

***DRAFT***

**BENZIE COUNTY  
PLANNING, ZONING & BUILDING CODE  
ADMINISTRATION ANALYSIS:  
Halting the Crisis of Confidence**

By Mark A. Wyckoff, FAICP,  
Director, Planning & Zoning Center at MSU,  
318 Manly Miles Building  
1405 S. Harrison Road  
East Lansing, MI 48824-5245  
517-432-2222

and

Kurt H. Schindler, Wexford County Extension Director  
401 N. Lake St.  
Cadillac, MI 49601  
231-779-9480

**June 12, 2007**

## **Purposes of the Study**

The principal purposes of this study are to:

- Identify apparent and real problems facing land use decision-making in Benzie County government at this time.
- Identify cost effective options that would improve the quality and timeliness of County Planning, Zoning and Building Code Administration services in Benzie County.
- Provide direction so the County Board of Commissioners, the County Planning Commission and key County staff are all on the same page, working to achieve the same vision and according to the same set of goals and objectives. This must be accomplished with the same common understanding of not only the vision and goals, but also of the respective roles and responsibilities of each of the entities involved.
- Provide recommendations to solve identified problems and prevent future ones.
- Provide the opportunity for township officials, stakeholders and the general public to regain confidence in their County elected and appointed officials.

Appendix A includes the original proposal for this project. It opens with two pages of observations about conditions and circumstances that led up to the project as the authors understood them in April, 2007.

## **Key Problems Identified**

Table 1 lists the key apparent problems that were articulated in interviews and based on the authors' judgment. It also lists what the authors think are the real problems that appear to underlie the apparent problems. These and related problems are described, discussed and analyzed in this report. Where pertinent, options are presented along with the pros and cons of each option and recommendations are offered to correct each of the real problems identified.

**Table 1: Principal Problems – Apparent and Real**

<b>Apparent Problem</b>	<b>Real Problems</b>
A number of recent costly lawsuits on zoning matters.	County Board and County Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) are unclear as to respective roles and responsibilities.
	County Zoning Ordinance update is incomplete.
	Inadequate staffing in the County Planning & Zoning Departments leading to bad decisions.
	Inadequate training of new staff, County Board, new County Planning Commissioners, and the need for refresher training of the County ZBA, and of County Building staff on how to best relate to the County Planning and Zoning programs.
Hiring of County Building Inspector and County Zoning Administrator, and appointment of County Planning Commissioners using procedures that are perceived as favoritism.	Poor system for establishing job descriptions, posting and hiring of positions, supervision, staff evaluation, continuing education, and maintenance of state and professional certifications.
	Poor communication with townships, contractors, builders and other stakeholders.
Zoning Ordinance that is not up-to-date and hard to use.	Inaction on recommended changes to the Zoning Ordinance.
	Poor priority setting, division of tasks, and adherence to a schedule.
Growing distrust of County Board and County staff on land use matters.	Poor effort to engage townships in provision of County Zoning services.
	Inadequate geographic and stakeholder representation on the County Planning Commission and inadequate input from affected townships in the appointment of Planning Commissioners.
	Poor communication with townships and constituents on planning, zoning and building code matters.

A growing crisis of confidence has arisen in response to a series of events where the present or immediate past County Board made at least one decision that led to a zoning lawsuit, made at least two personnel decisions that to some appear to have involved favoritism, and have made several decisions to appoint persons to the County Planning Commission that appear to provide greater representation to people in and around Crystal Lake as opposed to the County as a whole. These decisions appear to be based on the best of intentions, but have had unintended consequences. As a result, attempts by the County Board to resolve problems have led to new and in some cases larger problems than the original ones. This has lead to a growing perception that the County Board does not care about the interests of everyone in the County, or in some cases, cares more about issues on the west side of the County as compared to the east side. It is important that a series of decisions be made soon to unravel the tangled web. It is important that new procedures, training, communications, and relationships be quickly established. If not done soon, the likelihood that existing problems will grow worse is quite high.

## **Qualifiers**

While it is possible that these perceptions are not true, or are only partially true, they appear to be widely held by people both within and outside County government. In such a situation, it matters little whether they are actually true since people perceive them to be true and talk about them to one another as if they are. We have therefore accepted them as true for the purposes of this study—without attempting to validate their actual veracity.<sup>1</sup> The principal reason is because in every case if they are true, they violate basic practices of good administration, management and public decision making, and thus need to be addressed soon or other serious problems both inside and outside the land use arena will begin to develop.

This study was done quickly in order to meet a pressing need of the County. It could have been done more thoroughly, but the authors do not believe that more time or more detail would substantially change either the findings or the recommendations. While it was based on an interpretation of many persons impressions, as well as of the authors' over 60 years of combined professional experience in Michigan, a formal "audit" with many more interviews and examination of many more documents would have revealed more nuances, perhaps more problems, and possibly more solutions. However, the recommendations in this report include analysis of enough options to cover most of those other nuances. Of course, should other nuances become important as part of the review of these recommendations and implementation of them, they should be seriously considered and addressed.

Whether this analysis is 100% correct or not, is not as important as acting on the recommendations with deliberate speed and after proper consultation with all the affected and interested parties. This is because the recommendations are based on best practices which should be followed regardless.

It is also important that these recommendations be considered as a complete set and addressed as a set, and not viewed as a menu where some are selected for action and others are ignored. Picking and choosing, or ignoring some is almost certain to exacerbate (as opposed to resolve) the identified problems. There are some recommendations which involve selection of certain options, and not others. For the most part these relationships are viewed as quite obvious, and if they aren't, don't hesitate to consult with the authors for further direction.

This report is presented as a draft in the event that there are factual errors. Please bring any errors to each author's attention within a month. Then the factual errors may be corrected and a final report issued. It may also be that some of the analysis or recommendations are not as complete as desired. If so, again please let each author know so that they may add material to the final report.

---

<sup>1</sup> Attempting to validate the actual veracity of the identified problems would take considerable time, require the ability to administer oaths, and cost a lot of money with little apparent benefit. Such tasks were clearly outside the scope of our proposal or authorization.

## **The Process Followed By the Authors**

The basic steps in the process followed by the authors are listed below:

1. Following submittal of the proposal in mid-April, the authors immediately requested and began to review background information such as job descriptions, recent meeting minutes, zoning and building code forms, and related information as relevant. See list of documents reviewed in Appendix B.
2. Between May 10<sup>th</sup> and May 23<sup>rd</sup> the authors interviewed 18 persons including the following:
  - The County Administrator
  - A couple of members of the County Board of Commissioners
  - A couple of members of the County Planning Commission
  - A member of the County Zoning Board of Appeals
  - The County Planning Director
  - The County Zoning Administrator
  - The County Building Code Director
  - Several Township elected officials
  - A couple of interested citizens representing key stakeholder groups.A full list of the persons interviewed is presented in Appendix C along with the interview questions. In many cases the follow-up questions were not asked. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.
3. The authors met with the County Planning Commission on May 10<sup>th</sup> to review the project scope, ask some interview questions in public and take questions from the public. The responses are reflected in the meeting minutes of the Planning Commission.
4. The authors met to discuss findings from the interviews and analysis of documents and to prepare an outline of key elements to address in the report.
5. The authors prepared a draft written report and sent it to the County Board and County Planning Commission for review prior to a joint meeting of both bodies on June 14<sup>th</sup>. We are sorry that the limited project time precluded more than a few days opportunity for review of this draft report prior to June 14, 2007.
6. The authors will facilitated a joint meeting of the County Board and County Planning Commission on June 14, 2007 to present a summary of the report, answer questions and assist with reaching consensus on the next steps.
7. After the completion of the above tasks the authors will assist with scheduling and conducting training programs for staff and commissioners, consistent with the recommendations of this report.

## Structure of the Current Planning, Zoning and Building Departments

Table 2 lists the basic characteristics of the current Planning, Zoning and Building Departments in Benzie County.

**Table 2: Basic Characteristics of the Planning, Zoning and Building Departments**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Planning</b>	<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Building</b>
<b>Basic Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and maintain County Plan</li> <li>• Prepare amendments to County Zoning Ordinance</li> <li>• Provide support to the County Planning Commission, including on discretionary zoning permits like special land uses and site plans, and on amendments</li> <li>• Prepare and maintain County Solid Waste Management Plan</li> <li>• Liaison on County Economic Development Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer and enforce the County Zoning Ordinance</li> <li>• Provide support to the County Planning Commission on discretionary zoning permits like special land uses, site plans and amendments</li> <li>• Administer County soil erosion and sedimentation control</li> <li>• Administer regulations related to land division applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer and enforce the State Construction Codes in Benzie County: building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical.</li> </ul>
<b>Recent Changes</b>	The planning and zoning functions were in a single department until recently. Planner had to handle Zoning Administrator duties from Oct. 2006 – February 23, 2007 while former Zoning Administrator was sick (and died). Formerly, 911 addressing, and recycling were services started in the County Planning and Zoning Department (when there were only 4 townships under County Zoning compared to the present 8 townships) and then spun off to others.	Newly spun off as a separate department with a separate department head; formerly was a part time position.	Relatively new department head, who was a former County Commissioner.
<b>Staff</b>	1 full time professional Planner (uncertified) and ½ of a full time clerical staff person.	1 full time professional Zoning Administrator (no formal zoning administrator training, but has a bachelors degree in civil	1 full time director (licensed builder & mechanical by the state), and 3 full time plan reviewers/inspectors

Characteristic	Planning	Zoning	Building
		engineering) and ½ of a full time clerical staff person.	licensed by the state (1 – mechanical, 1 – electrical, 1 – plumbing, 1- building) and 1 clerical staff
<b>Budget (prior to change)</b>	\$98,128 (revenue \$4,750)	\$11,757 (revenue \$31,800)	\$484,120 (revenue \$484,120)
<b>Budget (after change)</b>	\$98,128 (revenue-unknown)	\$11,757+\$56,500 (new director salary) (revenue of \$31,800 + \$16,000 soil erosion & sedimentation revenues)	\$484,120 (revenue \$484,120)
<b>Permit Activity</b>	None under new structure.	In 2006, before the new Zoning Administrator, it was 315 zoning permits, 143 SESSC permits, 19 land division permits. Special use permits have risen from 1-2 per year 15 years ago, to 45 in 2006.	597 (includes all types of building permits) in 2006; 139 were for new single family homes. A total of 6,392 inspections were performed in 2006.
<b>Staffing, budget and revenues compared to other similar departments</b>	See Tables 7-10 in Appendix D	See Tables 7-10 in Appendix D	See Tables 7-10 in Appendix D

There has been substantial mission creep in the Planning Department over time which is common in small rural planning departments where many issues have land use dimensions and planning staff often have a broad range of skills. The County Board has responded to this creep by spinning off responsibilities to others over time, such as the recycling and 911 addressing responsibilities and more recently upgrading the Zoning Administrator position from a part time to a full time position. This should allow the County Planner to devote more time to County Planning and more importantly initially, to complete amendments to the County Zoning Ordinance in a timely manner.

The responsibilities of the County Zoning Department and County Building Department are much more discrete and not as likely to be subject to mission creep, unless unrelated responsibilities in other departments were to be assigned to them, or unless the state were to mandate certain new responsibilities or services.

### Key Findings

Following is a list of our key findings that together with our experience, have contributed to the recommendations that appear at the end of this report. These findings relate to the key problems identified in Table 1.

- There is a lot of support for the vision of the County Plan. This support is broad. It includes County Board members and the County Planning Commission, County staff, townships subject to County Zoning, stakeholder groups like the local

Chamber of Commerce and many individual citizens. This is a reflection of the broad coalition of stakeholders that was involved in creating the Plan and supporting its implementation. It is somewhat surprising in that the Plan is now six seven years old (adopted 2000) and in need of updating. The strong support for the County Plan is a valuable asset. Furtherance of the Plan should be the focus of future actions by all parties.

- Among those interviewed there is almost unanimous support for controlled growth in the County. While there are those in the County that desire no growth, there is among most of those interviewed a belief that growth is both inevitable and necessary in the County, and that it should be managed so that the natural beauty and resources of the County are not irreparably harmed. The relationship between these resources and the economic development potential of the County is understood and supported. What varies is the degree to which growth and access to natural resources should be restricted so as to protect these unique natural resources while still allowing people to enjoy them. There is a contingent in the County which is worried that regulations will unfairly restrict their ability to retire as they are land rich but cash poor. Yet for the most part, this group's concerns are more centered on property value and equity, than any kind of opposition to protecting the quality of the resources that currently sustain the residents of the County. Thus, it is not necessarily an opposing view. It is another facet of the view of the mainstream.
- The character of the County from east to west is different geographically and economically. The west side is home to inland lakes, the Lake Michigan shoreline, and Sleeping Bear National Park. The people who reside there tend to have higher incomes; they are often retirees and often live in seasonal residences. In contrast, the east side lands are closer to Traverse City and to a lesser extent Cadillac and the jobs, economy in those locations. Use of land on the east side of the County reflects the blue and pink collar bedroom community character of their geographic location. On many issues there is a split between the "have's" and the "have nots" which is often split between the west and the east. Issues like the Crystal Lake Boat launch are viewed as attempts by the "have's" to keep out the "have nots" and are often perceived as being wrapped in "green" language to draw attention away from more basic social issues. Efforts by the County Board to replace Planning Commissioners with people who live on or near Crystal Lake, at the exclusion of people on the East (and to a lesser degree the south side of the County), are perceived as exacerbating the geographic split and disenfranchise those living on the East side of the County. This has contributed to the growing crisis of confidence in the County Board and actions by some townships to explore doing zoning locally (or in small groups of townships) rather than by the County.
- There is a concern by some that Planning Commission is too "green" in their approach to development, taking too long, or applying too many standards to protect the environment. However, it is the nature of their job to be this way and the standards they apply are adopted by the County Board of Commissioners or imposed by state law. If this were a legitimate concern, which we skeptical about, it could be partially remedied by changing the Zoning Ordinance.



