

POLK COUNTY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021

Jacobson is new County Board chair

Jerry Jacobson succeeded Gary Willhite as chair when the Polk County Board of Commissioners re-organized at the first meeting of the year on Jan. 5. Jacobson had been the vice chair in 2020. The new vice chair is Joan Lee.

Also a part of the reorganization was the installation of Mark Holy as the commissioner from District 5. He succeeds Don Diedrich, who did not seek re-election after serving as a commissioner for 16 years. Holy defeated Tim Finseth, 1,532 to 1,184 in the General Election to win the seat.

Jacobson defeated Travis Johnson 1,807 to 94 to win re-election in District 1. Willhite was re-elected without opposition in District 3.

Scott Balstad (District 4), and Lawrence Vettleson (District 5) were re-elected without opposition as supervisors of the East Polk County Soil & Water Conservation District. No candidates filed for the District 3 position, which remains open.

In the West Polk County Soil & Water Conservation District, Derek Peterson (District 2), Christian Peşter (District 4) and Chris Cournia (District 5) were all re-elected without opposition.

Holy's special interests in county government, he says, include issues dealing with water and drainage and with the continued support for public safety. "I begin my term in office by trying to educate myself a little bit more on how services are provided while always looking for the most

See **JACOBSON**, Page 2



Commissioners Gary Willhite, Gerald Jacobson and Mark Holy (left to right) took the oath of office from District Judge Cory Harbott when the Board reorganized to start the new year.

Rex and Deputy Stout will become a team

Training of second drug dog to begin

Sheriff's Ben Stout and his new canine partner, Rex, began training to become Polk County's second drug dog team starting on March 29.

After completing from 12 to 14 weeks of training at McDonough K-9 Kennel in Anoka, Minn., in June, they will work road patrol shifts mostly in the eastern area of the county. That's while Deputy Kyle Olson and his canine partner, Buffy, who have been a team on patrol for the past year and have participated in a number of arrests, work mainly the western area. Both teams will support the Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force and as needed, will work with other law enforcement agencies in the region.

When Deputy Stout and Rex complete training and come on duty, the county will have a drug team available at virtually any time that the presence of illegal drugs is suspected in a vehicle, in a residence, in a building or wherever that might be. Like Buffy, Rex will be trained to do

narcotics detection, tracking and apprehension.

A two-year-old German Shepard-Belgian Malinois, Rex came from the Czech Republic, which is where many drug dogs originate and get initial training. After being flown to Chicago, Rex will get to know and partner with Stout for about a week before actual training is to begin.

Deputy Stout, who was selected earlier this year to serve as the handler for the county's second drug dog, has been with the Polk County Sheriff's Department for five years, first as a dispatcher, then as a transport deputy, and in his current role as a road patrol deputy beginning a little more than two years ago.

The son of a career military member, Stout, whose parents and grandparents are from the Fosston area, did a lot of his growing up while his father served at several military posts. He graduated from high school in Barnesville,

See **DRUG DOG**, Page 2

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Drug Dog

Continued from Page 1

Minn., and joined the Marine Corps soon after. His four years of active duty included two deployments in the Middle East... a 7-month tour on the ground in Afghanistan and for six months on ship with a Marine expeditionary unit. After completing his active duty in 2012, Stout earned a B.S. degree in criminal justice at Bemidji State University in 2015 and completed his law enforcement skills certification at Alexandria Community & Technical College in 2016.

Stout's interest in becoming a handler stems from his desire to increase his involvement in law enforcement and from his time working with bomb dogs while in the military. "I wasn't a handler, but I got to do some work with the dogs and I enjoyed it. Kyle (Olson) said the training was pretty tough and challenging but I'm really looking forward to it."

Sheriff Jim Tadman is using \$15,500 of the money contributed by residents, businesses and organizations to the Polk County K9 Unit program to purchase and train Rex at the McDonough K-9 Kennel operation. The cost of the hotel and living expense for Stout during the 12 to 14 week of training and for any equipment will also be paid for from funds con-

tributed to the K-9 Unit Fund.

"Our goal," Tadman says, "is to pay for the dogs, the training, and needed equipment from the contributions made to the K-9 Unit drug fund and we've been able to do that. Deputy Stout has a pick-up truck as his patrol vehicle. The dog kennel can be placed in the truck and we we'll get the safety equipment switched around to make it work. That gives us the vehicle, so the big cost left was to be able to pay for the dog and the training, and, so far, we have had the money to do that."

Donations to the fund include a \$10,000 gift from Dick and Audrey Hebert of Mentor. Through mid-March, the fund had topped \$23,000 toward a goal of \$30,000.

Sheriff Tadman was Polk County's first K-9 officer (Nieko 1996-2003). The county has had two other dogs — with deputies Trent Stahlecker and Dave Emanuel as the handlers — in years that followed Nieko. The last of those dogs was retired in 2009.

The history between Tadman and Mark McDonough goes back to when they were beginning as K9 handlers and participated in the same trainings and K9 certification actions. McDonough started McDonough K-9 fulltime after 32 years as a law offi-

cer, during which he was a canine handler for 22 years. All McDonough K-9 trainers are current or retired police officers with years of law enforcement canine handler experience.

"To help us get our program off the ground two years ago, Mark donated both the dog, Buffy, and the training, too. At the time, we were just in the first stages of trying to get a dog back in Polk County. His gift got us going a lot sooner than I had ever thought possible," Tadman says.

The only expense that will be a part of the Sheriff's Department drug dog budget going forward, Tadman says, will be that for the daily feeding needs, for additional training, and for visits to the veterinarian. "Those will be the only things that taxpayers will support," Tadman says. "We will, of course, continue to accept donations to the K-9 fund."

Persons who would like to receive more information about the canine program, or who might want to contribute to the Polk County K9 Unit Fund, can access it on the Polk County Sheriff's Office Facebook page, or they can call Sheriff Tadman directly at 218-470-8282.

Jacobson

Continued from Page 1

efficient ways of providing them. Polk County has been well-managed and I want to do my part in making sure that continues," he says.

Among Diedrich's involvements as a commissioner was service on the board of directors of the Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT). He had advanced to the position of vice president of that statewide organization while also serving on its personnel, audit and governance committees. MCIT is a joint powers entity made up of Minnesota counties and associated public entities that pool resources to provide property, casualty and workers compensation insurance coverage to the members.

Diedrich, who was elected in 2004 and then re-elected in 2008, 2012 and 2016, was first elected to the MCIT board of directors in 2010 and then re-elected to consecutive four-year terms in 2014 and 2018. The MCIT board of directors consists of county commissioners, county auditors/auditor-treasurers, and a county administrator.

Andringa serves on Sand Hill Board

Don Andringa, Crookston, is the new member of the Sand Hill River Watershed District Board of Managers having been appointed to the position by the Polk County Board in January.

Andringa, who has farmed wheat, soybeans and sugarbeets south of Crookston since 1974, succeeds Dan Vesledahl, Winger. Vesledahl, who did not seek reappointment after serving one three-year term, had been vice chair of the board of managers, a position that Andringa has now assumed.

Other members of the board are: Stuart Christian, Fertile (chair); JJ Hamre, Beltrami (secretary); Clayton Bartz, McIntosh (treasurer); and Craig Engelstad, Fertile.

Engelstad joined the board a year ago after longtime board member Roger Hanson, retired. A farmer, Engelstad and his wife Cindy have three children and three grandchildren.

Hanson grew up on a farm west of Beltrami and after earning a bachelors degree at Moorhead State University and



Don Andringa

a masters at North Dakota State University left the area in the 1960s to become a junior high school teacher in several North Dakota and Montana communities. He and his wife, Shirley, moved back to the Hanson family farm in 1976 to farm and he accepted appointment to the Sand Hill board when it was organized in 1978.

Hanson retired from farming in 2012 and from the watershed position on Dec. 31, 2019. When on the watershed, he worked with former Sand Hill

Administrator Dan Wilkens on water issues for over 40 years. Wilkens retired at the end of 2018.

Tiedemann is reappointed

Gene Tiedemann, Euclid, has been reappointed by the County Board as the West Polk County representative on the Red Lake River Watershed District Board of Managers.

