whose date has not yet been set, but which will occur between Aug. 18-27 during the Virtual Annual Conference.

For questions on the platforms, contact Deena Bosworth at **bosworth@micounties.org**.



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# MACNEWS

## CANDIDATES CAN NOW FILE FOR SEATS ON MAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At the 2020 Michigan Counties Annual Conference in August, MAC members will vote on six seats on the **MAC Board of Directors**.

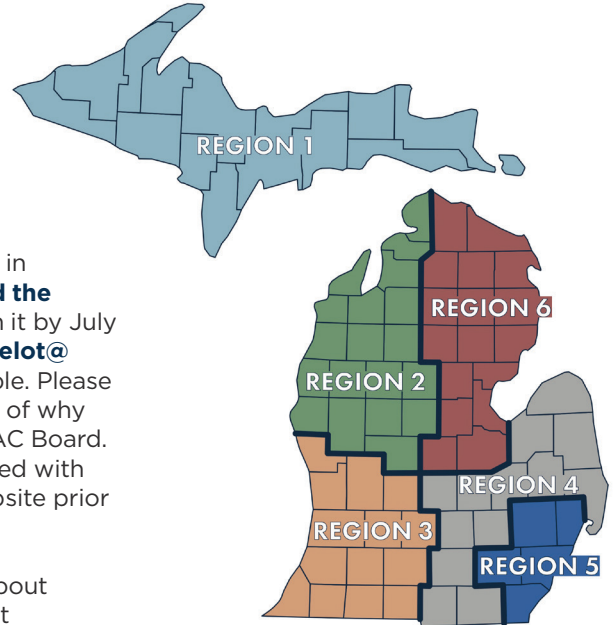
Commissioners wishing to serve on the Board, whether incumbents or new candidates, have until July 16 to file official notice of their intent to run. Board terms are for three years.

Seats representing regions are filled by a vote in regional caucuses at the conference. At-large seats are filled by the candidate that wins a majority of the six regional caucuses.

The MAC Board of Directors is the key body in guiding the legislative and organizational strategies of MAC.

### 2020 Board seats

- Region 1 — 1 seat
- Region 2 — 1 seat
- Region 3 — 1 seat
- Region 4 — 1 seat
- Region 5 — 1 seat
- At-large — 1 seat



Any member wishing to run in the election must **download the application form** and return it by July 16, 2020, to Derek Melot ([melot@micounties.org](mailto:melot@micounties.org)) to be eligible. Please also share a brief statement of why you wish to serve on the MAC Board. The information will be shared with voting members on the website prior to the elections

If you have any questions about Board duties, please contact Executive Director Stephan W. Currie at 517-372-5374.

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## MACNEWS

# THREE MICHIGAN COUNTIES AMONG HONOREES IN NACO ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Oakland, Macomb and Midland counties were among those honored this month by the National Association of Counties in its **2020 Achievement Awards**.

NACo recognized 522 entries from counties and state associations in 30 states in this year's awards.

"MAC offers its congratulations to all three counties for these awards," said Stephan Currie, MAC executive director. "This is just another reflection of the innovative work that happens every day in Michigan as county leaders address new challenges and find better ways to serve their residents."

### List of Michigan honorees by category

#### Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation

Macomb County: **"Centennial Farms" Program Spotlights County's Historic Family Farms**

#### County Administration and Management

Macomb County: **"Clerk's Corner" Intranet Improves Department Communication and Efficiency and "Virtual Clerk's Office" Helps Keep Department Running During Coronavirus Emergency**

#### Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Oakland County: **Returning Citizens Entrepreneur Training Center**

#### Human Services

Macomb County: **"Senior Hotline" Helps County's Seniors Find Services and Resources**

#### Information Technology

Oakland County: **CLEMIS Fire Integrated Records System (CFIRS), Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Approved Data Center and Security and Flexibility through SIEM and Monitoring**

Macomb County: **Cyber Security Program Implementation**

Midland County: **Improved Services and Efficiency using GIS in Midland County**

#### Libraries

Oakland County: **Water Infrastructure 101: What You**



#### Need to Know Below and Beyond Library Discussions

#### Parks and Recreation

Oakland County: **Red Oaks Nature Center Storybook Trail**

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## MACAO ARTICLE

# CRISIS TEACHES THE VALUE OF PLANNING AND TEAMWORK

By Craig Longnecker/Clinton County Deputy Administrator

The team that coordinated the development of the Continuity of Operations Plan for Clinton County includes the IT Director, Facility Director and Emergency Manager. As with most counties, Clinton does not have the depth of personnel necessary to dedicate significant blocks of time to quickly assemble these types of plans.