- There is a widely held belief that the County Planner and County Planning Commission have taken too long to complete an update to the County Zoning Ordinance. Despite the unusual series of events described below and the extenuating circumstances surrounding them, this is a legitimate concern. The remaining tasks should be broken down into parts and immediately pursued with the goal of getting most of the non-controversial changes in place by October. More time will be necessary to complete the remainder of the changes. Specific recommendations are offered at the end of this report. The tasks to complete amending a zoning ordinance include (1) staff (County Planner and County Attorney) refining an initial proposal, and then (2) review, critique, editing, and revision by those that establishes public policy (the Planning Commission and County Board). The bulk of the time it takes to update the Zoning Ordinance will be taken up by the review, critique, editing, and revision.
- The ill health of the former County Zoning Administrator greatly contributed to the delay in completing the County Zoning Ordinance amendments. The County Planner had to serve double duty, and whenever that happens, processing zoning requests always supersedes all other work. However, with the hiring of a new County Zoning Administrator, work on completing the County Zoning Ordinance should proceed rapidly.
- One of the recent lawsuits involved a decision supported by the County Board to overturn a decision by the County Zoning Administrator after a permit had been acted upon by an applicant. This is generally outside the scope of the County Board or County Administrator. See for example: *Land Use Series - "Elected Officials: Dealing with Constituent Complaints on Planning and Zoning Issues"* <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/wexford/pamphlet/pamphlet%20Elected%20Body%20Intervention.pdf>. An appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals further confounded the process. Questions have arisen over the scope of authority of the County Zoning Administrator versus the County Planner. These actions and recent questions reflect confusion over who does what and what do they do. This is the most basic issue involving boards, commissions and staff and there must be clarity and common understanding by everyone on the issue. Training of all groups and the staff are necessary.
- The process used to hire the Building Inspector and the Zoning Administrator suggests favoritism. The Director of the County Building Department is a former member of the County Board of Commissioners and resigned his seat to take the Department head position. The County Zoning Administrator was hired without any prior direct experience in zoning administration. While he has a degree in civil engineering and has worked in development and no one doubts his ability to learn to do the job well, it is unusual, if not highly unusual, for a County Zoning Administrator to be hired in Michigan with no prior experience. This has helped undermine the integrity of the position and trust in the judgment of the County Board of Commissioners. The whole process of position creation, posting, advertising, and filling should be done very openly, especially for department head positions. See for example: *"From Hiring to Firing: Advice for Townships"*, *Michigan Township News*, June 2007, pp. 16-23. In addition, there should be clear lines of responsibility, reporting, evaluation and either reward or remedial

feedback given to all employees, but especially to department heads. This does not appear to have been the case recently with regard to Planning, Building and Zoning Department head positions.

- Late, incomplete, and generally inadequate communication between the County and local units of governments, as well as with builders and citizens has led to growing distrust of land use and other related decisions by the County Board and County staff. Partly this is due to the way in which townships subject to County Zoning have found out about changes. For the most part they were neither uniformly consulted, nor separately informed of the decisions until after the decisions were made. Often the news came by word or mouth or newspaper. As a result, those most directly affected by County Zoning have begun to feel taken for granted. When coupled with a request to help finance County Zoning, at a time they were not being consulted about issues that affected them, some immediately said “no” and others began to explore other options for local zoning—including creation of a joint planning commission. This type of activity by townships appears to just be starting with more actions along these lines coming.
- Trust in County Planning and Zoning staff has diminished with the long delays in delivering needed changes to the County Zoning Ordinance, in processing some zoning requests during the period of the former County Zoning Administrator’s illness and in hiring a new County Zoning Administrator with no prior experience with zoning administration. Similarly, local contractors and builders have largely found out about changes in policy in the Building Department at the counter when seeking a permit, rather than by some advance communication. While an effort to gather them together was apparently initiated by the Director of the County Building Department, it was poorly attended and needs to be tried again, along with other more expansive and regular means of communication. Part of the issue may be the lack of a common attitude among staff that folks at the counter are customers and usually also taxpayers, who deserve more than just courtesy and timely disposition of their requests. They are one of the main reasons beyond public health, safety and general welfare that the zoning and building services are provided by the County.
- Trust in the County Administrator has diminished upon the public finding out about correspondence between the new County Zoning Administrator and the County Administrator, prior to hiring, that included considerations in changes to managing the County Planning & Zoning program.
- The appointment of new members to the County Planning Commission is viewed by many as giving preferential treatment to issues on the West side of the County generally and to Crystal Lake issues specifically. In the recent past townships (mainly in the east half of the County) have sought more representation on the County Planning Commission. Through inaction, the County Board has not responded to the request. The County Planning Act can be read to mean there is a need to have a broad cross-section of representation on the Planning Commission which represents various segments of the County. Adherence to this has been weak.
- There has been inadequate training of some County staff, new Planning Commissioners, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and County Board of

Commissioners in recent years on the basics of County Planning and Zoning. There have been several high-profile “retirements” of long standing members of the County Planning Commission in the last year. A body formerly with a lot of collective and institutional knowledge now has a lot of new members. To their credit, several are independently taking MSUE Citizen Planner training on-line, but most have had no formal training on their duties or responsibilities. Fortunately the chairperson is a seasoned Planning Commissioner who has recently imposed greater discipline on the Commission through the establishment of a work program, priorities, subcommittees and an effort to reach out to the townships in the County by attendance at township meetings. Meetings are conducted in an effective manner with a clear agenda and in a business-like fashion. There is much here to build upon, but the whole Planning Commission, County Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and new zoning staff needs to be trained together so that everyone gets the key basic information at the same time and in the same way. Follow-up training on special topics will likely also be necessary.

- Now there are three separate department heads serving the County Planning, Zoning and Building Code services when formerly there were only two. Alternative administrative options for organizing the Planning, Zoning and Building Departments should be seriously considered and when the opportunity presents itself, and if the benefits are sufficient, a change should be made. If not, the status quo should be preserved.

### Organizational Options, Pros & Cons

Table 3 lists the pros and cons of organizational options for each of the following:

- County Planning & Zoning Function
- County Building Code Administration Function
- Organization of Management of County Planning, Zoning & Building Code Administration
- Organization of the County Planning Commission.

**Table 3: Pros & Cons of Organizational Options**

Organizational Option/Description	Pros	Cons	Other Considerations
<b>County Planning &amp; Zoning Function</b>			
Retain a County Planning Function and County Zoning Function.	Compared to townships offering the services separately, there are significant economies of scale, level of service improvements (a full time office), opportunities to hire qualified staff and likely reductions in the number and severity of lawsuits under a well run County	It costs a lot of money. It is not a mandated service—so why provide it and instead save the County money? Cities, villages and townships are permitted to do planning and zoning on their own. (Consider the following intangible costs, among others: poor local land use decisions,	In the unlikely event the Legislature was to eliminate townships or certain township services, these may be forced upon counties. It could be a lot harder to

Organizational Option/Description	Pros	Cons	Other Considerations
	Zoning program compared to one run in a standard township. Perhaps most important is the opportunity to have a comprehensive county wide view in place, rather than a fragmented individual jurisdictional view. Requires major technical assistance program to townships which have their own zoning to make much progress.	fragmented growth, inadequate infrastructure, greater impact on County roads, poor coordination, possible loss of open space and natural areas, aka unmanaged growth, many different separate ordinances for the development community to comply with, no more "one-stop shopping" for permits).	reinstitute planning and zoning services in the future, than to retain them now.
Reshape a County Planning Function without County Zoning	Saves the cost of staff associated with County Zoning; imposes the burden on townships; County Planning Commission would still prepare a plan with a county-wide vision and would need to work cooperatively with townships to get that plan implemented.	Much harder to implement a county-wide plan without County Zoning. Requires major technical assistance program to townships to make much progress. Until townships adopted a local plan and zoning ordinance, there would be no zoning and property owners could do whatever they wanted. However, even with County Zoning with some townships not under County Zoning, major technical assistance is still a necessary service for the County Planning Department to provide.	Have to let one person go.
Retain a County Zoning Function without County Planning (either by a single County Zoning Ordinance, or the County administering under contract many separate local zoning ordinances)	Theoretically saves the cost of County Planning staff. But, zoning has to be based on a plan, so each zoned township would have to have an adopted plan that the County would have to accept as the basis for the County Zoning ordinance.	Imposes the burden on townships with little ability for the County to shape each plan. No county-wide view of future growth and development; much harder to achieve managed growth.	Have to let one person go. We are not aware of anywhere this model is in use. Poses unusual legal risks and few benefits.
Bring Townships Back in Under County Zoning/Retain the Remaining Townships Under County Zoning	The more townships under County Zoning the more cost effective the service, the more revenues from permits and the greater likelihood of being able to implement the County Plan.	High initial transaction costs and increased communication necessary for a lengthy period to restore trust. May not be possible to bring some townships back. The initial steps to accomplish this may seem counter-intuitive: Have County Planning	The more urbanized the township, the more likely the ability and perceived need to manage local zoning itself. The statutory system in Michigan

Organizational Option/Description	Pros	Cons	Other Considerations
		Dept. provide technical assistance to help a township plan and have township zoning. The overriding issue here is to foster adherence to the County Plan first and foremost over the issue of who administers the zoning ordinance.	always sets up the township as the government unit with the final say and power of decision on this issue. The County has no power to “win” on this issue. It can only be done through trust and cooperation.
Drop both the County Planning and the County Zoning Functions	Saves the cost of planning and zoning staff.	Imposes the burden on townships with no ability for the County to shape each plan and no county-wide view. Until townships pick up the slack, there would be no planning and zoning and property owners could do whatever they wanted.	Have to let three people go. Unlikely to be well received by citizens who support County Planning and Zoning.
<b>County Building Code Administration Function</b>			
Retain a County Building Code Function	With County Zoning, Building and Soil Erosion Code Administration in one location, the County is able to offer a “one stop shopping” service for contractors, builders and “do it yourselves.” This is a huge positive service to them, and a “one stop shopping” is a significant economic development service strategy.	Not a mandated service. Cost of staff, especially in periods of low permit activity as it requires retaining experienced staff so that when building activity picks up, the County doesn’t have to hire anew and train (e.g., build a reserve within the Building Department fund). However Soil Erosion Code Administration will have to be retained and performed by the County – it is a statutorily mandated service.	
Drop the County Building Function: Let the State take over County Building Code Administration	None we are aware of. There is even no cost saving of not having to pay building code staff because 100% of revenues have to be used for operations of the Building Dept. Unless the County Board chooses to subsidize the	No more “one stop shopping,” passes costs of convenience onto contractors, builders and “do it yourselfer” and often results in major project delays and longer travel distances to obtain permits and delays in permit	State of Michigan building code enforcement is remote, slow, and causes many construction delays.

<b>Organizational Option/Description</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
	department, revenues should equal or exceed expenses. Many counties build a reserve, so they can retain service during years when permit activity is down without a cost to the County General Fund..	inspections.	
<b>Organization of Management of County Planning, Zoning &amp; Building Code Administration</b>			
Keep Planning, Zoning & Building under Separate Dept. heads	Current situation. Clear accountability once job descriptions and line of command are completed.	May not be as much coordination between planning and zoning as if they were under the same department head. Probably costs more due to higher wages for department heads.	
Organize Planning & Zoning under a Single Dept. Head and keep Building Separate	Former structure. Planning and zoning are usually better coordinated this way.	More costly to have two department heads than one.	Since zoning implements the plan, zoning is subservient to planning. We are unaware of anywhere in Michigan where the zoning administrator supervises the planning director, but many places where the reverse is true.
Organize Zoning and Building under a Single Dept. Head and keep Planning Separate	All regulatory code enforcement activities are together permitting cross training of staff in building and zoning code administration, provided they receive necessary state certifications. This can be more cost effective and can result in more professional operations. It still permits "one stop shopping," a significant economic development service strategy	Planning and zoning are separated. This can lead to zoning taking on a "life of its own" instead of serving to implement the Plan, which can result in undesired legal issues.	This is a common model, especially in cities and large townships.

