



MICHIGAN COUNTIES

Open Meetings Act: The dangers of delegation



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Letter from the Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Currie', written over a white background.

STEPHAN W. CURRIE
MAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“All commissioners should embrace their governance role by fostering transparency, making data-driven decisions and maintaining open communication with the public. This edition of *Michigan Counties* is centered around resources from MAC and elsewhere that can help you do just that.”

Michigan’s 619 county commissioners play a crucial role in shaping the communities they serve. They are responsible for setting policies, managing budgets and ensuring essential services reach residents efficiently. However, governing at the county level is not without its challenges. Political divisions, economic uncertainty, and unexpected crises — from natural disasters to public health emergencies — can create chaos and uncertainty. In these moments, strong leadership is needed to provide clarity and direction.

In 2024, we elected commissioners to four-year terms for the first time, and about 130 of you are new to the position. All commissioners should embrace their governance role by fostering transparency, making data-driven decisions and maintaining open communication with the public. This edition of *Michigan Counties* is centered around resources from MAC and elsewhere that can help you do just that.

County commissioners oversee a broad range of functions, including:

- **Budget and finance management:** Allocating resources for public safety, infrastructure, health services, and economic development.
- **Policy development:** Creating and enforcing ordinances that address local needs and concerns.
- **Collaboration with stakeholders:** Working with state agencies, municipalities, and private organizations to deliver services and improve community outcomes.

Given these responsibilities, commissioners must act as both policymakers and problem-solvers. In today’s fast-paced world, county governments face increasing pressure to respond quickly to crises while maintaining transparency and accountability. Here’s how commissioners can bring clarity through chaos:

1. Strengthening communication and transparency

One of the most effective ways to manage uncertainty is through clear and consistent communication. Commissioners should prioritize public engagement, interdepartmental coordination and media relations.

2. Data-driven decision-making

Making informed decisions based on reliable data is essential, especially in times of crisis.

By relying on objective data rather than political pressure or public sentiment alone, commissioners can make rational, effective decisions that stand up to scrutiny.

3. Building stronger intergovernmental and community partnerships

No county operates in isolation. Effective governance requires collaboration with various levels of government, local businesses, nonprofits and community groups.

These partnerships enable counties to leverage additional expertise and resources, ensuring a more coordinated and effective response to challenges.

4. Fiscal responsibility and strategic planning

Financial constraints often exacerbate crises, making it critical for commissioners to practice sound fiscal management. This includes long-term budget planning, efficient resource

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



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Letter from the President



Melissa A. Daub

MELISSA DAUB
PRESIDENT, MAC BOARD OF
DIRECTORS

“Our committee is considering ways to reduce food waste by developing strategies to divert food from landfills and implement composting programs and I hope that you will do the same in your home county.”

As we navigate the complexities of our roles as county commissioners, one issue continues to demand our attention and action: food insecurity. No one in our state should struggle to access nutritious food. Yet far too many families across our diverse communities face this very challenge.

The situation is alarming. According to Feeding America, 1.4 million Michigan residents are facing hunger, and over 378,000 of those residents are children. These aren't just numbers; they are struggling families, children going without meals and seniors facing hardship right here in our communities.



At the same time, food is the single largest source of material disposed of in our state's landfills. According to the Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, Michigan disposes of 1.5 million to 2 million tons of food waste through its municipal and commercial waste streams each year. This waste is responsible for an estimated 11.1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions and \$11.9 billion in lost revenue.

Recently, I attended a panel event hosted by Forgotten Harvest and the Michigan Sustainable Business Forum titled “Reducing Hunger, Building Climate Leadership: The Future of Food Resue in Michigan.” The panel participants discussed ways we can address food insecurity and meet our climate goals by forming partnerships between food producers and non-profit organizations in our communities.

Forgotten Harvest is an organization that works to rescue surplus food from grocery stores, restaurants, and caterers, and delivers it to emergency food providers in the metro-Detroit area. In one year, Forgotten Harvest rescued and donated 42,114,494 pounds of food to families who are food-insecure and struggle to cover the cost of basic life necessities.

Michigan counties are now working with the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy to write new Material Management Plans (MMP) that will replace existing Solid Waste Management Plans. I serve as vice chair of Wayne County's MMP Committee. Our committee is considering ways to reduce food waste by developing strategies to divert food from landfills and implement composting programs and I hope that you will do the same in your home county.

Food insecurity demands our immediate attention. As we work on our new MMPs, we have a unique opportunity to address hunger and food waste. Let's move beyond conversation and commit to concrete action. I welcome your partnership and look forward to the progress we will make together. ♦

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Letter from the Executive Director

FROM PAGE 5

allocation and seeking grants or alternative funding. By maintaining financial stability, counties can exercise proactive decision-making and remain resilient in the face of economic turmoil.

A commissioner's ability to provide clarity during times of uncertainty directly impacts the well-being of their constituents. Leadership is not just about making decisions, it's about inspiring confidence, fostering collaboration and ensuring county government remains responsive and effective.

