



COUNTY OF DOOR

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Door County Board of Supervisors

Administrator's Annual Report

February 22, 2011

Michael J. Serpe, County Administrator

Mr. Chairman and members of the Board of Supervisors,

When I gave this report to you in 2008 I said that "I'm proud, as I know you are, to work in county government. I love what I do; I need to, now more than ever. The reason I love it and why it's a pleasure is that I get to SERVE people. In the final analysis, that's what life is all about. That's why you're here and that's a very good thing."

I still feel that way but I'm starting to wonder if I've got some kind of delusional condition.

I'm here, in the seat of Door County government, to tell you that the financial condition of Door County is sound. While we are expecting rough seas ahead, we are not "broke" as has been reported in some circles and publications. Thanks to the continuing careful stewardship of the County Board, the Finance Committee, the Finance Department and all of the department heads, our accounts are in good shape and in spite of what we hear next week from the state capital, all of us will do whatever is necessary to keep us and them in good condition.

This isn't a budget speech but in light of the happenings of the past week and what will be revealed next week; money is on a lot of the minds in this room. As WCA President Mark O'Connell noted in a message to us last week, "While county government recognizes that the state has a significant fiscal challenge and is choosing to solve a portion of that challenge by having state employees contribute more to WRS and health insurance, requiring counties to solve an impending state created fiscal challenge in the same manner and requiring counties to use the same tools removes the ability of counties to solve our budget challenges on our terms."

We need to realize that "our terms" are very restricted and we need to remind the people we serve of that fact in the weeks and months to come.

Over the past three decades, the State has been systematically shifting costs to Counties, which is the single greatest factor in rising County property taxes. The State's deficit would be much higher without this shift. While costs have risen in every area, there has been no actual increase in shared revenue, community aids, juvenile justice funding or court surcharges to pay for State mandated services since the 1980's.

We are now facing the truly daunting task of balancing the needs and expectations of the people we serve with what will most likely be significantly diminished resources. We cannot expect our "partners" at either the federal or state levels to provide us with sufficient resources in the near future or the distant future for that matter. We are on our own and we will be for a good long time.

If we are not granted expanded "home rule" operational authority, the negative impact upon the smaller parts of our overall budget will be magnified. If we are not able to be in control of our service delivery system we will have to make very unpopular decisions locally to absorb State budget cuts.

The physical assets of our county continue to need adequate care and maintenance and the health, safety, and quality of life of our people need to be protected and enhanced yet our ability to do so will be ever so problematic in the coming years.

Deep inside I think that we all continue to believe that what we do is worth the effort and that by continuing to work together we will make Door County a place that people will always be proud to call home.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I ask you and all the people of Door County for understanding, patience, and compassion as together we confront the challenges ahead.

On Wisconsin.

Thank you.