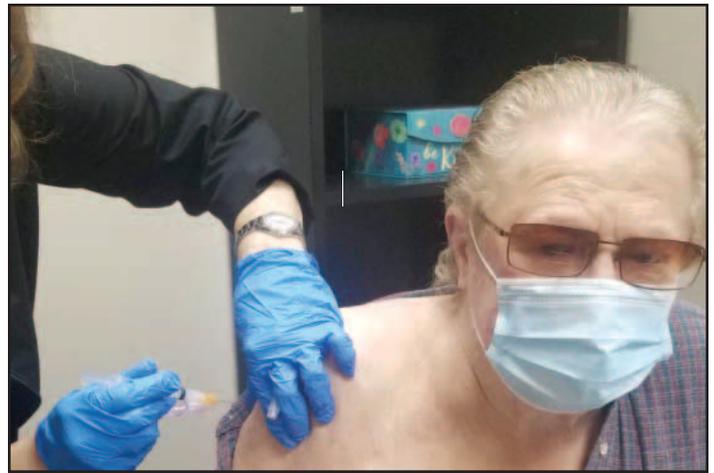
A 17-year member of the board, Tiedemann is serving as its vice president.

Terry Sorenson, Mentor, the board secretary, represents East Polk County.

Other members of the board of managers are: Dale Nelson, Thief River Falls (Pennington County, president); Leroy Ose, Thief River Falls (Marshall County); Les Torgerson, Leonard (Clearwater County); Allan Page, Red Lake Falls (Red Lake County); and Brian Dwight, Waskish (Beltrami County).



Nurse Brittany Corbett gives nurse Emily Bibow her Moderna Covid-19 vaccination at the newly remodeled East Grand Forks office.



Harlan Mosher got his Covid-19 vaccination from nurse Pam Olson when Public Health nurses were vaccinating Phase 1a (healthcare workers), E-12 school staff and child care workers and people 65 and older.

Amidst Covid-19 pandemic

Polk County Public Health is marking 90th year

Polk County Public Health, formerly known as Polk County Nursing Service, is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year! Now is a great time to take a trip down memory lane to reflect on a small sampling of monumental moments in our history, appreciate the present time, and to look forward with courage and hope.

Our agency first opened its doors in 1931 with a staff of one to provide healthcare to school aged children.

In 1967, we became one of the first Medicare-certified home health agencies in the area.

In 1972, the Polk County Mobile Health Unit began formal operation. This 27-foot bus, modified to provide two offices and a reception area that included a bathroom and storage space, allowed two registered nurses to provide prevention, health education services, early detection screenings, immunizations, pregnancy testing and the like. It has been told that 2,438 people visited the mobile unit during the first year of operation and many more followed in its 16 years of operation.

In 1990, Polk County Public Health nurses and colleagues from 13 counties across northwest Minnesota came together with a common goal to increase childhood immunization and prenatal care rates. The new Communities Caring for Children (CCC) initiative received praise from Anne Barry, then commissioner of health, as it offered grassroots, inter-governmental cooperation bridging primary care and the public health sector. The CCC program made all pregnant women and their children up to age five eligible for affordable, across-the-board prevention from prenatal care to immunizations and well child check-ups.

With offices in Crookston and East Grand Forks, an office was opened in McIntosh to better serve the needs of East Polk County residents in 1995.

Restaurants went smoke free

Crookston made public health history on January 1, 2000. The community greeted the new millennium by becoming the first city in the state to have all of its restaurants go 100% smoke-free. The elimina-

tion of smoking from the city's eating places was the culmination of efforts spearheaded by a community-based coalition called Wellness Works that was financially supported by Polk County Public Health, RiverView Healthcare Association and Altru Clinic-Crookston. All Minnesota workplaces, including bars and restaurants, became smoke-free with the Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007, a comprehensive statewide law that provides protections from secondhand smoke.

During 2009-2010, Polk County Public Health utilized its All-Hazards Response and Recovery Plan during the H1N1 pandemic response where coordinated communication and response were utilized at all levels of government and across the private sector. Notably, Polk County Public Health, its healthcare partners and community volunteers spent many hours offering vaccination clinics at designated sites across Polk County.

70 departments in state

Minnesota's local public health system works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all Minnesotans. The current system consists of 70 local public health departments, which are organized as 51 community health boards (CHBs). CHBs are the legally recognized governing body for local public health in Minnesota. After nearly two years of pre-planning and a history of informal and formal partnerships, Polk County Public Health (PCPH) and Norman-Mahnomen Public Health (NMPH) established the Polk-Norman-Mahnomen Community Health Board (PNM CHB) in 2013, a joint venture to best utilize and leverage our skills and services.

In 2013, to assure strong family home visiting services, the PNM CHB collaborated with Clay County to bring a dream to reality by expanding Clay County's Nurse Family Partnership program to include two PNM nurses serving families in Polk, Norman and Mahnomen counties. Nurse Family Partnership program is an evidence-based community health program that improves pregnancy outcomes; improves child health and develop-

ment, and improves the economic self-sufficiency of the family.

Top notch care

We appreciate and feel fortunate to have top notch primary and specialty care, hospitals, dental, vision, chiropractic and mental health services close to home.

For the last several years, Polk County Public Health has been dedicated to expanding our thinking and definition of health as something that starts in our families, schools, workplaces and communities, in neighborhood parks and trails, and in the air we breathe and water we drink. Health starts in strong, loving families, where neighborhoods are safe for walking and biking and grocery stores, convenience stores, food shelves and farmers markets have fresh fruits and vegetables that can be enjoyed by all.

Polk County Public Health has an array of skills and expertise in community health assessment and planning, data and emerging trends, communications, community partnerships, health equity, leadership and preparedness and response needed to successfully implement the basic public health protections key to ensuring the community's health.

Services provided

Aimed at improving the health of people and communities, we are proud of the services we provide such as: Maternal & Child Health - newborn, family and special healthcare needs visits, Nurse Family Partnership, Growing Great Kids, Follow Along Program, Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Follow-up, Child and Teen Check-up Outreach, Reproductive and Sexual Health Services/Education, School Health, Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, Immunizations, Health Promotion, Health Screenings, Footcare, Dental Fluoride Varnish, Environmental Health, Blood Lead Testing/High Lead Case Management, Radon Prevention, Care Coordination and Case Management, Correctional Health, Women Infants and Children (WIC), Breastfeeding Support (2019

See PUBLIC HEALTH, Page 4

Tip fee hikes were needed, had been postponed

Increases in tip fees at the Landfill and Resource Recovery Facility went into effect this year. These increases were necessary to offset the many negative financial impacts to those facilities over the previous five years. While these increases have been discussed but postponed for the last several years, the pandemic made it impossible to further delay the rate increases.

The tip fee increases, like all cost increases, get passed down from the service provider to those using the service. When it comes to waste management, this means that the cost increases are incurred by the counties, cities and haulers. Those entities then pass along the cost increases to the generators of the waste, the businesses and residents they serve.

The tip fee and state tax costs incurred by Polk County for its

solid waste management programs are paid through the Solid Waste Assessment that appears on the property tax statement. Those Solid Waste Assessments are adjusted periodically to cover costs. In response to the increases in tip fees, the Solid Waste Assessments were also adjusted for 2021.

The pandemic provided a challenge when setting the Non-residential Solid Waste Assessment (assessment). The fee schedule is volume based. Typically, that volume is based on waste hauler records obtained as a condition of the next years haulers license, actual scale receipts or comparison to similar uses. The pandemic negatively impacted many non-residential entities — going from open to closed, or to limited operations.

Unfortunately, as the haulers

records began to come in as required by the haulers license it was apparent many of them struggled to accurately track the waste volume fluctuations in a way that would yield an accurate volume for the purpose of setting the 2021 Solid Waste Assessment.

So, while the Solid Waste Assessments overall were increased, it was Polk County's intention that some level of pandemic relief would be realized by those non-residential sectors severely impacted (prohibited from operations) by the pandemic responses.

It was believed that the level of relief would be based on the decreased waste volumes, which occurred due to that pandemic response. The actual level of decrease was intended to be based on the documented waste haulers numbers from 2020. However, the evolving

and shifting nature of the pandemic response prevented getting that level of detail to make the assessment changes as intended.