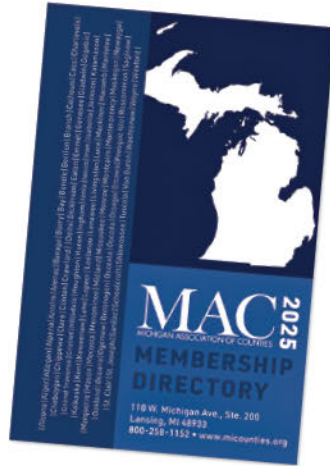
As stewards of local government, commissioners must rise to the occasion, ensuring their counties are not only prepared for the challenges ahead but also poised for a prosperous future. ♦

MAC Member Directory is on its way

MAC is pleased to announce the impending delivery of the 2025 MAC Membership Directory.

The annual document, with more than 140 pages of information, is mailed free of charge to:

- County commissioners
- County administrators
- County board offices
- Countywide elected officials



As usual, the directory includes:

- Listings of elected officials in each of Michigan's 83 counties
- Listings of members of the Michigan Legislature and the state's delegation in the U.S. Congress
- Background material on MAC's advocacy activities
- A brief history of county government in Michigan

The digital version of the directory will be linked to MAC's website, with access credentials to be found on Table of Contents page of printed editions.

For corrections or updates to the digital edition, please contact Communications Director Derek Melot at melot@micounties.org.

to actively promote county roles and responsibilities in serving residents.

Through participating in NCGM, your county can:

- Champion the county workforce (Michigan counties collectively employ more than 40,000 people from Monroe to Gogebic)
- Boost civic engagement and strengthen connections between government and residents
- Raise public awareness of programs and services provided to the community

In 2024, MAC arranged with Rep. Julie Rogers, a former Kalamazoo County commissioner and MAC Board member, for a House resolution in support of NCGM.

A sample proclamation, sample press release, celebration ideas, social media resources and more can be found at <https://bit.ly/CountyMonth2025>.

Celebrate National County Government Month in April

National County Government Month (NCGM), held each April, is an annual celebration of county government. Since 1991, the National Association of Counties (NACo) has encouraged counties



Tuscola's Young passes at age 74



YOUNG

Tuscola County Commissioner Tom Young died Jan. 12, 2025, at age 74. He was a Republican from Unionville and represented the county's District 1 since 2016.

Young also held roles as a township supervisor, a village council member for Unionville for 20 years and was a member of the Tuscola County Farm Bureau Board of Directors.

His professional career included stints at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, where he served as a business development manager for over 18 years, PTAC and Thumb Area Michigan Works.

He served as a Tuscola County commissioner for District 1 beginning in 2016, rising to vice chair of the Tuscola County Board chair of its Finance Committee. His public service also included roles as a township supervisor and a village council member for Unionville. ♦

Sign up now for the 2025 Legislative Conference

The 2025 Michigan Counties Legislative Conference will be held April 7-9, 2025, at the DoubleTree Hotel in Lansing.

The event, co-hosted by the Michigan County Medical Care Facilities Council, will feature a new format that ensures no MAC member misses any informational session that interests them.

This year, those sessions will include updates on such issues as cybersecurity, Michigan's housing crunch, road funding options, the state's juvenile bed shortage and much more! All of these educational sessions will be plenary sessions, meaning no overlapping events or choices to be made.

Special events at the conference include:

- A Strolling Dinner on the opening night for mingling with colleagues and MAC's Premier Corporate Partners
- A Legislative Reception, during which MAC will honor its "Legislative Advocates" for 2024
- Presentation of certificates to members of the 2025 class of County Commissioner Academy



Member pricing for the conference is \$425 for all events, though one- and two-day packages are available. Any elected or appointed county official or member of MCMCFC may use member pricing.

To start your registration, go to <https://bit.ly/2025LCregister>.

MAC has secured a room block at the DoubleTree, with a per-night rate of \$189. To secure that hotel rate, register directly with the hotel **by clicking here**.

We look forward to seeing you at the DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Lansing! ♦

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No-cost Prescription Discount Program.

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Low-fee health discounts nationwide.

- Provides 24/7 telemedicine service and save 15% to 75% on vision services, hearing aids and screenings, diabetes supplies, prepaid lab work and more

Low-fee dental discounts nationwide.

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Open Meetings Act: The dangers of delegation

BY MATT NORDFJORD/MANAGING SHAREHOLDER, CST MUNICIPAL LAW

“A public meeting is any meeting of a public body that a quorum of the public body attends where those decisions are made, or those deliberations occur. (MCL 15.262(b))

Most public bodies use sub-quorum committees as part of their normal governmental process, and the Open Meetings Act (OMA) may also impact these sub-quorum committees.”



The Michigan Open Meetings Act (MCL 15.261 et seq.; “OMA”) requires all “public bodies” to make their decisions — and have all deliberations toward those decisions — at “public meetings.”

A public meeting is any meeting of a public body that a quorum of the public body attends where those decisions are made, or those deliberations occur. (MCL 15.262(b))

Most public bodies use sub-quorum committees as part of their normal governmental process, and the Open Meetings Act (OMA) may also impact these sub-quorum committees.