This effort took two years of short manageable meetings with elected officials and department heads. The process consisted of each department identifying the most critical aspects of their operations and options for continuing services in the event of a disruption. This resulted in resumption of operation plans tailored to and created by the departments themselves. The effort was completed at the end of 2019. The next step was to plan a tabletop scenario to exercise the plans; enter COVID-19.

On March 16, the Clinton County Board of Commissioners held a special board meeting to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the county did declare a “State of Emergency,” it was not done with a sense of panic. With guidance from the Health Officer, and leadership from the Board Chair, discussion focused on health, safety and continuing to provide essential services to our residents. The Sheriff, Emergency Manager, Central Dispatch Director and Chief Judge all spoke that day and contributed to the sense of assurance that plans were in place to address the issues at hand. Each of them has been a strong leader in their respective departments and continue to be important members of the county team that meets on a regular basis to address ongoing concerns related to COVID-19.

While this has been a stressful time for everyone, it was made less so by having plans that identified the most essential functions of each department and various ways to continue providing service during a disruption. For example, the IT department was able to increase remote work capability for courthouse employees from 21 percent to 69 percent within a short period of time. This effort enabled departments to establish remote work rotation plans that allowed for the social distancing necessary to keep employees and the public safe.

The ability to draw from the resumption plans, that previously identified and resolved obstacles, hastened this effort. Without prior planning this effort would have taken much longer and would have added unnecessary stress. Even with the best planning, emergency situations are stressful. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the countless

hours and selfless efforts put in by the entire county team.

In addition to challenges, every crisis provides opportunities. Adapting to the evolving “new normal” will allow all of us the opportunity to rethink county operations. The result could potentially resonate far beyond more remote work capability. A public hesitant to venture out may feel more

comfortable with online transactions. Offices previously reluctant to transition to less paper may find electronic transactions to be the norm. Like it or not zoom meetings are probably not going away. That said, in-person interaction has value. This is the time for a thoughtful approach to finding the right balance for your community.

The great challenge of sailing the ship of county government is establishing the relationships and trust necessary to get you through the tough times. Advanced planning can make these times less stressful and help to create the sense of teamwork necessary to weather the storm.

*Craig Longnecker is the treasurer of the Michigan Association of County Administrative Officers (MACAO).*

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## AFFILIATE CORNER

# COUNTY TREASURERS DEAL WITH COVID-19, TAX FORECLOSURE AND LOWER FED RATES

By Bob Robinson/Eaton County Treasurer

On March 15, the Federal Reserve announced a drop in benchmark interest rates to 0 percent in an attempt to moderate the effects of the coronavirus outbreak on local communities and governments. This was down from a decade high of 2.25 percent in late 2019. While the difference between 0 and 2.25 doesn't seem like much, it can make a big difference in county revenue.

Across all departments and agencies in Eaton County, for example, we will see a \$700,000 drop in interest revenue in 2020. That's impactful for a county with a \$35 million budget and \$4.5 billion in taxable value.

About \$250,000 of lost interest is General Fund revenue. The county's road commission will lose \$259,000 and the drain commission nearly \$200,000 in 2020.

"After a decade of low rates, we were finally seeing some decent yields," said Saginaw County Treasurer Tim Novak. "We are also focused on the lack of tax collection receipts coming in. We're trying to get a grip on how much revenue will be lost.

Further complicating the revenue picture, counties statewide will see an increase in delinquent taxes and foreclosures as families and business owners deal with financial hardship in the months ahead. During the Great Recession, an economic downturn set off by a crash in housing and finance, many counties saw a 5-year, 45 percent increase in delinquent tax receipts.

On March 10, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer issued Executive Order 4, which among many other things extended Michigan's tax foreclosure deadline from March 31 (MCL 211.78g(3)) to May 29, or 30 days after the termination of the state of emergency. As of this writing, the 2020 tax foreclosure deadline runs through June 29. Some county treasurers have postponed 2020 foreclosures entirely because of the devastating financial hardship of the COVID emergency on home and business owners.

