

## Adopting New Technology for Improved Communication Marathon County Board Leads the Way

By Matt Hildebrandt, Marathon County Board Supervisor

The Marathon County Board will be a little out of their comfort zone this summer as they adapt to the use of new technology but the benefits to the public will soon be evident.

The County Board has approved the purchase and use of iPads for the members of the county board. Through the county website, the board has easy access to documents related to the board meetings. There are several benefits for the board, county staff, and the public when it comes to using this type of technology. The use of iPads increases the availability of agendas, minutes and packet materials to the board, which means not only a cost savings, but also improved communication to the media, the staff, and the residents of Marathon County. This also leads to additional benefits such as:

- Increased transparency
- Reduction in costs for producing materials
- Improved staff efficiency (by reducing time making copies, collating packets, and mailing packets)
- Increased citizen participation

Once implemented, the county will provide the public with the same materials that the county board is using during meetings. This creates much more opportunity for the public to understand issues and increase their participation in decision-making.

When the county board approved the use of iPads during my first term on the board, it was an exciting outcome to a long journey. At my first meeting as a board supervisor in April of 2012, I recall attempting to find the packet materials online before the meeting because I had left my paper packet at home accidentally. I remember struggling immensely and barely being able to find the agenda, let alone the



Matt Hildebrandt

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# Adopting New Technology for Improved Communication

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presentation materials and any other accompanying items. This experience made me wonder what it would be like as a citizen wanting to find information on an agenda item. This is just one example of why the county board felt the need to change the way it delivers information-- both to its members and the public it serves.

At first glance, the arrival of materials in a timely fashion may not seem as though it is a benefit to the public, but the importance of these materials arriving promptly is key. This allows supervisors enough time to review the materials and to form intelligent opinions on the issues being presented. This is of the utmost importance to the health and well being of the county. Not only does this mean that supervisors are better equipped to make better decisions, but the members of the public are also able to research an issue and become better informed on the topics facing their local municipalities and county government.

The use of technology, such as iPads, by the county board has a number of benefits to the county board, but equally important are those to the public that we serve. I hope that the increased availability of county board materials has a positive impact and increases the public's interest in county government and maybe even encourages some to consider participating in government whether it be through serving on the county board, or as a citizen member to one of many program committees, or just by attending and participating in county board meetings.



Please mark your calendars for July, which is when the county board materials will be online. You may not have a use for the information right away, but at least you know where to find it if someday you have an issue of interest.

# Why Do You Want to Do This Thankless Job?

By Ken Day, Marathon County Board Member

I serve on the Marathon County Board because I know I can make a positive contribution to our community. That being said, my personal goal in serving on a board of directors has always been to contribute to the organization such that when my service is completed, the organization is better for my having been a part.

Serving as a member of the Marathon County Board I believe I can:

- Foster county government's participation as a community leadership organization.
- Improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of county government.
- Enhance the county's working relationship with other governmental and non-profit organizations on a regional basis.
- Impact the quality and quantity of services the county provides for its residents and others who do business in and with the county.
- Encourage county government to anticipate and plan for the future, participate in creating that desirable future for Marathon County, and prepare county residents and Marathon County government to flourish in that future.

Specific to my interest in the Marathon County board, I have the following perspective, which draws me to service. Over time, the primary leadership for Marathon County and the regional community has changed. In the past, large corporations that were founded and developed in Marathon County primarily provided leadership for community initiatives. During the past thirty years most of these large organizations have been acquired by parent organizations with corporate headquarters located outside

of Marathon County. This has resulted in a reduced ability and incentive for these organizations to initiate and contribute to local leadership activities. The resulting leadership void is a challenge for the community.

My initial and current interest in being part of the County board is my belief that Marathon County government has the ability and responsibility to fill a portion of that leadership void. Marathon County has the ability to fill this void by aggressively initiating and participating in leadership activities for the regional community. With an annual budget of approximately one hundred and sixty million dollars (\$160,000,000) the county has a great ability to affect and influence the future quality of life in Marathon County. I believe Marathon County government needs to be a community leadership organization providing great services in the present while anticipating and planning for the future.

