



Dells of the Eau Claire

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

## Property Taxes and Assessments

Mary Kluz UW-Ext, Lorraine Beyersdorf, Treasurer

It is a common misconception that an increased assessment means a higher tax bill, or a reduced assessment means a tax cut. This is not always the case. A change in assessment does not necessarily lead to a change in property taxes.

Imagine a tiny village with only two parcels. Both properties were valued last year at \$100,000 and the tax bill for each was \$1000. The village's total property tax collections were \$2000.



The following year the reassessment valued both properties at \$200,000 each. The village provided no new services and the total tax collections remained the same. Even though the assessments doubled in value, each property was billed \$1000 in taxes, one-half of the total tax collections.

New scenario: the village has decided to provide a new service, requiring an additional \$200 of tax collections. The total tax collections needed are now \$2200. Assessments have stayed the same. Now each property owner will be billed \$1100; the ratio remains the same at one-half of the total assessments.

Another possibility: One of this tiny village's properties is damaged by flooding, and the owner rebuilds a smaller home. The new assessment for the smaller home is \$100,000. The other property remains valued at \$200,000. Now the village's total property value is \$300,000, and their tax collections are \$2000. The tax bill for the smaller home will decrease to \$667 (one-third of the total tax levy) and the tax bill for the property with the higher assessment increases to \$1333 (two-thirds of the total collections).

No matter how many properties, no matter what the total value, you pay the same share of a municipality's tax levy as your share of the property value.

## Budget Saving Strategies

Diane Wessel Conservation, Planning & Zoning

With decreased shared revenues and increased cost of services, communities are faced with the task of maintaining services with fewer resources. Communities are forced to prioritize activities, contain operating costs, and minimize overhead costs.

Communities should look to their Comprehensive Plans for guidance when making budgetary decisions. Your Comprehensive Plan reflects the desires of your residents through its goals, objectives and policies.

The plans identify activities such as shared services, negotiating contracts jointly with other communities for a lower rate, reducing the cost of services by directing development to appropriate locations, and creating a formal process for road improvement.

### Special points of interest:

- Comprehensive Plans available on-line at [www.co.marathon.wi.us](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us)
- Financial assistance for reducing lead hazard (715) 261-1900
- Firewood Permits \$25 (715) 261-1550
- If you would like any of the articles for reproduction or have ideas for future articles, contact Diane Wessel (715) 261-6042

# County Budget Prioritization

Brad Karger, County Administrator

The Marathon County Board of Supervisors is in the early stages of establishing priorities to County programs. Anticipating financial challenges from a State budget deficit and a jail expansion project which may come as early as 2011, board members created a prioritization process.

Focus groups of Marathon County residents were conducted in Athens, Hatley, Stratford, Wausau, Rothschild, and Mosinee. One theme that emerged was that participants were very supportive of government programs that benefited the elderly, and more specifically, those that allow the elderly to live safely and with dignity.

Conversely some participants were not so supportive of County programs that were discussed like alcohol and drug addiction treatment. Many participants assigned a lower priority to those government programs that benefited people who they believed had engaged in behavior that caused or contributed to their unfortunate condition.

The next step of the prioritization process is a review of the focus group results by the County standing committees. Committee members will be challenged to blend ideas generated by the focus groups with their own thinking and establish some overarching goals for the service areas.

These goals will be used to establish priority groupings that will be used to establish budget and funding for 2010 and years beyond.

This prioritization process is a leadership activity of the County Board designed to shape the future of County Government in a thoughtful, participatory and deliberate way.

Now is the perfect time for your County Board representative to hear from you about your thoughts on the priorities of government.

If you don't know who your County Board representative is or need their contact information, contact: County Clerk: (715) 261-1500 or [www.co.marathon.wi.us.gov](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us.gov)

## Life In Marathon County

Diane Wessel, Conservation, Planning & Zoning

The United Way of Marathon County publishes the Life Report every two years. The report uses data and survey results to depict the quality of life in Marathon County.

The report can provide your community with a valuable tool to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses and to prioritize its focus and activities.

The goals of the Life Report are:

- Create a community agenda for action
- Identify the community's strengths
- Provide a perspective of changes or trends over time

The success of the Life Report depends on survey response. The surveys will be sent to random households in April. If your household receives the Life Report Survey, please take the time to complete it.

The 2007—2009 Life Report is available by calling (715) 848-2927 or on-line at [www.unitedwaymc.org](http://www.unitedwaymc.org)

## Firewood Permits

Tom Lovlien, Parks Recreation & Forestry

Many people are relying on firewood to combat the increasing costs of burning fossil fuels while heating their homes. Did you know that following timber harvests on County Forest and Park property there are often tops and down wood remaining on site?

The Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department offers permits to individuals to collect and use the remaining wood as firewood. The permits are valid from 30-90 days, are site specific and allow you to remove up to five cords. The cost of the permit is \$25.

For more information or to apply for a permit:  
(715) 261-1550





# Working Lands Initiative—Next Steps

Andy Johnson, Conservation, Planning & Zoning

The Working Lands Initiative (WLI) is a State initiative led by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to protect working lands (agriculture, forestry, tourism and recreation) from conversion to other land uses and to retain the economic viability of industry related to these lands.