So how will COVID-19 affect tax receipts and foreclosures?

"Given this downturn is not related to the housing or finance sectors, I think the increase in delinquent tax receipts will be 20 percent to 25 percent," said Ingham County Treasurer Eric Schertzing. "But at this point, it's a guess. We will know more in six months."

If the problem evolves into a residential or commercial



property devaluation, we could see Great Recession numbers again," added Schertzing.

Here in Eaton County, my office estimates a total impact of about \$1 million annually for the next two or three years. That would be at minimum, with \$700,000 in lost interest and another \$300,000 in lost revenue from growing tax delinquent numbers.

The direct impact on the county's General Fund would be \$500,000.

If we see a negative interest rate environment, which is looking more and more like a future reality, the impact will be even bigger since the banks would then be charging rates against account balances.

Reduced interest earnings on investments, lost tax collections and additional quantitative easing by the Fed will create an unsettling mix of financial concerns for county governments. Treasurers and county boards throughout the state will be wrestling with these issues and impacts in the months ahead.

*Bob Robinson is the second vice president of the Michigan Association of County Treasurers (MACT).*

## Seven new ways we're protecting Michigan's water

Trust is earned. We are committed to doing what it takes to uphold our pledge to protect our Great Lakes while safely meeting Michigan's energy needs.

We have been listening to the concerns of the people of Michigan about protecting water, and have formally

entered into an agreement with the State of Michigan. This agreement includes seven key actions that we are undertaking to move toward a long-term solution for the future of Line 5.

Learn more at [enbridge.com/MichiganAgreement](https://enbridge.com/MichiganAgreement)



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## EXPERT CORNER

# DTE SUPPORTS COMMUNITIES DURING CRISIS IN MORE WAYS THAN JUST ENERGY

By Carla Gribbs/DTE Regional Manager

DTE Energy cares deeply about the counties and communities in which we live and serve, and its top priority during these unprecedented times is the health and safety of its customers and employees.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, DTE remains committed to providing our customers and community leaders with the support they need. We refined our safety practices, following CDC guidelines, to ensure we deliver energy while keeping employees and customers safe. From helping customers facing financial insecurity with their utility bills to fully activating the DTE Energy Foundation and its nonprofit partners to supply food, shelter and other basic needs – we are here to serve, and we are here to help.

We have continued to support our counties and communities throughout the state. DTE and the DTE Energy Foundation have:

- Donated 2 million KN95 masks to county emergency managers, first responders and hospitals throughout Michigan
- Raised \$1.3 million for Michigan Association of United Ways and Michigan Community Action
- Matched \$360,000 of DTE employee and retiree donations for local nonprofits.
- Welcomed 500 students into DTE's "Work from Anywhere" virtual internship program
- Supported 1,000 statewide non-profits — Helped 500,000 families with basic needs and provided 3 million meals through area agencies
- Enrolled 2,000 participants in our low-income bill support program since March
- 9,000 customers received State Emergency Relief payments during COVID-19
- Provided 51,000 tablets and internet access for Detroit Public School Community District students

We continue to support our residential customers. We:

- Extended coverage through winter 2020 for customers enrolled in our senior protection program: All seniors (62 and older) are covered by this program unless they chose another payment option.
- Broadened our 30-day medical hold policy to customers that are physically exposed, infected or quarantined by the COVID-19 virus (including influenza).
- Assisted low-income and vulnerable customer by instituting shut-off moratoriums for low-income and senior customers and created new payment plans to ease the burden of COVID-19.



**DTE Energy®**

DTE has signed on as sponsor for Podcast 83, MAC's regular look at the news, stories and trends related to Michigan's 83 counties from Keweenaw to Monroe, Chippewa to Berrien.

"We are pleased to have DTE support this new channel of communication to our members," said Executive Director Stephan Currie, who serves as host for the podcast. "One of my top goals as executive director at MAC is to multiply the ways we connect with members. Podcast 83 has been a vital step in achieving that goal."

Visit the [Podcast 83 page on the MAC website](#) to listen to any episode, or visit it on [Soundcloud](#).

For our business customers, we have:

- Organized support for small businesses: Working with state and federal leaders and the Small Business Administration of Michigan, DTE **helped** small businesses apply for small business administration loans.
- Partnered with Pure Michigan Business Connect to source products to keep our employees, customers and communities safe. 92 percent of our spend during the initial COVID-19 response – about \$15.3 million – went to local Michigan businesses.
- Distributed 6,000 PPE kits to support the safe reopening of small businesses across Michigan.
- Provided 400 grants to small businesses.