As a single member of a large county board, influencing the accomplishment of these outcomes may seem unrealistic. I disagree. Someone or group of individuals are going to influence and design Marathon County's current activities, performance and its future. Why not me--or you? That may be the more appropriate question to be asked.



Ken Day

# Guidelines on Children Being at Home Alone

By Pam Cotton, Child Welfare Manager

At what age can a child be left home alone or babysit another child? While it would be convenient to provide an answer that has a specific magic age, the truth is that children develop at different rates. There are multiple considerations to take into account when deciding the maturity of a child in self-care or care taking. Wisconsin State Statutes do not specifically address the age and circumstances under which a child can be left without adult supervision. A child needs to demonstrate an acceptable level of maturity and be socially and emotionally prepared to handle the responsibility of being home alone. Additionally, parents or caregivers need to invest some time in preparing children and the household for the child to spend time at home alone.

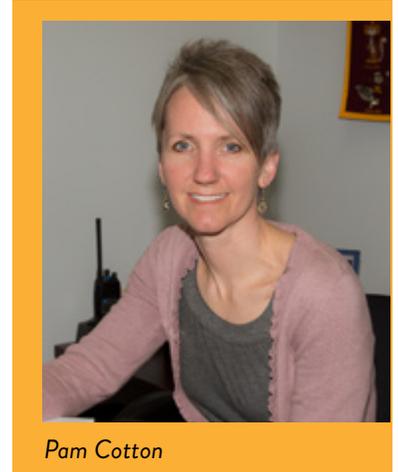
When considering the ability of a child to be left unsupervised, there are key areas of knowledge that must be grasped by a child with the necessary level of maturity. For example, they must be able to recognize serious danger and know to dial 911 in an emergency. A child must know how to accurately tell time and solve small

problems on their own. They must be confident enough to reach out to a trusted adult if a larger problem arises. A child must know how to safely respond to a telephone call or the doorbell ringing when they are in charge.

For children who want to babysit others, they must demonstrate the ability to obey household and school rules consistently. A babysitter must be able to solve routine conflicts with siblings or between younger children. They also need to be able to successfully complete other job responsibilities around the home, such as preparing an easy meal or putting away the dishes. Children who babysit must also feel confident and secure about being in charge. They must be able to talk easily about school activities, their friends, and their feelings. Generally,

children age 11 and older are permitted to enroll in a babysitting preparation class. The [American Red Cross offers online and community based classes](#).

If you have any questions about this subject please contact Dawn Perez, CPS Access/Initial Assessment Supervisor at 715-261-7507. Dawn or someone on her team will also be able to assist if you would like to report suspected abuse/neglect for children including information about kids being left home alone.



Pam Cotton

## Guidelines for Leaving Children Home Alone\*

**8 years of age and younger:** should not be left home alone for any period of time.

**9-10 years of age:** may be able to handle being left home alone for short periods of time. It is not recommended that children of this age be left to supervise younger children.

**11-12 years of age:** can usually handle a broader range of time alone and can provide care for other children with proper preparation.

*\*The Marathon County Department of Social Services suggests these guidelines for parents or caregivers in making the decision to leave a child home unsupervised, after considering the factors discussed in this article.*

## Bicycle Route is Part of the Package

By Karen Nerison, Contributing Writer

Marathon County is on a path to become a healthier county. Biking is just one of the many recreational activities available in this region.

[Bike friendly communities](#) are steadily increasing around the United States. Today's increased focus on health and on consuming less and living more sustainably contributes to the interest in cycling as a transportation choice.

Understandably, communities are taking notice and capitalizing on this shift. Building work-life opportunities that enthusiastically support this trend allows communities to remain competitive and appeal to a vibrant young professional workforce that seeks a satisfying balance of work and active lifestyle.