First, if the committee is delegated by law or by the full Board the authority to make these decisions, the committee is also considered a separate “public body” subject to the OMA’s requirements. ([MCL 15.262(a); e.g., statutory finance committees under MCL 46.51 et seq. and 46.61 et seq.]. *Even if the final decisions are reserved for the full Board and the committees are purely intended as advisory to the full body, sub-quorum committees can still run afoul of the OMA.*

For example, a meeting of a sub-quorum committee at which a quorum of the full public body actually attends and actively participates in deliberations can make that meeting subject to the OMA. (*Nicholas v Meridian Charter Twp Bd*, 239 Mich App 525 (2000)) Similarly, round-robin meetings of the sub-quorum committees to consider an issue, such as to consider applicant for an appointment, can be considered a violation of the OMA when used to circumvent the OMA’s public meeting requirements. (*Booth Newspapers, Inc v University of Michigan Bd of Regents*, 444 Mich 211 (1993); 1981-1982 Mich. OAG No. 6091)

Even if the full public body has reserved the authority to render a final decision, the actions of the committees in how they make their recommendations may require compliance with the OMA.

Where a committee, council or subcommittee is empowered to act on matters in manner that deprives the full body (e.g., the Board of Commissioners) of the opportunity to consider and vote on all of the matters before it, the committee’s decision “is an exercise of

governmental authority which effectuates public policy,” and the committee proceedings are therefore subject to the OMA. (OAG, 1997-1998, No 5222, p 216, 217-218 (Sept. 1, 1977)) For example, when a committee (or sub-committee) considers and eliminates potential options that are not part of the eventual advisory conclusion sent to the Board of Commissioners, this narrowing of scope is an exercise of governmental authority that effectuates public policy. This may occur where there are several applications under consideration, and the committee recommends some of them and rejects others. In this instance, all the applications must be presented to the full body for consideration with the committee’s recommendations. **Otherwise, the committee is deemed to have made a final decision by rejecting some of the applications.**

This point is underscored by the decision of the Michigan Court of Appeals in *Schmiedicke v Clare School Bd*, 228 Mich App 259, 261 (1998). In that case, a local school board established a Personnel and Policy Committee (PPC) and delegated to that committee “the task of reviewing whether the school district should retain its current method for evaluating school administrators and whether the length of administrator contracts should be changed.”

The committee thereafter met in private and ultimately recommended no change in the school district’s existing policies. After receiving the committee’s report, the full school board took no action, effectively adopting the committee’s recommendation. The Michigan Court of Appeals concluded that, under these facts, the committee was subject to the OMA and had violated that Act by meeting in private. The court reached this conclusion even though the school board had apparently not intended to delegate actual decision-making authority to the committee. (*Schmiedicke*, 228 Mich App at 263-264)

Matters referred to or considered by a committee that reach the full Board of Commissioners only if the committee makes a recommendation or if the committee makes an unfavorable recommendation and the matter does not reach the Board; may result in the exercise of governmental authority which effectuates public policy. If the facts demonstrate this, the committee is not merely advisory but exercised governmental authority which effectuates public policy and is, therefore, subject to the requirements of the OMA. (OAG, 1977-1978, No 5222, *supra*, at 218; OAG, 1998, No. 7000)

This point was more recently elucidated when the Michigan Supreme Court, in a 5-2 decision, decided the case of

Pinebrook Warren v City of Warren, ___ Mich ___; ___ NW3d ___ (July 31, 2024), which reversed a Court of Appeals decision, and held that an advisory committee formed to make recommendations was subject to the OMA.

Although advisory committees are generally not subject to compliance with the OMA, it is not sufficient to simply label a committee as advisory. Rather, the enabling action and the actions actually taken by the committee, and the conduct of the full Board’s subsequent deliberations and decision on the committee recommendations, must be examined to determine whether it was the committee that actually made the decisions, thus rendering the committee a public body subject to compliance with the OMA. The full Board must demonstrate independent consideration of the merits of the committee’s recommendations, and not merely give their approval without adequate discussion.¹

In a subsequent case, *Exclusive Partners, LLC v City of Royal Oak*, ___ Mich App ___; ___ NW3d ___ (Dec. 4, 2024), the Court of Appeals applied the holding of *Pinebrook Warren* in determining that an OMA violation occurred when the City Commission delegated its authority to the city manager to rank applicants for marijuana establishment licenses. The City Commission approved the City Manager’s rankings when awarding the licenses without apparent deliberation. The court viewed the city manager as a de facto decision maker in the process. Therefore, his closed-door meetings with staff in which the rankings were made constituted a decision by a governing body, which required compliance with the OMA.

Based on the typical operation of standing committees and any other similar committees/sub-committees of the County Board of Commissioners, the committees are subject to the Open Meetings Act when the committee is effectively authorized to determine whether items of consideration will or will not be referred forward for consideration and action by the full Board of Commissioners. The tasks of studying, considering and narrowing a variety of issues for the purpose of rendering a final recommendation(s) to the full Board should be open to the public consistent with the purpose of the OMA. ♦

¹The Michigan Supreme Court remanded this case to the Court of Appeals to determine whether the few subsequent meetings of the committee held pursuant to the OMA remedied the prior violation. On December 12, 2024, the Court of Appeals issued an unpublished opinion that vacated the issuing of the medical marijuana licenses due to the Review Committee’s failure to comply with the OMA and remanded the case to the trial court for further proceedings consistent with its opinion.



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CRC is your partner in making government better

BY ERIC LUPHER/CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN

I have been drafting columns for Michigan Counties for several years now, sharing research and perspectives from the Citizens Research Council of Michigan (CRC). I hope you find them useful. I also hope this has spurred some of you to learn more about CRC and investigate the research that, among other things, will help you better keep your counties functioning.