As we work through this pandemic, DTE is continuing to take big steps that will power Michigan's economy for years to come. As one of the largest investors in the state, DTE will spend \$2 billion with Michigan companies this year alone, continue to build critical infrastructure to provide cleaner, safer and more reliable energy and create thousands of new jobs across the state while continuing to build a stronger tomorrow.

Anyone having trouble paying your bills due to reduced income or health impacts from **COVID-19**, please call us at 800.477.4747.

## BEST PRACTICES

# SOCIAL MEDIA: BEST PRACTICES FROM AN EARLY ADOPTER

By Shannon Felgner/Ottawa County Communications Manager

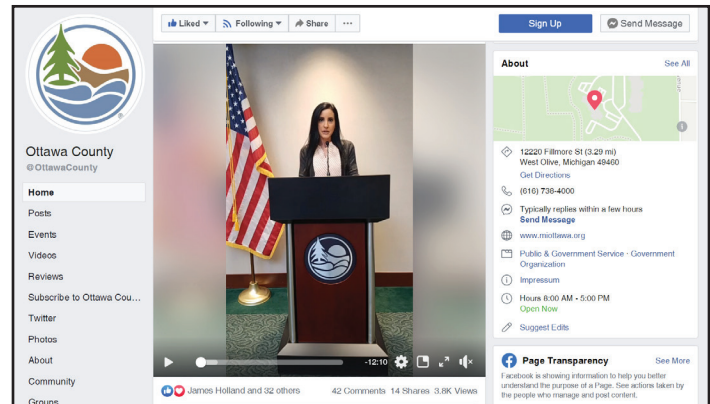
Ottawa County established its first social media account on Facebook in 2009. Since then, social media have become some of the most useful and effective communication tools employed by Ottawa County. During April, Ottawa County reached more than 448,000 unique residents via Facebook alone. Nearly 70,000 people engaged with the county on Facebook with comments, messages, shares and other interactions, demonstrating that social media are more than one-way communication. Social media are critical communication channels.

Much has changed since 2009. Additional social platforms have emerged, new tools are available and features have been added. These changes both enhance and test social media content creators. One of the most challenging changes on Facebook, most popular platform among Ottawa County residents according to its 2018 Citizen Survey, is known to social media managers as “the algorithm.”

At any given moment, Facebook is choosing between thousands of competing posts to be shown in your followers’ newsfeeds. Only about 100 ever make it to your target’s newsfeed. The elusive algorithm determines who will see your post. While Facebook will not disclose precisely how the formula works, it has disclosed some of the signals. Just a few of these signals include:

- Time of day of the post
- Speed of internet connection
- Type of device in use
- Type of post
- Previous interactions with posts
- Friends with interactions with posts
- Plus thousands of other signals

The key, then, is to work with what we know about the algorithm to ensure your page’s post is served to as many people as possible. Keep the following tips in mind to create engaging content.



**Kristina Wieghmink, communications specialist for the Ottawa County Department of Public Health, addresses residents about COVID-19 via Facebook LIVE during March 2020.**

### Post frequency

Data show that Facebook pages who post daily perform better than pages who post less than once a day. Posting up to three times per day is acceptable; however the posts should have varying content types.

### Content type

Pages who vary their type of content perform better. Content types include photos, status updates, videos, events, Lives, local alerts and more. Even the same topic shared as a different type of post can be effective at reaching additional individuals. Users who have not actively engaged with videos in the past are not likely to have a video show in their newsfeed. Perhaps these residents may be more likely to engage with a photo and, as such, they will be served more posts with photos. Remember to avoid “too much of the same” when it comes to the type of content.

**Continued on page 15**

## SHARE YOUR ‘BEST PRACTICES’ WITH MAC

From challenges come creativity, and boy have Michigan’s counties been challenged in the 21st century.

MAC continues to highlight how counties have found ways to continue or expand services in the most hostile of fiscal environments. Our “Best Practices” initiative isn’t a competition, but a celebration — of Great Lakes ingenuity, passion and plain ol’ grit.

Big or small, technical or simple, we want to hear how you have found a new way to serve your constituents.