Organizational Option/Description	Pros	Cons	Other Considerations
Organize Planning, Zoning & Building under a Single Dept. Head	Generally the lowest cost for staffing as there is only one department head. Theoretically accountability should be better with a single department head, but sometimes it is easier to find excuses.	Sometimes hard to find a qualified person as it requires the department head to be well-trained in all three activities, as well as in administration and there must still be properly certified building inspectors in the office, including one that is the "lead" for that program if the department head is not a building inspector.	Since no building permit should ever be issued contrary to zoning, and zoning is there to implement the Plan, where consolidation under a single department is achieved, building is usually subservient to a certified director of planning or co-equal. Where co-equal, it is usually because the state building code requires administrators with state certification, while planners have voluntary certification and as yet zoning administrators have no required or voluntary certification.
Replace department heads by voluntary or involuntary termination and then reorganize based on the option selected above	The status quo may need to be continued for a variety of reasons. However, any opening in a department head position should be viewed as an opportunity to seriously consider consolidation of departments. It may need to be a two step process over a longer period of time.	Any involuntary termination of a department head may come with its own set of unanticipated costs and other consequences, including further loss of trust and confidence in decision makers.	Personnel cost savings that do not produce a higher quality of service or higher level of service may be false savings.
<b>Organization of the County Planning Commission</b>			
Ask for voluntary resignations of members of the County Planning	Create a situation where all stakeholders and communities feel equally represented. Rebuild trust	Planning Commissioners may not want to resign. May only be able to do by selecting the next option or	Existing commissioners may be very well qualified and may

Organizational Option/Description	Pros	Cons	Other Considerations
Commission and replace with a more representative body soon, or only after enactment of new codified Planning Enabling Act	with townships and citizens.	phasing in as openings occur. May push back restoring trust.	be able to make decisions that embrace the best interests of everyone in the County, but if a significant part of population believes that they won't, then reality matters little. Also "representation" is a major part of "well qualified" and if not representative, then maybe one is not "well qualified" regardless of one's personal skills.
Repeal the County Planning Commission Ordinance and terminate existing members and readopt a new ordinance with new appointments soon, or after enactment of new codified Planning Enabling Act	This would clear the air quickly and permit appointment of new members that better represent the geography and stakeholder interests in the County (some of the existing longtime members should be reappointed for continuity).	This could be politically problematic for the County Board. Plus, if the ordinance were replaced by a new ordinance, that may need to be readopted soon (or at least be amended) depending on action by the legislature on a new codified Planning Enabling Act	Same observation as above.

## Recommendations

Following are the authors' recommendations to address the principal problems and opportunities presented by this study.

1. The County Board of Commissioners should commit to building the best rural Michigan County Planning, Zoning and Building Code program.

The natural environment and visual splendor in Benzie County is nearly unparalleled in Michigan. Growth is inevitable, and if done right, desirable. But it needs to be well managed, and having a dozen separate local governmental efforts is much less likely to result in a smooth and synergistic effort, than a



single County coordinated and led effort could be. It is time for the County Board of Commissioners with the support of the citizens and local units of government in the County to take the Benzie County Planning, Zoning and Building programs to the next level—and not merely to address the immediate problems.

Staffing and budget decisions on local planning and zoning for the last decade have been reactive rather than proactive, and lack a clear vision for what the County Board is trying to achieve. Without a clear vision, township customers, builders, contractors, interested stakeholders and citizens will remain unsure of the County's commitment and be less willing to place their confidence in the services offered. Townships will be more likely to strike off and set up their own planning and zoning program, which will reduce the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the County program.

The only real solution is for the County to prove its commitment by launching a clear and consistent initiative to provide the best rural Michigan County Planning, Zoning and Building Code program. That does not mean the most expensive, nor necessarily the one with the most services, but it does mean a program that the County can afford (in light of competing responsibilities and in consideration of the fact that it is not a state mandated activity). It means providing an inter-governmentally cooperative program with the following characteristics:

- High confidence and trust by the customers using the service;
- High level of timely, quality service;
- Efficient and cost-effective operation of each service;
- Reasonable personnel costs;
- Quality staff with long term commitment to the County;
- Quality Planning Commissioners;
- Engaged stakeholders;
- Efficient and effective meetings and decisions;
- Proper enforcement and follow-through on suspected and actual violations;
- Clear and consistent communication;
- Recommendations that come from advisory bodies (like the Planning Commission) are consistently supported by the County Board, because both bodies are on the same page;
- Good planning, zoning and building code administration, as well as good issue planning so there are “no surprises”;
- Proper training of staff, elected officials and commissions involved in planning and zoning;
- Regular opportunities for staff training, mentoring, evaluation and advancement.

2. The County should dramatically improve intergovernmental cooperation and communication with local governments, contractors, builders, other stakeholders and citizens.

The principal day-to-day customers of County Planning and Zoning services are local units of government in the County, with townships being the most direct recipients since eight are voluntarily subject to County Zoning. Contractors, builders and citizens in general are also customers of these services, as well as of the services of the County Building Department. In the face of growing distrust of the County, it is imperative to quickly rebuild the trust of the local units of government first, and then of the contractors, builders, other stakeholders and citizens.

The two best ways are (1) to involve these customers in more direct and meaningful ways in the decisions that will affect them, prior to decisions being made and (2) through improved regular communication with them. This will result in greater transparency in decision making and will slowly help rebuild trust in decisions of the County Board, County Planning Commission, County Zoning Administrator, and County Building staff.

The County Planning Commission has already started down the path to improved intergovernmental relations by having Commissioners attend local township board meetings. However, without a broader initiative with a clear purpose and goals, the current effort is perceived more as interference than consultation or improved intergovernmental relations.

As has already been proposed, a County Intergovernmental Summit is a good idea for improved intergovernmental coordination. This is because a successful County Planning, Zoning and Building Program requires a partnership with townships subject to County Zoning. The elected boards of townships or councils in a city or village are no less elected than their County Board equivalents. Understanding the significance of this fact, and the attitude-adjustment that goes with it, is important to successful intergovernmental relations in a County.

A joint meeting with the elected bodies of all the townships, cities and villages in the County, with the full County Board of Commissioners, the County Planning Commissioners, and the Planning, Zoning and Building Department heads may be an important first step to getting everyone on the same page again. This needs careful planning and involvement of all those involved, but should happen soon—certainly by the end of September.

It may not be possible to bring some townships back under township zoning or to stop others that decide to move away from County Zoning. However there is strong support for the County Plan. The Planning Commission should place adherence to the County Plan as its first priority. Making the Plan the first priority will, or may, mean some townships leave County Zoning. The County has no real authority to change that decision. That authority rests exclusively with the respective township. Trying to resist or organize opposition to a township pulling out of County Zoning will only serve to set the township's heels deeper into the ground. The result will be (1) loss of the zoning under County jurisdiction, and (2)

loss of the township following the County Plan. While this may seem counter-intuitive, the most effective stance for the County to take is for the Planning Commission to direct planning staff to help a township set up its own zoning and planning when it becomes known that it wants to. When the County is seen as first, helping a township, even when it may mean the County loses zoning jurisdiction. The County's goal in this situation is (1) to maintain strong lines of communication, (2) convey respect to township official's decisions even when it may not be the County's first choice, (3) allows the County to remain a significant player in the township's planning process, and (4) starts to rebuild trust. The result is far more likely the township will closely follow the County Plan –rather than adopt some other plan. The County can also be seen as helping with some cost saving suggestions for the township to consider: such as adopting the County Plan in whole, rather than paying a consultant to write another plan; or using the County Plan as a template from which they compose their own plan (which would then be very similar to the County Plan). The over-riding issue here is to foster adherence to a strongly supported County Plan first and foremost over the issue of who administers the Zoning Ordinance. It is useful to recognize the asset the County Plan is, and make that the priority which one uses to build upon.

Other suggestions for consideration to improve communication with citizens, local governments, builders and other stakeholders include:

- Complete preparation of the County website where all meeting agendas, minutes and draft documents of the County Board of Commissioners and County Planning Commission are promptly posted.
- County department heads attend every monthly Benzie County Chapter Michigan Townships Association (MTA) meeting.
- Notify townships within X distance of a pending zoning case with a formal notice (as would be done for a neighboring property owner). See sample zoning amendment language to comply with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act: *Land Use Series - "Sample Approach to Update a Zoning Ordinance to Comply With Michigan Zoning Enabling Act of 2006."* (<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/wexford/pamphlet/pamphlet7SampleZoneAmdMiZoneEnabAct.pdf>).
- Create and distribute a quarterly newsletter to all citizens in the County.
- Hold periodic hearings on planning and zoning matters in affected township halls.
- Notify contractors and builders (in writing (e.g., a newsletter or letter) and at an open forum) of upcoming changes in policy, interpretation, fees, time with processing, etc.

3. Establish and consistently apply new procedures for hiring, supervising, training, and evaluating County employees (or at least Department heads).

One of the most easily prevented problems is remedied by a simple set of consistently followed personnel policies that address the following for all County employees (or at least Department heads):

- Up-to-date job descriptions: which should remain substantially the same for a long time, unless there is a major reorganization with broad input before a change is made.
- Clear line of supervision: must specify who employees report to, when and in what form.
- Open hiring process: the process of developing a job description, posting it, considering applicants and hiring should be a public process with considerable transparency when it comes to department head positions.
- Appropriate staff training, development and certifications: Staff training needs should be identified on an ongoing basis and training should be initiated as soon as needs are identified. Training should also be offered to develop latent skills and prepare employees for future opportunities, especially for administrative ones. If employees are not certified in positions that typically are certified, or licensed, then employment should be conditioned on receipt and subsequent maintenance of such certification or licensing.
- Periodic employee evaluations: new employees should be evaluated at short intervals (usually 30, 90, and 180 days) and then annually thereafter, unless a need is identified for more frequent evaluation. Progressive discipline should be considered for adoption as a County policy if employees do not make progress with identified deficiencies.

4. Require basic and continuing education of all staff, elected and appointed persons involved in land use decision making in the County beginning with a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each party involved in each of the common types of planning, zoning and building decisions.

Planning, zoning, soil erosion and sedimentation and building code administration are areas requiring special knowledge; and the relevant federal, state and local policies associated with these activities change over time. It is critical that staff, elected and appointed officials be regularly updated on key aspects of statutory and case law, state administrative rules and the potential impact of proposed legislation. Training on effective decision making, open meeting act requirements, and other similar training is also valuable in helping local land use groups make decisions that are in the best interest of the whole community. Some of the most obvious, immediate training needs in Benzie County are listed below:

- Training of staff, elected and appointed officials on roles and relationships, so it is clear who does what, when, and why (and who doesn't).
- Training of the new Zoning Administrator on how to professionally administer a County Zoning Ordinance, including proper use of forms and enforcement methods, so as to be efficient and minimize County and personal liability.
- Training of County Building Code enforcement staff on their role in supporting zoning administration and enforcement, and of the County Planning Director and County Zoning Administrator on their role in supporting County Building Code Administration.

- Training of the County Zoning Board of Appeals, and the County Planning Commission on the relationship of planning to zoning in a rural Michigan county under Michigan's unique planning and zoning legislation. This training would also include the basics of implementing a zoning ordinance under the new Michigan Zoning Act, PA 110 of 2006. It would also address roles and responsibilities, limitations and preparing good minutes.
- Training of the County Planning Commission on some of the unique functions of a County Planning Commission (e.g. bigger picture issues, promoting inter-jurisdictional cooperation and coordination, technical assistance to local governments, etc.).
- Training of the County Board of Commissioners on the same issues as above, but especially on roles and responsibilities as related to planning, zoning, and building code administration, including limitations of their authority.
- Training of representatives of townships subject to County Zoning on all of the above issues and on techniques by which they may be most effective to influence administrative and legislative decisions on County Zoning.
- Training for all of the above parties in how to prevent (wherever possible) and minimize (where necessary) the legal risks associated with adverse zoning lawsuits.
- Training on the basic elements of good Ordinance enforcement.
  - a. Adopt laws you intend to enforce.
  - b. Uniformly apply them to everyone equally.
  - c. Always enforce the Ordinance when it is being violated.
  - d. Enforcement is easiest to accomplish when:
    - done in concert with good planning,
    - there is a proper relationship between planning and zoning,
    - local leaders and citizens are well educated about the benefits of good enforcement and support the regulations,
    - there is good cooperation between elected and appointed officials and with staff,
    - there is a constructive "can do" attitude by enforcement staff,
    - there is adequate dependable staff at all times who make predictable decisions,
    - there are effective office procedures that adequately track cases from beginning to end.
  - e. Good enforcement is most effective when it is an outcome of doing other things right, rather than simply an end itself.

5. Move deliberately to completion of the comprehensive update of the County Zoning Ordinance.

Zoning is the principal tool for implementing the County Comprehensive Plan. Two-thirds of the update to the County Zoning Ordinance has been adopted and draft text for the remaining one-third has been prepared. It will be a very important test of commitment to developing a top notch rural County Planning

and Zoning program to adopt most of the remaining zoning changes within the next six months. The County Planning Commission has already committed to this and the County Board took an important step by returning staffing levels back to having two people perform the function of the County Planner and County Zoning Administrator, and even more important with increasing full time-equivalents personnel for these two functions. This should provide ample time for the County Planner to complete this task with assistance from the County Attorney hired to support this effort.

The basic elements of this effort can be phased, but generally should be completed in the following order:

- Finish refining contents of the final third of the Zoning Ordinance (largely the individual district and special land use provisions).
- Adopt and index the Zoning Ordinance.
- Zoning Administrator should prepare a land use table by district to facilitate administration.
- Planning Commission should begin work on Town Neo-traditional Development (TND) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) provisions, and refinements to other overlay zoning provisions after all the above tasks are completed (these tasks alone may take a year to complete).

Thereafter the Zoning Administrator should maintain an up-to-date copy of the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. Both should be posted on the County website. Also the Zoning Administrator should maintain an annotated copy of the updated Zoning Ordinance (or a separate document of annotations) for Zoning and Planning Department use.

6. Evaluate organizational options and staffing levels in the Planning, Zoning and Building Programs and make changes as appropriate after proper consultation and when the right opportunity presents itself.

Table 3 presents a series of organizational options for the Planning, Zoning and Building programs. The County Board should complete an initial assessment and selection of a preferred alternative over the next 3-4 months, and then decide the circumstances or opportunities under which it wishes to act on its preferred choice. Since each of the three departments has a separate department head now, there is no immediate need to take action. However, should that change (retirement, resignation, step down), the County Board should revisit the issue and decide whether to make a change.