For those of you who have not yet done so (www.crcmich.org), the Citizens Research Council was founded in 1916 to improve government in Michigan. We provide factual, unbiased, independent information concerning significant issues of state and local government organization, policy and finance. By delivering this information to policymakers and citizens, we aim to ensure sound and rational public policy formation in Michigan.

We think of ourselves as a good government organization. We don't approach issues from a conservative, free-market perspective nor from a progressive, liberal perspective. Rather, given the need for government services, we monitor trends in state and local finances; analyze the structure and organization of government; conduct in-depth studies of major public policy issues; and assist public officials and concerned citizens to promote efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in governmental operations.

How can you operationalize the principles of good government within county government?

Economy. The economic operation of county government means that you are using the financial resources provided in the most thrifty, efficient manner possible. Earmarking is bad because revenue trends and service needs do not grow in tandem. All revenues should be put through budgetary processes to ensure they are put to their best use. Take seriously your role in oversight and take a fresh look at the county departments and service delivery mechanisms.

Efficiency. Challenged department heads and division leaders to ensure that operations

consume as little time, energy, and money as possible. This may be more of a challenge for counties than other types of local governments because of the number of independently elected officials. It makes intentionality more important. Ultimately, county commissioners control the purse strings. Use that power for the betterment of the county.

Governance of service delivery should reflect those that fund the service and those that benefit from its delivery. While state funding is helpful, it is also the case that the pleasure of spending money should accompany the misery of raising it.

Counties have big geographic footprints. Use the power to adjust the number of commissioners to your advantage. Honestly evaluate the many constituencies (urban, rural, agriculture, suburbs, etc.) within the county and adjust the number of commissioners to resemble the varied interests rather than consolidating many interests into few districts.

Equity can mean different things to different people. Generational equity is good. Today's services should be paid for by today's taxpayers.

Accountability. Sunshine is good. Many county services are not high profile. Be proactive in letting county residents know about the decisions being made and actions being taken by county government. Adhere to both the letter and spirit of open meetings and freedom of information laws.

For the few counties operating as home rule counties, make sure operations reflect the charter. For general law and optional unified counties, do what you can to make county operations understandable by the residents.

County commissioners are elected in partisan elections. However, there is not a partisan way to provide most county services. Your policy lens will lead you to certain decisions, but with the principles of good government guiding you, the county will serve the needs of all county residents. ♦

Eric Lupher is president of the Citizens Research Council of Michigan.



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.

“We provide factual, unbiased, independent information concerning significant issues of state and local government organization, policy and finance. By delivering this information to policymakers and citizens, we aim to ensure sound and rational public policy formation in Michigan.”

MSU Extension trainings support effective county governance

BY ERIC WALCOTT/GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY VITALITY SPECIALIST, MSU EXTENSION

“A partnership with the Michigan Department of Treasury, the Fiscally Ready Communities program offers five webinars focused on financial sustainability.”

In 2025, Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) will continue our commitment to preparing county leaders for effective governance. Nearly 200 county officials participated in the 2024 New Commissioner School in partnership with the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC), and we look forward to continuing to equip even more leaders with the tools they need to serve their communities.

MSUE offers a comprehensive range of programs to meet the various needs of county officials, ensuring they are well-prepared to navigate the challenges of effective governance.

Governing Essentials Webinar Series: The Governing Essentials Webinar Series is tailored for local elected and appointed officials who wish to sharpen their skills and promote good governance practices. Sessions cover the Open Meetings Act, Parliamentary Procedure, and Components of Extraordinary Governance. Participants can view the webinars individually or as part of a three-part series. The webinars are offered in March, August, and December, providing multiple opportunities to engage with the material.

Fiscally Ready Communities: A partnership with the Michigan Department of Treasury, the Fiscally Ready Communities program offers five webinars focused on financial sustainability. These sessions guide local governments in adopting best practices for budgeting, financial planning, and operational efficiency, empowering communities to achieve long-term fiscal health and resilience.

Citizen Planner: The Citizen Planner Program is available multiple times in the spring, with an additional online option. This program offers land use education for locally appointed and elected planning officials, as well as interested residents across Michigan. The award-winning curriculum is designed to provide participants



with knowledge and skills to make informed land use decisions in their communities.

Master Planner Series: The Master Citizen Planner (MCP) webinar series

Citizen Webinar

offers those with the MCP credential, and interested residents, an opportunity to learn more about contemporary planning and zoning topics. The series includes six 1-hour webinars available throughout the year. This series helps residents and appointed officials to deepen their understanding and application of land use planning principles.

Strategic Planning/Goal Setting Facilitation: MSUE's trained facilitators provide tailored workshops for community groups looking to define and achieve their goals. These workshops, available year-round by request, include brainstorming, prioritization, and action planning, ensuring groups have a clear path toward their desired outcomes.

Custom Trainings by Request: MSUE understands that each community has unique needs. The Good Governance team offers customizable training on a wide range of local government issues, ensuring county leaders receive relevant, impactful education.

MSUE's programs are designed to support county leaders, fostering effective governance that strengthens Michigan communities. Whether it's mastering fiscal policies, understanding land use, or setting strategic goals, these initiatives prepare leaders to make informed decisions that benefit their constituents.