As a result, the CY2021 Non-residential Assessment went out based on the best information available. It is expected that there will be some adjustment for those sectors specifically identified and regulated in the executive orders issued by the Minnesota governor.

These adjustments likely will be in the form of an abatement that would generate a new tax statement, or some other format which accomplishes the same outcome. The eligible sectors and amount of relief offered have not been determined at this time. — **Jon Steiner, Polk County Environmental Services director**

Public Health

Continued from Page 3

Minnesota Breastfeeding Friendly Health Department- Gold Award) and Coalition, Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), Polk County Wellness Coalition, Child Passenger Safety Seat Checks, Toward Zero Deaths Coalition, and Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Prevention.

Responding to disasters and emergencies is a core responsibility of Minnesota's local public health departments. Over the past year Polk County Public Health has invested resources to respond to and mitigate the risks associated with Covid-19 through leading our incident command structures; extensive communication, coordination and collaboration among all involved in pandemic preparedness, response, and recovery; maintaining situational awareness through epidemiologic surveillance; partnering with health care and long term care to ensure adequate medical care and staffing; providing infection prevention recommendations; addressing health disparities; supporting mental well-being; testing and supporting the expansion of testing resources; contact investigation and contact tracing; coordinating alternate housing, food and medications for individuals needing assistance during isolation/quarantine; providing vaccine to identified popula-

tions in accordance with public health guidelines and procedures; and continuing other services in new ways.

Polk County Public Health's success is a testament to the commitment of our local public health team and healthcare, school and community partners who work together to ensure the people of Polk County benefit from comprehensive and progressive public health services. We look forward to a bright future!

Driscoll named to water board

Dan Driscoll, East Grand Forks, has been appointed by the Polk County Board to serve on the board of directors of the Marshall & Polk Rural Water System. He succeeds Paul Driscoll, East Grand Forks, who retired.

In other action, Mike Kasowski, Fisher, the president, has been reappointed to a four-year term on the water system board.

Other members of the board are: Rodger Stordahl, East Grand Forks; Ronald Abrahamson, Warren; Wayne Nelson and Orin Knutson, both of Oslo; and Paul Bergeron, Argyle. The system has its offices in Warren.

Snyder advanced to assistant administrator

Jacob Snyder has been advanced to the position of assistant administrator of Polk County Environmental Services.

A 12-year member of the department, first as a field technician for 10 years and for the past two years as the administrator of the Planning & Zoning Division, Snyder took on the increased responsibilities of the new position in January.

"I am excited for the opportunity to continue to serve all Polk County residents' needs regarding the Environmental Services Department's many programs," Snyder says. He and his wife and 3 children live in Crookston. A native of Crookston and a graduate of Crookston Central High School, Snyder earned a bachelors degree in Natural Resources Management with a biotic emphasis at North Dakota State University. After working for the West Polk



Jacob Snyder

County Soil & Water Conservation District for a summer in Crookston and for a brief time in Thief River Falls, Snyder joined Polk County Environmental Services as an intern in 2008.

When a staff vacancy developed that fall, he quickly earned the required state certifications needed to become a field technician.

Pandemic has affected transportation, too

With less travel, gas tax revenues are down

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a reduction of about \$1 million in County State Aid Highway (CSAH) funds — that’s the county share of the gas tax — because of reduced travel but it hasn’t resulted in any reduction in the highway needs... or the activity that County Highway Engineer Richard Sanders has planned for 2021.

This summer’s work plan includes the reconstruction in one combined project of Fisher Avenue in Crookston and the mill and the overlay of CSAH 11 from the east limits of Crookston to CSAH 46.

Another project involves the grade widening and full depth reclamation and overlay of CSAH 57 from CSAH 13 to the Red Lake County line plus a stretch of Red Lake County CSAH 17.

Reconstruction of two bridges on CSAH 1 between east of Fertile to CSAH 10 is also in the plans as are the overlay of CSAH 27 from CSAH 6 to the Clearwater

County line; the overlay of CSAH 6 from the curb and gutter in Fosston to CSAH 3; overlay of CSAH 6 from Trunk Highway 92 north to the Red Lake County line and from there west (in cooperation with Red Lake County) to Oklee.

“We are using \$1.8 million in local option sales tax dollars and \$1 million worth of Local Road Improvement Program Funds to reconstruct Fisher Avenue and \$500,00 of local option sales tax for the overlay of CSAH 11 from the east limits of Crookston to CSAH 46,” Sanders says.

County State Aid Highway dollars will be used to fund the CSAH 57 work and the overlay of CSAH 6, CSAH 27. The bridge work will be financed by a little over \$800,000 in bridge bonding along with about \$1 million in CSAH funding.

“After everything, we’ll be about \$1 million in the hole,” Sanders says of the financing. The difference will be made up

for this year by “advancing” funds for 2022. “We’ll be a million in the hole before we start 2022. Plus, we already have a \$1 million worth of delayed financing on the books from 2021, so we’ll be \$2 million behind by the time we get to next January.”

If that’s not enough, there will be the need to finance bridge replacement work.

“We’re going to have to find money for the Climax bridge in 2024. Right now, we have \$2.3 million in federal dollars meant for the replacement, which will cost over \$5 million. We’re going to need to find about \$2.7 million somewhere. I’m working with State Rep. Deb Kiel and State Sen. Mark Johnson on trying to get some state bonding dollars for that project. The Nielsville Bridge replacement hasn’t received any funding as of yet. If we can get a federal Build Grant, then we’ll have to scurry and come up with our local share to fund that project, too.”

‘Gravel Tax’ settlements made to townships

The \$184,550 in Aggregate Material Tax collected for gravel excavations made in Polk County in 2019 was an increase of \$36,294 from the \$148,256 collected in 2018.

Distribution of the 2019 tax included \$74,512 each to the Township Road & Bridge Fund and to the Polk County Road & Bridge Fund, \$26,298 to the Reserve Fund for Pit Restoration, and \$9,227 that was credited to the county auditor- treasurer for administration.

For townships, the method of distribution of the gravel tax is based on the number of “active” pits within the township rather than on the number of miles of road that are affected by the hauling.

For townships, the tax is used as a way to help maintain roads. By law, the tax rate is set at 21.5 cents per cubic yard or 15 cents per ton of aggregate material excavated.

The ability to collect the tax was created in 1980 by special legislation at the

request of Polk and Norman counties.

The settlement payments sent to each township for 2019 included: Chester, 5 pits, \$14,902.45; Columbia, 1 pit, \$2,980.49; Gently, 8 pits, \$23,843.92; Grove Park-Tilden, 3 pits, \$8,941.47; Hill River, 1 pit, \$2,980.49; Kertsonville, 1 pit, \$2,980.49; Lessor, 1 pit, \$2,980.49; Liberty, 1 pit, \$2,980.49; Queen, 1 pit, \$2,980.49; Trail City, 2 pits, \$5,960.98; and Woodside, 1 pit, \$2,980.49.