The immediate need is the issue of support staffing levels. The planning and zoning function has had a single support staff for many years. Many have observed for a long time that the responsibility is greater than one person can be expected to do. Now with that person split half time serving two department heads, the odds of serious overload are great. The County Board should seriously consider providing an additional half time support staff for a transition

period through completing the Zoning Ordinance amendments. This is to ensure quality work and to prevent overload during this period. An assessment can be made during this period as to whether this arrangement or another arrangement should be put in place on a permanent basis.

7. Move to a more representative Planning Commission.

Since one of the major concerns with the County Board and County Planning Commission has to do with the perceived overrepresentation of various interests and geographic parts of the County, the County Board should consider the various options outlined on Table 3 to make the Planning Commission more representative. Whether the decision to do so is made as a result of Planning Commission resignation, or reconstitution by the County Board, it is a decision that should be made in the next couple months, unless the option to tie reconstitution to the a new Michigan Planning Enabling Act is made, in which case the timing should correspond with the adoption of that act. Balanced geographic and interest area representation should be given to future appointments to the Zoning Board of Appeals, but there is no immediate need to do anything more drastic there, given the infrequency with which it meets.

8. Initiate update to County Comprehensive Plan.

As soon as the amendments to the County Zoning Ordinance are complete, the County Planner and County Planning Commission should evaluate the current County Plan and determine if the Plan is (1) still current, (2) needs amendments, or (3) needs to be re-written. If numbers 2 or 3 are chosen, then, design and implement a broad based process for public and stakeholder participation in updating the County Comprehensive Plan.

### **Consequences of Not Acting in a Timely Manner**

While the County did not get to current situation overnight, and can't solve/change path overnight, it is important to move quickly to resolve identified problems. Following is a list of potential consequences of not acting on these options and recommendations in a timely manner.

- Further loss of trust in County Board of Commissioners;
- Further loss of trust in County Planning Commission;
- Loss of confidence in County Zoning Administration;
- Loss of more, or all, townships under County Zoning;
- Loss of trust in County Building Code Administration;
- Irrelevance of County Planning;
- Diminished morale among County staff in the Planning, Zoning and Building Departments;
- Potential lawsuits;
- Potential recalls.

### **Proposed Immediate Next Steps**

Acting in a timely manner does not mean rushing to act. Proper deliberation involving all the affected townships and stakeholders should occur first. These issues need to be

reviewed from the perspective of the best interests of the whole County over time, and not just of those people in the room making the decision, or those that happen to hold jobs in the effected departments at that time. But, because of erosion of confidence, decisions cannot be delayed for very long. Following is a recommended list of actions that should be taken immediately (or very soon if so indicated):

1. The County Board, County Planning Commission, and County staff (County Administrator, County Planner, County Zoning Administrator, and County Building Code Department staff) should immediately commit to building the best rural Michigan County Planning, Zoning and Building Code program that the County can afford (in light of competing responsibilities and in consideration of the fact that these are not state mandated activities).
2. The County Administrator should immediately send a copy of this report to all the townships, cities and villages in the County, as well as to major stakeholder groups, and make it easily available (on a County website, in the County library, etc.).
3. The County Administrator should immediately schedule a joint meeting between the County Board, County Planning Commission and townships presently under County Zoning, or ask to be a part of the next Benzie County Chapter of the MTA gathering in the County. At that meeting the County Board Chairman should ask for validation of the problems, findings and recommendations in this report and for township input on key options. In particular, ascertain under what circumstances, if any, townships that have proposed leaving County Zoning would change their minds and stay.
4. The County Administrator should immediately arrange for training of the new County Zoning Administrator with Kurt H. Schindler.
5. The County Board should immediately instruct the County Planner and County Planning Commission to process the remaining major amendments to the County Zoning Ordinance with a recommendation for adoption of the major amendments (see discussion above) within the next six months.
6. The County Administrator should immediately instruct the Director of the County Building Department to set up a meeting with contractors, builders and the County Building Code staff to go over existing, new and any proposed new regulations, procedures and fees and ask for input on ways to best ensure smooth implementation. Considerably more effort will be needed to notify, and encourage attendance (e.g., provide dinner).
7. The County Administrator should, very soon, schedule a joint training with Kurt H. Schindler in the early fall for the County Board of Commissioners, County Planning Commission and County Zoning Board of Appeals on dates that all can attend. Encourage the County's consulting attorney, and representatives of townships subject to County Zoning to attend as well. This training would focus on the training needs identified in the recommendations.
8. The County Administrator should poll the Planning Commission members to determine if any have any interest in immediately or soon discontinuing their service on the Planning Commission, and if not, whether the County Board wishes to reconstitute the Planning Commission now, or upon adoption of a new codified Michigan Planning Enabling Act.



9. The County Board should commit to completing the County website within two months, and decide what additional communication improvements it would immediately put in place for its activities and direct the Planning Commission, Planning Department, Zoning Department and Building Code Department to put in place, and the deadlines for such implementation (e.g., newsletter, extensive agenda/minutes mailing list, attendance at Benzie Chapter MTA meetings, County Summit, rotate meeting locations, and so on).
10. Following the actions above, decide, what, if anything should be done relative to consolidation of County Planning, Zoning and Building Departments. Prepare for this action by putting into place more formal personnel policies that meet the recommendations of this report, and then commit to consistently following them.

### **Parting Thoughts**

All of these recommendations require several attitude changes on the part of staff and members of the County Board of Commissioners, the County Planning Commission, the County Zoning Commission and the County Zoning Board of Appeals. In particular they require:

- Commitment to a belief that a quality planning and zoning program in Benzie County is very important;
- Agreement that all planning, zoning and building services are provided to “customers” and are provided in conjunction with “partners,” and that townships subject to County Zoning are “partners” as are builders and contractors who are subject to County Building Codes;
- Commitment to meaningfully<sup>2</sup> involving “customers” and “partners” in future decisions that affect their interests in the planning, zoning and building code arenas;
- Remembering that all “customers” and “partners” are also constituents, voters, and taxpayers, and that in the process of serving them, the County Board and its staff are also serving its neighbors and friends—you are all part of one community;
- A deeper understanding that “we are all in this together” and how much less likely it is that any governmental entity will succeed in achieving quality land use in the long term if it tries to go it alone.

MW:Benzie County\Benzie County Analysis5.doc

---

<sup>2</sup> Meaningfully means the involvement is at the very beginning, when the discussion is focusing on defining what the issue or problem is, which then moves toward brainstorming as to what the various solutions might be, and finally the selection of the solution after considering various alternatives. Meaningfully does not mean a small group comes up with a proposed solution and then asks for other's input after the fact.

## **APPENDIX A PROPOSED SERVICES**

April 12, 2007

Anne Damm  
County Commissioner  
Government Center, 448 Court Place  
P.O. Box 377  
Beulah, MI 49617

Dear Commissioner Damm:

I'm writing on behalf of myself and Kurt Schindler, Wexford County Extension Director in response to your letter of March 21<sup>st</sup> requesting a proposed procedure and cost for evaluating effective options for providing planning and zoning services in Benzie County. Following is a proposal to provide this service.

We understand that the County is anxious for this work to be performed quickly. To that end Kurt and I are holding May 10<sup>th</sup> and June 14<sup>th</sup> to be in Benzie County.

Kurt and I have performed similar analyses in other counties and we look forward to undertaking this work on behalf of the citizens, businesses, local governments and County government in Benzie County.

Feel free to call if you would like to discuss this proposal or if you have any questions (517) 432-2222. Thanks for the opportunity to be of service.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Wyckoff, FAICP  
Director, Planning & Zoning Center at MSU

MW:\mydoc\benzie\benzie P&Z assessment proposal2.doc

# PROPOSAL

## UNDERSTANDING OF THE OPPORTUNITY

Following is our understanding of the current circumstances that we believe are relevant to analyzing the provision of planning and zoning services in Benzie County and to proposing alternative options for the provision of those services.

- Benzie County has the second most rapidly growing population of any County in Michigan. This is placing considerable strain on county and local governments to stay up with development related applications and approvals.
- Benzie County is one of the premier vacationing counties in Michigan which results in significantly more citizens to service, than a county with fewer stellar attractions.
- The County Planning Commission is nearing completion of a major update of the zoning ordinance, but important work remains to be done.
- The County Planning Commission must soon review and possibly update the Open Space & Natural Resources Protection Plan as part of the statutorily required 5 year plan review process.
- There have been some zoning decisions in the recent past, that have raised questions about the efficacy of zoning ordinance administration and enforcement. Unanswered questions have undermined public confidence.
- The County Zoning Act was repealed last July 1, 2006 and a new statute replaced it. This makes it imperative that all those involved in the zoning process be well informed about the new structure and changed procedures. Some zoning ordinance changes may also be necessary.
- The MSPO award winning county zoning administrator, Don Swartz, recently passed away after a long illness and a new county zoning administrator Craig Seger has been hired to replace him. Mr Seger is a professional engineer and is now the head of the zoning department. He has no prior experience with zoning administration. Some citizens have questioned the wisdom of this decision.
- Initially it was announced that Mr. Seger was the new department head of both zoning and planning. David Neiger, longtime County Planner objected and following a joint meeting between the County Board of Commissioners and the County Planning Department, it was determined that Mr. Neiger remains a department head, but is only responsible for planning functions.
- There is also a separate County Building Department which handles building and code enforcement. Steve Haugen is the Department head of that department.
- Benzie County has a contractual relationship with the Grand Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation, a Traverse City-based five-county economic development office. In addition, the County has its own

Economic Development Corporation on which the County Planner sits as Secretary. It meets every other month.

- The County Planner prepares the periodic updates to the County Solid Waste Management Plan. There is a separate coordinator of recycling and solid waste services; that is Marlene Zylstra-Woods.
- Presently there are 9 townships under county zoning (Benzonia, Blaine, Colfax, Crystal Lake, Homestead, Gilmore, Inland, Joyfield, and Platte) and 2 townships are considering adopting their own zoning ordinance (Homestead and Inland).
- The Governor (a Democrat), the Speaker of the House (a Democrat) and the Senate Majority leader (a Republican) have all called for greater cooperation, and consolidation of local government services as part of the effort to tame the state budget crisis. The Governor has proposed increasing state revenue sharing to those that demonstrate cost savings through consolidation. The House Majority Leader has called for County Boards to consolidate townships, while the Senate Majority Leader is said to be considering several consolidation plans. There is as yet no consensus to act on any of these proposals, nor is there specific legislation pending.
- Benzie County, like many counties in Michigan, is facing another budget crunch.
- Many counties have gone through reorganization of services to save money, improve efficiency and improve service delivery. More are considering doing so.
- There are pros and cons to each alternative organizational structure and there should be public dialogue before making a decision.
- The process that led to the current County Plan was broad and inclusive of stakeholders, local governments and citizens, and this has resulted in a desire by many citizens to continue to see tangible progress with Plan implementation. Such progress will require a service delivery system in the County that is timely, done right the first time, and adequately considers the relevant public interests.

This setting presents several unique opportunities:

- The opportunity to identify cost effective options that improve the quality and timeliness of county planning and zoning services.
- The opportunity to share options from other counties with similar challenges.
- The opportunity to again get the County Board of Commissioners, the County Planning Commission and key staff on the same page, working to achieve the same vision and according to the same set of goals and objectives.
- The opportunity to answer some common questions and prevent some future unnecessary conflicts.
- The opportunity for some members of the public to regain confidence in their chief elected and appointed officials.

- The opportunity to focus on the future and put conflicts of the past behind everyone.

This setting also presents several unique challenges:

- The charge only included looking at planning and zoning services, yet some of the most obvious options for improving the quality of service require looking at other existing and potential service areas (such as building code administration, solid waste and recycling, economic development, and perhaps other similar services).
- The time frame is short.
- Any analysis we present must be carefully reviewed and discussed in public, which may make it difficult for some to feel they can be candid.
- Any option which represents a change from the status quo is likely to be met with some opposition by those who are most directly affected.

At a minimum it is apparent that any set of options will include recommendations for some new training. This should be coordinated with the attorney hired by the county to assist with zoning matters. For example:

- Training of the new Zoning Director on how to professionally administer a county zoning ordinance, including proper use of forms and enforcement methods, so as to be efficient and minimize county and personal liability.
- Training of building code enforcement staff on their role in supporting zoning administration and enforcement.
- Training of the County Zoning Board of Appeals, and the County Planning Commission on the relationship of planning to zoning in a rural Michigan county under Michigan's unique planning and zoning legislation. This training would also include the basics of implementing a zoning ordinance under the new Michigan Zoning Act, PA 110 of 2006.
- Training of the County Planning Commission on some of the unique functions of a county planning commission (e.g. bigger picture issues, promoting inter-jurisdictional cooperation and coordination, technical assistance to local governments, etc.).
- Training of the County Board of Commissioners on the same issues as above.
- Training of representatives of townships subject to county zoning on all of the above issues.
- Training for all of the above parties in how to prevent (wherever possible) and minimize (where necessary) the legal risks associated with adverse zoning lawsuits.
- Review of the forms used in zoning administration to see if changes are desirable or necessary.

## **PROPOSAL**

This proposal offers analysis, technical assistance and training services to Benzie County in an effort to improve the quality, timeliness and effectiveness of administration of planning, zoning and related services. We will need clarification before starting, as to whether any county services beyond planning and zoning are to be covered in the analysis.

