

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
HAMPSHIRE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010**

The Hampshire Council of Governments is a membership based organization that solves common challenges through regional solutions while retaining local control over local affairs. The combined dues for the Council of Governments in Fiscal Year 2010 were \$37,206. Dues for all member towns have been reduced to ease the financial burden to the municipalities while increasing the stability of the Council membership. The dues collected help support Council programs, services, and assistance to a variety of programs. It is the continued goal of the Council to increase revenues from a variety of sources to offset the reduced assessment and to expand services.

The Council achieved several key goals in 2010.

- A strategic planning process was completed, with input from all towns in our service area. The Council will continue to refine this planning process and will work with our membership to create specific services and programs to meet the most pressing needs of the Towns.
- Hampshire Power continues its impressive expansion. It now serves the electricity needs of towns, schools, and businesses in the five Western Counties of Massachusetts - Hampshire, Franklin, Hampden, Worcester, and Berkshire.
- Hampshire Power is aggressively pursuing Municipal Aggregation, which will eventually strive to serve residential customers, expanding the benefit of our electricity cost saving model.
- Hampshire Care and the Hampshire Park property were sold to the Masonic Health System of Massachusetts.
- The Council Cooperative Purchasing Program saved the participants in this program approximately \$718,110.
- The Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust held down costs once again, keeping to single digit health care increases in a climate of double digit increases. The Trust remains the pinnacle of health insurance in the Commonwealth.
- The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) provided 124,000 hours of service to our communities, equaling a contribution of more than \$2.58 million.
- The Councilors established a scholarship fund to help support high school students who have demonstrated civic and community involvement

Hampshire Power

Hampshire Power continued to expand with the number of customers increasing to almost 100. The energy load increased from 4 to 6 MWs during FY2010. More towns and districts in Worcester and Berkshire Counties joined the Program and the renewal rate of contracts was 100%. A new rate plan was added during the year which resulted in three choices for customers – the new Fixed, the Real Time, and the Profit Share. During FY2010, Real Time Rate customers saved a total of \$410,000 compared to the utilities' rates. The Municipal Aggregation Initiative was launched with the hiring of a staff person to research regulations, meet with towns' Boards of Selectmen, develop the necessary plan for the Department of Public Utilities, and commence aggregation for a number of towns. The Green Committee, a sub-committee of the Electricity Committee, was revived and green options for customers, sustainability, and renewable energy programs continue to be researched. To decrease the risk involved in purchasing electricity, staff had reviewed proposals and met with consultants in order to contract for purchasing services in the new fiscal year.

Cooperative Purchasing

The Cooperative Purchasing program, now in its 30th year, coordinates and administers a formal bidding process on behalf of Council departments, municipalities, school districts, human service agencies, and miscellaneous governmental entities throughout the Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire County region. Buying in bulk generates added savings over lone bidding efforts while complying with state procurement statutes and eliminating duplication of administrative work. The total purchasing volume for goods and services for Fiscal Year 2010 was \$4.6 million with a projected savings of \$718,110.

Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust

In a year when many towns are facing double-digit rate increases in health insurance premiums, our towns once again held their costs to single-digit increases. The Hampshire Councilors serve as the trustees of the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust, a cooperative effort to provide health and life insurance with excellent benefits at competitive rates. An Insurance Advisory Committee, made up of representatives of all participating units, meets regularly to discuss problems and possible solutions and to explore new ideas. The Trust manages a self-funded group of health insurance products. In the Insurance Year 2010 (April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010), the collective premium for the Trust was \$45M. Through the efforts and expertise of the Trust management, the volume of participation in the program, and the participation of the town representatives on the Advisory Board, the Insurance Trust is successful at managing costs while providing excellent benefits.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

RSVP (Retired & Senior Volunteer Program) of Hampshire & Franklin Counties is the Council's community service program that mobilizes adults age 55+ to meet community needs by recruiting, placing, and supporting volunteers in a diverse array of service opportunities at local non-profit and public agencies. RSVP matches people with experience and skills to offer with organizations that need their help. The program benefits the senior population by keeping them active and engaged, and benefits our region by bringing these volunteers' dedication, wisdom, and expertise to bear on our communities' most pressing needs.

During FY10, RSVP brought on 141 new volunteers bringing our total volunteer force to 653. These volunteers gave more than 124,000 hours of service to our communities, equaling a contribution of more than \$2.58 million. RSVP Volunteers serve at hospitals, nursing homes, schools, libraries, after school programs, survival centers, and senior centers in towns across the two counties.

The following are some examples of the impact RSVP volunteers are having on our communities:

- During the reporting period 20 volunteers worked with 203 students in schools and after school programs to improve academic skills. 74% of students increased their interest in reading and 77% improved their academic skills.
- Through RSVP's Osteoporosis Exercise Program, 32 volunteers led strength training classes for 242 seniors. 85% of class participants improved their physical health and 97% improved their ability to avoid falls or broken bones.
- 128 volunteers increased food security in our region by providing food to more than 800 elders.
- 255 volunteers improved the quality of life for more than 10,000 seniors by leading activities and providing information at senior centers.

Regional Services

The Regional Services Department develops regional approaches to problems shared by Hampshire County municipalities. The department secured surplus federal equipment for various Massachusetts municipalities and state entities. The current net savings of property delivered to member communities for Fiscal Year 2010, after fees and delivery charges, totaled \$4,400.00. Net program income from fees was \$6,350.00. Member communities receive a 50% discount off the Council portion of the fee, as well as the right of first refusal on higher quality pieces of equipment obtained through the surplus program. The department arranges workshops and seminars on topics of interest to local officials.

Hampshire Inspection Program

Now in its sixteenth year, the Hampshire Inspection Program is a fee for service building inspection and zoning enforcement program serving Chesterfield, Goshen, Huntington, and Middlefield. Annual assessments are based on building permit and zoning activity. Two hundred and ninety-eight building permits were issued in FY2010, of which twenty-five permits were for new homes. Annual assessments to member towns are based on hours spent on building permit and zoning activity. All administrative, clerical, and travel expenses are shared equally by member towns. The program offers a fully certified inspector who regularly attends training and educational seminars.

Wellness Initiative Program

The Wellness Initiative is a worksite wellness program working with 70 municipal units to identify the needs and interests of subscribers and to provide information, education and programs promoting healthier choices. The Wellness Initiative launched several new programs including: Being a wise health care consumer; Mediterranean Diet Nutrition class and sampling; and Walking challenges in several communities. The Initiative also piloted 4 wellness teams to assess the health risks, needs and interests of employees in their work place and identify programs and strategies to meet these health needs

The Tobacco Free Community Partnership

The Tobacco Free Community Partnership conducts compliance checks to monitor the illegal sale of tobacco products to minors, and provides education on the health and economic effects of tobacco. In addition the program sponsors a western mass smoke free apartment website for both landlords interested in making their buildings smoke free and tenants interested in finding smoke free apartments. Landlords can list their smoke free apartments for free. The website can be found at www.smokefree.hampshirecog.org,

For further information on Council programs, expenses, and revenues, please contact the Councilors' Office at 413-584-1300 ext. 2. You may also visit the Council website at www.hampshirecog.org.