For more information on registration and program details, visit the Michigan State University Extension website at www.canr.msu.edu/government or reach out to your local county extension office at www.canr.msu.edu/government. We look forward to supporting your journey toward effective governance in 2025 and beyond. ♦



Coming soon: County Commissioner Academy 2.0

County Commissioner Academy is a professional development program for commissioners incorporating a series of events and workshops focused on the day-to-day responsibilities of a Michigan county commissioner. Participants earn continuing education “hours” by attending designated events and workshops.

Since its inception, the academy has certified more than 130 current and former county commissioners, with graduates honored each year at the Michigan Counties Legislative Conference.

This year, in addition to our normal “graduation ceremony” at the conference, MAC will unveil details of “Academy 2.0.” These changes are designed to enhance MAC’s educational offerings and adapt to the new rhythm of service for commissioners now elected for four-year terms.

“We are confident that these updates will improve our ‘curriculum’ for members and, thereby, enhance the value of your county’s MAC membership,” explained Executive Director Stephan Currie.

For more information about CCA, contact MAC Communications Director Derek Melot at melot@micounties.org or 517-372-5374. ♦

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MAC sets '25 legislative priorities; launches internal committees for platform work

BY DEENA BOSWORTH/DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

In late January, MAC announced its key priorities for 2025 with the Michigan Legislature, focusing on securing fair revenue sharing, enacting reforms to Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act, addressing court funding challenges, compensating local governments for tax revenue losses and increasing road funding.

MAC also has filled out its internal committees, which will play a crucial role in shaping the association's policy platforms and legislative advocacy in the months ahead.

MAC's committees provide county commissioners with a platform to engage in in-depth policy discussions, hear from industry experts and guide the association's advocacy team in its work. The five internal committees are:

- Environment, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Tourism
- Finance and General Government
- Health and Human Services
- Judiciary and Public Safety
- Transportation and Infrastructure

(See membership lists on page 20.)

2025 State Priorities

MAC has identified several key legislative and funding issues that it will advocate for in 2025. These priorities reflect the needs of Michigan's counties and aim to ensure fair funding, effective governance, and improved public services. (Use the QR code to access a printable PDF for handy home reference.)



Creating a Fair Revenue Sharing System for Counties

Revenue sharing remains the most flexible form of state aid to counties, enabling them



to make localized, impactful investments in public services. MAC is advocating for the establishment of a Revenue Sharing Trust Fund (RSTF) through a statutory earmark of the state sales tax. This would earmark a share of the first 4 percentage points of the state's sales tax for this purpose.

Funds deposited into the RSTF would remain dedicated to local government distribution, ensuring stability and predictability in funding. The proposed structure mirrors the original intent of revenue sharing, where local allocations rise and fall in proportion to sales tax revenue.

Enacting Reforms to Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act

Counties face significant staffing challenges due to the current structure of Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act, which is set to take effect on February 21, 2025. MAC supports House Bill 4002 to provide necessary reforms, including:

- Clear guidelines on earned sick time requirements for county employees.

“Revenue sharing remains the most flexible form of state aid to counties, enabling them to make localized, impactful investments in public services. MAC is advocating for the establishment of a Revenue Sharing Trust Fund (RSTF) through a statutory earmark of the state sales tax”

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

- Scaled-back leave time requirements for part-time and seasonal workers.
- Employer discretion on the rollover of unused time.
- A more feasible and manageable sick leave structure for county governments.

Compensating Local Governments for Funds Diverted by the Veterans Property Tax Exemption

Since the passage of the Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption in 2013, counties have faced substantial revenue losses, amounting to tens of millions of dollars annually. While MAC supports the exemption, it urges the state to:

- Compensate local governments through a refundable income tax credit.
- Ensure that counties are not burdened by the financial impacts of the exemption.

Adopting a Permanent State Solution to Funding Michigan's Courts

Michigan's counties are the primary funding source for the state's trial courts. However, the ability to collect fees from criminal defendants to support the court system is set to expire on Dec. 31, 2026. MAC is advocating for a long-term funding solution, including:

- Permanent legislative action to secure court funding.
- Implementation of recommendations from the Trial Court Funding Commission.
- A stable, efficient funding model that does not place undue financial pressure on counties.

Increasing Road Funding to Address Michigan's Infrastructure Crisis

Michigan faces an estimated \$3.9 billion annual shortfall in road and bridge funding. MAC is committed to securing additional resources to address this crisis without reducing revenue sharing. Key goals include:

- Ensuring county roads receive dedicated and increased funding.
- Exploring alternative funding mechanisms to provide sustainable infrastructure investment.
- Advocating for bipartisan solutions to Michigan's transportation funding challenges.

MAC is committed to advancing these priorities and, with our members' help, ensuring Michigan's counties receive the funding and support necessary to provide essential services. ♦