Please send a brief description and contact information for the point person of your “Best Practice” to Derek Melot, [melot@micounties.org](mailto:melot@micounties.org).

For questions, call Melot at 517-372-5374.



**HOW COUNTIES ARE TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES**

# SOCIAL MEDIA: BEST PRACTICES FROM AN EARLY ADOPTER

from page 14

## Authentic posts

Content that is authentic performs better. Consider photos of real community members instead of stock imagery. You may want to share stories about the people behind the work you do. Imperfect video shot from a phone generally performs better than a slick, high-end production. Live videos perform very well in the algorithm and come with built in promotion tools, such as a notifying your followers that your page “is now live.” Interacting appropriately with your followers also improves engagement and authenticity in your posts.

## Final thoughts

Social media are effective and useful for communication when managed properly. The role of managing social media is complex, however, both an art and a science. Those managing social media protect the agency, mitigate risk, develop communication messaging, influence the public and take on a great deal of responsibility for an important communication channel. Leaders can support communication professionals and social media managers by remembering that, as with other positions in the workplace, the job requires a certain set of expertise, skills, education and training.



**Podcast 83 is MAC’s audio review of news and events in Michigan’s 83 counties, from Berrien to Chippewa, Iron to Monroe.**

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## Live Healthy U.S. Counties



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**Be a Live Healthy county with health discount programs for residents**



**Help your residents save on everyday prescription, dental and health costs.**

**Prescription Discounts** at more than 68,000 pharmacies nationwide. Free to residents – they can save an average of 24%\* off retail prices.

**Dental and Health Discounts** at a national network of providers. Low-fee programs save residents 15% to 50% on dental and health costs.

**The Live Healthy program also includes marketing materials to reach your residents.**

**Become a Live Healthy county – it’s free! Visit [www.naco.org/health](http://www.naco.org/health) or call toll-free 1-888-407-6226.**

The Live Healthy discount program is NOT insurance.



\* Savings may vary by drug and by pharmacy. The Prescription Discount Card is operated by CVS/caremark®. The Discount Medical Organization for NACo Health and Dental Discounts is Alliance HealthCard of Florida, Inc. All rights reserved. ©2015 CVS/caremark. 106-35891a 100515

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COUNTY NEWS NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES MAY 11, 2020 11

**BEHIND THE SEAL**

**TUOLUMNE COUNTY, Calif.**

**PROFILES IN SERVICE**



**VERONICA KLINEFELT**

Board Member  
President, Michigan Association of Counties  
Commissioner,  
Macomb County, Mich.

**Klinefelt**

**Every morning I read:** The Macomb Daily

**My favorite meal is:** Dinner, ribeye steak flame-grilled

**My pet peeve is:** People who litter

**My motto is:** If you don't lie, you don't have to remember what you said or did.

**My favorite movie is:** "The Sandlot"

**My favorite music is:** The Eagles

**My county is a NACO member because:** Together, our voice is heard. Great resources.

**Number of years involved in NACO:** Six

**Years in public service:** 21

**Education:** BS in Criminal Justice from Wayne State University

**The hardest thing I've ever done:** Say goodbye to a loved one.

**Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner:** Jon Meacham, Colin Powell and my great-grandfather, Michael Healy, the bootlegger.

**A dream I have is to:** Make a lasting difference.

**The most adventurous thing I've ever done:** Hitchhike across Ireland with my sisters and sleep on a hotel roof in Greece. (We travelled Europe with no money.)

**My favorite way to relax is:** Hanging out with family

**I'm most proud of:** My children

**You'd be surprised to learn:** I love to play poker.



The seal features the county's major industries and employers from the time, including logging, lumber mills and mining. Many of these industries remain important employers in the county today. The seal also depicts a stamp mill, smelting stacks and an ore dump.

The seal depicts recreational opportunities — skiing, water sports, camping and hiking — that attract tourists to the county. Other images in the seal showcase the tourism industry including cabins, toboggans, tents and skiers. Tuolumne County is a major gateway to Yosemite National Park.

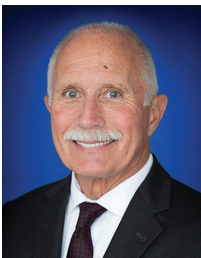
If you would like your county's seal featured in "Behind the Seal," contact Rachel Looker at rlooker@naco.org.

