

# POLK COUNTY

## Newsletter

**INSIDE: Red River  
Juvenile Center  
Resumes Operation**

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**Spring 2023**

## Special election to decide open commission seat

With the passing of Gerald “Jerry” Jacobson in January there is an open seat on the Polk County Board of Commissioners. This has created the need for a special election to select a new commissioner for the vacant 1<sup>st</sup> District seat. The candidates running for the open seat are Travis Johnson, Paul Reese, Kristie Jerde, Michelle Cote, and Marlow Jacobson.



**See pages 2-4 to learn about the candidates**

### SPECIAL PRIMARY ELECTION

- ▶ **When is it:** May 9th
- ▶ **How do I vote:** In-person, absentee, or mail-in ballot
- ▶ **Where do I vote in person:** Vote in person at one of five polling places: Crookston - Ward 1&5, Fertile, Woodside Township, and Garfield Township.

**ELECTION See Page 4**



**CHUCK WHITING**  
Polk County  
Administrator

## Springing Forward

I grew up in Minneapolis which uses the same calendar as we use here in Polk County, but spring seemed to come a couple of weeks earlier there. Today is the last Monday in March as I write this and it’s 10 degrees outside, over my lunch hour, which like all my lunch hours for the past five months have been spent inside. We all know spring is coming, it has to, right? So, let’s look ahead to the flurry of activity, and not snow flurries, that will eventually come our way.

First, we will have an election on May 9 for County Commissioner District 1, the seat held by long-time commissioner Jerry Jacobson. District 1 is Fertile to the south part of Crookston and the lakes area. With five candidates, May 9 will be a primary with the top two vote-getters facing off on August 8, and the winner taking the seat at the August 15 Board meeting. More information is included in this newsletter, or you can call 218-281-2554 for more voting information.

**CHUCK See Page 6**

## Moratorium halts new edible uses

On February 8, The Polk County Board of Commissioners accepted an emergency interim ordinance, or moratorium, prohibiting the establishment of new uses or expanding existing uses related to the sales, testing, manufacturing, and distribution of THC products.

Implementing a moratorium was in response to Minnesota recently passing legislation making it legal to sell THC-infused edible cannabinoids. Effective July 1, 2022, the new law allowed the sale of food or beverage products containing small amounts of THC, specifically 0.3% of any hemp-derived THC. The law also states products can’t contain more than 5 mg of THC per serving and no more than 50 mg per container.

Specifically, the new law states edible cannabinoids can only be sold to consumers over

the age of 21. They also can’t be marketed to or target children in any way, including not bearing the likeness or contain characteristics of persons, animals, or fruit that appeal to children; being modeled after a brand of products primarily consumed by or marketed to children; or being made by applying a hemp-derived cannabinoid to a commercially available candy or snack food item.

Some labeling and testing requirements were established under the new law, but it didn’t create any licensing criteria or regulations for compliance by manufacturers or businesses that sell cannabis products.

The July legislation had limited publicity, which prevented counties across the state from studying the potential impacts of legalizing edible cannabinoids and engaging in policy

discussions regarding possible regulations.

The intent of the moratorium is to maintain the status quo while Polk County staff has time, hopefully with public input, to study the new law and determine if any potential amendments are required to its ordinances that would uphold public health, safety, and general welfare. Along with safety concerns, the ordinance allows for the consideration of licensing and rules, sales management controls, and other regulations for the sale of cannabis products.

Some things that could be taken into consideration by Polk County staff are state law, current county regulations, and regulations that have been or may be adopted in other neighboring

**EDIBLES See Page 2**



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# Commissioner Candidates - District 1

## Travis Johnson

Travis “Bull” Johnson grew up in Southeast Louisiana in the small town of Larose, which is about as close as you can get to the Gulf of Mexico without actually getting your feet wet.



**Johnson**

Johnson’s childhood dream was to either join the military or be a professional wrestler. After graduating high school, he decid-

ed to forego any future in the WWF and try his hand defending our country. Due to a previous head injury his military dreams would have to be put on hold.

While his goal of joining the military was put on hold Travis spent time working in the oil industry and as part of the American Red Cross. In 1991 his head injury improved, and he enlisted in the Army where he served as a pay roll clerk until 1997.