We believe as a result of our services and consensus on a course of action following completion of the work laid out in this proposal, that the likelihood of adverse zoning litigation associated with zoning administration will be reduced and the likelihood of significant errors in future zoning administration will also be reduced. This proposal is based on our experience that improved zoning administration is most effective where all the pertinent parties are involved in relevant training, not just the “front line” staff. This proposal is also premised upon the *complete participation and support* of all of the following:

- ◆ County Administrator
- ◆ County Planning Director
- ◆ County Zoning Director
- ◆ County Planning Commission
- ◆ County Zoning Board of Appeals
- ◆ County Building Code staff
- ◆ Any other staff, commissions or consultants providing assistance on planning, zoning and related decisions in Benzie County.

*“Complete participation and support”* means that all staff and appointed commissioners will participate in interviews, data collection, and any training sessions in which their participation is meaningful as determined by the trainer. When everyone hears the same information at the same time, many future conflicts and potentially confusing situations can be avoided. It also reduces the need for continued consulting assistance. Our philosophy is to build the capacity locally by ensuring that all relevant staff and commissioners receive the same knowledge together, thereby increasing the ability of staff and commissioners to problem solve together at a future time.

## **PROPOSED SERVICES**

Following are the specific services offered:

1. Clarify the basic objectives to be achieved, the options to be considered and the elements of each option to examine.

### Proposed objectives:

- Provision of quality services to customers
- Efficient and cost-effective operation of each service
- Proper enforcement and follow-through on suspected and actual violations
- Clear and consistent communication

- Recommendations that come from advisory bodies (like the Planning Commission) are likely to be supported by the County Board
- Good administration and issue planning so there are “no surprises”
- Proper training of staff, elected officials and commissions involved in planning and zoning
- Opportunities for staff training, mentoring and advancement
- Others?

Proposed options to be examined:

- Maintain the current “silo” approach with each activity (planning, zoning and related activities) functioning separately with its own director and support staff;
  - Maintain two or three separate but coordinated groups of activities, such as zoning, building and code enforcement; planning, and economic development with one director and support staff for each group;
  - Maintain a single large department with all these activities under a single director who has considerable experience and who has demonstrated ability to multi-task. That would be planning, zoning, building code, code enforcement, and economic development coordination under a single roof and a single director.
  - Include if directed, consideration of other related activities such as emergency management, county facility/public works maintenance management, etc.
2. Identify the general pros and cons of each option as relates to parameters particular to Benzie County.

Process to be followed:

- Immediately request and review background information such as recent meeting minutes, zoning and building code forms, a sample of zoning files, related information from other service areas as relevant.
- Interviews of the following:
  - The County Administrator
  - A couple of members of the County Board of Commissioners
  - A couple of members of the County Planning Commission
  - A member of the County Zoning Board of Appeals
  - The County Planning Director
  - The County Zoning Director
  - The County Building Code Director
  - Other County Staff as appropriate
  - Several Township Supervisors
  - A couple of interested citizens representing key stakeholder groups.

- Meet with the County Planning Commission to ask some questions in public and take questions from the public.
  - Prepare a draft written analysis and send to the County Board and County Planning Commission for review prior to a joint meeting of both bodies.
3. At a mutually convenient time, facilitate a joint meeting of the County Board and County Planning Commission to answer questions and assist with reaching consensus on one of the alternatives or a combination of alternatives.
  4. After the completion of the above tasks and based on a separate cost estimate; scheduling and conducting the following training programs:
    - Specialized training for the Zoning Director on zoning administration, use of zoning forms, processing various zoning requests, record keeping, filing, and ways to minimize lawsuits.
    - Basic training on the relationship between planning and zoning, and on the basics of zoning administration: rezoning, special use permits, site plan review, variances, and related issues. This program should be required attendance for:
      - County Administrator
      - County Planning Director
      - County Zoning Director
      - County Building Code staff
      - County Planning Commission
      - County Zoning Board of Appeals

It is also recommended that representatives of all townships subject to county zoning be invited and encouraged to attend.

## **SCHEDULE**

Work would begin immediately after receipt of acceptance of this proposal. All work on the first three tasks would be completed by July 31st.

## **ESTIMATED PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES**

Work is estimated to take a minimum of 40 hours and a maximum of 48 hours. Work will be billed at the completion of task 3. Work by Mark Wyckoff will be billed at the rate of \$130/hour. Wyckoff will take the lead role on the project. Work by Kurt Schindler will be billed at \$35/hour. Both will separately charge mileage at \$0.48/mile. Payment for the services of both individuals will be handled together with payment to Michigan State University. Follow-up training and any additional services would be billed separately at the same rates upon mutual agreement as to a scope of work and time frames.



*Personnel Expenses*

Mark A. Wyckoff, FAICP -- \$130/hour

Estimated time = 48 hours = \$6,240

- Travel to and from East Lansing to Benzonia (2 trips)
- Day of interviews and evening meeting with Planning Commission
- Preparation of draft report
- Joint meeting with Planning Commission and County Board of Commissioners
- Revisions to report and related follow-up

Kurt Schindler -- \$35/hour

Estimated time = 20 hours = \$700

- Travel to and from Manistee or Cadillac to Benzonia (2 trips)
- Day of interviews and evening meeting with Planning Commission
- Assistance with preparation of draft report
- Joint meeting with Planning Commission and County Board of Commissioners
- Assistance with revisions to report and related follow-up

*Nonpersonnel Expenses*

Mileage at \$0.48/mile

- East Lansing/Benzonia/East Lansing (355 miles round trip x 2 trips = \$340.80)
- Manistee/Benzonia/Manistee (64 miles round trip x 1 trip = \$30.72)
- Cadillac/Benzonia/Manistee (78 miles round trip x 1 trip = \$37.44)

Photocopying: at direct copy service charge

Overnight mail and delivery services: at direct service charge

Meals and motel expenses (if any and none are expected): at direct cost

Others: at direct cost

Estimated Total = \$7,350.00

## **APPENDIX B**

### **DOCUMENTS REQUESTED & REVIEWED**

- Minutes of last 3 meetings of the County Planning Commission
- Minutes of last 3 meetings of the County Board of Commissioners
- Minutes of last 3 meetings of the County Zoning Board of Appeals
- Written job description of the County Planning Director
- Written job description of the County Zoning Administrator
- Written job description of the Director of the County Building Department
- Written job description of the County Administrator
- Graphic showing the hierarchy of who reports to whom among directors of county departments and how they all relate to the County Board of Commissioners (requested but not delivered)
- Copy of the ordinance which created the County Planning Commission and any amendments
- Copy of the most recent annual report of the County Planning Commission & County Planner
- Copy of the most recent annual work program of the County Planning Commission (for the next 12 months)
- Copy of the most recent annual report of the County Building Dept.
- Copy of the most recent annual work program of the County Building Dept. (for the next 12 months)
- Copy of the most recent annual report of the County Zoning Administrator
- Copy of the most recent annual work program of the County Zoning Administrator (for the next 12 months)
- County Board of Commissioners Budget for the current fiscal year (as adopted, and then if amended, as amended)
- Copy of the complete set of forms used for County Zoning Administration (partial set delivered)
- Copy of the complete set of forms used in County Building Administration (partial set delivered)
- Copy of the complete set of forms/templates used for reports by the County Planning Department on planning, zoning, subdivision and land division matters (partial set delivered)
- A listing of the % of time spent by each of the following in not more than 8 categories of choosing by the following (time in all categories must add up to 100%; e.g. 25% at counter with applicants, 25% reviewing plans for ordinance conformance, 10% telephone and email, 10% staff and other county meetings, 10% enforcement actions, 15% field inspections, 5% miscellaneous):
  - County Planning Director
  - County Zoning Director
  - Director of County Building Dept.
- Number of zoning permit applications filed and number issued by type for last 3 years
- Number of building permit applications filed and number issued by type for last 3 years
- Copy of the County Zoning Ordinance
- Assessment of the remaining work to be completed on the Zoning Ordinance update (supplied by County Planning Director and updated by the County Planning Commission Chairperson)

In addition, we received a copy of a variety of other unsolicited public documents from local and county governmental officials at the interviews, or transmitted to us afterwards including copies of correspondence to townships from the county and from townships in responses to the county request for funds to support county zoning, as well as various internal communications related to specific department heads provided by interested citizens.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **LIST OF THOSE INTERVIEWED & INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### **May 10, 2007 Personal Interviews**

Craig Seger, County Zoning Administrator  
Dave Neiger, County Planner  
Steve Haugen, Director, County Building Dept.  
Chuck Clarke, County Administrator/Controller  
Cliff Graves, County Planning Commission, Chairperson  
Jerry Priebe, Immediate past County Planning Commission Chairperson  
Frank Walterhouse, member County Board of Commissioners  
Mary Pitcher, member County Board of Commissioners  
Rad Kadlec, Chairperson, County Zoning Board of Appeals  
Cathy Demitroff, Supervisor, Homestead Township  
Zane Gray, Supervisor, Inland Township  
Jim Sheets, Supervisor Benzonia Township  
Marilyn Wareham, Clerk Inland Township

#### **Subsequent Telephone Interviews**

Ann Bourne, Citizen  
Mark Roper, Chairperson, County Board of Commissioners  
Don Tanner, County Planning Commission  
Christine Stapleton, Realtor  
Pat Laarman, League of Women Voters

## BENZIE COUNTY INTERVIEW FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Start: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you see as your role relative to the County Planning, Zoning and Building Program?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What do you feel are the prevailing attitudes among citizens in the County relative to growth and development? Do you feel this is the “right” attitude? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What do you feel are the prevailing attitudes among local elected officials in the County relative to growth and development? Do you feel this is the “right” attitude? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What do you feel are the prevailing attitudes among County Commissioners relative to growth and development? Do you feel this is the “right” attitude? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What do you feel are the prevailing attitudes among County Planning Commissioners relative to growth and development? Do you feel this is the “right” attitude? Why or why not?

6. What do you feel are the prevailing attitudes among staff in the County relative to growth and development? Do you feel this is the “right” attitude? Why or why not?
- County Planning staff
  - County Zoning staff
  - County Building staff
  - Staff to the County Board of Commissioners
7. What do you see as the principal strengths of the following:
- County Planning Program?
  - County Zoning Program?
  - County Building Program?
8. What do you see as the principal weaknesses of the following:
- County Planning Program?
  - County Zoning Program?
  - County Building Program?

9. What do you see as the principal opportunity posed by the analysis of the County Planning, Zoning and Building Programs, and subsequent training that will be conducted?
10. Is this opportunity different from your expectations for the analysis and training we will be conducting? If so how?
11. What specific training needs do you see in the County related to planning, zoning and building?
12. If only one thing could be changed with the County Planning, Zoning and Building Programs what should that be? Why?
13. Do you have an opinion on the best way to organize the County Planning, Zoning and Building Programs in Benzie County? If so, what option do you prefer and why?
  - 3 separate Programs with separate Program heads
  - Combining 2 Programs but keeping one Program separate (specify which to combine)

- Single combined department under a single department head (specify who as head)

- Other option, specify:

14. What question didn't we ask that you wished we would have asked?

15. Do you have any other questions for us?

Time Finish:

MW:Benzie survey2.doc

## APPENDIX D

### INFORMATION ON CODE ADMINISTRATION, FUNCTIONS, AND SERVICES RELATED TO PLANNING, ZONING AND BUILDING CODE ADMINISTRATION IN MICHIGAN COUNTIES FROM TWO SURVEYS (1993 AND 2000)

**County Comparison Survey:** Selected pages from data gathered by the Planning & Zoning Center, Inc., in 2000 by survey of 10 Northern Michigan Counties. Reproduced with permission.

**County Survey Results,** from December 1993 issue of ***Planning & Zoning News***, reproduced with permission. Data gathered by Planning & Zoning Center, Inc., in 1993 from survey of 23 Michigan Counties.

[Note: the authors are unaware of any more recent data.]



# COUNTY SURVEY RESULTS

by Tovah Redwood

This article summarizes the results of a recent survey of 23 county planning departments in Michigan. While a few more counties were surveyed, only offices with at least one full time planner or zoning administrator are included in the analysis which follows. In some instances, survey results were contrasted with a similar survey conducted in 1989 of most of the same counties. Many of these counties also responded to a **PZN** invitation to briefly describe the current scope and future focus of their office and services. These case studies appear on pages 17-32.

All responding counties were grouped into 3 categories to facilitate comparisons between counties with similar SEV's. The populations of each county were also used as a basis for comparisons per capita. Land area per county is presented for context. Not all counties provided information on every survey question (especially financial figures) so detailed financial information by source is not analyzed in this article. The principal data that lends itself to tabular display are found in Tables 1 through 3.

One central theme emerges: adaptability. Though counties concentrate on a wide range of different program areas, they have all responded to external pressures ranging from perennial budget cuts to weak county board of commissioners support. Much like their private industry counterparts, those counties that have survived most intact have learned to respond with creativity and judicious belt-tightening. Through it all, planning staff continue to concentrate on the "big picture", and position themselves to coordinate sub-regional issues. The trick, they say, is to make their funders and constituents aware of just how indispensable county planning has become.

## About the Author

Tovah Redwood is a freelance writer specializing in planning and economic development. She has evaluated land banking for neighborhood development in Cleveland; edited a needs assessment of small business assistance programs in the state of California; contributed a chapter in a book on marketing for economic development; and written speeches, newsletters, technical reports and promotional brochures. She has written for **Planning and Zoning News** recently on dam relicensing, takings claims and the property rights movement. She holds degrees from Rutgers University and the University of California at Berkeley, and lives in Ann Arbor.