# KLINEFELT FEATURED IN NACO'S COUNTY NEWS

MAC Board President Veronica Klinefelt of Macomb County was featured in the May 11, 2020, edition of County News, the newsletter of the National Association of Counties.

In the newsletter's Profiles in Service feature, Klinefelt named The Eagles as her favorite band, cited litter as a pet peeve and copped to a love of poker.

## MEET YOUR MAC BOARD JOE BONOVELTZ AND KYLE HARRIS



**Name:** Joe Bonovetz  
**County/MAC Region:** Gogebic/Region 1  
**Position:** Director  
**County Service:** Board of Commissioners, 2007-present  
**Profession:** Retired letter carrier

**Previous Public Service:** Board service for Gogebic Health Department Board, Mental Health Board, NorthCare, Community Action, Transit, Northern Rail Transportation Commission, Regional Broadband, Trail Authority, MI Works, Airport, Finance, UPCAP and UP Legislative Coalition; serve as trustee for Michigan Counties Workers' Compensation Fund

### What was the most surprising challenge your county encountered in the first weeks of the COVID crisis?

Because of our remote location in the Upper Peninsula, COVID-19 did not have the fatal consequences that were suffered in Southern Michigan. Nevertheless, we took all of the precautions for ourselves as well as others. As we begin to open the state up, my prayer is that everyone will use common sense and be considerate of others.



**Name:** Kyle Harris  
**County/MAC Region:** Saginaw/Region 6  
**Position:** Director  
**County Service:** Board of Commissioners, 2017-present; committees on Labor Relations and County Services

**Profession:** Director of grower relations, Cherry Marketing Institute

**Previous Public Service:** Staff, Michigan House of Representatives and Michigan Senate

### What was the most surprising challenge your county encountered in the first weeks of the COVID crisis? Why?

I think the most challenging thing for Saginaw County was what to do with our employees. While we wanted to treat our employees for their hard work in uncertain times, it was clear that declining revenues and budgets would become problematic. While some wanted to lay off much of the workforce to match the private sector, there was those who believed we needed many in our workforce to continue carrying out many of the services the county provides. Another issue was what to do with members of the workforce who didn't have internet to work from home.

All in all, at the end of the day, I'd say things turned out well. Those who didn't want to work or were not "essential" were allowed not to. As for those who wanted to continue working in some capacity, they did and were rewarded for continuing to provide a service to the residents of Saginaw County.

# MAC

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

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**[www.micounties.org](http://www.micounties.org)**



## MEET THE STAFF

# KRISTINA GARNER AND GABRIEL ZAWADZKI



Garner

**Staffer:** Kristina Garner, Coordinator of Blue Cross and COBRA Services

**Joined MAC:** February 2006

Kristina is the “dean” of the MAC staff, having served with us for more than 14 years. During much of that time, Kristina has been our friendly face at exhibitor shows at MAC and other association events across Michigan. She is a fierce and highly knowledgeable fan of the Detroit Tigers.

**Briefly describe your daily duties at MAC:** I serve as Blue Cross Blue Shield/Blue Care Network and COBRA Administrator for several Michigan counties and county entities. I assist with their employee insurance changes and enrollments, prepare their COBRA compliance notifications and track and process all COBRA premiums. In addition, I work as a liaison between counties/county entities, BCBS/BCN, insurance agents and COBRA participants to help maintain established relations. I also provide general support to other MAC staffers.

**What do you find most interesting/rewarding about working at MAC?** What I particularly enjoy is being a part of an organization because that is dedicated to the mission of helping our counties in Michigan and supporting them with their county needs.



Zawadzki

**Staffer:** Gabriel Zawadzki, director, Grant Services Program

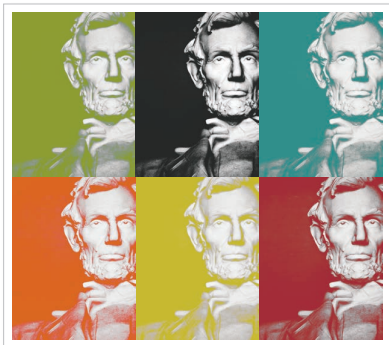
**Joined MAC:** October 2007

Gabriel joined MAC's Grant Services Program as an assistant in October 2007. In May 2018, he was named director of the program, which assists with writing and implementing a variety of grants. Gabriel also is MAC's informal “IT guy,” rescuing other staff members from a variety of

technology problems. Among his hobbies is photography; visitors to MAC's offices in Lansing can see several of his photographs of Michigan landscapes.