Transportation officers selected

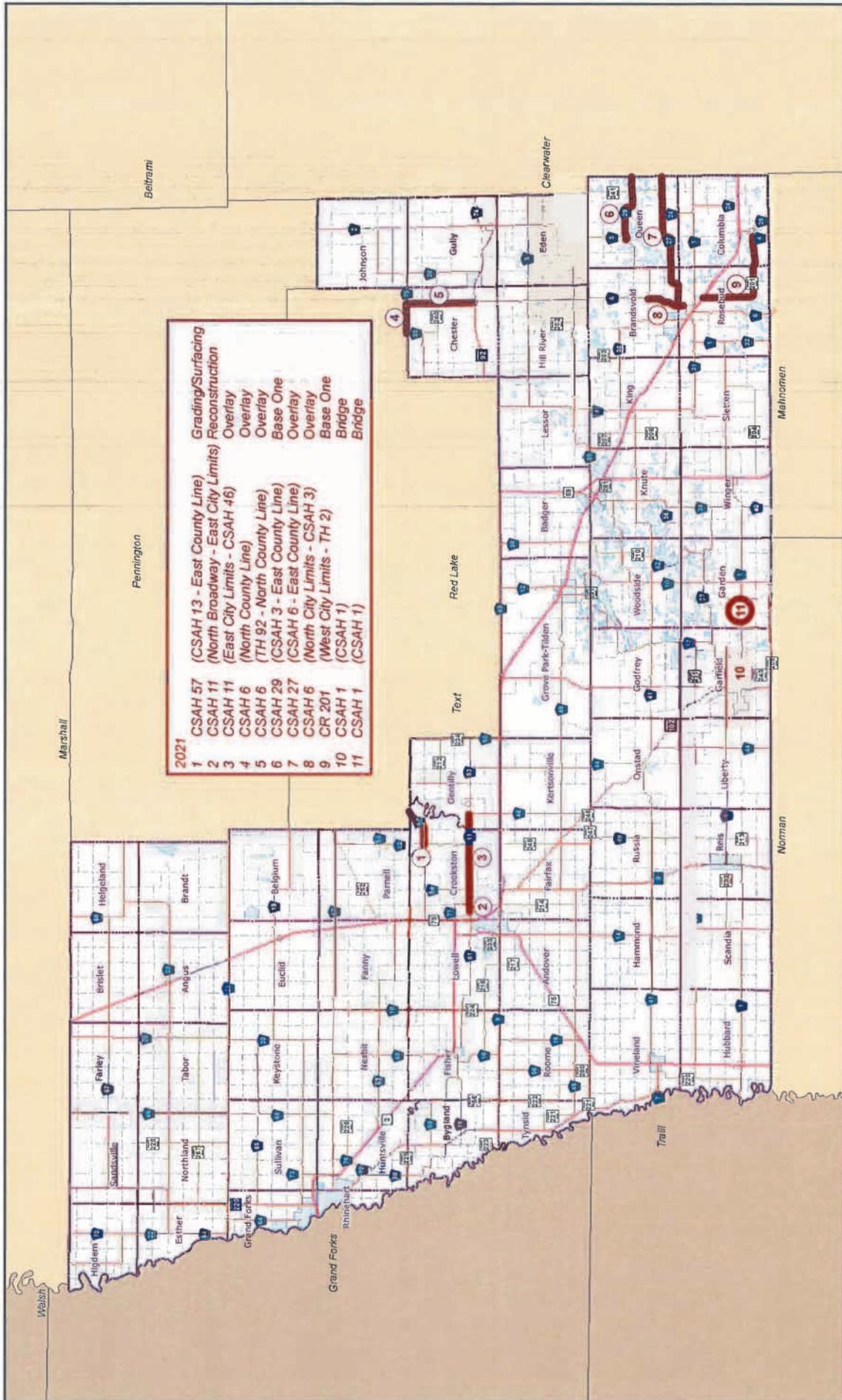
Commissioner Warren Strandell has been elected chair of two regional transportation organizations. The Northwestern Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership, eight counties that determine the use of federal grant dollars for Transportation Alternative Projects (TAPS) in District 2 of Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), selected Strandell as chair at the Dec. 12 meeting. The new vice chair is MnDOT District 2 State Aid Engineer Brian Ketring.

Earlier in December, the Transportation Advisory Committee of the Northwest Regional Development Commission elected Strandell as its new chair. Marshall County Commissioner Sharon Bring is the new vice chair and Kittson County Commissioner Theresia Gillie is the secretary.

Don Jensen, who retired as a Pennington County Commissioner, had been chair of both organizations with Strandell as vice chair.

History of Gravel Tax collections

1997	\$3,325	2009	\$124,766
1998	\$78,035	2010	\$144,334
1999	\$77,655	2011	\$165,101
2000	\$90,678	2012	\$197,253
2001	\$90,391	2013	\$177,846
2002	\$73,975	2014	\$254,861
2003	\$86,007	2015	\$175,864
2004	\$72,362	2016	\$141,271
2005	\$104,077	2017	\$146,432
2006	\$98,378	2018	\$148,256
2007	\$66,497	2019	\$184,550
2008	\$64,299		



**2021 PROPOSED ROAD CONSTRUCTION
POLK COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

These data are provided on an "AS IS" basis. The user assumes all liability for any use of the information. The user warrants that the information is accurate and reliable. The user warrants that the information is current and complete. The user warrants that the information is not used for any purpose other than the intended purpose.

Emergency Management deals with destructive events

The Polk County Emergency Management Department deals with many aspects of destructive events that can occur within the county.

Part of dealing with the aftermath of these types of events might include declaring a state of emergency. A declaration of a state of emergency serves as an official document alerting the governor that the county has incurred major damage from some type of destructive event.

It also gives a county the necessary powers needed to protect citizens and property, preserve municipal government and assure mutual disaster aid from appropriate local, state and federal agencies.

The second step is for local officials to gather and submit their preliminary damage assessments to their county emergency management department. These assessments are used to serve as a tool by the county to determine the severity and magnitude of the damages and if the costs to repair could qualify for any state and/or federal assistance.

In Polk County, the municipalities, townships, county departments and other publicly owned entities have done an excellent job in submitting their initial damage assessments to the Emergency Management Department after a disaster.

This has worked well for Polk County when the repair costs are severe enough to qualify for state and/or federal assistance. For example, Polk County was included in a federal disaster declaration for severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding that occurred in 2019. Thirty-four townships, three cities, and four county depart-

ments had repair costs of over \$767,000. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) paid 75% of those repair costs and the State of Minnesota paid the remaining 25%.

Polk County incurred more damage from spring flooding that took place in 2020. The damage met the threshold to qualify Polk County for assistance from the Minnesota State Public Disaster Program. Twenty-four townships, two cities, two county departments, and one watershed district had repair costs of over \$480,000.

By qualifying for the Public Disaster Assistance Program, the state will pay 75% of those repair costs and the remaining 25% is the responsibility of the public entity that incurred the damages.

Declaring a state of emergency for these two events brought in outside funds totaling to over \$1 million to repair public infrastructure in Polk County. Without the state of emergency declaration, the county would not have been eligible for any state or federal assistance, which would put the full costs of those repairs onto the taxpayers of the county.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

On March 24, 2020, Polk County declared another state of emergency concerning the COVID-19 virus.

The Emergency Operation Center (EOC) located at the Polk County Sheriff's Office was activated. Many county employees stepped up and were a part of the EOC team, but a special thank you needs to be extended to Polk County Veterans Service Officer Kurt Ellefson, Polk County Assistant Environmental Services Administrator Jacob Snyder and

Polk County Finance Officer Arla Meyer.

They were actively involved in planning, preparing, and responding to all requests that came into the Polk County EOC during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the nationwide shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), one of the first tasks for the EOC team was to acquire additional PPE to meet the needs of the county departments, law enforcement agencies, fire departments, emergency medical services, care facilities, schools, hospitals, and clinics throughout the county.

The EOC team was able to locate and acquire PPE supplies from Minnesota Homeland Security Emergency Management (HSEM), commercial suppliers, and local businesses. The Polk County Sheriff's Office created space to store all the new PPE and was also instrumental in transporting it to the facilities in need throughout the county.

At the start of the pandemic, the Polk County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department met with Polk Emergency Management and Polk County Public Health to discuss what could be developed through GIS to help keep Polk County residents informed and up to date on the COVID-19 virus.

The GIS department then created the Polk County Coronavirus Response Hub. The GIS Department manages and updates the hub periodically with the latest information pertaining to COVID-19. The hub is located on Polk County's Website at <http://www.co.polk.mn.us/>

Ag & Drainage

The Polk County Ag & Drainage Department continues to perform maintenance duties on the legal drainage systems. In 2020, over 6.5 miles were cleaned to legal grade, 21.5 acres of brush control was performed, and 166 miles of cattail infestations were treated with an approved aquatic herbicide in the southwestern portion of Polk County.

The county continues to target prohibited noxious weeds such as leafy spurge, Canada thistle, spotted knapweed, purple loosestrife, and wild parsnip, located within the county road right of ways. In the 2020 growing season, over 1,300 acres of these noxious weeds were treated with an approved broadleaf control herbicide.

