



Wayne County  
Commission  
Vice-Chair

# 7th District Update Alisha Bell



Summer 2016

Guardian Building  
500 Griswold, 7th Floor  
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Phone: (313) 224-0936 • Fax: (313) 967-1233  
Email: abell3@waynecounty.com

## County's finances have a brighter outlook

It's almost budget season in Wayne County.

I serve as vice-chair of not only the Commission, but also its Committee on Ways and Means, and the committee is about to begin budget deliberations for the 2016-17 fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

The Committee on Ways and Means will hold a series of budget hearings, which are open to the public, on a department-by-department basis. Once the committee's deliberations are complete, it will make a recommendation to the full Commission for final approval. That projected vote date is Aug. 18.

The budget hearing schedule will be posted on the Ways and Means web page at [www.waynecounty.com/commission/717.htm](http://www.waynecounty.com/commission/717.htm).

For the 2015-16 fiscal year, the Commission adopted a budget of \$1.56 billion; the 2014-15 budget was \$1.68 billion. Virtually every department, including the Commission, saw its budget reduced for 2015-16.

It was one factor in Wayne County's improved

financial picture. The largest factor was the transfer of an excess \$178 million by the Treasurer's Office from its Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund, wiping out the accumulated deficit of \$88 million and all but eliminating the structural — or annual — deficit of \$52 million.

The 2016-17 budget will be affected by significant cuts taken by union employees and retirees, namely via their health care benefits, under the consent agreement with the state of Michigan. The county is aiming to end the consent agreement this year. At that time, the state will continue to monitor the county's budget for the following two years. The county administration reported that there was a general fund surplus of \$5.7 million as of Sept. 30, 2015, the end of the last fiscal year.

Wayne County also has been shoring up its pension system, which was just 47 percent funded. The Commission recently voted to send more than \$14 million to the fund.

## County commissioners attend national conference

Commissioner Alisha Bell joined county commissioners from across Michigan to visit with members of the state's congressional delegation during the National Association of Counties' Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.

The group discussed the Michigan Association of Counties' top federal priorities, including Medicaid coverage for pre-trial inmates, full funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program and enacting the Marketplace Fairness Act, which would enforce sales taxes on Internet commerce.

"The visit was informative and important in that we lobby for what is in the best interest for our constituents in Wayne County as well as across our great state," Commissioner Bell said.



*Commissioner Bell joined county commissioners from Michigan at the NACO Conference held earlier this year in Washington, D.C. U.S. Senators Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow met with the Michigan contingent.*

## Voters asked to renew parks millage

A proposal affecting county property taxes will be on the ballot in all Wayne County communities on Tuesday, Aug. 2.

Voters will be asked to consider renewing a tax “to continue to improve and operate several parks and related facilities,” according to the ballot language. The tax in question is commonly referred to as the parks millage. It was first authorized by county voters in 1996, then was renewed for five-year periods in 2000, 2005 and 2010.

The proposal before voters Aug. 2 would continue the millage through 2020. It is expected to generate \$9.9 million next year. The parks levy is just under one-quarter of a mill and appears on winter tax bills.

In very approximate terms, the tax costs \$12.30 per year on a home that is worth \$100,000. A mill is \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 of a property’s taxable value. A home’s taxable value is roughly half of a home’s worth, but each home’s taxable value varies depending on how long its annual increases have been limited under Proposal A. Taxable value is listed on tax bills and on assessment notices.

To determine precisely how much one pays on the parks millage, one can multiply their home’s taxable value by .0002459. The ballot language reflects the practice of providing funds for park improvements in local municipalities.

Here is the **question** as it will appear on the ballot:

### (Proposition P)

#### PARKS MILLAGE CONTINUATION

To continue the millage authorized in 2010, shall Wayne County levy this millage at the estimated 2015 rollback rate of .2459 (about 25 cents per \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for five more years (2016 through 2020) to continue to improve and operate several parks and related facilities, including Hines Park, Elizabeth Park, Chandler Park, and improvements to municipal parks in the 43 communities as provided in an implementing ordinance through an annual allocation by commission district of the greater of \$50,000 or 15% of the total funds generated from that district, on the condition that, for any year for which this increased levy would be imposed, Wayne County must budget from other sources an amount equal to its 1995-1996 fiscal year appropriation for parks? This renewal is projected to generate \$9,865,514 in 2016.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

## Voters also to decide renewal of Zoo millage

Also on the Aug. 2 primary election ballot will be a proposal to renew a property tax levy that helps finance the Detroit Zoo. While this is not directly a county tax, it was placed on the ballot by the Wayne County Zoological Authority, a body created by the Wayne County Commission under an enabling state law, and appears on winter tax bills.

