

COMMUNICATION

COLLABORATION WITH BERRIEN COUNTY

For the past several months, City Manager Heather Grace has been working closely with Berrien County Administrator Brian Dissette and Berrien County Community Development Director Dan Fette on a potential plan to address the recent problem posed by the State of Michigan's requirement to change the means of public safety communications for first responders. This process had led to an opportunity for the City of Buchanan to consider a possible collaboration with Berrien County that would consist of the following:

- Purchase of the AEP building at 500 Circle Drive by the County;
- Construction of a new Communications Tower at the site;
- Select remodeling of the interior of the AEP building so it can serve as the new home of Berrien County's Emergency Management office, along with its 911 dispatch center—to be located on the third floor of the building;

- Select remodeling of the second floor of the building (along with a small section of the main-floor lobby) to serve as Buchanan's new City Hall; and
- Reservation of portions of the main floor to be kept available for use by AEP during emergency events.

This potential collaboration has not yet been fully approved by the County, and will require votes by both the City and the County in order to move forward. Bi-weekly meetings between Manager Grace and administrators with the County have been scheduled, and a tour of the AEP building for City Commissioners will be scheduled soon.

Once the Berrien County Commissioners have voted to finalize the purchase of the AEP building, Manager Grace will formally present the proposal to the City Commission for a vote to decide whether the City wants to officially move forward with the project.

Not only does this project have the potential to greatly improve public safety through enhanced communications for first responders, but it will also allow for continued future collaborations between the City of Buchanan and the County. It would also have the added benefit of making the current City Hall building potentially available for redevelopment, which could bring

new business into the City. Finally, the increase in jobs coming to the City via the many County employees who would begin working out of the AEP building would bring further growth to our local economy, as these workers would now be regularly shopping and dining in Buchanan.

Updates regarding this potential project will be provided during future Commission meetings and work sessions.