Early during his time in the military Travis met his wife Terri (Weber) Johnson in Germany and they were married in 1994. They have two biological children together; Christopher, 28, and Alexis, 25. In 2020 they adopted Jamee, who is now 21 years old.

Once his military contract was up Johnson and his family relocated to the Minneapolis area where he worked for various car dealerships as a salesman and Enterprise Rent-A-Car as a rental agent. Shortly after settling in Minneapolis his employer transferred him to Corpus Christi, Texas.

After several years working in the auto industry Travis missed serving in the military, so he rejoined the Texas National Guard in 2004. He didn’t have to wait long to

get to work either deploying to Kuwait in January 2005 in support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

That deployment made Travis realize how much he missed the military, and he transferred back to active duty. He finished his 20-year career in 2018 when he retired as a Sergeant First Class. Over a 20-year career Johnson’s duty stations included Germany, Atlanta, Kuwait, Colorado, Iraq, Portugal, South Korea, Washington D.C., and Amman, Jordan.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Travis’ military career was attending Defense Attaché schooling in Washington D.C. After school her served as the Defense Attaché Staff NCO at the US Embassy in Amman, Jordan, where he worked in a liaison role between the U.S. military and other foreign militaries.

Following his time in the military Johnson and his family returned to Minnesota on an 8-acre homestead in Beltrami. While building his new farm, Travis decided to try his hand in politics running for Polk County Commission in 2020. He lost to incumbent Gerald “Jerry” Jacobson in District 1, but that didn’t deter Travis. In 2022 he ran for the U.S. House in Minnesota’s 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District where he lost to incumbent Michelle Fischbach (R).

Travis holds a handful of degrees including a bachelor’s degree in human resources from the University of Maryland, a master’s degree in international relations/conflict resolution from the American Military University, and a bachelor’s degree in animal science from the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

With his animal science degree Johnson has been focusing on his farm raising kinder goats, Belted Galloway cattle, pigs, and chickens.

## Paul Reese

Paul Reese has led a life of helping people, both at home and afar. Originally from Greenbush, MN, Reese later moved to Staples, MN, and grew up there until he graduated from Staples-Motley High School in 1979.



**Reese**

He began his path in medicine, graduating as a licensed practical nurse, LPN, from Central Lakes College in Brainerd, MN. While at Central Lakes Reese

joined the Army Reserve in 1982 and attended basic training in Fort Jackson, SC. Paul then got a Bachelor of Science in nursing from North Dakota State University. He spent the next few years working as a registered nurse, RN, at St. Ansgar’s Hospital in Moorhead and later in the emergency room there.

In the middle of his college education, Paul deployed to Iraq on a diplomatic mission outside Kuwait. In an EVAC hospital, with 200 beds and 400 employees, he saw patients for about four months overseas. Following his mission, he returned to North Dakota and finished his education at the University of North Dakota and received a degree as a Physician’s Assistant.

After college Reese moved to Crookston in 1993 and worked at Northwest Clinic, later Altru Clinic, for 14 years before transferring to RiverView Health in Fertile, MN. He has worked in

Fertile since 2006 mainly focusing on family practice.

During his time across Polk County, Reese has served as a fire department volunteer, worked with local high school sports, sat on the Polk County Fair Board, and worked with his local church. With the Fertile Fire Department as a volunteer, he has held the positions of assistant chief and training officer and is the acting medical officer currently.

Reese has been a member of the Polk County Fair Board since 1994 and was involved in the building of the new barn, which took four years to plan and construct. He works primarily in the grandstand area organizing any events held there, such as the demolition derby and Baja racing.

Paul also serves on the building and funding committee of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Fertile. That committee focused on the construction of a new church building in 2019, which was a 10-year project. He’s also served on the parish council.

Being a veteran has led him to be a member of the American Legion Post 238 in Fertile since 1993 where he helped build a veteran’s memorial in town. Paul also is very involved with local sports, especially wrestling, where he assists with any injuries.

Reese currently resides outside Fertile with his wife, Pamela, in a home they built in 2020. They have been married since 1986 and have four children together, Lee, Luke, Linsey, and Paul. He enjoys spending time with his nine grandchildren.

## EDIBLES

### From Page 1

jurisdictions, including cities within the county. Like alcohol and tobacco sales, the regulations typically would revolve around time, place, manner, and possibly licensing of such sales, assuming the Minnesota legislature doesn’t pass legislation

preempting local regulation.