2021 Spring Flood Outlook

The threat for significant, impactful, snowmelt flooding is very low for the county. Dry conditions have persisted since last fall. The spring flood risk is running below long-term historical averages across all of the Red River Basin. — Jody Beauchane
Emergency Management Ag & Drainage Inspector

Pester serving on West Polk S&WCD

Christian Pester has joined the West Polk Soil & Water Conservation District as the supervisor from District 4.

A fifth generation farmer, Pester will serve a four-year term representing Andover, Crookston, Fairfax, Gently, Kertsonville, and Lowell townships. Pester and his wife, Sarah, have a son, Arlie.

County Board Meeting Times

8:00 a.m. on 1st Tuesday of the month

9:30 a.m. on the 3rd Tuesday

8:00 a.m. on the 4th Tuesday

All meetings are open to the public

County Commissioners

Dist. 1 — Jerry Jacobson, chair

Dist. 2 — Warren Strandell

Dist. 3 — Gary Willhite

Dist. 4 — Joan K. Lee, v. chair

Dist. 5 — Don Diedrich



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'The times' have created issues for Corrections

The winter months and high numbers of COVID-19 in the communities created significant challenges for Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC) the last several months. Despite the implementation of multiple screening protocols, development of quarantine housing and frequent testing of inmates, TCCC still encountered operational challenges across all agency departments.

COVID response

While the average daily population for the Northwest Regional Corrections Center was down almost 18% in 2020 (ADP of 152 in 2020 vs. ADP of 185 in 2019), the decreased population did not equate to a decrease in challenges to be addressed.

Several housing unit adjustments were implemented early during the pandemic to allow for greater separation and the ability to isolate symptomatic inmates and these changes continue nearly 12 months later.

In addition to managing the ever-changing housing unit adjustments, corrections officers and other jail staff have

taken on additional responsibilities in the form of temperature checking and symptom logging for all new admissions during their first 14-days of incarceration.

To give that some context, it is estimated that corrections officers have conducted over 14,000 symptom screens and temperature checks since the pandemic began (and that number is a very conservative estimate). In addition to the increase in responsibilities seen by corrections officers as a result of the pandemic, the jail nursing staff has also seen a significant influx in work and the stress that goes along with a global pandemic.

Nursing staff have met regularly with jail personnel to review and make adjustments to COVID-19 protocols. This collaborative approach allowed for the development of a COVID-19 response that balanced the need to manage the healthcare needs of the inmates while avoiding the implementation of harsh restrictions which could create management problems and exacerbate an already stressful

environment for everybody.

Since July 2020, jail nursing staff have conducted approximately 1,547 COVID-19 tests. As of March 1, 2021, the jail has had 28 positive cases amongst the inmate population, though none have required hospitalization.

The response protocols that have been put in place and the work of corrections officers and nursing staff have proven effective as is evidenced by the low number of positive cases identified within the jail since the pandemic began.

Staffing Challenges

As challenging as managing the many obstacles associated with the pandemic amongst the inmate population at the jail and the resident population at the juvenile center, equally challenging has been the management of frequent staff shortages encountered since the pandemic began. Staff symptom monitoring and prompt reporting of close contacts certainly helped to mitigate the introduction of the virus into the work environment; however, this created staff shortages which created additional stress among an

already depleted staffing complement.

During the first 6 months of the pandemic, TCCC missed approximately 950 hours of work due to the need to isolate or quarantine. During the last 3 months of 2020, agency staff missed over 2,000 hours of work because of isolation and quarantine requirements with the jail bearing the brunt of that impact due to the restrictions of working in a congregate care setting if symptomatic or a close contact.

During the peak of staffing shortages, emergency staffing options were developed, which included the use of administrative and probation staff to conduct wellbeing checks within the jail facility during overnight hours after receiving some introductory training.

While the emergency staffing options did not have to be implemented, the willingness of staff to assist one-another across departments highlights the extra efforts repeatedly given by staff throughout the pandemic. — **Andrew Larson, TCCC executive director**

Building permits required for all projects

We would like to remind people that Polk County Planning & Zoning requires building/land use permits for all construction projects in Polk County.

If you are planning building or and use projects outside of incorporated cities, please contact Polk County Planning & Zoning staff prior to construction to determine set-back and ordinance requirements that may apply. More information on building/land use regulations can be found on the Polk County website at www.co.polk.mn.us under the Environmental Services/Planning & Zoning department tab.

People sometimes forget to apply for a building permit or don't think they need a permit for a deck, small shed, septic system etc. However, permits are required for almost any construction project in Polk County. Any land alterations or landscaping activity in the shoreland or floodplain

zoning districts may also require permits. Septic system permits involve obtaining a design from a licensed septic contractor as well as verification of soils through the permitting process. All "fixing" of septic systems requires a land use permit.

Landowners are responsible for obtaining all permits for projects on their property, not the contractor. Contractors securing permits on behalf of the landowner must still have the landowner sign the permit application. When a contractor says that a permit is not required, please take the time to contact our office and inquire about your specific project.

Also remember that land use/zoning permits that aren't obtained prior to construction are treated as "after-the-fact" (ATF) permits subject to three times the cost of the normal permit fee plus an additional \$150 penalty fee, if applicable. The costs can add up quick especially if a variance is

required due to setbacks not being met. In certain situations, penalty fees may accrue to thousands of dollars or the need to be reconstructed or moved.

It is NOT in the best practice to simply do a project and ask for forgiveness. Many of these ATF situations result in wasted time and money as well as possible structure removal or court fees.

So, make sure to apply for your land use/building permits early and plan projects ahead of time to avoid unnecessary delays or ATF penalty fees. Our office is more than happy to answer questions and assist you through the permitting process. For more information contact Polk County Planning & Zoning at (218) 281-5700. — **Jacob Snyder, Environmental Services assistant administrator**



Don Cavalier



Tom Noah

Cavalier and Noah join Planning & Zoning

Don Cavalier and Tom Noah are new members of the Polk County Planning & Zoning Commission. They will serve three-year terms.

Noah, Crookston, the appointment of District 3 County Commissioner Gary Willhite, succeeds Courtney Pulkrabek, who retired after serving on the commission for 15 years.

Cavalier, Crookston, the appointment of Crookston Mayor Don Steinbrook, succeeds Bobby Baird, who had served on the commission for three years.

In his 40-year career in education in Crookston, Cavalier served as a member of the Student Affairs staff at the University of Minnesota Technical College (1976-1992) and at the University of Minnesota-Crookston (after the name was changed in 1992-2016).

Cavalier had served as the director of the Career Development and Counseling Department including the Diversity Program; Students with Disabilities Program; alcohol, tobacco and other drug programs; Student Health Services; Alumni Services and was the head baseball coach.

Noah, who was born and raised in Crookston, became the owner of the Noah Insurance Service in 1980. The firm that had been started by his father in 1955.

In the Crookston community

Noah has served on several committees within the Crookston Chamber of Commerce and served on Crookston Park Board. He was also a Crookston youth hockey coach.

Other members of the commission are: Chair Mike Powers, East Grand Forks (East Grand Forks Mayor Steve Gander appointment); Vice Chair Robert Franks (Commissioner District 5 appointment); Donovan Wright, Mentor (District 1); Len Vonasek, East Grand Forks (District 2); Paul Jore, McIntosh (District 4); Arlet Phillips, East Grand Forks (Polk County Township Officers Association); Mike Schulz, Mentor (Maple Lake Improvement District); Rolland Gagner, Erskine (Union Lake Sarah Improvement District); and County Board Chair Jerry Jacobson. The county board chair serves on the commission during the year that he/she serves as chair of the board.

Five members of the Planning & Zoning Commission also serve on the Polk County Board of Adjustment that hears requests for variances to the rules of the County Zoning Ordinance. That membership includes Powers (chair), Franks (vice chair), Gagner, Wright and Noah. Jore and Phillips are alternates.

Doreen Erickson named to Extension Committee

Doreen Erickson, Climax, is a new member of the Polk County Extension Committee having succeeded Danny Anderson, Fisher, who did not seek reappointment. Erickson is the Commissioner District 2 appointment.

A native of Red Lake County where she grew up in 4H, Erickson is a Fisher-Climax 4-H Club leader. She and her husband, Brad, and their children live near Climax and have a Boer goat herd. Their children, who are involved in 4-H, are Kennedy, 17; Adelle, 15, and Sawyer, 11.