**Briefly describe your daily duties at MAC:** The Grant Services Program keeps counties informed of upcoming grants, writes grant applications, and helps with grant administration. An average day involves researching county funding and education opportunities for county commissioner email alerts. It sometimes narrows focus to special request projects that can range all the way from redeveloping contaminated land to improving parks to building hockey rinks. When a grant and project match up, work switches to strategy development, writing, and administration for successful applicants.

**What do you find most interesting/rewarding about working at MAC?** There are few things as satisfying as helping a county from start to finish on a grant that makes a real difference in a community, whether it's finding funds to demolish blight or helping a small fire department get new equipment. Grant writing and management also involve travel to all corners of the state. The beautiful landscapes passed through and unique communities visited during these trips have been unforgettable and a treasured part of working at MAC.



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BUT YOU CAN PLAN FOR IT.

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**Protect your people, protect your budget**

CoPro+, MAC's cooperative purchasing program especially designed for counties and other public entities, has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by creating a robust new program to give public entities the best possible prices and services on Personal Protective Equipment.

**NEW!** Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

## MACNEWS

# NACO ADDS TELEMEDICINE ACCESS AND INCREASED RX DISCOUNTS TO LIVE HEALTHY PROGRAM

By John Losh/NACo Membership Services

As millions of Americans are being laid off, working fewer hours and need greater access to healthcare due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many county residents are stretching every dollar.

Especially during these challenging times, the National Association of Counties (NACo) has been working to bring county residents NEW ways to cut healthcare costs through our Live Healthy discount program. Now more than ever, saving feels better.

At NO COST to NACo members, counties can provide significant savings for residents and their pets through NACo's Live Healthy discount program which provides savings on prescription, health and dental costs. Since 2004, nearly 1,300 counties, parishes and boroughs have enrolled to save residents over \$705 million on their prescriptions.

To assist during this time of need, the Live Healthy program has been enhanced to help residents save in new ways:

- 24/7 telemedicine access through the health discount program, providing unlimited calls with a clinician without co-pays
- An average of 30 percent savings – and increase of six percent – on medications with the NO COST Rx discount card
- More affordable monthly fees for the Health and Dental discount programs

No contracts or agreements are required for counties, parishes or boroughs to offer the Live Healthy discount program to residents. NACo provides comprehensive marketing materials to promote this program to your community at NO COST. To learn more about the program, order marketing materials or sign up, visit [NACo.org/health](https://naco.org/health).

In participating counties, residents with and without insurance can visit [LiveHealthyCard.com](https://LiveHealthyCard.com) to enroll and save on their prescriptions, health services and dental care.

### Prescription Discounts

Residents simply present their NO COST discount to save on prescriptions at more than 66,000 participating pharmacies across the country.\* The discount card also offers instant rebates on 69 common prescriptions.

### Health Discounts\*\*

For the new low price of \$5.95 a month for individuals



and \$7.95 for families, residents can enroll online at [LiveHealthyCard.com](https://LiveHealthyCard.com) or call 877.573.2395. The health program provides: 24/7 telemedicine access and savings between 15 percent and 70 percent on vision, hearing, diabetic supplies, prepaid lab work and diagnostic imaging.

### Dental Discounts\*\*

For the new low price of \$5.95 a month for individuals and \$7.95 for families, residents can enroll online at [LiveHealthyCard.com](https://LiveHealthyCard.com) or call 877-573-2395. The Dental program can provide savings up to 50 percent on most dental procedures with over 11,000 dentists, including check-ups, cleanings, X-rays, fillings, root canals, extractions and dentures.

These discounts are provided with no annual limits, no shopping around, no forms to complete, no waiting periods, no age or income requirements, no medical condition restrictions and no catch. The Live Healthy discount program is NOT health insurance and cannot be used in conjunction with health insurance.

To learn more about the program or sign up, visit [NACo.org/health](https://NACo.org/health) or contact NACo with questions about the program at [LiveHealthy@naco.org](mailto:LiveHealthy@naco.org).

*\*Savings may vary by drug and by pharmacy*

*\*\*Available in all states, except Washington*

*John Losh is membership outreach manager for the National Association of Counties.*