## Activities

County planners apply their special skills with tools of varying sophistication to an evolving mix of program areas (see Tables 1 & 2). Asked to divide their time by activity, county planning directors responded that county land use planning, zoning, local planning assistance, management, and county support occupy a significant portion of virtually all departments' time. Most planning departments spread their time in increments of 5-20% across these activities and economic development, transportation, solid waste management and review of local zoning.

Some notable exceptions include Oakland and Emmet Counties, which each spend about 50% on "Other county support," Kalamazoo County, which spends 40% on solid and hazardous waste management; and Saginaw and St. Clair Counties, which each spend close to 40% on transportation. Marquette County spends fully 80% of its time on "Other county support."

Comparing 1993 time budgets with the 1989 survey reveals some interesting changes. In overall average terms, county planning departments seem to be spending significantly less time on housing (9.6 to 4.4), and far more on economic development (1.2 to 9.7) and transportation (1.8 to 7.1). Other numbers reveal counties now spend more time on county land use planning or zoning (7.1 to 12.0), but EVEN MORE time on "Other county support": 7.5 to 17.2. Even considering the wide variations inherent in the large sample from which this average is determined, with few exceptions the individual responses show that county planners spend as much, and usually much more, time on "Other county support" than on local planning assistance.

## Programs

Questions about specific programs within each of these activity areas reveals that while economic development, housing, and recreation show a broad distribution of effort among diverse programs, certain transportation and environmental programs involve a significantly fewer number of survey respondents. In this era of inter-modal transportation planning and federal attention to other forms of transit besides the automobile, non-motorized planning and urbanized area transportation study committees each involve fully half of those county departments responding. Other important programs included non 3-C highway planning, comprehensive development plan revisions, public transport, county highway plans and lobbying for new roads. In addition, there are a few programs

county planning departments do not engage in at all: preparing work programs for county highway planning, route planning for transit, capital improvement programming for roads and bridges, and ridesharing.

Responses to questions about environmental programs show that the multitude of state environmental programs that were in the planning stages several years ago are now being implemented. "Implementation of solid waste plans," in fact, earned the most responses (half or slightly greater) of any choice. It is telling that just as many departments cited "past involvement" with preparing solid waste plans, staffing 641 committees, waste stream assessment, Clean Michigan Fund grants, and energy planning, while few departments deal with household hazardous waste collection anymore, many are still involved with recycling or composting, and with groundwater protection.

Housing and economic development, in contrast, showed greater distribution among different programs, and in some cases even a lack of any activity at all. Only housing rehabilitation and Community Development Block Grants involve anywhere near half of the respondents. Fewer still lend staff support to an economic development commission or area development office, or prepare or maintain an office of economic development planning, the most popular economic development choices. Under the category of recreation, preparing county recreation plans and planning for trails on abandoned railroad rights-of-way, for example, earned as many responses as the housing programs.

In a catch-all "other" category that included tourism and substance abuse programs, only "inter-agency cooperation" showed any significant present involvement. In another related question on regional planning, over half the directors responding said they "attend regional agency meetings." It is clear that meetings are being held; it is less clear how much actual cooperation occurs. This is a noteworthy and inconsistent area, according to the PZC survey. Many departments cite involvement, but many also wish they could: cooperation between and among agencies is still cited as a weakness or need for some departments, and as a strength by others. Those who desire such cooperation often conveyed very strong emotions—one director went so far as to list this area three times within a brief paragraph. Interagency cooperation would seem to merit further study and sharing of information across counties and regions.

The local and county planning categories contained few surprises. Master plans,

**Table 1**  
**PERCENTAGE OF TIME BY ACTIVITY - 1993**

ACTIVITY	Oak-land	Wayne	Macomb	Wash-tenaw	Gene-see	Kala-mazoo	Monroe	St. Clair	Berrien	Living-ston	Sagi-naw	Midland
Management	0	5	5	10	10	15	5	10	25	5	5	25
Housing	0	20	5	5	0	5	8	5	0	5	5	0
Economic Development	0	10	15	10	5	10	10	4	0	4	5	0
Solid/Hazard. Waste Mmgt.	0	1	10	2	0	40	2	7	25	6	1	0
Local Planning Assistance	25	10	2	20	0	5	8	7	15	14	10	5
County L.U. Planning/Zoning	0	1	8	10	0	0	14	13	5	2	1	25
Clearinghouse Reviews	2	2	2	1	5	0	7	2	0	16	0	0
Regional Planning	10	3	8	4	5	0	10	3	0	5	2	0
Transportation	0	20	8	4	5	5	5	35	10	5	40	10
Historic Preservation	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recreation	5	1	1	0	0	10	5	8	0	0	5	0
Other Environmental	0	1	5	5	0	0	3	2	2	8	10	0
Review of Local Zoning	5	5	0	4	0	5	5	4	2	10	5	10
P.A. 116 Review	2	0	1	1	5	5	2	0	1	1	1	5
Other County Support	50	10	30	20	35	0	12	0	15	14	10	10
Other Infrastructure	0	10	0	2	35	0	4	0	0	5	5	10
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	105	100	100	100	100	100	105	100
ACTIVITY	Calhoun	Grand Traverse	Eaton	Lapeer	Van Buren	Emmet	Leelanau	Mar-quette	Shia-wassee	Charle-voix	Benzie	
Management	5	15	20	35	10	5	22	1	10	0	10	
Housing	30	0	20	0	10	3	0	1	0	3	0	
Economic Development	20	0	20	0	40	2	1	0.25	0	5	20	
Solid/Hazard. Waste Mgmt.	10	0	5	5	0	1	15	2	10	20	10	
Local Planning Assistance	0	20	10	15	5	15	10	3	5	10	10	
County L.U. Planning/Zoning	0	20	10	15	10	10	15	1	29	20	30	
Clearinghouse Reviews	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.25	0	2	1	
Regional Planning	0	5	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	1	
Transportation	0	20	1	0	5	2	1	1	0	5	1	
Historic Preservation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.25	0	0	1	
Recreation	0	0	1	0	5	5	0	2	10	10	5	
Other Environmental	0	0	1	5	0	0	5	1	0	0	1	
Review of Local Zoning	0	10	1	20	5	1	20	3	5	10	5	
P.A. 116 Review	0	0	1	0	5	0	1	0.25	1	2	0	
Other County Support	10	10	0	5	5	53	10	80	30	8	5	
Other Infrastructure	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	
TOTAL	100	100	95	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	

Note: Not all columns add to 100%. All responses to the survey are reproduced as returned.  
Source: Planning and Zoning Center, Inc. County Survey, 1993.

zoning ordinances, zoning and planning amendments, and corridor studies occupy the most departments on a local level, with transportation studies, model ordinances, and preparation of grant applications as close seconds. At the county level, only those seven departments with county-wide zoning ordinances deal with preparing or maintaining those ordinances; the rest of the departments, of course, responded "never." Preparing land use plans in-house with consultants, or having consultants prepare them alone, seems to have been a more popular option in the past, as several departments only responded "past involvement" with such a work scheme. Roughly the same number presently do the job themselves in-house.

The only statutory operations cited consistently are Act 116 reviews of farmland and open space, and township zoning amendment reviews. For the county government departments they work with, planners prepare property tax maps, coordinate building needs, and act as "an advocacy body to state and other governments." Planners also prepare population forecasts for the counties or the relevant divisions. For the federal government, county planning departments are commonly repositories for census material and serve as liaisons to the Census Bureau. In other inter-

governmental database questions, the survey showed that the same number of departments currently belong or expect to belong to the IMAGIN data sharing network.

### What it Takes to Get the Job Done

The number of staff members varies widely between counties, from fractions of one to the high of 35 in Macomb, with the majority at between 2 and 7. The staff mix is drawn mostly from professional and support ranks, with a few interns, graphics, and technical staff. Table 3, Available Resources by County, displays this information for all responding counties. The number of computers per staff person, while still below 1 in many counties has risen dramatically from 1989.

County planning budgets rely in large part on general fund monies, with local contracts and sale of data providing additional revenue in S.E.V. Groups One and Two. Twelve counties received state grants, virtually all from MSHDA, Commerce and "Other" sources. Most of these grants ranged from \$7,000 to \$40,000 each, with larger MSHDA grants awarded to St. Clair County for \$200,000, and to Eaton and Lapeer for \$300,000 each. In the 1989 survey, the most common source of state grants was the DNR, for solid waste management. Now, most counties are in

**Table 2  
PERCENT OF TIME SPENT  
ON PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

Avg. of SEV Groups	Avg. of Grp 1	Avg. of Grp 2	Avg. of Grp 3	Over-all Avg.
<b>Activity</b>				
Mgmt.	9.4	15.0	8.0	11.0
Housing	5.3	8.8	1.2	5.4
Econ. Dev.	7.1	11.1	4.7	7.9
Solid/Haz. Waste Mgmt.	9.7	3.4	9.7	7.5
Local Plan. Assist.	10.2	9.9	8.8	9.7
County Land Use Plan.	5.7	10.4	17.5	10.4
Clearinghouse Review	2.3	2.0	0.7	1.8
Regional Plan.	4.8	2.1	1.3	3.0
Transportation	10.2	10.1	1.7	8.0
Hist. Preserv.	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.2
Recreation	3.3	1.4	5.3	3.2
Other Environ.	2.0	3.0	1.2	2.1
Review Local Zoning	3.3	7.6	7.3	5.9
PA 116 Review	1.9	1.6	0.7	1.5
Other Co. Sup.	19.1	8.0	31.0	18.3
Other Infrast.	5.7	5.6	0.9	4.4

**Table 3  
AVAILABLE RESOURCES BY COUNTY—APPROPRIATIONS, PLANNERS, SUPPORT STAFF,  
AND COMPUTERS 1993**

County	Land Area (sq. mi.)	1990 Est. Population	SEV Group	County Appropriation	Appropriation Per Capita	Planners Per 100K Pop.	Number of Planners	Other Professionals	Graphics	Technical
<b>GROUP ONE</b>										
Oakland	910	1,083,592	1	\$1,684,573	\$1.55	0.55	6	2	3.5	1.5
Wayne	623	2,111,687	1	\$573,000	\$0.27	0.28	6	2	0	1
Macomb	482	729,000	1	\$4,231,600	\$5.80	1.51	11	8	7.5	0.5
Genesee	648	430,460	1	\$1,370,000	\$3.18	2.79	12	0	1	3
Washtenaw	716	282,937	1	\$615,000	\$2.17	0.71	2	4	1	0
Kalamazoo	576	223,411	1	\$225,689	\$1.01	0.45	1	1.5	0	0
Berrien	583	161,378	1	\$175,600	\$1.09	1.24	2	0	0	0
St. Clair	720	145,607	1	\$616,613	\$4.23	2.75	4	1	0	0
Monroe	563	133,600	1	\$840,207	\$6.29	2.25	3	0	1	1
<b>GROUP TWO</b>										
Saginaw	829	211,946	2	\$262,876	\$1.24	2.36	5	1	0	0
Calhoun	712	135,982	2	\$73,409	\$0.54	0.74	1	0	0	0
Eaton	576	92,876	2	\$500,000	\$5.38	3.23	3	1	0	3
Midland	528	75,651	2	\$128,458	\$1.70	1.34	1	0	0	0
Lapeer	666	74,768	2	\$380,642	\$5.09	1.34	1	0	0	0
Livingston	581	115,645	2	\$397,000	\$3.43	2.59	3	3	0	0
Van Buren	632	70,060	2	\$102,495	\$1.46	1.43	1	1	0	1.5
Grand Traverse	490	64,273	2	\$165,000	\$2.57	1.56	1	1	0	1
<b>GROUP THREE</b>										
Marquette	1,878	70,887	3	\$143,950	\$2.03	4.23	3	0	0	0
Shiawassee	540	69,770	3	\$27,750	\$0.40	2.87	2	0	1	0
Emmet	461	25,040	3	NA	\$0.00	11.98	3	0	0	0
Charlevoix	414	21,468	3	\$69,315	\$3.23	4.66	1	0	0	0
Leelanau	340	16,527	3	\$242,794	\$14.69	12.10	2	0	0	0
Benzie	342	12,500	3	\$100,000	\$8.00	8.00	1	0	0	0

the implementation phase of solid waste planning.

Five counties received federal grants, with Macomb netting a noteworthy \$2.3 million from HUD. Other Macomb grants include \$98,000 from Urban Mass Transit and \$107,000 of "Other" grants. Genesee County secured \$500,000 from HUD, \$400,000 from Federal Highway, \$100,000 from Urban Mass Transit, and \$50,000 of "Other" grants. St. Clair earned \$68,000 of Federal Highway grants, Saginaw brought in \$121,000 from Federal Highway and \$24,000 from Urban Mass Transit funds, and Leelanau lists \$16,000 of "Others" monies. This mix approximates the findings of the 1989 survey.

### ***The answers were thoughtful, sometimes constructive, and occasionally fiery.***

#### **Respect**

Open-ended questions about strengths, weaknesses, unmet and long-term county planning needs gave respondents a chance to reflect on larger trends beyond specific programs and budgets. The answers were thoughtful, sometimes con-

structive, and occasionally fiery. Responses indicate that most planning directors chafe at their "advisory" role. For example:

- "County planning recommendations are seen as advisory only."
- "Not considered vital part of government."
- "Advisory role weakens influence and discourages members."
- "(Lack of) authority to require instead of just influence."

This advisory function, directors say, will continue to limit their ability to provide quality services without guaranteed legislative support. For example:

- "Non-mandated function of county government results in need of county planning to be responsive to needs and desires of county board at expense of work program and desired planning activities."
- "There is really no authority or power thus no enforcement."
- "In order for county planning...to be effective, legislative support, particularly in the development of new and innovative programs, will be needed."