In other Extension Committee developments, Aaron Rongen, Fertile, has been re-elected committee chair, and Marlys Balstad, Fosston, who succeeded her husband, Scott, as a committee member mid-term in 2020, has begun her first full term as the District 4 appointment.

Other committee members are: Connie Hannesson,



Doreen Erickson

Crookston (member at-large); Rongen (District 1); Rae French, Crookston (District 3) and Brad Grunhovd, Euclid (District 5).

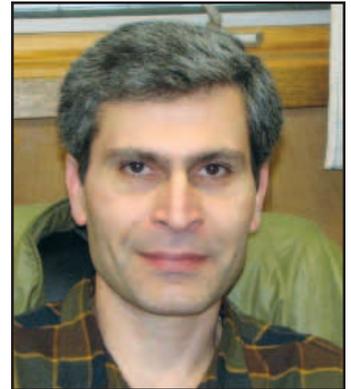
County commissioners Joan Lee and Gary Willhite serve on the committee. County Taxpayer Service Center Director Michelle Cote is the committee secretary.

Maher named Middle Snake Tamarac Watershed administrator

Morteza “Mori” Maher is the new administrator of the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District organization based in Warren. He succeeds Joel Praska, who had been the administrator for two years before resigning in mid 2020. Danny Omdahl, a MSTRWD technician, had served as the interim administrator.

A native of Iran, Maher earned his civil engineering degree and was in business there before coming to the United State in 2011. He earned a masters degree in Leadership and Organizational Development at Denver University and had professional positions in Colorado and in the Washington, D.C. area before being appointed the MSTRWD administrator on Dec. 14.

The MSTRWD Board of Managers includes: John Nelson, Oslo (president); Bill Peterson, Middle River (vice president); Roger Mischel, Warren (secretary); Robert Kovar, East Grand Forks (treasurer); Brad Blawatt, Viking;



Morteza Maher

and David Bakke, Newfolden. Established in 1970 as the Middle River Snake River Watershed District, it became the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District in 2002 when the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) approved a petition to add the Tamarac River to the district. The district covers approximately 1,476 square miles in Marshall, Polk, Pennington, Kittson, and Roseau counties.

Impact of latest stimulus bill

Please Sir, May I drink from your firehose?

Chuck Whiting, Polk County administrator



I have developed an issue with the phrase “we live in interesting times” simply because that seems to suggest this all recently started and will eventually come to an end. While that is my hope with the pandemic, I think we are realizing that the pace of change and disruption in our lives is going to continue if not quicken.

While I believe life’s lessons provide us rudders to sail by, it is amazing how quickly we can adapt to changing circumstances, even as those come more and more quickly. Recognizing our abilities to adapt to change while keeping our heads about us is really the key to living in modern times. And I hope we are doing that as Polk County officials.

As I am writing this, Congress has finalized another stimulus bill that will have many direct impacts on you, me and Polk County. As often is the case, federal remedies to economic and social problems tend to be wholesale initiatives addressing macro issues whether you, me or Polk County has any of those issues or to what degree we may have them.

Twice in the last year state funds have been provided to the County to give out to local businesses and agencies adversely affected by the pandemic, which we have done. Hopefully these have helped our businesses and some of the funds have helped Polk County... as much as \$2 million to address COVID-19 related expenses, costs and revenue flows.

By the time you are reading this, Congress will have issued checks directly to most of you and to counties and states across the nation as part of a \$1.9 trillion package. Of that amount, \$65.1 billion is for counties, a huge amount but small in comparison to the total stimulus package.

For Polk County, the amount is just over \$6 million, which I

may say is quite a bit. We are not sure yet whether there are strings attached to these funds but there may not be, which means we will have to use our own discipline to appropriately apply these funds for the betterment of Polk County. This will be much of the work of the Board in the coming months and beyond. Talk about drinking from a firehose.

For context, it is not too early to reflect on how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the ways we do things and to plan for how we will do things going forward. Old fashioned planning and clear-eyed visioning will help us adjust to these changes but it will be a different world. With that in mind, our job at the County will be to adapt to this new reality while remaining prudent and responsible stewards of the public’s resources we are responsible for.

This does make for interesting times. I suppose it’s the keeping up with them that requires our effort. For instance, Polk County was hit by Chinese cyber forces exploiting a Microsoft weakness in our email system. While caught, it put us down for several days of clean up and changes in how we operate. It’s just one more thing to deal with but the risks are enormous.

We are not so far out of the way to avoid these issues and our responses require just as much wherewithal as large organizations. We must adapt and move forward. Hopefully defending our way of doing things does not swamp our abilities and resources to stay ahead of the threats that are now ever present.

So, keep an eye on us. There is a lot to do and no time to waste. We are entering new times and must be looking forward to adapt.

Grant for septic updating

Polk County Environmental Services has a cost-share grant program that is available to property owners who have an existing noncompliant septic system. Funds are intended to fix septic systems that are currently failing codes or functionality. These dollars are made possible through a grant received from the Minnesota Clean Water Legacy Act.

There is a limited amount of funding available and preference for funding will be determined based on household income status, condition of existing system, and proximity to priority surface waters. Income restrictions apply. A major goal within the program aims to fix “imminent public health threats.” Polk County uses USDA low-income guidelines to group funding grant contributions.

Households must not exceed the income guidelines and must be the landowner’s homestead, not a second dwelling or rental. If approved, applicants will be required to pay any match requirement

upfront. Holding tank septic systems cannot be installed and SSTS for new construction of a dwelling do not qualify for the program. The County will provide a cost share grant contributing 60% and up to 80% of installation cost up to a maximum of \$12,000 grant dollars.

To learn more about this program call Polk County Planning and Zoning at (218) 281-5700. Prior program applications can also be found on our website at www.co.polk.mn.us under the Environmental Services and Planning and Zoning Department page. Polk County will update the 2021 program application packets on our website soon.

The deadline to apply for the Septic System Fix-Up Grant Program is June 1, 2021. After this date, remaining funding will be available on a first come first serve basis. — **Jacob Snyder, Polk County Environmental Services assistant administrator**

Retka takes region economic resiliency post

After a more than a two-decade career as an administrator at Northland Community and Technical College, James Retka has joined the Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) as its Region 1 economic resiliency specialist.

Retka’s primary goals with NWRDC are to provide technical assistance to local units of government as they navigate through the current pandemic. That assistance can include economic disaster resiliency in the form of planning, economic development planning for cities and counties, assistance with workforce development challenges, and encouraging and supporting regional entrepreneurial activity.

While at Northland, Retka was active in community economic and workforce development efforts through the college’s Center for Outreach and Innovation and other administration assignments.

235 arrested for dealing in northwest Minnesota

The Pine-to-Prairie Drug Task Force, a 13-member organization made up of area county and city law enforcement officers and four U.S. Border Patrol officers, combined to make 235 arrests in 2020.

The Task Force works in eight northwestern Minnesota counties with a focus on mid to upper-level dealers.

Polk County and the cities of Crookston and East Grand Forks each provide one officer to the force while the City of Thief River Falls and Pennington County cooperate to provide an investigator. Counties contributing investigators to the force are Lake of the Woods, Marshall, Norman and Roseau. The U.S. Border Patrol and U.S.

Homeland Security commit four investigators. While not committing a full-time member to the task force, Kittson and Red Lake counties assist as needed.

Polk, Marshall and Norman counties and the cities of Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks each have canine officers that are made available to the task force.

From 312 new cases in 2020, the Task Force seized 75 weapons in addition to 36.4 grams of cocaine, 64 grams of heroin, 16.24 pounds of marijuana, 1,578 grams of methamphetamine (meth), 309 prescription pills, and 112 grams of fentanyl.

Among the more significant cases made in Polk County was one in East Grand Forks that began with an arrest of a person for DWI that led to the confiscation of 82 grams of meth plus smaller amounts of heroin and cocaine. In another case, also in East Grand Forks, law officers had noticed trafficking for almost two years before a short standoff led to the arrest of a parolee. Seized were guns, marijuana, meth and cocaine.