Tim Wissbroecker with Greenheck Fan Corp bikes to work every day all year round, even in sub zero temperatures. He bikes for two reasons, to save money on gas and to help him train for triathlons and other races. Tim, who was struck by a vehicle while on a training ride was very appreciative of the marked bike route around Marathon County. He feels it makes everyone more aware of the cyclist on the road. He says, "This is especially true in the springtime when more people are out on the biking on the route and drivers are getting used to people being out and about again."

Employers also benefit from the ability to hire a young, energetic population of talented workers who are

eager to take advantage of all the benefits of living in Marathon County – including the bicycle route system. Nathan Schwanz, who works as local office staff for Congressman Sean Duffy agrees that biking helps attract young professionals, but he also feels that biking is part of the bigger package that Marathon County has to offer. Young professionals move where the jobs are, but there is also an increased emphasis on recreational opportunities. Nathan says, "It has to be both; young professionals are looking for a work-life balance. Young professionals really want the whole package and that is what attracts them to move to a certain community."



*Tim Wissbroecker bikes to work year round*

Aspects of Marathon County's cycling culture that appeal to today's young professionals are the increased attention to cyclists' needs such as

designated bicycle lanes, designated trails, and well-marked bike routes. Gary Barden, of Gary Barden Design and the president of [Central Wisconsin Off-road Cycling Coalition](#), is enthusiastic about every type of cycling, and he says, "There is so much momentum in Marathon County for cycling; everyone involved is creating a safe and exciting cycling culture."

Marathon County is a great place to work, live and play. And there are several ways to attract young professionals to our region, including biking. Offering the complete package allows us to lead lives that are balanced and full of opportunities to be healthy and happy.

# County Government's Role in Economic Development

By Brad Karger, Administrator

I have a hard time giving a concise answer when I'm asked to describe the County's role in economic development and creating private sector jobs.

County Government does not have a direct role in economic development. We do, however, have a role in several activities that can be very effective in supporting economic development and job creation:

- We partner with Portage County on Central Wisconsin Airport, providing the availability of commercial air travel.
- UW Extension provides education support to farms and agribusiness to promote efficiency and profitability.
- We fund MCDEVCO, a non-profit corporation, created to attract new businesses to the area and promote expansion of existing businesses.
- We provided the facilities for University of Wisconsin-Marathon County (UWMC) to provide the first two years of college education.
- We are a funding partner to the business incubator, a facility dedicated to helping new businesses get launched successfully.
- We play a role in land use planning, promoting the orderly development of retail and manufacturing, agriculture and agribusiness while protecting our natural resources.
- We provide road infrastructure to support commerce.
- We have just recently identified a role for County Government in branding and marketing our area to new businesses and for existing businesses to attract the talent necessary to make their businesses successful.

When I am speaking with service organizations, people



Brad Karger

tell me that they want the County to develop more high paid, private sector jobs. But, if I ask the group if they believe that County Government can do this, almost always a resounding "no" is heard.

The answer is somewhere between the two extremes. County Government can make and is making important contributions to economic development and job creation. I would describe it more as a support role, with the entrepreneurs who are executing their business plans being the key in economic development success.

Starting a business shouldn't take place in isolation and this is why County Government connects with all the resources and encourages entrepreneurs to take advantage of collaborative opportunities with other businesses, attract employees from a talented and educated workforce, and capitalize on educational opportunities and business development resources.

Do you agree with my assessment that it is challenging to describe concisely the role of county government in economic development?

# Growing Towards Safety

By Dave Mack, MPO Director/CPZ Program Manager

One of the many benefits of living in Marathon County is being located smack dab in the middle of everything that is best about Central Wisconsin. We are able to move easily from one “best” place to another, shifting effortlessly from one activity to another.

Our robust infrastructure is one of the many reasons Marathon County is a great place to live, work, play and visit. We are located at the confluence of major highways, which not only allows the residents of Marathon County to be within easy reach of an abundance of opportunities, but it also attracts new businesses and tourists to the region for a healthier economy.

