

Wayne County Commissioner • District 8 • Fall 2016

# Diane L. Webb

Proudly serving the residents of Dearborn Heights • Redford Township • S.E. Livonia



## How to contact Commissioner

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Commissioner Webb believes in always being accessible to residents and community officials. Please feel free to contact her with any issue or question.

## GREETINGS FROM THE COMMISSIONER:

Dear Resident,

The transformation of Wayne County government is still under way as fiscal year 2016 comes to a close. The Evans Administration is wrapping up its second year in the Executive Office and the county has gone through a myriad of changes as part of its plan to restructure county government. Armed with a Consent Agreement from the State Treasurer's Office and a \$238 million going away present from the former Wayne County Treasurer, this administration has taken some actions that were necessary, overdue and effective in improving the county's finances. Unfortunately, some of its actions went too far, too fast and have negatively impacted the lives of thousands of employees and retirees. Those actions led to costly lawsuits, a mass exodus of the active workforce, an enormous loss of institutional knowledge and an inability to recruit or retain employees, dramatically impacting county operations.

In the pages that follow, I will bring you up-to-date on the county's financial gains and the attributing factors. I will also share with you the operational challenges that the County is experiencing and what both outcomes mean to residents and taxpayers.

Next will be an update on recent and scheduled road and park improvements, with a brief commentary on why the Parks Millage Renewal is such a great deal for residents of the 8th District! Some useful information on county programs, services, and upcoming events can be found inside on my Community Page, and a current list of frequently requested county phone numbers can be found on the back for your convenience.

In closing, I thank you once again for the honor of representing you on the Wayne County Commission. If I can ever be of service to you, your family, or your place of business, please do not hesitate to call my office.

Sincerely Yours in Service,

Diane L. Webb  
Wayne County Commissioner, District 8

## Wayne County's road to financial stability, impact on operations

This section will provide an update on the key financial challenges the county faces, the decisions that were made to address them, and the impact those decisions have had on operations.

The county's balance sheet is looking better than it has in nearly a decade. The progress the county has made can be attributed to: an overall improvement in economic conditions; the \$238M transferred from the County Treasurer's Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund (DTRF) (proceeds from the sale of foreclosed properties) to the County's General Fund; and the significant reductions in retiree and employee benefits that the CEO "negotiated" in the Retiree Healthcare Settlement and through "collective bargaining" under the consent agreement.

### Overall Economic Conditions

**Property Values are Up:** Property values in the majority of the County's 43 cities and townships have shown significant increases for the last three to four consecutive years; however, those out-county gains continue to be countered by the reassessment of residential property values in the city of Detroit and the loss of personal property taxes, **according to the CEO's office**. The combination of the two are projected to cost the county \$14M in tax revenue in the 2016-17 Budget. Property tax revenues make up 55% of the county's total revenue. As you can see by the chart below, property values in the 8th District communities continue to increase as our economy improves.

#### Wayne County Commission District 8-Table of Assessment Increases Residential Property Class – 2014-16 Tax Years

Municipality	2014 Tax Year	2015 Tax Year	2016 Tax Year	Total
Redford Township	+3.28%	+9.65%	+8.25%	21.18%
Dearborn Heights	+4.34%	+11.19%	+6.50%	22.02%
Livonia	+7.09%	+12.36%	+8.11%	27.56%

**Unemployment Rates are Down:** Unemployment rates in Wayne County were as high as 18.2% in July 2009, and as low as 5.3% in April 2016. Lower unemployment means more spendable income, which helped increase the county's portion of State Shared Revenues (sales tax collected by the state) increasing the county's allotment from \$40M in fiscal year 2014-15 to \$50M in fiscal years 2015-16 and 2016-17. Investment income is also increasing as interests rates have improved from 0.1% to averages of 3%-8%, depending on the fund. Economic development across the county is increasing, commercial property values and tax revenues, creating jobs, and reducing the cost of blight, and crime.

### The Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund

Earnings from the sale of foreclosed homes during the most recent recession generated the \$238M that was transferred from the County Treasurer's Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund (DTRF) over fiscal years 2014-15, and 2015-16, with another \$32.4M transfer projected in the 2016-17 budget. Monies from the DTRF were used pay off the county's cumulative deficit, all of the county's annual budget deficits, settle outstanding lawsuits and pay down both the Judgement Levy imposed by the court and the County's unfunded pension obligations.

