

LETTERS

An outrageous act by the Berrien County Board

Editor,

I have a problem with our county commissioners being able to vote for their own salary increases, or, for any of their own compensation. I realize County Administrator Bill Wolf made the proposal, but who approves Mr. Wolf's compensation? The county board of commissioners. There is a direct conflict of interest here on multiple levels that needs to be resolved.

The Herald-Palladium article about this 2 percent raise was very informative, but unfortunately, the data gathered by the county was analyzed incorrectly.

The salary increase rationale is that our commissioners put more hours in than the other counties that were reviewed. Our commissioners have four formal meetings a month, while most of the other counties only have one. Instead of using that information to decide a 2 percent salary increase was required, why wasn't the question asked about why Berrien County requires so many more meetings to conduct the same amount of business that other counties can accomplish in one? Wolf also stated: "Half of the counties looked at do not offer commissioners health insurance, and four have no pension benefits." This is another startling piece of data. Why do our commissioners have health or pension benefits at all then? The board's health coverage alone costs approximately \$168,000 a year. The county board job was always intended to be a part-time job, and part-time employees don't receive any type of benefits in the real world.

Why does our county with a population of approximately 155,000 need 12 commissioners? Kalamazoo County, with approximately 260,000 people, only needs 11 commissioners



and its 2015 budget was \$32 million larger than ours. Based on this data, we only need seven commissioners to represent us as well as Kalamazoo County.

Bottom line, our county board of commissioners is over-compensated, does not reflect the overall demographics of the county (due to the ages of the vast majority of the commissioners), which I am sure is somewhat related to holding so many weekly meetings scheduled during regular working hours, and is more content with the status quo than driving the change needed to operate government with less money.

So, county board, start showing some leadership, give yourself your 2 percent raise, but eliminate being able to vote on your compensation in the future, eliminate all your benefits, and direct Mr. Wolf to start collecting data and applying the correct critical thought to determine how to lower our taxes. If you

need some help, let me know. I'm available.

**Rob Hoffman
Coloma**

Another huge turnout for recent recycling event

Editor,

The 7th annual Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Day event was a success, serving 685 community members on a thankfully sunny day.

There were 66 extraordinary volunteers on hand greeting residents, directing traffic and helping unload literally tons of materials from vehicles. Other community partners that make this recycling event possible include Cycle-Re-Cycle, Kent Record Management and Mosaic Resale Shop and Resource Center in Benton Harbor; Green Earth Electronics Recycling, Martin's Supermarket and United Container Company in St. Joseph; Republic Services in Stevensville; Lions Club; Dart

Container Corp. in Mason, Mich.; Drug and Laboratory Disposal of Plainwell, Mich.; and the Berrien County Road Commission.

Residents can recycle all the items that were collected at this event at various local recycling locations or at future events this year. Anyone who may have missed the recycling event or has more materials to get rid of, check out the Recycling Guide at www.berriencounty.org/recycle.

Thank you to our amazing community members who put in the effort to make sure their waste got handled safely and responsibly. My hope is that the county Parks Department can continue the partnership with Lake Michigan College to offer this recycling event to the community for years to come.

**Jill Adams
Environmental Property
Manager
Berrien County Parks
Department**