MAC Internal Committees for 2025

Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Tourism

- Jeff Dontz, Commissioner, Manistee, Chair
- Jack Shattuck, Commissioner, Ionia
- Josh Chamberlain, Commissioner, Charlevoix
- Walter Bujak, Commissioner, Kent
- Phil Kuyers, Commissioner, Ottawa
- Tami O'Donnell, Commissioner, Gladwin
- Gail Patterson-Gladney, Commissioner, Van Buren
- Gary Sauer, Commissioner, Benzie
- William Sarkella, Commissioner, Sanilac
- Julie Wuerfel, Commissioner, Berrien
- TJ Andrews, Commissioner, Grand Traverse
- Dennis Harris, Commissioner, Saginaw
- Nikki Koons, Commissioner, Manistee
- Monica Schafer, Commissioner, Ingham
- Kurt Doroh, Commissioner, Van Buren
- Kris Pachla, Commissioner, Kent
- Philip Lewis, Commissioner, Crawford
- Terry Marecki, Commissioner, Wayne
- Beverly Brown, Commissioner, Genesee
- Tracy Slodowski, Commissioner, Saginaw
- Melissa Daub, MAC President, Wayne (NV)
- Stan Ponstein, MAC Board member, Kent (NV)
- Dwight Washington, MAC Board member, Clinton (NV)
- John Malnar, MAC Board member, Delta (NV)
- Kevin Shepard, MACAO representative, Charlevoix (NV)
- Suzy Koepplinger, Board coordinator, Saginaw (NV)
- Sarah Kline, Acrisure (NV)

Finance and General Government

- Bob Showers, Commissioner, Clinton, Chair
- Glenn Anderson, Commissioner, Wayne
- Chris Jane, Commissioner, Mecosta
- Dave Vollrath, Commissioner, Berrien
- Katie DeBoer, Commissioner, Kent
- Karen Moore, Commissioner, Gladwin
- Art Jeannot, Commissioner, Benzie
- Jim Van Doren, Commissioner, Lenawee
- Thomas Bardwell, Commissioner, Tuscola
- David White, Commissioner, Emmet
- Doug Zylstra, Commissioner, Ottawa
- Wendy Mazer, Commissioner, Kalamazoo
- Jessica Cook, Commissioner, Muskegon
- Nikki Koons, Commissioner, Manistee
- Craig Reiter, Commissioner, Schoolcraft
- John Kaczynski, Commissioner, Alpena
- Alex Garza, Commissioner, Wayne

- Angela Powell, Commissioner, Oakland
- Melissa Daub, MAC President, Wayne (NV)
- Richard Schmidt, MAC Board member, Manistee (NV)
- Bryan Kolk, MAC Board member, Newaygo (NV)
- Paul Compo, MACAO representative, Crawford (NV)
- Kim Murphy, MACAO representative, Lenawee (NV)
- John Fuentes, MACAO representative, Clinton (NV)
- Sarah Kline, Acrisure (NV)

Health and Human Services

- Jim Moreno, Commissioner, Isabella, Chair
- Gail Patterson-Gladney, Commissioner, Van Buren
- Jeanne Pearl-Wright, Commissioner, Eaton
- Rhonda Nye, Commissioner, Benzie
- Julie Wuerfel, Commissioner, Berrien
- Lisa Salgat, Commissioner, Arenac
- Craig Reiter, Commissioner, Schoolcraft
- NicoleChristensen, Commissioner, Eaton
- Michael Webster, Commissioner, Saginaw
- Irene Cahill, Commissioner, Ingham
- Tanya Pratt, Commissioner, Ingham
- Angela Powell, Commissioner, Oakland
- Linnie Taylor, Commissioner, Oakland
- Melissa Daub, MAC President, Wayne (NV)
- Antoinette Wallace, MAC Board member, Macomb (NV)
- Vaughn Begick, MAC Board member, Bay (NV)
- Richard Schmidt, MAC Board member, Manistee (NV)
- Dwight Washington, MAC Board member, Clinton (NV)
- Sarah Lucido, MAC Board member, Macomb (NV)
- Tracy Byard, MACAO representative, Oceana (NV)
- Norm Hess, Assoc. for Local Public Health representative (NV)
- David LaLumia, Area Agencies on Aging Assoc. representative (NV)
- Alan Bolter, Community Mental Health Assoc. representative (NV)
- Bob VanderZwagg, County Social Services Assoc. representative (NV)
- Renee Beniak, MCMCFC representative (NV)
- Don Haney, MCMCFC representative (NV)
- Suzy Koeplinger, Board Coordinator, Saginaw (NV)
- Sarah Kline, Acrisure (NV)

Judiciary and Public Safety

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- Karen Moore, Commissioner, Gladwin
- Wendy Mazer, Commissioner, Kalamazoo
- Chris Jane, Commissioner, Mecosta
- Brad Haggadone, Commissioner, Lapeer
- Tami O'Donnell, Commissioner, Gladwin
- Christopher Boyd, Commissioner, Saginaw
- Rayonte Bell, Commissioner, Berrien
- Bill Lutz, Commissioner, Tuscola
- Jon Houtz, Commissioner, Branch
- Brian Potter, Commissioner, Wexford
- Jessica Cook, Commissioner, Muskegon
- Lisa Salgat, Commissioner, Arenac
- NicoleChristensen, Commissioner, Eaton
- Melissa Daub, MAC President, Wayne (NV)
- Bryan Kolk, MAC Board member, Newaygo (NV)
- Doug Lloyd, Prosecuting Attorneys Assoc. of Michigan representative, Eaton (NV)
- Hon. Jan Cunningham, Michigan Judges Association representative, Eaton (NV)
- Mike Murphy, Michigan Sheriffs Assoc. representative, Livingston (NV)
- Kim Murphy, MACAO representative, Lenawee (NV)
- Debra Kubitskey, MACAO representative, Jackson (NV)
- Shannon Elliott, MACAO representative, Lenawee (NV)
- Suzy Koeplinger, Board Coordinator, Saginaw (NV)
- Sarah Kline, Acrisure (NV)

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Brian Gutowski, Commissioner, Emmet, Chair
- WalterBujak, Commissioner, Kent
- Kevin Knisely, Commissioner, Lapeer
- Mark Piotrowski, Commissioner, Saginaw
- Monica Schafer, Commissioner, Ingham
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Navigating the future of work: Insights for Michigan county leaders

BY SONJA BRININGER, SHRM-CP AND JEANNE BOLHUIS/ACRISURE

Sonja Brininger, SHRM-CP is an HR consultant and Jeanne Bolhuis is senior HR consultant for Acrisure, a MAC Premier Partner.