In a case in Polk County, a



A case in which Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force officers worked with those from the Beltrami County based Paul Bunyan Task Force in Lake of the Woods County resulted in the confiscation of over 100 grams of the meth pictured in the two photographs on this page. The meth dealer received a five-year prison sentence.

small-town dealer was arrested after a search discovered 35.7 grams of meth. Leadership in the community was very thankful that the problem was solved.

Other cases in the eight-county area included one in Pennington County where the investigation of a fatal overdose resulted in the arrest of a dealer in the neighboring Paul Bunyan Drug Task Force area along

with the seizure of 160 grams of pink heroin laced with fentanyl.

In another case, a woman who had been traveling to California on a regular basis was arrested enroute back to the Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force area with 19 grams of meth, 116 grams of marijuana, and four THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) cartridges.

A combined investigation with

Paul Bunyan Drug Task Force led to the arrest of a large meth dealer in Lake of the Woods County resulting in over 100 grams of meth and a five-year prison sentence.

And in Marshall County, a new deputy sheriff found 126 grams of meth in a vacuum cleaner as he made one last search of a premises. The discovery led to the arrest of a man who was out on bail on first-degree drug charges.

A resident of East Grand Forks mistakenly received in the mail a package containing 2 pounds of marijuana. After reporting it to police, a watch was begun during which subsequent packages were received containing 900 BHO (butane hash oil) cartridges.

In still another instance, a juvenile was arrested in East Grand Forks after he dropped his wallet and fentanyl pills (M box 30) were discovered.

Pine to Prairie officers were also involved in a case in Thief River Falls in which Devon Pulczynski, 24, was charged and convicted of first-degree murder and first-degree arson.

Trends have BHO cartridges and marijuana coming into the area by mail.





Polk County Human Service Center

With the exception of the placement of some furniture, the \$2.5 million remodeling project in the Polk County Human Service Center in East Grand Forks has been completed. Missing though are the county employees, most of whom continue working from home. When the governor will be able to lift the ‘work at-home’ directive is not known but the office quarters are ready for county employees to move back in. The color key at left indicates the space

that individual county and the other regional agencies will occupy. The diagonally-shaded area at right is occupied by the Northwest Mental Health Center. This area of the building was developed in a separate project that had been started a year before that done for county offices. Northwest Mental Health was able to move into its newly expanded space a year ago. However, a late snowstorm last April occurred at the same time that the

building’s roof was being replaced. The storm left 11 inches of snow on the roof, which when it quickly melted created a large pool of water. When trapped there that water found a way through an unprotected opening in the roof and caused extensive interior damage to the recently finished walls, ceilings, and flooring in Northwest Mental Health Center space. All has now been restored (and paid for by the contractor’s insurance company).

A look inside the Human Service Center



Front reception desk for Social Services



Some of the work stations in Social Services



Public Health reception desk

Enforcement of Buffer Law moves forward

Polk County continues moving forward with the enforcement of the Minnesota Buffer Law §103F.48.

The zoning ordinance was amended in 2017 to incorporate the rules, regulations, and enforcement procedures of the buffer law consistent with the state statutes §103F.48. There are two agencies responsible for the buffer program in Polk County, the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and Polk County Planning & Zoning Departments.

Landowners should work with their local SWCD and take the appropriate steps to follow all buffer requirements on their specific parcel. Also, landowners should contact their local SWCD office (West Polk SWCD at 218-281-6070 or East Polk SWCD at 218-563-2777) to notify the district if steps were taken to implement the buffer areas. The SWCD determines compliance with the buffer regulations and Polk County assists in the violation enforcement highlighted below.

The ordinance requires that landowners owning property adjacent to a water resource identified and reviewed on the DNR buffer protection map (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/buffers/index.html>) must establish and maintain a buffer to protect the State's water resources as follows:

a. DNR Public Watercourse (rivers & creeks): a 50-foot average width and 30-foot minimum width continuous buffer of perennially rooted vegetation.

b. Public Drainage Systems (ditches): a 16.5-foot minimum width continuous vegetative buffer.

If you receive a Corrective Action Notice (CAN) it requires the landowner to take action to correct the noncom-

pliant buffer or an APO with monetary penalties will follow. Landowners who receive a CAN must contact the local SWCD to determine the steps to get the buffer into compliance with the law.

Spring planting season is right around the corner, so don't forget to seed the required buffer areas on all the parcels adjacent to public waters and public ditch systems. If landowners fail to establish and maintain a required buffer, they may be subject to Administrative Penalty Orders (APO) and/or criminal enforcement by Polk County.

The APO monetary penalties for initial violations are as follows.

- \$0 for 11 months after issuance of the Corrective Action Notice;

- \$50 per parcel per month for the first six (6) months (180 days) following the time period in i; and

- \$200 per parcel per month after six (6) months (180 days) following the time period in ii.

For more information on buffers, visit the Polk County website at www.co.polk.mn.us under the Environmental Services and Planning & Zoning Department page there is a buffer mapping tool available on the website to assist landowners in determining the watercourse or public ditches in relation to their specific parcels.

The goal of the buffer program in Polk County is to get buffers put in place and not have to enforce parcels through the APO enforcement procedures. For more information contact Polk County Planning & Zoning at (218) 281-5700. — **Jacob Snyder, Assistant Administrator Environmental Services**



Organics collector systems are located at the Crookston Transfer Station and Fosston Recycling Center

Organics collection to be 're-booted'

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) awarded Polk County a grant to establish a regional Source Separated Organics Material (SSOM or Organics) Collection Program in 2018.

Polk, along with Beltrami, Clearwater and Hubbard counties, participated in the project. The goal was to start interest in, or programs for, the collection of organics at either the residential level or from large generators (schools, universities, hospitals, cafes, etc.).

Despite challenges in getting approvals executed and infrastructure ordered, the program began with the delivery of the large collection units (roll-off containers mated to air circulatory systems) to Beltrami and Hubbard in the summer of 2019.

Defects discovered

Those containers were placed into service shortly thereafter. Just before start-up in Clearwater and Polk was to begin that fall, equipment defects were discovered in the systems already in service.

Rather than put more equipment with defects into service, it was decided to retrofit the unused equipment and then replace the defective systems with the retrofit systems. This kept those operational programs going but delayed program start-up for the others until early 2020.

Clearwater started their program early in 2020 with the placement of their large generator collection unit into service. Polk deployed its first large generator collection unit at the University of Minnesota-Crookston just before the pandemic began.

Expansion of the program

soon took a backseat to concern and planning for the pandemic as it began to evolve and spread.

However, when the governor issued Executive Order #20-20, those large generators of organics were shut-down. Programs for residents were likewise discouraged when people were told to stay home. Only minor usage of existing organics collections occurred through the pandemic, as most sites remained suspended and no new sites were added during that time. That has been the situation to date.

Despite the pandemic responses still in place and the incremental reopening of those large generator sites, there is interest in restarting and re-booting these programs across the region.

Collection stalled

In Polk County, the start of a residential organics collection program stalled before truly starting, so the decision was to "re-boot" a residential program.

The re-booting of the Polk County Residential Organics Collection Program will occur with the availability of Organics Collection Kits (Kits) for Polk County residents (except City of East Grand Forks which does not participate in Polk County Solid Waste Programs).

Each Kit will include the following: (1) 5-gallon pail, (1) easy open/close lid, (50) compostable 5-gallon liner bags, (3) binders for keeping the bag from sliding into the pail, and (1) set of information and instructions for the types of materials that can be placed in the pail and how to empty it when necessary.

To "re-boot" the residential

organics collection program these kits will be offered for FREE for a limited time. There will be a limit of one kit per household. The kits will be available by March 31. After the limited free offering expires, kits and kit refills (more compostable bags) will be available for purchase.

To be accepted

The organics will be accepted from residents at the Polk County Transfer Station in Crookston and the Polk County Recycling Center in Fosston.

Access to the drop-off area will be for residents of Polk County (except East Grand Forks residents) and only during regular business hours.

When open, residents can place their collected organics into an appropriately marked cart. The use of the cart allows us to screen the materials for non-compostable bags, contaminants or other materials not allowed for composting.