In March, Marathon County hosted a workshop, co-sponsored by Lincoln County, on the WLI to gather input from local officials and residents. Information was presented on tools such as agricultural enterprise areas, purchase of development rights, woodland protection programs, and minimum lot size.

Participants identified which tools they felt would be viable in their community, which ones they may be willing to try and which they would like to learn more about.

Participants said that they would like to provide input on WLI activities to assure that residents understand the importance of working lands and that issues such as property rights, mapping, program benefits, and program activities are addressed.

For more information or to get involved, contact Andy Johnson: (715) 261-6002

Farmland Preservation Plans are part of WLI. Marathon County will update the County Farmland Preservation Plan developed in 1982. During plan development, staff will be in contact with local officials and landowners to discuss and gather input on topics such as zoning, purchase of development rights, conservation subdivisions, agricultural districts, and woodland protection efforts.

Over the next few months, the Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department will work with County officials and DATCP to identify planning priorities and strategies. We will notify local officials of our activities and time lines.

## Lead Poisoning in Children

Vicki Chrapkowski, Health

Lead is still a silent hazard found in the paint on windows, siding, and porches, in dust, and in soil of homes built before 1978. It is most harmful to children under the age of 6.

Every child should have their lead levels checked with their doctor at age 1 and 2. Lead exposure is totally preventable.

At low levels a child may have:

- Developmental delays
- Lower IQ
- Hyperactivity
- Learning disabilities
- Behavioral problems
- Impaired hearing
- Stunted growth

Damage to the brain may be irreversible.

If symptoms are present they may include:

- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Decreased activity
- Loss of appetite
- Constipation
- Loss of recently learned skills



For more information on lead poisoning or lead hazard reduction funding, contact the Marathon County Health Department at (715) 261-1900

## Lead Hazard Reduction Funding Available

Sara Brown, Health

Most pre-1980 homes contain lead paint. When lead paint deteriorates or was applied to friction surfaces such as windows, floors and doors, it has the potential to cause lead poisoning in children. The Marathon County Health Department has a grant to assist homeowners with the cost of home improvements that reduce lead hazards.

The purpose is to prevent lead poisoning by reducing lead hazards. Grant money and low interest loans (~2%) are available to income eligible families or landlords renting to low income families. A child under the age of 6 must reside at or frequent the home to be eligible for the grant.

For homes where lead hazard reduction work can be accomplished through painting, vouchers are available for up to \$500 for paint and supplies. This is not income based, but does require the presence of a child under 6 years old.

# Community Connections

Marathon County CPZ  
210 River Drive  
Wausau, WI 54403-5449

Nonprofit  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit #186  
Wausau, WI

## A PERIODIC NEWSLETTER BY THE MARATHON COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE AND ITS DEPARTMENTS

Conservation, Planning & Zoning: 261-6040  
Health: 261-1900  
Highway: 261-1800  
Parks, Recreation & Forestry: 261-1550  
Solid Waste: 446-3339  
UW-Extension: 261-1230

The Marathon County Environmental Resources Committee provides guidance on policies and strategies that balance, protect and enhance environmental and community resources through cooperation with all levels of government.

We're on the Web!  
[www.co.marathon.wi.us](http://www.co.marathon.wi.us)

## Did You Know???

The Ringle Brick Company began as a sawmill built in 1889 by John Ringle. Discovery 5 years later of a 30 foot thick deposit of clay led to the closing of the sawmill in 1904. Shale found underneath the clay was pulverized into a powder, mixed with the clay and formed into bricks. Iron oxide in the shale gave the brick a burnt orange color after firing. Due to the firing of the bricks, there was intense heat, and the brickyard burned down twice and was rebuilt. The final Ringle brick was produced in 1943.

## Neighborhood Connections Town of Plover Brownfield Cleanup Success

Andy Delforge - REI Engineering Inc. and Plover Planning Commission

The Town of Plover had a problem with a property in the Town that was blighted and tax delinquent. The site also contained a burned house and out buildings filled with electronics from the original owner. The soil was known to be contaminated. All of these issues were big problems for the Town to overcome. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Marathon County and REI Engineering, Inc., worked with the Town in applying for and receiving a WDNR Brownfield Site Assessment Grant (SAG).



The grant allowed the Town to remove and recycle a total of 33,205 pounds of electronics, 1,090 intact fluorescent bulbs, and 25 pounds of broken bulbs that were stored in the buildings. Asbestos samples were collected and the buildings were demolished. A total of 98.2 tons of building debris was transported to the Marathon County Landfill. A total of 12.3 tons of tires were also removed and transported for recycling. The wells formerly serving the buildings were properly abandoned. When all the work was completed, the basement was backfilled with sand, the site graded, covered with topsoil, mulch and seeded. Soil and groundwater samples were also collected on the property and analyzed for contaminate parameters to determine the degree and extent of contamination collected throughout the property.

The restoration of the site has removed a public blight, reduced the potential for soil and groundwater contamination and reestablished the property to saleable condition. The Town of Plover is considering the site for a municipal center or other redevelopment.