- "A pervasive unmet need in county planning comes from the legislative halls of the State Capitol. Counties are generally not recognized as 'municipalities' and they are limited in being able to enact and enforce county-wide regulations to carry out land use policies...There are some areas where county planning permissives need to be broadened...this is particularly important in the more rural lower density regions of the state."

### ***A pervasive unmet need in county planning comes from the legislative halls of the State Capitol. Counties are generally not recognized as 'municipalities' and they are limited in being able to enact and enforce county-wide regulations to carry out land use policies...***

Not surprisingly, planning directors cite money as the solution to some of their problems. While legislative support was

**Table 3  
AVAILABLE RESOURCES BY COUNTY—APPROPRIATIONS, PLANNERS, SUPPORT STAFF  
AND COMPUTERS 1993**

Clerical	Interns	Department Account.	Other	Total Support Staff	Support Staff per 100,000	Total Staff	Staff per 100,000	Number of Computers	Computers per Staff	Computers per Planner
<b>GROUP ONE</b>										
3	0	0	0	8	0.7	16.0	1.5	4	0.3	0.7
1.5	0	0.5	0	3	0.1	11.0	0.5	7	0.6	1.2
8.5	0	0	0	16.5	2.3	35.5	4.9	19	0.5	1.7
3.5	0	1	0	8.5	2.0	20.5	4.8	20	1.0	1.7
0	1.5	1	0	3.5	1.2	9.5	3.4	10	1.1	5.0
0	0	0	0	0	0.0	2.5	1.1	3	1.2	3.0
0.5	0	0.5	0	1	0.6	3.0	1.9	3	1.0	1.5
1	0	0	0	1	0.7	6.0	4.1	2	0.3	0.5
2	0	0	2	6	4.5	9.0	6.7	10	1.1	3.3
<b>GROUP TWO</b>										
1	0	0	0	1	0.5	7.0	3.3	9	1.3	1.8
0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.4	1.5	1.1	3	2.0	3.0
1	0	0	0.5	4.5	4.8	8.5	9.2	6	0.7	2.0
1	0	0	0	1	1.3	2.0	2.6	3	1.5	0.0
1	0	0	0	1	1.3	2.0	2.7	1	0.5	0.0
1	0	0	0	1	0.9	7.0	6.1	6	0.9	2.0
0.5	1	0	0	3	4.3	5.0	7.1	2	0.4	2.0
1	0.5	0	0	2.5	3.9	4.5	7.0	4	0.9	4.0
<b>GROUP THREE</b>										
0.85	1	0	0	1.85	2.6	4.9	6.8	2	0.4	0.7
0.5	0	0	0	1.5	2.1	3.5	5.0	1	0.3	0.5
1	0	0	0	1	4.0	4.0	16.0	0	0.0	0.0
1	0	0	0	1	4.7	2.0	9.3	2	1.0	2.0
0.5	0	0	0	0.5	3.0	2.5	15.1	2	0.8	1.0
1	0	0	0	1	8.0	2.0	16.0	3	1.5	3.0



listed frequently as an important unmet need of county planning, money was cited repeatedly as the greatest long-term need. The directors' wish list included:

- "Stable income source independent of county general funds."
- "Additional funding for contractual services for more professional planning."
- "Additional staff that can be insulated for hours at a time to get work done."
- "Necessary tools and funding to do all that we can do."

Short- or long-term, however, county planners wish for greater definition of their roles. Two responses, in fact, mention "selling" and "marketing" as tools available to sharpen roles and responsibilities that would, in turn, generate the much-longed-for recognition in the form of funds and enabling legislation. In the meantime, such clarity is elusive:

- "(We lack) direction, purpose, and leadership."
- "The headless nature of county government (is related to) the pure arm of the state concept of the role and responsibility of county government."
- "(There is a need for) a clear definition of the role of county planning."
- "Determining a clearly perceived identity as either a normal 'line' agency or 'special projects' staff (would help)."
- "(We lack) legislation providing a clearly defined, meaningful role for county planning."

**Overall, planning directors frequently cite education—of the public, of state and county government, and of each other—as a means of gaining respect, funding, enabling legislation, and a clear outline of their function and responsibility.**

Overall, planning directors frequently cite education—of the public, of state and county government, and of each other—as a means of gaining respect, funding, enabling legislation, and a clear outline of their function and responsibility. It is significant that the county planning agencies are fulfilling their "desired image" as "multi-faceted service agencies" and as "data central," but they wish to be known less as the agency "to turn for help in a pinch" and more as both "the right arm to the chief executive" and as "professionally capable, respected, and providing leadership." Most directors, how-

ever, did not cite the type of education they would like to see happen; finding out how to correct the misperception of their role and abilities may be one of the biggest planning challenges these county departments face.

Our survey responses indicate that county planners feel their special strengths and skills should earn them the recognition they seek. In particular, they cited the broad perspective they bring to their work. Just as the "big picture" inspires their approach, objectivity and arbitration skills shape their work; a thorough grasp of sub-regional issues flows from the combination. Problem-solving skills, and diversity of staff knowledge and background were also frequently mentioned as strengths.

### Case Studies

The case studies beginning on the next page present a portrait of county planning departments with different histories, program emphases, and philosophies. As a division of the Department of Jobs and Economic Development, Wayne County Planning offers an Urban Recovery Partnership Program to design cooperative recovery programs for distressed communities, a Community Development Bank modelled on Chicago's successful South Shore Bank, and proposed Empowerment Zone and enhanced housing rehabilitation efforts. Livingston County concentrates on emergency management, the MSPO award-winning PEARL plan for rural clustering, balanced housing opportunities, and a Partnership in Planning program "to improve the department's relationship with local governments, to create public awareness of the department's resources...and to educate staff to local issues."

Emmet County experienced significant opposition to the "specter of land use regulation" until a county-wide zoning ordinance went into effect in 1972. That scenario is

re-emerging in Marquette County, where the County zoning ordinance is being rescinded. Macomb County, site of the largest county appropriation (\$4.2 million), largest grants received (over \$2.5 million), and largest staff (35), describes its strategy in private management terms: "rightsizing."

As a county with urban, suburban and rural communities, Macomb may hold lessons for all Michigan counties, who, according to Planning and Zoning Center findings, long for more political and fiscal support. In Macomb,

*"the Planning office has established itself as an invaluable resource to policy makers and to every major county department. Every dollar allocated is perceived as a high-dividend investment...Macomb has the lowest millage rate of any county in the state. In order to maximize the use of existing funds, county departments have had to seek innovative ways to stretch staff resources."*

Macomb's director points out that his department has earned this reputation as activities have increased 600%, while the staff compliment has increased by less than 40%.

Since the Planning and Zoning Center conducted its first survey 4 years ago, there are more departments using GIS, fewer doing clearinghouse reviews, less time spent on housing, and more time spent supporting other county departments. In response to questions about unmet needs, however, this may as well have been the same survey; the same comments turned up about insufficient political and fiscal support. Perhaps this and similar surveys will contribute to finding ways to address the enduring complaint by county planning directors: "Not valued or understood by decision makers." □

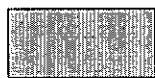
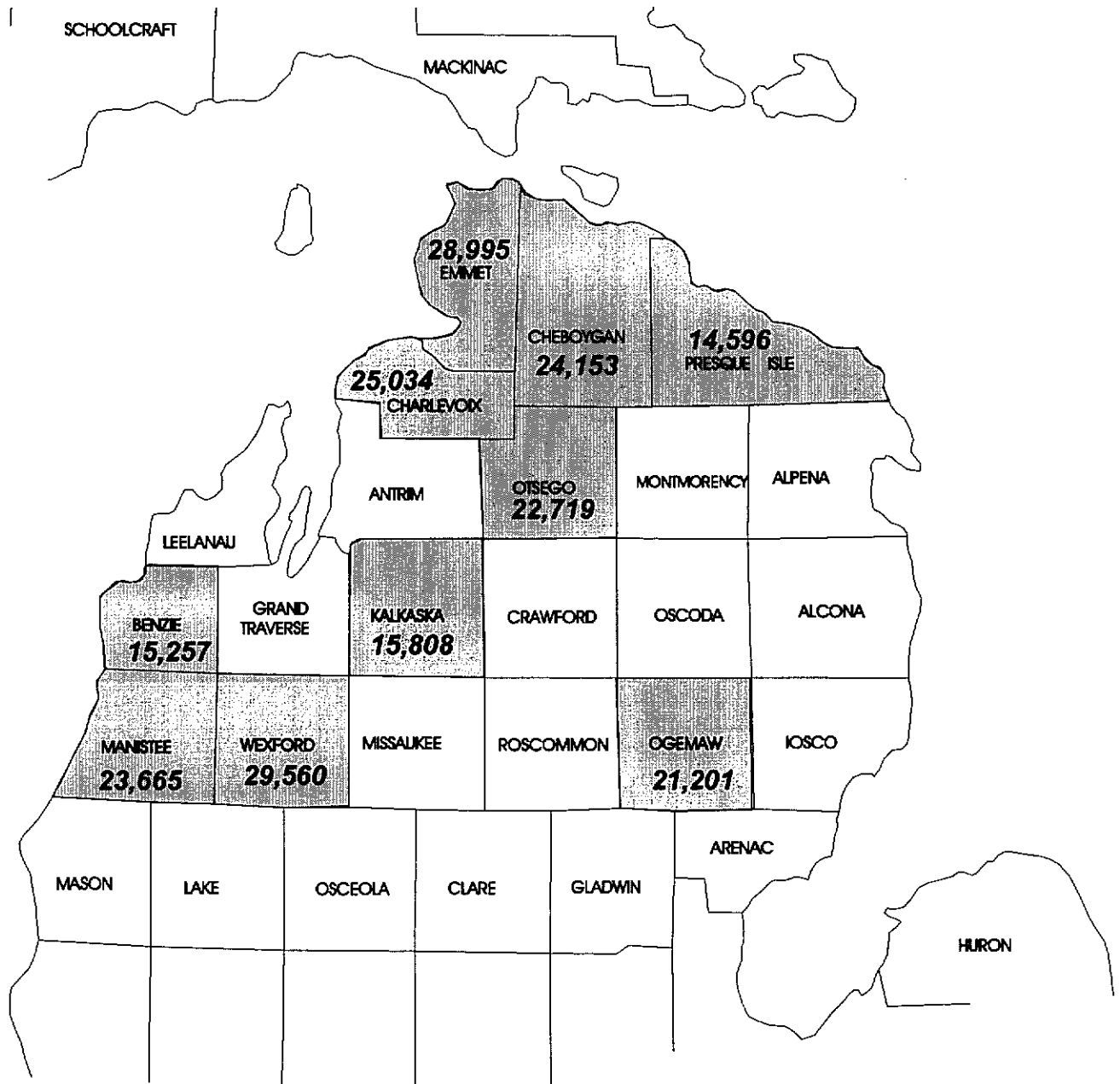
### ORDERING BACK COPIES OF PLANNING & ZONING NEWS

Back copies of Planning & Zoning News® (PZN) are available, while supply lasts, at the rates listed below. Please indicate the month and year of the desired issue(s), the number of copies for each issue(s), and whether you are or are not a PZN subscriber. Please send along with your name, address, and check in the proper amount (add \$1.50 for postage and handling for each issue ordered) to: Planning & Zoning Center, Inc., 302 S. Waverly Road, Lansing, MI 48917. Ph. 517/886-0555, FAX 517/886-0564.

# Copies	Special Rate	Standard Rate	Standard Rate
Same Issue	(Vols. 1-5)	Subscribers (Vols. 6-8) (Vols. 9-11)	Nonsubscribers (All Vols.)
1	\$1.00	\$4.00	\$5.00
2-5	0.75	3.00	4.00
6-9	0.50	2.50	3.00
10+	0.25	1.50	2.00

A complete set of all back copies of Volumes 1-11 is available at a special rate. Call or write for details.

# County Comparison Survey



**Counties Surveyed**

**22,719**

**Estimated Population 1999  
(US Census Bureau)**

**Table 1**  
**County Population Estimates for 1999 compared with**  
**1990 population**

Area Name	Population			1990-1999 Change	
	4/1/90	Est.* 7/1/98	Est.* 7/1/99	Number	Percent
Benzie	12,200	14,743	15,257	3,057	25.1%
Charlevoix	21,468	24,496	25,034	3,566	16.6%
Cheboygan	21,398	23,813	24,153	2,755	12.9%
Emmet	25,040	28,633	28,995	3,955	15.8%
Kalkaska	13,497	15,554	15,808	2,311	17.1%
Manistee	21,265	23,485	23,665	2,400	11.3%
Ogemaw	18,681	21,085	21,201	2,520	13.5%
Otsego	17,957	22,232	22,719	4,762	26.5%
Presque Isle	13,743	14,535	14,596	853	6.2%
Wexford	26,360	29,118	29,560	3,200	12.1%

NOTE: \* Estimate includes births minus deaths plus net international and domestic migration and two additional components of demographic change--net federal movement and a residual--which are not included in this table.

For further information about how the estimates are produced go to  
[www.census.gov/population/methods/stco99.txt](http://www.census.gov/population/methods/stco99.txt)

Source: Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau  
 Internet Release Date: March 9, 2000  
 sta7/excel/survpop.xls 9-18-00 MM

## **Report on Other Counties (Accompanies Tables 5-11)**

### *1999 Residential Construction*

Table 5 shows the US Census tally of building permits compared with the county records for the permits. The figures are different because the US Census does not include mobile home construction and may reflect different months to represent a year's total (example July 1998 through June 1999 instead of January 1999 to December 1999).

