



The Quarterly

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

Friends of Public Health Award

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The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) was presented with the 2012 “Friend of Public Health Award” by the **Berrien County Health Department (BCHD)** at a ceremony held on Wednesday, May 2, 2012. Duane C. McBride, Ph.D. Chair of the Board of Health, made the presentation. Executive Director, John Egelhaaf and staff received the award on behalf of the Commission.



John Egelhaaf receiving the award

The SWMPC believes that excellence in planning is fundamentally about improving the quality of life in the communities of southwest Michigan. The work of our two organizations has tended to grow together over the last several years. The mission of the **BCHD** is: to prevent disease, protect health, prolong life, and promote an optimal quality of life. We regularly partner with organizations from across the region to help us do our work. Some of the specific SWMPC projects identified by the **BCHD** included:

- Provided key perspectives as a vital member of the “**Health Equity Alliance**” (HEAL) and “**Building**

Healthy Communities Coalition”.

- Instrumental in the success of the **BCHD’s** Complete Streets Project.
- Participated as an active member of the steering committee for county-wide obesity reduction initiative.
- Promoted Public Health through non-motorized transportation map.
- Conducted a community survey on septic systems that was later used to support and promote the **BCHD’s** point of sale initiative in the Environmental Health service area.
- Addressed transportation challenges that lead to an established fixed route bus system in Benton Harbor/St. Joseph area.
- Demonstrated that proper land use and community infrastructure can have a significant impact on the public’s health.
- Shared their community data.

Through these activities and many others, we hope to reinforce our commitment to an ongoing partnership with the **BCHD** to ensure that all Berrien County’s residents realize their optimal level of health and quality of life.

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TRANSPORTATION

A New Transportation Website!

Mywaythere.org is a website developed by the SWMPC as a one-stop resource to help find transportation options within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. Also, human services professionals can also use Mywaythere.org to provide their clients with information about transportation options and inform clients about several free and reduced programs available to eligible seniors, students, veterans, and persons with disabilities. The free and reduced programs include senior shopping shuttles, the **Disabled American Veterans** medical shuttle, student summer passes, and the 50% reduced fare card program. Increasing awareness about these programs helps people address many transportation barriers when accessing employment, education and training, grocery shopping, medical appointments and other life enhancing activities or events.



The new Mywaythere.org website!

This website has information on carpooling and ridesharing. It also lists walking and biking opportunities. There is information on traveling by bus, train, or airplane in and out of the country. It also has information on how to get and use power scooters or motor chairs and much more.

The SWMPC has worked with several partners to ensure that the most up-to-date information is available. Many of these agencies include **Area Agency on Aging, Senior Centers, Disabled American Veterans**, non-emergency medical providers, and local taxi companies to name a few. Although the website is targeted to human service professionals, SWMPC is working on making the website's content more user friendly and accessible for the general public and those with visual and hearing disabilities.

If you would like to schedule a demonstration for your staff or committee, please contact Mobility Manager, Christina Phippen at 269-925-1137 ext 19 pippenc@swmpc.org or Senior Planner, Kim Gallagher at 269-925-1137 ext 18 gallagherk@swmpc.org Try Mywaythere.org today!

Galien River Watershed Project

SWMPC has partnered with **Perry Ballard Inc.** to develop four different billboards currently up along Red Arrow and US 12 Highway. There was an ad and press release published in the local newspaper! An additional 1600 mailers were sent to residents in the Galien River Watershed explaining the importance of maintaining septic systems.



One of four different billboards

SWMPC also partnered with **Midwest-Family Broadcasting** and developed three different radio ads that played on 97.5 FM focusing on Septic System Maintenance, Lawn Care, and Rain Gardens. You can listen to these ads at www.swmpc.org/what_can_i_do.asp. For more information like www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheGalienRiver!

ENVIRONMENT

Three Oaks Rain Garden Project

The **Jimmy F New Foundation** awarded a grant to promote clean water by developing rain gardens. The **Village of Three Oaks** had the best attendance at the Low Impact Development Workshop held by SWMPC on March 1st and were presented a \$600 **Cardno JFNew Native Plant Nursery** gift certificate to assist their rain garden project. On June 9th, after a great deal of planning and coordination, volunteers from **Sunflower Garden Club**, SWMPC, David Krumrie, the **Masons** and the **Village and Township of Three Oaks** constructed and planted the garden with a variety of native plants. The rain garden is located next to the new Three Oaks Community



Garden site where the pea stone is being laid as a base to help water percolate into the ground.