### The Retiree Healthcare Settlement and the Consent Agreement

The CEO and representatives for approximately 3,200 retirees resolved a pending class-action lawsuit by negotiating the elimination of retiree health care for a \$130 a month stipend, in order to preserve their pensions that were being threatened after the precedent was set allowing governments to reduce pensions in the City of Detroit's Bankruptcy Case.

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While moving Medicare-eligible retirees off an employer's healthcare plan and offering a stipend to cover supplemental costs is becoming common in the private sector, it is not a practice the Commission supports for the county retirees. Approximately 60% of the county's Medicare-eligible retirees are receiving pensions of \$20K or less, and a \$130 monthly stipend does not cover supplemental costs for most seniors. Approximately 790 of these retirees were not Medicare-eligible and incurred thousands of dollars in unexpected healthcare costs.

With \$1.3 billion in unfunded healthcare obligations we acknowledge that adjustments had to be made. What I did not support was the across the board elimination of benefits whether retirees were Medicare-eligible or not and a supplemental plan that offered the same \$130 monthly stipend to Medicare-eligible retirees whether they were 90 years old living on a \$5K pension or 65 years old and receiving a \$105K pension! This action by the administration saved the county \$20M in annual healthcare costs, but that doesn't make it right. Several lawsuits have already been filed against the county by retirees that were negatively affected by this settlement. Reasonable measures would have been entertained by the Commission to address this need with all retirees if we had a role in these settlement negotiations, but we did not. The Commission did act to reduce retirement healthcare for all employees covered under the Legislative Benefit Plan, and approximately 1,200 retirees that were not included in the class-action suit, contrary to media reports.

Pension and healthcare costs were also targeted in the CEO's "negotiations" with the county's unions under the consent agreement. Active employees will pay \$2,400-\$2,600 more a year for their healthcare and will not receive healthcare benefits or stipends when they retire. Those employees that currently participate in the Defined Benefit Pension Plan will have to pay twice as much into their pension to get half as much out of it for future years worked.

DTRF monies combined with the Judgement Levy and pension benefit reductions negotiated under the consent agreement reduced the unfunded pension obligation from \$910M to \$637M, increasing the pension funding level from 45% to 54% in two years. Reductions in healthcare benefits that resulted from the Retiree Healthcare Settlement, Legislative actions by the Commission, and concessions taken by collective bargaining units, reduced the unfunded healthcare obligation from \$1.3B to \$472M in two years. The elimination of the cumulative and structural deficit, and reduction in unfunded retirement obligations have improved the County's credit rating as two of the three bonding agencies have upgraded the county's outlook from "negative" to "stable."

**The 2016-17 Budget:** It was another extremely challenging year but the Commission wrapped it up by working on a \$1.5B balanced budget for Wayne County in the 2016-17 fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1. The newly adopted budget represents a \$57,745,000, or 4% reduction from the 2015-16 fiscal year resulting in a projected \$55.2M surplus in the County's general fund.

### **The Impact on Operations**

It is inarguable that the county's finances have improved significantly in the past two years, but not without an equally significant negative impact on the county's operations. The reduction in retiree benefits has resulted in costly lawsuits. The reduction in employee benefits has resulted in a mass exodus of institutional knowledge, and the county is seriously struggling to provide mandated services with 593 vacancies it cannot seem to fill. The lack of personnel to deliver mandated services in Public Safety, Public Services, Health and Human Services and Public Health Services has elevated the County's exposure to liability to an unprecedented level. Delayed financial and performance reporting on a wide array of grant funded services is putting federal and state funding at risk, and we have a budget surplus? It makes no sense at all. Still operating under the state's consent agreement, this administration's tunnel vision on reducing the bottom line, could end up costing us far more than was saved. A more balanced approach could have resolved the county's financial woes, mitigated many of these concerns and created a more sustainable path to recovery.

# County, township roads receive upgrades

A number of local streets and roads have been repaved this year under Wayne County's 2016 Road Construction Project with Redford Township streets making up one-third of the 30 major road projects completed countywide to date.