### *1999 Building Permits*

The building permit data falls within common ranges. The reported building permits issued for the surveyed counties were from 700 to 1200, with Charlevoix being the highest. Electrical and mechanical permits were reported by most counties to be from 800 to 1200 per year (Table 6). Some counties have seen a steep increase in mechanical permitting because of new propane tanks in the region. Plumbing permits were significantly less than the other inspection areas, hovering from 400 to 600 permits per county for the counties surveyed. Cheboygan had the highest levels of permits per building department staff at 824 (Table 9).

### *Soil Erosion and Sedimentation/Grading Permits*

There was some variation from county to county for the administration of soil erosion and sedimentation permits (Table 6). Reportedly, these permits are increasing along with other permitting functions over the past ten years. Zoning Administrators that also handle soil and erosion permits report spending 1/4 to 1/3 of their time with this responsibility. In a few counties, the soil erosion and sedimentation permits are handled through a separate department external to the building and zoning departments (Table 7).

Because of the wide variation in how the soil erosion and sedimentation permits are handled administratively, they are omitted from the county comparison table (Table 9).

### *County Staff Comparisons*

Table 7 represents the results of the staff survey for the county building and zoning departments. Most of these counties have one building inspector, one electrical inspector, one mechanical inspector and one plumbing inspector. In some of the counties, surveyed inspectors are cross-trained in electrical, mechanical and/or plumbing inspections. Charlevoix & Emmet have two additional full-time inspectors, to bring their totals to six, because of high workloads. Charlevoix, Ogemaw and Benzie have hired part-time inspectors to assume some of the burden and allow the full-time inspectors to take vacations. In other cases, the building code officer is also cross-trained for zoning



administration. In most of these counties, the zoning administrator is also the zoning code enforcer.

#### *Clerical/Administration*

Counties typically employ one full-time clerical staff person for the building department and one full-time clerical staff person in the zoning department. In some situations, the offices share a clerical person. Where there is more than one in each department, the clerical staff usually performs some administration functions (Table 7 and 9). Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Kalkaska and Otsego identified time that represented administration of their departments. However, presumably that function is taking place within the other counties, but perhaps is just an assumed role (Table 7 and 9).

#### *Funding*

With the passage of the new Unified Construction Code, PA 245 of 1999, all revenues that are taken in from permitting fees must return to the building departments that they originated. Fees are a large part, if not the county building departments' entire operating budget. In only two counties, Kalkaska and Ogemaw, the dollars generated through permits are not covering the costs associated with running the department. However, this discrepancy is reported to be very small. The county zoning departments do not report being close to self funded (unless they are supplemented by the building department) (Table 7).

#### *1999 Zoning Permits*

Most of the counties surveyed are zoning large areas with only one zoning administrator. Ogemaw County had the highest number of zoning permits issued, 923 for 1999. The next highest was Cheboygan with 877 zoning permits in 1999. Ogemaw had the busiest zoning department, with 671 zoning permits issued per staff member. Most counties ranged from 200-300 zoning permits per staff member. Special uses, variances, and amendments totaled fewer than 50 permits per year for three counties of the counties surveyed. Functions like site plan review were in most cases offered, but the number of plan reviews was not recorded (Table 8).

#### *Summary Comparison*

Table 9 represents a break down of building and zoning staff according to time spent on various duties. Tables 10 and 11 provide summaries of permits per building and zoning staff members.

Source: Phone Interviews of County building and zoning departments personnel 8-21-00 through 8-31-00. Personnel that responded to the survey via phone were mailed the results to check for accuracy of the data. All discrepancies have been amended for the final tables presented on pages B-13 through B-18.

**Table 5****1999 Building Permits from US Census Data**

	<b>Single Family Homes*</b>	<b>Two-Family*</b>	<b>3 to 4 Family*</b>
Benzie County	294	0	0
Charlevoix County	390	0	0
Cheboygan County	222		
Emmet County (unincorp)	215	20	2
Kalkaska County	133	0	0
Manistee County	(U.S. Census figures only by individual twp. & city)		
Presque Isle County	125	0	0
Ogemaw County	144	0	0
Otsego County	191	4	6
Wexford County (unincorp)	160	0	0

**Source: US Census Bureau of Statistics, 1999**

\*Does not include mobile home construction.

**1999 Residential Construction**

	<b>New Construction (includes mobile homes)</b>	<b>Remodels</b>
Benzie County	306	359
Charlevoix County	676	514
Cheboygan County	263	546
Emmet County	542	421
Kalkaska County	265	503
Manistee County	332	421
Presque Isle County	125	83
Ogemaw County	300	700
Otsego County	349	463
Wexford County	273	479

Source: Phone interviews of county building department and zoning department personnel 8-21 through 8-31-00

**Table 6**  
**1999 County Building Permits**

	Area Coverage	Building	Electrical	Mechanical	Plumbing	Soil/Erosion	# of Permits Issued Increasing or decreasing
Benzie County	whole county	846	825	810	421	151	increased substantially in 1999
Charlevoix County	whole county	1289	1093	1212	645	391	increasing
Cheboygan County	whole county	1231	987	884	442	107	increasing
Emmet County	whole county	818	1057	1281	596	sep. dept	increasing
Kalkaska County	whole county	768	811	1212	384	200	increasing
Manistee County	whole county	753	(other records are kept at the state)				increasing
Presque Isle County	whole county	481	476	State	State	82	inc. through 98, decreased in 1999
Ogemaw County	whole county	923	677	664	329	98	steady
Otsego County	whole county	1136	1180	817	575	173	increasing
Wexford County	all except City of Manton and Cedar Creek Twp.	792	828	929	434	69	increasing

Source: Phone interviews of county building department and zoning department personnel 8-21 through 8-31-00

**Table 7**  
**County Staff Comparisons**

	<b>Building Dept. Inspectors (includes Mech., Plumb., Electric &amp; Building)</b>	<b>Zoning Admin.</b>	<b>Clerical</b>	<b>Admin.*</b>	<b>Total Staff (not including Soil/Erosion staff time)</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Soil Erosion and Sedimentation</b>
Benzie County	3	1 PT ZA (.5)	1 FT & 1 PT in both planning & building	0.5	7	\$299,000	.75 Z.A.
Charlevoix County	8.5	0 (municipali- ties)	2	0.5	9	\$492,972 covers all costs	1 full-time
Cheboygan County	3.3	0.9	2 (split between building and zoning)	0	6.2	\$269,197	.80 building and zoning department
Emmet County	6	3 (also doing planning)	3	1	13	\$558,000 more than covers all costs	separate department
Kalkaska County	3.5	1	1 FT for ZA & 1 FT & 1 PT for building dept.	0.5	7.5	\$215,700, just short of covering costs for building. \$11,200 in zoning fees, does not cover costs.	separate department
Manistee County	4 (state employees)	0 (municipali- ties)	Permits are handled by Lansing	0	STATE	State funded, permit dollars go directly to the state.	separate department
Presque Isle County	3.5 (Building inspector is ZA) (plumbing & mech. inspector state employees)	0.5	1	0	4	\$103,791 supports all costs (not including state inspectors)	separate department
Ogemaw County	3 FT	1	1 FT (split with zoning and building) & 1 (split between planning & building)	0	5.5	\$174,000 budget, \$169,000 from fees and the rest from the general fund.	1 building department
Otsego County	4	1.25	2 in building, 1.5 in zoning	1	9.75	\$386,789 from fees, about \$65,000 revenue	.75 zoning department
Wexford County	3.5	1	1 (clerical split with planning)	0	5.5	Self funded (\$308,000)	.30 ZA

Source: Phone interviews of county building department and zoning department personnel 8-21 through 8-31-00

\* All departments have administrative responsibilities, but not all departments allocated time from existing staff.

Abbreviations: FT=full-time, PT=part-time and ZA=Zoning Administrator

**Table 8**  
**1999 Zoning Permits**

	Area coverage	Permitted Uses	Special Uses	Variances	Amendments	Site Plan Review	Enforcement Action	Written Reports
Benzie County	7 of 12 twps under county zoning	230	13	3	2	NR	NR	ZA
Charlevoix County	All 17 twps. have their own zoning.	676	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cheboygan County	18 of 19 townships under county zoning (Mackinaw City, Wolverine, Cheboygan & Burt Twp do their own zoning)	877	46*	See Note*	1	NR	33	ZA and clerical
Emmet County	12 of 16 townships under county zoning (Bear Creek Twp., Little Traverse Twp., Pleasantview Twp., West Traverse Twp., Mackinaw City, Harbor Springs, Alanson, Pellston and Petoskey have their own zoning)	851	54	16	29	25	112 Complaints, 8 Citations	ZA
Kalkaska County	8 of 12 townships under county zoning (Village of Kalakaska with their own zoning)	447	18	16	2	28	NR	ZA
Manistee County	NO COUNTY ZONING	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Presque Isle County	10 of 13 townships under county zoning (3 twps & 3 cities have own zoning)	253	1	13	0	NR	NR	ZA
Ogemaw County	13 of 14 townships have county zoning (1 twp & 1 city with own zoning)	923	50	28	6	NR	60	Done by clerical staff
Otsego County	All 9 townships under county zoning (City of Gaylord and Vanderbilt have own zoning)	686	50	NR	58	113	19 (365 letters sent)	ZA
Wexford County	13 twps of 16 under county zoning (1 village no zoning)	404	15	15	5	3	61	ZA

Source: Phone interviews of county building department and zoning department personnel 8-21 through 8-31-00

NOTE:\*Indicates that Special Use Permits and Variances are included in the same category.

NR: Information on the activity is not recorded but the activity is taking place

NA: Not applicable

**Table 9**  
**1999 Comparison**

	Total staff building and zoning departments	Total staff building department	Total staff zoning	Total permits from building department	Permits per building department staff	Total permits from zoning department	Permits per zoning department staff	Total building and zoning permits	Total building and zoning permits per staff
Benzie County	7	5	2	2902	580.4	248	124.0	3150	450.0
Charlevoix County	9	9	0	4239	471.0	676	0.0	4915	546.1
Cheboygan County	6.2	4.3	1.9	3544	824.2	878	462.1	4422	713.2
Emmet County	13	9	4	3752	416.9	975	243.8	4727	363.6
Kalkaska County	7.5	5.5	2	3175	577.3	511	255.5	3686	491.5
Manistee County	STATE								
Presque Isle County	5	4	1	957	239.3	267	267.0	1224	244.8
Ogemaw County	5.5	4	1.5	2593	648.3	1007	671.3	3600	654.5
Otsego County	9.75	7	2.75	3708	529.7	907	329.8	4615	473.3
Wexford County	5.5	4.5	1	2983	662.9	404	404.0	3387	615.8

Source: Phone interviews of county building department and zoning department personnel 8-21 through 8-31-00

**NOTES:**

\*\*\*According to time estimates given over the phone regarding work responsibilities, staff levels were split into building and zoning staff (even if technically they are working in the same department)

\*\*\*\*Because of the inconsistency of practices regarding soil/erosion permits from county to county, the soil erosion PERMITS AND STAFF WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS COMPARISON SHEET

**Total staff building and zoning departments:** includes all building and zoning staff, clerical but DOES NOT include soil erosion staff.

**Total building department staff:** INCLUDES BUILDING, MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, AND PLUMBING INSPECTORS AND CLERICAL BUILDING DEPT. STAFF, DOES NOT INCLUDE SOIL EROSION STAFF (or staff time)

**Total zoning department staff:** INCLUDES ZONING ADMINISTRATOR AND CLERICAL ZONING STAFF  
DOES NOT INCLUDE SOIL EROSION STAFF (or staff time)

**Total permits from building department:** Includes building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing permits  
DOES NOT include Soil/Erosion permits

**Permits per building department staff:** total building department permits/building department staff

**Total permits from zoning department:** Includes zoning permits, site plan review, variances, SUP and amendments. DOES NOT include Soil Erosion permits.

**Permits per Zoning Department Staff:** total permits from zoning department/number of staff

**Building Code staff only:** represents only building inspectors & staff, DOES NOT include building clerical staff.

**Total building permits per staff:** total building permits/building code staff only

**Table 10**

	<b>Permits per building department staff</b>	<b>Permits per zoning department staff</b>	<b>Total building and zoning permits per staff</b>
Benzie County	580.4	124.0	450.0
Charlevoix County	471.0	0.0	471.0
Cheboygan County	824.2	462.1	713.2
Emmet County	416.9	243.8	363.6
Kalkaska County	577.3	255.5	491.5
Manistee County	STATE		
Presque Isle County	239.3	267.0	244.8
Ogemaw County	648.3	671.3	654.5
Otsego County	529.7	329.8	473.3
Wexford County	660.7	628.6	656.3

Source: Phone interviews of county building department and zoning department personnel 8-21 through 8-31-00

**Table 11**

	<b>Total permits from building department</b>	<b>Total permits from zoning department</b>	<b>Total building and zoning permits</b>
Benzie County	2902	248	3150
Charlevoix County	4239	0	4239
Cheboygan County	3544	878	4422
Emmet County	3752	975	4727
Kalkaska County	3175	511	3686
Manistee County	STATE		
Presque Isle County	957	267	1224
Ogemaw County	2593	1007	3600
Otsego County	3708	907	4615
Wexford County	2983	404	3387

Source: Phone interviews of county building department and zoning department personnel 8-21 through 8-31-00