On October 1, 2013 the Detroit Wayne County Mental Health Agency ceased to exist and, in its place, the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority came into existence. With this change, Wayne County has become one of the last counties in the state to change to an authority status.

The new Authority is now separated from Wayne County government. It is governed by a 12-person board, six of whom are nominated by the Mayor of Detroit and six by the Wayne County Executive. The Wayne County Commission says yes or no to all 12 appointments. This composition of the board is established by the state legislature. It was an act of the legislature in December 2012 that forced the separation from the county and into the new authority governance.

It was my duty, as chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, to draft the piece of legislation to separate this $700 million a year operation from the county and hand over the assets and liabilities so that the new authority could open its doors October 1, 2013 without a hitch in services.

In the long run, being unhooked from the county bureaucracy will make more resources available to put directly towards services for the developmentally disabled, severely emotionally disturbed and substances abuse clients across the county.

I have taken a position on the new Authority board and serve as its vice-chair, as well as serving on the Finance Committee.

Please take the time to check out the Authority website at www.dwmha.com to get a feel for all that is happening with these vital services.
Wayne County Jail update

I am going to separate this report into two areas, “The Unfinished Jail” section and the “What’s Next?” section.

**The Unfinished Jail** – Work on the jail has been officially halted by the Building Authority as of a few months ago. Reports to the Commission from the County Executive’s office indicated that $154 million was spent before the project was shut down. There is currently a lawsuit underway to try to get some, or all, of that money back from the contractor and architects. I would think it will be a very long time until we know something on this suit.

Another aspect of the unfinished jail is a report from the County Auditor General, who works under the direction of the Commission, that was completed two months ago. In that report, the Auditor General turned up what he felt was illegal activity. The auditor is obliged to forward the report to the County Prosecutor when possible illegal actions turn up.

Upon reviewing the report, the Prosecutor began an investigation and ordered the report not to be made public, I have not seen that report. Currently, the case has been turned over to a one-person grand jury, Wayne County Judge Timothy Kenny, who will decide whether charges should result.

**What’s Next?** – Nearly four months ago the Executive bid out five downtown Wayne County properties. They included the two current downtown jails, the Frank Murphy courthouse, the Juvenile Detention Facility and the parking lot with the half-finished jail. They reported back to the Commission a month ago that Rock Ventures and its owner Dan Gilbert submitted a $50 million offer that was deemed the winning bid. Negotiations are currently going on with the State of Michigan to lease the closed Mound Road prison for $1 a year and then retrofitting that facility to meet the county needs as well as moving the criminal courts and the prosecutor to that site. As I write this report, no details of how all this would work are available.

As someone who voted “no” three years ago on the original jail proposal, I will be very cautious and skeptical of any proposal brought to the Commission and I will keep you updated in this monthly newsletter.

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At the Commission Table

- The Commission has approved additional money to go towards housing rehab in Harper Woods. Wayne County is using federal HUD grants, called NSP, or Neighborhood Stabilization Program, to demolish or rehab four homes in Harper Woods. The refurbished homes will then be made available for sale to moderate or low-income families. Please click [here for my website](www.waynecounty.com/commission/district1.htm) for more details on this matter.

- The Commission has approved money from the Parks Millage that will go to improvements in several District 1 parks. Marbud Park at State Fair and Gratiot is getting $70,000 for upgrades. Harper Woods parks received $50,000 for upgrades at Salter Park. In addition, I have committed $50,000 last year and again this year for the improvements going on at Balduck Park and Chandler Park, both located in the city of Detroit.

- The Commission has approved a tax capture of up to $5 million in an expanded Downtown Development Authority footprint that would go towards the building of a new hockey arena in downtown Detroit. Overall, of the $450 million price tag on the arena, 58 percent of the funds for its construction would come from public dollars. I voted “no” on this proposal. Please click [here for my website](www.waynecounty.com/commission/district1.htm) for proposal details.