In the second year of the Redford Township Road Initiative Program, repaving work was completed on sections of: Salem, Robindale, Denby, Dixie/Dover and Columbia, two sections of Boeing Avenue and two sections of southbound Inkster Road. The Inkster Road project also included fill work and a repaving project of Inkster Road north of Six Mile that is on the 2017-18 construction schedule. In addition, Lenore received structural repairs.

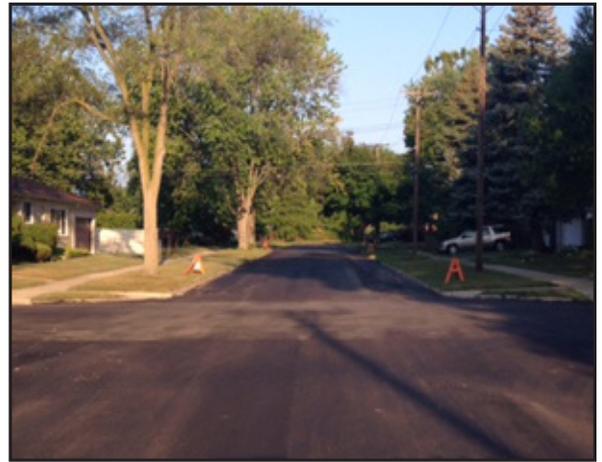
"It's great to see local streets getting the kind of repair work they so desperately need," Commissioner Diane Webb said. "The Inkster Road project will be welcomed by the many residents in my district that travel it frequently."

County road maintenance in Livonia includes paving and fill work at the Haggerty/Five Mile intersection, which remains on the schedule for this year, while repaving and fill projects on Farmington Road, south of Plymouth Road, and Inkster Road, are on the 2017 construction schedule.

In Livonia, two major roads will also be completed this year - both Seven and Eight Mile roads between Farmington and Newburgh, while repaving and fill work of Farmington Road south of Plymouth is on the 2017 construction schedule. Also resurfacing of Farmington Road from Seven Mile to Base Line roads between Farmington and Newburgh roads and a concrete reconstruction on Amrhein have been proposed for fiscal 2017.

Other proposed projects selected for fiscal year 2018 include overlay and concrete base repair on Stark and resurfacing on Ann Arbor Trail; overlay and concrete base repair on Lyndon and resurfacing, patching and curb and gutter repairs on east bound Schoolcraft.

In Dearborn Heights, much-needed repaving projects are under review for portions of Joy Road and Beech Daly.



***As part of the Redford Township Road Initiative Program, Boeing Avenue repaving work was completed earlier this summer.***



***Also, as part of the Redford Township Road Initiative Program, repaving work on Columbia was completed this year.***

## ***Call 1-888-ROAD-CREW to report road problems***

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.

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 the issue.

The Wayne County Roads Division maintains about 1,440 county primary and local roads, and 462 miles of state trunk lines and freeways. It has nine yards throughout the county and uses 144 trucks and pieces of equipment to maintain roads.

## County distributes funding for park improvements

Improvements at parks throughout District 8 are being completed with funds provided through the Wayne County Commission.

In Dearborn Heights, the city will receive \$34,503 from the county with an additional \$12,247 coming from the city's general fund. This \$46,750 project was requested from the current fiscal year budget to remove two existing tennis courts at Swapka Park and replace them with a new court.

In fiscal 2014-15, \$20,000 was allocated to renovate two tennis courts at Parkland Park, including sealing cracks, removing and replacing posts and footings and restriping the repaired courts.

Parkland Park is owned by Wayne County but leased to the city

An additional \$14,402 was authorized to place a metal roof over, and add an entrance door and exterior lighting to an enclosed area of the Richard A. Young Recreation Center. The new facility will store ball field equipment and recreation department supplies.

In Livonia, Commissioner Diane Webb directed \$60,000 to repair the Clements Circle Pool.

"I'm particularly pleased that the county was able to assist in bringing such a significant recreation investment into southeast Livonia and that they able to complete it in time for people to use during this year's extremely hot summer," Webb said.

In Redford Township, \$25,112 was requested to continue walking path resurfacing projects and add ing new playground and fitness equipment at Claude Allison and Handy parks.

