



Local News

Akinwale gains leadership award

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John Madill / H-P staff Hartford City Manager Yemi Akinwale stands in front of city hall Wednesday.

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HARTFORD - Hartford City Manager Yemi Akinwale has earned a high honor from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission.

Akinwale got the commission's 2010 Welch-Lackey Leadership Award at its Feb. 1 meeting at Southwestern Michigan College in Dowagiac.

"There is no finer ambassador for the SWMPC across the region than Mr. Akinwale," said SWMPC Executive Director John Egelhaaf.

Akinwale of Benton Harbor serves on the planners' board as a Berrien County representative. He is also alternate board treasurer and serves on the board's Administration Committee. He is also a board member for the Community Hospital/Lakeland Foundation and is also active in the Van Buren County Red Cross and Area Agency on Aging.

"I was surprised to get the award," Akinwale said. "I was humbled by it. I got a nice plaque."

Akinwale has been Hartford city manager since 1999. Before that he was Benton Township economic development director, and he served as administrative village assistant in Constantine.

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is the regional planning agency for Berrien, Van Buren and Cass Counties.

The Welch-Lackey Leadership Award was named in honor of two past SWMPC board members, George A. Welch and William F. Lackey.

Also at the Feb. 1 meeting, the planning commission awarded the 2010 Graham Woodhouse Intergovernmental Cooperation Award to the various entities involved in the Lakes Area Sewer Authority project in portions of Van Buren and Cass counties.

The sewer system, completed in November, serves about 800 customers. Plaques were awarded last week to representatives of many of the 13 entities that cooperated in the project.

"The overall success of the project is a clear example of how building trust in relationships among all team players is the true objective and driver for the project," said Project Engineer Alan Smaka of Wightman & Associates of Benton Township.

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