Once the carts are full, we will empty them into a large collection unit until it is full. Once the large collection container is full, it will be hauled to the Polk County Landfill where it will be managed and processed into compost material.

To register for the program, please contact Polk County Environmental Services at (218) 281-6445 or by email at: environmental.svs@co.polk.mn.us.

More information can be found on our web page at: www.co.polk.mn.us/517/Organics-Program. We will be updating that webpage as the program evolves. — **Jon Steiner, Polk County Environmental Services director**



An organics cart into which residents deposit materials

Sanders to have position on NACo Board

The Executive Committee of the National Association of County Engineers (NACE) has voted Polk County Engineer Richard Sanders to a position on the board of directors of the National Association of Counties (NACo).

As an affiliate of NACo, NACE has one member on the NACo Board. Sanders will assume the position when NACo has its annual conference in July.

Already a member of NACo's Transportation Steering Committee, Sanders serves as vice chair of that body's Subcommittee on Highway Safety.

A member of the Polk County Highway Department since 1991 and the county engineer since 2002, Sanders has been a leader in transportation organizations both in Minnesota and nationally. He was president of the Minnesota County Engineers Association in 2013 and served as president of the National Association of County Engineers (NACE) in 2018.

Changes to be made in handling of yard waste

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the volume of material received from commercial lawn services and in the volume of large tree branches, limbs, trunks and logs.

These unintended trends impacted access to services, disrupted the compost process and damaged infrastructure.

As a result, there will be changes related to yard waste acceptance at the Polk County Transfer Station in Crookston this year.

Accepting yard waste at the Transfer Station began in response to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) requiring the City of Crookston to limit public access to the city burn site due to lack of an on-site operator.

With no other viable options and already accepting small amounts of yard waste going to the city's burn site anyway, Polk County expanded its facility to accommodate more material.

The intent of the Transfer Station providing that service was to provide an outlet for leaves and lawn clippings from residents. Over the last several years not only does the Transfer Station see many deliveries from residents with 2-3 bags of leaves/grass clippings but also regularly receives multiple large loads of yard waste or tree waste that is delivered on dump-style trailers, roll-off containers and large truckloads. Many of these are from commercial sources.

These larger loads were not what the service at the Transfer Station was set up to accommodate. These loads take longer to unload, require more room to maneuver, the weight of the load damages the pad/delivery area, and many of the loads received are often mixed or consist entirely of oversized materials that cannot be composted in the form it is delivered (large diameter or long tree waste needs to be chipped or shredded before being added to the compost pile).

In addition, many of these loads are so large that the Transfer Station just reloads them in a county container and pays shipping to the Compost

Facility or in essence subsidizes the commercial services.

In effect for this spring, charges will be applied at the Transfer Station for long (>3 feet in length) or large-diameter (>4 inches in diameter) tree waste materials received from residents that require shredding to compost.

Yard waste will be accepted from residents at no charge. For commercial sources accepted at the Transfer Station, yard waste will be charged \$20/ton, small tree waste (<3 feet/<4-inch diameter) will be charged \$30/ton and large tree waste (>3 feet/>4-inch diameter) will be charged \$40/ton.

Loads of yard waste and tree waste delivered direct to the Compost Facility (Gentilly Landfill) will be charged at \$10/ton less than the Transfer Station. Commercial lawn services should contact the Transfer Station or Compost Facility with any questions related to conditions or hours of operation.

All users of this service will also experience some inconvenience this summer. It was intended to repair the damage to the compost receiving area at the Transfer Station in 2020 and modify it to accept yard waste separate from tree waste.

However, the project was not able to be completed in the fall of 2020. It is anticipated that many of these repairs and improvements to the compost receiving area will occur in 2021.

This will cause periods of time that services may be limited or disrupted in order to accommodate the planned improvements. It is our goal that these short-term disruptions will be minor and the improvements and repairs will produce long-term benefits.

Please feel free to contact the Polk County Transfer Station (218-281-6445) or Landfill Complex (Compost Facility location - 218-281-5419) with any questions. — **Jon Steiner, Polk County Environmental Services director**



Solar-powered CD3 Wayside Solar boat cleaning station

Boat cleaning station to help combat invasive species spread

The Polk County Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Task Force made a recent purchase to help protect waterways in Polk County.

Polk County commissioners authorized the Task Force to use state grant funding that was saved in prior years to purchase a CD3 Wayside Solar boat cleaning station from CD3 systems, a Minnesota based company. CD3 systems products aim to give the public tools and equipment to combat AIS spread.

The state's clean, drain, dry initiative aims to keep boats and watercrafts free of water which ultimately keeps aquatic invasive species where they are.

Responsible lake and river users need to take necessary steps to take the time to look over all watercraft equipment when recreating on lakes and

ivers. Aquatic hitchhikers continue to spread all throughout Minnesota on boats and watercrafts. The cleaning stations will help lake and river users have the necessary tools to combat aquatic invasive rivers are for people recreating in Polk County. The task force aims to keep our waterways clean and productive for future generations of lakes and river users. We are proud to have a CD3 system in our toolbox to combat AIS spread in Polk County.

When you see the CD3 boat cleaning station at a access site come clean your watercraft with it, its free to use! For more information contact Polk County Environmental Services at (218) 281-5700. — **Jacob Snyder, assistant administrator Environmental Services**

Fight Crime

The Polk County Sheriff's Tip Line

is completely Anonymous

Help us to fight drugs and all crime. Your tips, especially when combined with information that we have, could help someone's child, parent, relative or friend. — **Sheriff Jim Tadman**

1-218-435-7872

POLK COUNTY 2021 ASSESSMENT TILLABLE CHANGES

PRIOR TO STATE BOARD ADJUSTMENTS

KEY
TILLABLE PERCENTAGE CHANGE
AVERAGE TILLABLE VALUE PER ACRE

COUNTY WIDE
0.5%
\$3,355

HIGDEM 0% \$3,687	SANDSVILLE 0% \$3,707	FARLEY 0% \$3,751	BRISLET 0% \$3,110	HELGELAND 0% \$2,050
ESTHER 0% \$4,385	NORTHLAND 0% \$4,488	TABOR 0% \$4,312	ANGUS 0% \$3,510	BRANDT 0% \$1,849
GRAND FORKS 0% \$5,389	SULLIVAN 0% \$5,351	KEYSTONE 0% \$4,975	EUCLID 2% \$3,679	BELGIUM 0% \$2,053
RHINEHART 0% \$5,288	HUNTSVILLE 0% \$5,456	NESBIT 2% \$5,320	FANNY 2% \$4,037	PARNELL 0% \$2,163
	BYGLAND 0% \$5,016	FISHER 1% \$5,189	LOWELL 1% \$4,743	CROOKSTON 0% \$3,544
	TYNSID 0% \$5,029	ROOMIE 0% \$5,013	ANDOVER 0% \$4,657	FAIRFAX 0% \$4,028
		VINELAND 0% \$4,851	HAMMOND 0% \$4,044	RUSSIA 0% \$3,658
		HUBBARD 0% \$4,552	SCANDIA 0% \$3,631	REIS 0% \$3,273
			ONSTAD 3% \$1,629	LIBERTY 0% \$1,853
			GODFREY 2% \$1,974	GARFIELD 2% \$2,239
			WOODSIDE 2% \$2,384	GARDEN 1% \$2,709
			KNUTE 0% \$2,494	WINGER 1% \$2,698
			KING 3% \$2,394	SLETTEN 1% \$2,671
			LESSOR 0% \$1,912	ROSEBUD 2% \$2,521
			BADGER 0% \$1,714	BRANDSVOLD 0% \$2,515
			TILDEN 2% \$1,414	WINGS 1% \$1,880
			GROVE PARK \$1,414	QUEEN 5% \$1,880
			KERTSONVILLE 2% \$2,322	COLUMBIA 8% \$1,540
			GENTILLY 2% \$2,322	JOHNSON 0% \$1,511
			CROOKSTON 0% \$3,544	GULLY 0% \$1,493
			FAIRFAX 0% \$4,028	CHESTER 0% \$1,588
			ANDOVER 0% \$4,657	HILL RIVER 0% \$2,162
			ROOMIE 0% \$5,013	EDEN 0% \$1,900