The zoo tax is one-tenth of 1 mill and costs the owner of a \$100,000 home roughly \$5 per year. The 0.1-mill levy was first approved by voters in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties in 2008 and is set to expire in 2017. The proposed renewal will extend the collection from 2018 through 2027. Voters will also consider the renewal in Oakland and Macomb counties.

## Parks Events



### Family aquatic fun

A sure way to beat the heat is the Wayne County Family Aquatic Center at Chandler Park on Detroit’s east side. The park features a wave pool, more than 100 spray fountains and two 23-foot-high water slides. It’s at 12660 Chandler Park Drive.



### Mud Day July 12

Wayne County’s annual Mud Day will be a source of messy fun for children from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. July 12 at Nankin Mills Park in Westland. Children should bring a towel and wear old clothes and shoes or a bathing suit.



### Jazz on the River Aug. 6-7

Bring your blankets and chairs and get ready to tap your feet to the best of cool jazz at the 21st anniversary of Jazz on the River at Elizabeth Park in Trenton. Call 734-261-1990 in July for the schedule of musicians taking the stage at 1 p.m.

## Groups offer variety of assistance

The Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency was designated by the state in 2015 as the community action agency to serve the city of Detroit with a variety of programs. Wayne Metro is part of WRAP, or the Water Residential Assistance Program, for those who have fallen behind on their water bills and meet income requirements. Other programs include:

- Community and economic development, including immediate help with critical home repairs.
- Financial empowerment, including financial coaching and information about services.
- Outreach and community services, including assistance to those facing financial difficulties, housing emergencies and personal or family crises.
- Housing/homeless services, including transitional housing.
- Youth and family services, including Head Start, after-school and summer youth programs, and GED and English as a second language classes.

Call 313-388-9799 or visit [www.waynometro.org](http://www.waynometro.org) for more information.

Other groups also offer housing assistance:

- National Faith Homebuyers offers down-payment assistance to first-time homebuyers, foreclosure prevention assistance and workshops, and financial literacy and homebuyer classes. Call 313-255-9500 or visit [nationalfaith.org](http://nationalfaith.org) for more information.
- The Detroit Recovery Project offers rental assistance for low-income families. It also offers assistance to ex-offenders returning to the community. Call 313-365-3100 or visit [www.recovery4detroit.com](http://www.recovery4detroit.com) for information.

## Commission pledges \$1 million for rape kit investigations

Wayne County has pledged \$1 million from its general fund to test and investigate more than 11,000 rape kits that had been discovered in 2009 after being abandoned in a Detroit Police Department storage unit.

County commissioners joined Wayne County Executive Warren C. Evans, Prosecutor Kym Worthy and other county officials in November to make the announcement. The Commission later approved adding the \$1 million to Worthy's 2015-16 budget. The county also gave about 5,000 square feet of space in the Guardian Building for investigators, prosecutors and task force members to use.

Enough SAID (Enough Sexual Assault in Detroit), formed more than five years ago after 11,341 unopened, untested rape kits were found, continues to accept donations to solve cases and bring criminals to justice. To make a donation, visit the website [enoughsaiddetroit.org](http://enoughsaiddetroit.org).

## Resurfacing projects welcome news to drivers

With the warmer weather, orange barrels pop up like dandelions — but all in the name of progress.

Wayne County officials recently announced 16 road projects for 2016 as part of a \$30 million plan, which also will pay for about 50 seasonal employees and 62 new pieces of equipment.

Two of the resurfacing projects will be very welcome news to residents of the 7th District: Joy and Fenkell roads will be resurfaced, both between Evergreen Road and the Southfield Freeway.

The Wayne County Commission recently unanimously voted to devote \$1.12 million to the Joy Road project.

Joy runs through the heart of the district, while Fenkell is along the district's northern edge.

Motorists who want to report the location of potholes or other problems on county roads can do one of three things:

- Call 1-888-ROAD-CREW (762-3273) 24 hours a day.
- Visit [www.waynecounty.com/dps](http://www.waynecounty.com/dps) and click on "report road hazard."
- Use a smartphone to visit [compass.waynecounty.com](http://compass.waynecounty.com) and click on the "hazard" triangle on the lower right corner.

If they are near the pothole, Compass can capture the location via GPS coordinates.

If the problem is on a road not maintained by the county, the appropriate agency will be contacted.

Some main roads in the 7th District are under county jurisdiction and some are maintained by the city of Detroit or the state.

