Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum Applauds Financial Control Measures Taken by the County in Response to COVID-19

MASON – Today, the Ingham County Board of Commissioners voted to approve several measures that would address the financial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on Ingham County. Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum (D-Onondaga) spoke out on this issue at the Finance Committee meeting on May 20, 2020, and encouraged Commissioners to take action.

“Ingham County has a healthy budgetary reserve, the result of sound fiscal practices in previous years,” said Byrum. “However, we should not rely on those reserves alone to get us through this crisis. The preventative measures passed tonight represent clear direction from the Board to the County’s department heads to chart a course to fiscal responsibility.”

The Board of Commissioners implemented preventative measures to reduce expenditures during the 2020 budget year. Included were a hiring freeze for all non-essential positions (those that were not part of the County’s COVID-19, response, public safety, and others) through August 31, 2020, a freeze on non-essential out-of-state travel, and restrictions on discretionary, non-essential spending.

“The effect of COVID-19 on the County’s budget has yet to be fully realized,” stated Commissioner Thomas Morgan (D–Lansing), Chair of the Finance Committee. “The County may not be able to rely on state revenue sharing next year and there will almost certainly be a decrease in revenue from property taxes. Families across our community are having to tighten their belts and do more with less, and we need to do the same if we hope to protect the vital County services that so many of our neighbors rely on.”

Also among the controls enacted include a “Work Share Program” wherein county employees in many departments are furloughed one day per week between June 1 and July 31, 2020. The Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, as passed through the CARES Act, runs through July 31, 2020 and provides $600 per week in federal dollars to each employee. Union Representatives have indicated their support of Ingham County’s participation in the Work Share Program.

“The Work Share Program allows the County to save on payroll costs while keeping our employees whole,” said Morgan. “Payroll is the county’s top expense and to effectively save nearly 20% without harming our employees is an easy win.”

The County budgetary process has begun already for the 2021 budget year. County officials have asked for budget submissions showing where discretionary programs can be suspended to cut each Department’s budget by 10%.
“It is certainly a step in the right direction to expect the need to tighten our belts next year and to do so while keeping our employees as unaffected as possible,” remarked Byrum. “The resolutions passed tonight should help to soften the budgetary blow that we know is coming next year.”

For more information, call (517) 256-3390.

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