In particular, the recent Highway 51/29 project offers a myriad of benefits for Marathon County including:

## Improved Traffic Flow

The traffic on both US 51 and STH 29 was beginning to grow to a level where serious congestion was occurring, specifically at the US 51 off ramp at STH 29, which was the only place traffic had to stop along STH 29 between Green Bay and Menomonee. There were constant traffic backups onto US 51, and expanding the roadway to six lanes meant that many more vehicles could be on the roadway. Other projects that help traffic flow were the improvements on County Highway R and the rebuilding of the McCleary Bridge now provide another roadway option for drivers instead of being on the freeway.

## Safety

The traffic flow issues made the roadway less safe and less desirable to drive. With the freeway traffic including the

larger trucks, residents wanting to get across town only had one option, the freeway. The improvements gave people options to drive on better, new roads. WI DOT at the inception of the planning process wanted to get the local traffic off the interstate and to utilize the local roads.

## Cost Savings

The roadway pavement was over 40 years old and in need of replacement and it was in the best location, so rebuilding the existing road was the smartest decision. Financially, the amount of time people would have to wait to continue along STH 29 was adding up and maintaining the old road was getting expensive.



*This portion of the interstate is 3% of road miles in Marathon County, but carries approximately 80% of the traffic.*

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## Growing Towards Safety *continued*

By Dave Mack, MPO Director/CPZ Program Manager

### Economic Health

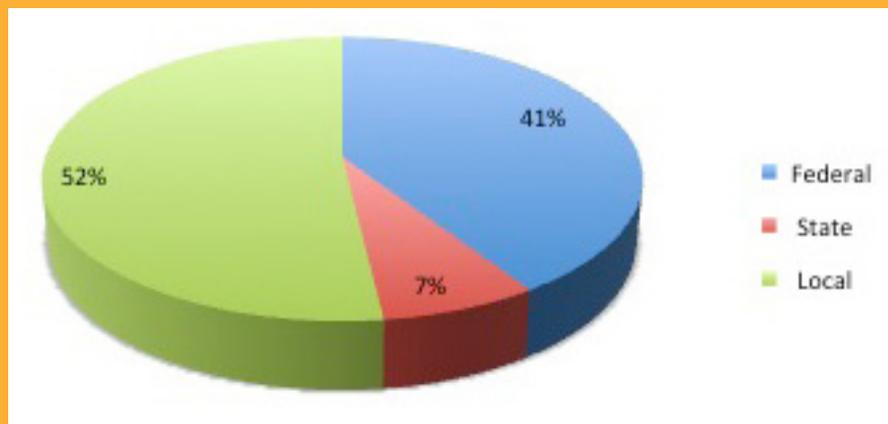
The need to grow Marathon County's business environment increases the demand for moving both people and freight from one place to another—as effectively as possible. The improvements being made to Hwy 51/29 offer a competitive edge when it comes to attracting new businesses to the region. With transportation being a key factor in economic growth, it is vital that we keep up with the demands of business.

In 1997, WisDOT and local officials started the planning process to rebuild the USH 51 and STH 29 freeway and interchanges in the Wausau region. With a highly skilled team of WisDOT and hired engineers, the planning process looked at the two main interchanges of US 51 and STH 29 along with the CTH N, NN and Sherman St., Stewart Ave., and Bridge Street interchanges. As part of those areas, the whole length of the project roadway,

about six miles, was to be converted from two lanes to three lanes in each direction. The entire project was broken up into smaller more manageable project.

A representative from Marathon County worked very hard to assist the engineers in planning in order to include a local perspective of need relative to community growth. Also, the county developed an environmental impact process (integrated storm water management components and wetland mitigation) unique to this major transportation project.

With all this work being done in recent years the WisDOT and local communities will have spent over \$310 million dollars to not only make the Wausau region a safer and easier place to drive, but also an even better place to live, work, play, and visit.



*This chart represents the funding sources for the infrastructure improvement projects.*