“Leaders should invest in technology that supports hybrid work, such as collaboration tools that enhance communication between remote and on-site staff. Additionally, creating designated spaces in county offices for collaborative work can help foster a sense of community and belonging among employees.”

With 2025 well underway, the landscape of work is evolving rapidly, presenting both challenges and opportunities for leaders in Michigan’s county entities. As workplaces evolve at an unprecedented pace, how can Michigan county leaders stay ahead? Read on for some key strategies to consider for fostering a thriving workforce that can compete with the private sector.

At the heart of any successful organization lies its people. Empowering employees is not just a management strategy but a fundamental principle that can lead to enhanced organizational performance. For county leaders, this means creating an environment where employees feel valued and engaged. Providing opportunities for professional development and ensuring that employees’ voices are heard can significantly improve job

satisfaction. For example, Michigan counties could implement regular town hall meetings, allowing staff to share their ideas and concerns directly with leadership.

Over 44 million Americans quit their jobs in 2023. Michigan county leaders should take note of this trend, particularly as 51 percent of U.S. employees are actively seeking new opportunities. This reality underscores the necessity of retaining talent, especially in public service roles. Consider conducting “stay interviews” with current employees to understand their motivations and areas for improvement within the workplace. This can help retain skilled workers and reduce turnover.

The transition to hybrid work models has been one of the most significant changes in recent years. There are challenges and advantages of this work style. For Michigan counties, this

means recognizing the need for flexible work arrangements while also ensuring that employees remain connected and engaged. Leaders should invest in technology that supports hybrid work, such as collaboration tools that enhance communication between remote and on-site staff. Additionally, creating designated spaces in county offices for collaborative work can help foster a sense of community and belonging among employees.

With 52 percent of employees reporting high levels of daily stress, mental health has become a pressing concern. County leaders must prioritize employee wellbeing by expanding mental health programs and resources. This could involve partnerships with local mental health organizations to provide workshops and support services tailored to the unique challenges faced by public sector employees.

The forecast for 2025 highlights the increasing importance of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB). Even with the changing attitude at a national level toward DEIB initiatives, for Michigan counties, this is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage. County leaders can create a more representative workforce that reflects the communities they serve. This could involve outreach programs to encourage underrepresented groups to apply for county jobs and ensuring that hiring practices are equitable. Training programs focused on cultural competency can also enhance workplace collaboration and understanding among staff.

The concept of work-life balance is crucial in retaining talent and ensuring employee satisfaction. Leaders in Michigan counties should strive to create policies that promote flexibility, such as adjustable work hours or the option to work remotely when feasible. This approach not only supports employees' personal needs but also fosters loyalty and productivity.

As Michigan county leaders navigate the future of work, it is essential to adopt a forward-thinking mindset. By empowering employees, addressing workforce trends, and prioritizing wellbeing and inclusion, county entities can create a vibrant workplace that attracts and retains talent. The path forward requires intentionality and a commitment to fostering a community where every employee feels valued and engaged. Through these efforts, Michigan counties can not only enhance their organizational culture but also better serve their communities in the coming years.

By embracing these strategies, leaders can ensure that their counties are not just adapting to change but thriving in it, setting the stage for a future-ready workforce. ♦



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Ogemaw charts course out of jail dilemma

BY TIMOTHY DOLEHANTY / OGE MAW COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR-CONTROLLER

“Michigan counties, at their own cost and expense, are required to provide a suitable and sufficient jail. In lieu of providing a jail, counties may contract with other counties for the use of their jails.”

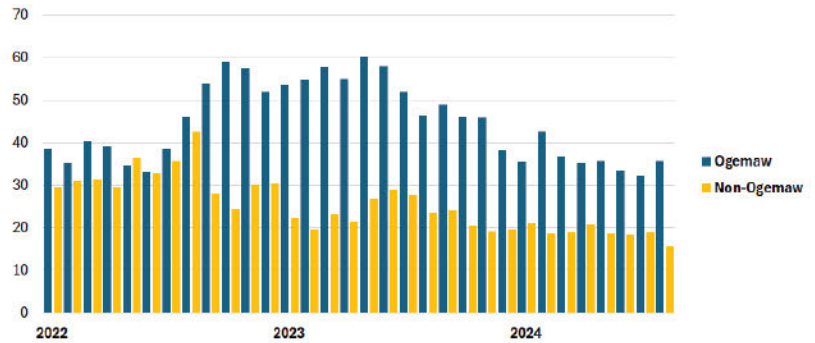
Ogemaw County routinely balanced its General Fund budget for more than a decade with supplemental transfers from the tax revolving fund and, more recently, the American Rescue Plan Act. By the time work began on Ogemaw County’s fiscal 2025 budget, however, transfers from these funds would no longer be viable. Coupled with other significant reductions, the County faced a projected revenue reduction of 12.5 percent, with (literally) no financial reserves to fill the gap. The situation was dire, to say the least.