For those who wish to follow up on the progress of a concern on a county road, be sure to have the incident number that was issued. That makes it much easier for DPS employees to track it.

## In and Around District 7



*Commissioner Bell recognized the outstanding accomplishments of several women in the community during this year's annual Women's History Month celebration. She presented certificates of recognition to (above, left to right) Alycia Emerson of the Schoolcraft Improvement Association, Juanita Wright of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Precinct, Beverly Brown from Pride Area Community Council, (right) Abena Hogan of the Barton-McFarlane Neighborhood Association and (far right) Bobbi Johnson from Franklin Park. Congratulations to all the recipients for their contribution to our community!*



*Commissioner Bell found herself in the center of tomorrow's leaders at a pair of events this spring. (Left) Students at Carver Elementary School were all smiles when Commissioner Bell participated in National Reading Month activities in March. In April, the 9th Annual Belle of Ball brought smiles to the faces of many young ladies as they selected free prom dresses and accessories.*



## Commissioner attends mental health conference

Commissioner Alisha Bell was part of a Wayne County contingent that attended The Stepping Up Initiative's two-day National Stepping Up Summit, which discussed solutions on how to reduce the number of mentally ill inmates in county jails.

The initiative is sponsored by The Council of State Governments Justice Center, which estimates that 2 million adults with serious mental illnesses are admitted to county jails nationwide every year. It also estimates that the percentage of mentally ill inmates is three to six times higher than the general public.

The summit drew county officials, jail administrators, behavioral health specialists, law-enforcement officers and others from 50 jurisdictions in 37 states.

"It's important to immediately identify those admitted to the Wayne County Jail who are in need of mental health treatment," Commissioner Bell said. "These people — some of whom shouldn't be in jail in the first place — can get the help they need, which is the most important thing. And, it can possibly reduce the number of inmates in the jail, which would save money for Wayne County.

"It's a win-win for those who need help and for the county."



*Commissioner Bell joined (left to right) Robert Dunlap, chief of the Wayne County Sheriff's Office, Tamela Aikens, Dr. Carmen McIntire and Judge Timothy Kenny at the two-day National Stepping Up Summit, discussing methods on how to reduce the number of mentally ill inmates in county jails. Commissioner Bell stressed the immediacy of identifying the needs of those requiring mental health treatment.*

## County Treasurer Sabree pledges to deliver services

Eric Sabree has been appointed to the position of Wayne County Treasurer to fill the remainder of the term vacated by Raymond J. Wojtowicz, who retired in December after holding the post almost four decades.

Sabree became the second new treasurer in just the four months following Wojtowicz's retirement. Former judge and assistant prosecutor Richard Hathaway was named treasurer in December, but announced in early March he would leave the post because of personal reasons. Sabree was appointed April 4.

State law calls for a vacancy in countywide elected positions to be filled via appointment by a three-person panel consisting of the county's clerk, prosecutor and chief judge of the Probate Court. The post will be on the ballot this year for a four-year term that begins in July 2017.

Sabree, 61, was one of eight applicants considered by the appointing panel of Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, Clerk Cathy Garrett and Chief Probate

Judge Freddie Burton Jr.

"I cherish my relationship with the Commission members and staff, and pledge to continue working with you to deliver the best possible service to our residents," Sabree said at the Wayne County Commission's April 7 meeting.

"We realize that the residents and business owners of our county need help, and we will continue to make your inquiries a priority. We also plan to visit each Commission district at least twice per year with staff members to accept payments, provide payment plans and to answer questions."

The Treasurer's Office manages all finance, forfeiture and foreclosure activities for the county, including collecting delinquent property taxes. Sabree joined the Treasurer's Office in 2011 as deputy treasurer of land management before being named as chief deputy treasurer last year. He previously served as chief assistant in the county's Office of Corporation Counsel.

Wayne County Commission  
Vice-Chair



**Alisha Bell**  
COMMISSIONER • DISTRICT 7  
500 GRISWOLD, 7TH FLOOR  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226



PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
DETROIT, MI  
PERMIT NO. 1353

**Please Join Wayne County Commissioner**

**Alisha Bell**

*Annual Evening in the Park*

*Family Cook-out and Legislative Briefing*



**Thursday, July 14, 2016**

**5 p.m. - 7 p.m.**

**Warrendale site**

**in Edward Hines Park**

**located at**

**23300 Warren Ave.**

**between Telegraph & Outer Drive**

**(Area 'A' near the picnic shelter)**



**Food & Fun**

**Please RSVP by Friday, July 8, 2016 • Call (313) 224-0936**