An additional \$28,000 was authorized from a fiscal 2014-15 request to complete additional projects at both parks. That money includes \$13,000 for a permanent outfield fence at Softball Diamond No. 2 in Claude Allison Park, \$9,000 for pavilion roof repairs at Handy Park and \$6,000 to resurface walking paths at both parks.

Money comes from the local share of the Wayne County Parks Millage, which voters reapproved in August.



**Commissioner Diane Webb and Ted Davis, superintendent of Livonia Parks and Recreation, show off the newly renovated Clements Circle Pool.**

## Voters approve renewal of county parks millage

Voters in Wayne County have approved the continuation of the county parks millage, a property tax dedicated to improving and operating several parks and related facilities.

The tax was on the primary election ballot Aug. 2, and was approved by nearly a 3-to-1 margin and continues through 2020.

The parks millage was authorized by county voters in 1996, and is expected to generate \$9.9 million next year. The tax costs \$12.30 per year on a home that is worth \$100,000.

This victory is especially sweet for the residents of the 8th District because the Commission amended the language to protect larger out-county communities like Livonia from taking reductions and creating a \$50K minimum for smaller communities like Dearborn Heights and Redford Township.

The overall impact to the district is a \$41,125 increase that can be used in local parks.

## Volunteers will again be called on for 'Make a Senior Smile Day'

Commissioner Diane Webb's 8th Annual "Make a Senior Smile Day" is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 5, from 8:30 a.m.-noon. Volunteers rake leaves in the yards of income-eligible seniors in need of the assistance in Dearborn Heights, Redford and the southeast portion of Livonia. Volunteers and sponsors are needed.

Children under 18 are asked to be accompanied by an adult. Contact Commissioner Webb's office at 313-224-0930 or [dwebb1@waynecounty.com](mailto:dwebb1@waynecounty.com) for more information.



*Volunteers from Commissioner Diane Webb's 2015 "Make A Senior Smile Day" event brought smiles to the faces of seniors in Dearborn Heights, Redford and Livonia. This year's event is set for Saturday, Nov. 5.*

## Heroes on Hines events are set for October 1

The 4th annual Heroes on Hines Half Marathon and 5K Run presented by Wayne County Parks and Running Fit, kicks off at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 1.

The event is a benefit for First Responders Memorial, which remembers police, fire and EMS personnel throughout Wayne County who have given their lives in the line of duty. The memorial, located at Hines Drive and Haggerty Road in Plymouth Township, is the starting and ending point for both races.

Participants can register at [www.heroesonhines.com](http://www.heroesonhines.com). Entry fee includes a race T-shirt, post-race food and a medal for all finishers. Visit the website or call 734-261-1990 for more information.

## Hazardous Waste Collection scheduled for Oct. 8

The final Household Hazardous Waste Collection of 2016 offered by the Wayne County Department of Public Services will be held Saturday, Oct. 8 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. at Wayne County Community College Downriver Campus, 21000 Northline Rd. in Taylor.

Items acceptable for disposal include household paints, stains and dyes, floor care products, bathroom cleaners, solvents, fertilizer, batteries, fluorescent bulbs, fire extinguishers, mercury thermometers and more.

The electronics recycling portion of the event will accept computer CPUs, flat screen monitors, printers, scanners, keyboards and mice. Also accepted will be cell phones, fax machines, copiers and flat screen televisions. The program no longer accepts the older-style TVs and monitors with cathode ray tubes.

Only household products from Wayne County residents will be accepted. No commercial or industrial waste will be taken. Also not allowed are refrigerators, microwaves or other appliances, tires and concrete.

Questions can be directed to the Department of Public Services at (734) 326-3936. For a link to a flyer for the program, email Commissioner Diane Webb at [dwebb1@waynecounty.com](mailto:dwebb1@waynecounty.com).

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## **STEP store benefits those with special needs**

STEP has opened a new store in Dearborn Heights dedicated not only to providing shoppers with bargains but in helping provide jobs for community members with special needs.

The new STEP Thrift Store has opened at 23850 Ford Road, in the site formerly occupied by Tried and True, and joins similar STEP stores in Wayne and Southgate. STEP stores provide jobs for more than 60 individuals with physical or mental disabilities.

STEP – Services to Enhance Potential – is a nonprofit organization which provides support and services more than 1,300 special needs individuals here in Wayne County. Its major goals include increasing the number of special needs individuals who are employed, self-employed or active in community volunteer programs.