Volunteers at the Three Oaks Rain Garden

Garden in an area that usually floods due to the heavy clay soils. This garden is also located next to an elementary school. An interpretive sign was developed by SWMPC and will be placed next to the newly planted garden to educate the public on the purpose and benefits of rain gardens. Visit www.facebook.com/swmpc for more photos of the Three Oaks Rain Garden Project. The rain garden is located at 2 Oak Street Three Oaks, MI 49128.

What is a Rain Garden?

A rain garden is a special garden with a shallow dip in the center to collect water running off roofs, pavement or lawns. It is typically planted with native shrubs, wildflowers like Butterfly Weed, Purple Coneflower and grasses. A rain garden reduces water pollution by slowing the water down and allowing it to soak into the ground which filters out pollutants such as sediment and excess nutrients.



Purple Coneflower

What are the Benefits of Rain Gardens?

Rain gardens are a beautiful solution to help keep our streams, rivers and lakes clean. A rain garden is composed of native plants that have very deep roots which allow the water to percolate down into soil. Native plants need less water, fertilizer and pesticides saving time and money. Rain gardens attract birds and butterflies! Visit www.raingarden.org to learn more.



Butterfly Weed



Pump your septic tank every 3 years.

Septic System Maintenance = Clean Water!

Pollution from failing septic systems hurts everyone! When was the last time you had your septic system pumped? Can't recall? Then it's been too long! A septic system should be inspected and pumped every 3 years so that human waste from your home does not pollute drinking water sources and Lake Michigan. Human waste contains bacteria that can make people sick or even cause death. So if you have a septic system please:

- Have your septic system professionally inspected and pumped every 3 years. It will save you money!
- Limit excessive water usage in your home.
- Repair or replace your septic system when it's not working properly.

For more information about how to ensure safe water for you and your community or if you need financial assistance, visit www.swmpc.org/septic.asp or call the **Berrien County Health Department** at 269-927-5623 or visit their new and improved webpage at www.bchdmi.org/Septic.htm or call the **Van Buren and Cass County Health Department** (269) 621-3143 for assistance or visit www.vbcassdhd.org.



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*The SWMPC Mission is to promote a sustainable high quality of life through
 facilitation of sound planning and decision making*

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Calendar of Events 2012

July

4th SWMPC Offices Closed
10th Local Energy Assurance Planning
 Conference
16th 9:30 a.m. TwinCATS monthly
 mtg**
24th 1:30 p.m. NATS monthly mtg*
31st Michigan Transportation Planning
 Association Annual Conference

August

1st- 3rd Michigan Transportation
 Planning Association Annual
 Conference
7th Primary Elections: Get Out and
 Vote
20th 9:30 a.m. TwinCATS monthly
 mtg**
28th 1:30 p.m. NATS monthly mtg*

September

3rd SWMPC Offices Closed
17th 9:30 a.m. TwinCATS monthly
 mtg**
21st 5 p.m. MDOT's Regional Public
 Meeting in Kalamazoo
22nd 5 p.m. MDOT's Regional Public
 Meeting in Benton Harbor
25th 1:30 p.m. NATS monthly mtg *

*NATS Meeting 1345 E. Main Street, Niles, MI

**TwinCATS Meeting 1123 Territorial Road, Benton Harbor, MI

For more information and other events visit: www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp

2012 SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meeting

*Location: Van Buren Conference Center
 490 South Paw Paw Street Lawrence, MI*
 July 17, 2012 9:30 a.m.*
 October 16, 2012 9:30 a.m.

SWMPC Administrative Committee Meeting

*Location: Vincent Place Conference Room
 185 East Main St. Benton Harbor, MI*
 September 18, 2012 9:30 a.m.
 December 18, 2012 9:30 a.m.

*The **July 17th SWMPC Full Board** meeting will begin with a presentation about the SWMPC work on a Regional Food Hub. The Food Hub is an effort to link stakeholders across the food value chain within southwest Michigan. All are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to hear and ask questions about the SWMPC work in this area.