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Fairfield County 'not hurt as bad' as its peers in 2008

Officials stress potential for growth, recovery projects in annual address **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTYHELP FOR BUSINESSES DAMAGED BY SEVERE WEATHERVILLAGE OF CARROLL SEWER PROJECT**

*BY MICHELLE GEORGE
The Eagle-Gazette Staff*

FAIRFIELD COUNTY - Fairfield County Commissioners hope to help residents get back on their feet after a year of economic downturn and three bouts of severe weather.

And just how county officials hope to achieve that goal was detailed before a crowd of about 200 local officials and residents Tuesday at the annual state of the county address in Lancaster.

Fairfield County Commissioner Jon Myers said the county did well financially, despite the sagging economy, with sales tax revenues increasing from \$11.2 million for 2007 to \$11.5 million for 2008.

Myers said there was a drop in interest income through county investments from \$3.7 million in 2007 to \$2.9 million in 2008.

But overall the county was "not hurt as bad as other counties," he said.

The Commissioners said they plan to continue recruiting new business, conduct storm repair work county buildings and agencies and bring in tourism dollars by rehabbing historic sites such as the Rock Mill gristmill in Bloom Township.

Here are some projects highlighted during the address that residents can expect to hear more about in the coming year.

A new county marketing group is working to promote economic development in the county, particularly along the U.S. 33 corridor.

Fairfield County Commissioner Judy Shupe said Fairfield 33 Alliance representatives recently launched a Web site and an print ad campaign to attract future businessowners. Representatives also plan to participate in various trade shows this year.

Local business investors already have committed to \$150,000 per year for five years through the Alliance to promote job retention and expansion within the county.

Shupe also credited the county's revolving loan fund and Fairfield County Worknet for helping jobseekers find employment and employers find workers.

Worknet assisted 45 companies in 2008. Shupe said it will continue to do so through events such as the Teen Expo Career Fair on Thursday.

Shupe said the Worknet staff also assisted a new business, US Corrugated, in coordinating a massive two-day job fair at Liberty Center in July. She said more than 5,000 applications were screened during that two-day period.

Three crippling storms that swept through Fairfield County in 2008 and early this year caused damage to several businesses and county offices - and now those establishments are in need of repair.

The commissioners have set aside \$2,211,239 million from the maintenance fund to repair or maintain 25 buildings or businesses as part of a 2009 Emergency Project List.

Commissioner Mike Kiger said the list includes hooking up emergency generators, doing roof repairs and replacing a crack in the Fairfield County Courthouse chimney.

The Commissioners also plan to install separate telephone lines within the county buildings after a massive power outage in September knocked out electricity at the county courthouse and Fairfield County Sheriff's Office.

Kiger said the phone project will cost about \$800,000. He said the improvement project will ensure power does not go out in multiple county buildings should another outage occur.

Fairfield County workers plan to complete this year a \$1.4 million project to hook the village of Carroll into the county's wastewater treatment system.

Shupe said the project is part of \$10 million commissioners have invested in wastewater structure along the U.S. 33 corridor.

Village officials decided to hook into the sewer based upon their projections of future growth within the village. A sewer line is being installed from the lagoons and will extend the line north to Lockville Road Sewer line in Fairfield County.

Carroll's sewage is handled by an existing lagoon system in which algae, aerobic and anaerobic bacteria purify the wastewater.

Shupe said village officials have yet to implement sewer rates for residents.