Over many years, Ogemaw County faced financial challenges through reduced hours of operation and staff cuts. Many departments were already operating at or near minimum service levels, so options for spending cuts were limited. Attention turned to operational costs of the county jail, which accounted for 21 percent of all General Fund expenditures.

The Ogemaw Jail opened in 2010 with a designed capacity far greater than that needed to house Ogemaw County inmates. Total occupancy peaked at about 67 percent in the mid-2010s, but revenue received for housing inmates from other counties never recovered from the COVID era. By August 2024, Ogemaw County housed an average of just 35.8 inmates per day and another 15.6 for other counties. The jail was operating at just under 36 percent of capacity, but design limitations forced the County to staff the jail as if it was at 100 percent capacity.

Michigan counties, at their own cost and expense, are required to provide a suitable and sufficient jail. In lieu of providing a jail, counties may contract with other counties for the use of their jails. However, each “sending” county is still required to maintain a lockup consistent with state Administrative Rules for Jails and Lockups (MCL 45.16a). Knowing of their statutory funding obligation, the Board set out to explore options for housing inmates at other facilities.

Average Inmate Population by Month
2022 - 2024



Average inmate population by month, January 2022 to August 2024.
SOURCE: Ogemaw County Jail Inmate Rosters.

Discussion of such radical adjustments to the jail operation presented a challenge for the Board because the effects would be wide-ranging. An agreement would have to be negotiated with a neighboring county for inmate housing. Scheduling for post-arrest and court appearance transport logistics would present new challenges for jail administration. Staff reductions at the jail would be disruptive to vendors, local families, and the jail staff. In the end, fiscal realities left the Board with little choice but to pursue a major operational adjustment.

After months of study and many meetings, the Board adopted its fiscal 2025 budget on Sept. 26, 2024. The final budget for the jail was reduced by nearly half due in no small part to laying off 12 corrections officers. Coordination between jail administrators and the courts helps to ensure those inmates eligible for bond are released in time to avoid unnecessary transport to a neighboring county jail. The population in custody rose by nearly 12 percent in the first months after the new fiscal year but has since settled back to 2024 averages.

To be frank, our experience wasn’t all “unicorns and rainbows.” However, through the hard work of those directly involved, overall jail costs have met expectations and the county’s overall financial position has shown much-needed improvement. Moreover, this experience serves as an example of positive inter-county coordination resulting in financial stability for both participants. ♦

Oakland's Taub, a former MAC Board president, passes at age 85

Shelley Goodman Taub, former Oakland County commissioner and president of the Michigan Association of Counties in 2016-17, passed away on Feb. 4, 2025, after a brief illness. She was 85.



Taub

"Shelley's life of public service never ceased to impress," said MAC Executive Director Stephan Currie, "She wanted to serve, she enjoyed serving and she committed the time and energy to be effective for her county, her state and MAC."

Taub did two long stints on the Oakland Board, interrupted by two terms in the Michigan House, 2003-2006.

Taub was first elected to the MAC Board in 2012 and quickly rose into the leadership ranks to become president for the 2016-17 member year.

During her year as MAC president, Taub led a historic delegation of Michigan commissioners to a special White House briefing in August 2017 and continually championed a county role in arts and culture as chair of the Arts and Culture Commission of the National Association of Counties.

In her inaugural address at the 2016 Annual Conference, Taub said, "One size does not fit all.' This is an oft-repeated phrase that is intended to convey to the listener that the speaker understands your pain; that the speaker truly grasps the problem.

"The speaker of 'one size does not fit all' remembers the old fairy tale about the glass slipper and that you, the commissioner, have been wandering around the country like the prince with an idea or a mandate that does not fit, does not work, trying to squeeze into that slipper, particularly when the state or feds send us the slipper, the shoebox and the bill. ... So, what do we do and how do we comply and how in this state or this world can we squeeze a size 10 foot into a size 6 slipper?"

Taub then announced the creation of a message board system for county commissioners to share best practices, questions and ideas, all to leverage the collective wisdom of Michigan's hundreds of county commissioners. The Commissioners Forum continues to operate today.

In 2016, Taub was selected for the 2016 class of the



Taub shows off an autographed football from her beloved Michigan Wolverines, a parting gift as she ended her year as MAC president at the 2017 Annual Conference. Presenting the gift were incoming President Matthew Bierlein of Tuscola (left) and Executive Director Stephan Currie.



Taub addresses fellow Michigan commissioners at National Association of Counties offices in Washington, D.C., prior to a historic delegation visit to the White House in August 2017, as NACo Executive Director Matt Chase (left) and MAC Executive Director Stephan Currie listen.

Women in Government Program operated by the Governing Institute to increase female participation in public service.

Taub also served on NACo's Board of Directors. ♦



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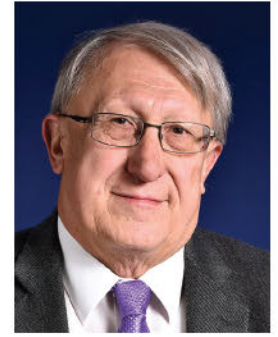
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Joseph Palamara
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Richard Schmidt
Manistee County/Region II



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