It operates seven Resource Centers, including one in Livonia, and is noted for its outstanding Customer Service Department, which helps individuals understand and navigate their way through the mental health system. Community residents can support its efforts not only by shopping at its new thrift store, but by donating gently used items for sale. To learn more about how to help, call the new Dearborn Heights store at 313-633-0755. Information on Customer Service Department services is available by visiting its website [www.stepcentral.org](http://www.stepcentral.org) or by calling 734-718-0483.

## **Buddy-to-Buddy benefit dinner to help area Veterans**

A benefit dinner for the Buddy-to-Buddy Volunteer Veteran Program is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 29 at the Lyskawa VFW, 6828 Waverly in Dearborn Heights.

The event features a spaghetti and salad dinner and musical tribute to famed recording artist Neil Diamond performed by the Neil Lawrence Experience. There will also be a cash bar and 50/50 raffle.

The Buddy-to-Buddy Program puts Michigan service members and veterans in touch with trained peers who can help them break down barriers to finding the help they need in dealing with such issues as clinical depression, sleep disturbance and PTSD, as well as in finding housing for homeless vets.

Doors open at 5 p.m., with dinner served at 6 p.m. and music to follow. The event is presented by the Polish League of American Veterans. Tickets are \$25 each. Ticket information is available by calling John Cortez at (313) 205-4066 or Sierra Sharpe at (734) 998-5825. For more on the Buddy-to-Buddy Program, visit its website, [www.buddytobuddy.org](http://www.buddytobuddy.org).

## **Mental Health Authority provides needed assistance**

Do you know that 75 percent of all people who try cocaine will become addicted and only one in four will be able to quit without help from a treatment program? Or that drug use and addiction is linked to 50 percent of the major crimes committed each year in the U.S.? Or that treatment can reduce drug use and crime by an estimated 40-to-60 percent?

Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. and heroin addiction and abuse of prescription drugs are leading causes, according to the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

“Heroin use is becoming an epidemic all across the United States and we must all work not only to stop it from spreading but to find effective ways to help those struggling with addiction to heroin and prescription painkillers,” Commissioner Diane Webb said.

The Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority provides a number of programs aimed at ending drug and alcohol addiction, leading to healthier individuals and safer communities. Prevention, early intervention, outpatient and residential programs and services are among those offered to individuals of all ages and backgrounds, including those suffering from mental illness and those with intellectual or developmental disabilities. It also maintains a 24 Hour Crisis HelpLine at 800-241-4949.

To learn more about the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority and the programs and services it provides, visit its website at [www.dwmha.com](http://www.dwmha.com) or call 313-833-2500. Services for individuals with hearing disabilities are available by calling TTY 800-630-1044.



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**Commissioner • District 8**  
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**Wayne County Commissioner**

# **Diane Webb**

2015-2016 Committee Assignments

- Wayne County Commission
- Committee of the Whole
- Chair, Committee on Public Services
- Vice-Chair, Special Committee on Senior Citizens & Veterans Affairs
  - Committee on Audit
- Committee on Health and Human Services
- Committee on Government Operations
  - Special Committee on Accountability & Transparency

*All Wayne County Commission meetings open to the public.  
 Please call 313-224-0930 for dates, times and locations.*

## **Frequently requested County phone numbers**

Commissioner Webb.....	(313) 224-0930
County Executive.....	(313) 224-0286
County Commission.....	(313) 224-2383
County Clerk.....	(313) 224-6262
County Prosecutor.....	(313) 224-5777
County Treasurer.....	(313) 224-5990
Register of Deeds.....	(313) 224-5850
Sheriff.....	(313) 224-2222
Veterans' Services.....	(313) 224-5045
Senior Services.....	(734) 727-7373
Public Services.....	(313) 224-7600
Parks Division.....	(734) 261-1990
Report a Road Hazard.....	(888) 762-3273
Health Department.....	(313) 224-0810
WC Circuit Court.....	(313) 224-5261
WC HealthChoice.....	(800) 935-5669
WIC Program.....	(734) 727-7107
Head Start.....	(866) 534-5437
Environmental Services.....	(313) 224-3620
Homeland Security.....	(734) 728-3711