The moratorium can be in effect for either up to 12 months from its approval date or until the County Board repeals the ordinance, whichever comes first. This ordinance only applies to the unincorporated areas of the county, so, most cities are excluded and can implement their own regulations over any cannabis products sold within city limits.

# Commissioner Candidates - District 1

## Marlow Jacobson

Marlow Jacobson grew up on a farm in Norman County, 7 miles east of Shelly, MN where he graduated from Halstad High School in 1982. After high school, he enrolled at Alexandria Technical and



Jacobson

Community College and graduated in 1984 with an associate degree in law enforcement.

Fresh out of college Marlow took his first job as a deputy

sheriff with Big Stone County in Ortonville, MN, working primarily in patrol, civil process, and serving papers. He later moved his way up to investigator specializing in child abuse and neglect, where he worked closely with Big Stone County Social Services.

While with Big Stone County Jacobson was on a committee with representatives from social services, and the assistant county attorney and victim advocate coordinating with each other on best practices for helping victims of abuse. He also collaborated with county commissioners and many departments within the county. Jacobson received numerous certifications and attended many drug investigation and child abuse/neglect courses while with the County Sheriff's Department.

Marlow also spent almost two years with the Big Stone County Highway Department running a motor grader, snowplow, and other equipment.

In 1994 his dad passed away, so he returned to Norman County to help his mother in Ada, MN. Jacobson joined the county sheriff's department as a Deputy Sheriff and Investigator. During his time with Norman County Marlow began a profession that would lead to a much different future for himself as he started working on his family farm.

A year after joining the Norman County Sheriff's Department Jacobson began working as a full-time farmer in Norman and Polk County, growing wheat, soybeans, corn, and sugar beets. While farming he continued to work part-time for the county highway department. Over the next few years, he worked a handful of part-time jobs while continuing to farm full-time. Marlow returned to law enforcement joining Clay County Corrections and hauling beets for TranSystems from 1998 to 2000.

Being a former law enforcement officer, Jacobson is a sustaining member of the Minnesota Sheriffs Association. He and his family belong to Maple Lake Lutheran Church.

Marlow currently resides on Maple Lake in Woodside township with his fiancée Michele (Miki) Miller and son, Jasper. Miki works as a dental assistant/hygienist at several Prairie Dental Center offices in Fertile, Ada, Mahanomen, and Twin Valley, MN. Jasper attends 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Fertile-Beltrami Elementary. Jacobson also has a 26-year-old stepson, Zach Holweger, who lives in Fargo and is a civil engineer.

## Kristie Jerde

Kristie Jerde spent her childhood in California's agriculture-rich Central Valley. Before making her way to Minnesota Jerde earned her associate degree in Archeology and a bachelor's degree



Jerde

in Forensic Anthropology with a minor in religious studies. While earning her degrees she worked for Bank America as

a teller, telephone banker, and briefly in wealth management.

After college, Kristie moved to Crookston to work in Student Affairs at the University of Minnesota-Crookston (UMC). She spent eight years at UMC and later worked at North Dakota State University for three years. While working at UMC, Jerde earned a master's degree in educational leadership and administration.

During her time in higher education, Kristie was heavily involved in two professional associations, the Association of College and University Housing Officials International (ACUHO-I) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). She served on regional and national finance, fundraising, and sponsorship boards.

Because of Jerde's involvement and record-breaking regional fundraising, NASPA hired her to work remotely for NASPA's national office in Washington, D.C. She was fortunate to have the flexibility to work remotely and travel for NASPA for five years.

The pandemic brought about a lot of change in how associations and other or-

ganizations provided events and conferences. During this time, Kristie became well-versed in many virtual event platforms, which led to her current job opportunity at an event tech company.

For the past year, she has worked for BigMarker, leading a team of talented professionals based in Europe and the U.S. working in client retention and expansion for hundreds of clients ranging from small nonprofits to large Fortune 500 companies.

When she isn't working Jerde is heavily involved with the Crookston community, she has served on the Crookston City Council since 2021. She's involved in a Crookston women's philanthropy group. Kristie also sits on Crookston's Park and Rec board, the Downtown Crookston Development Partnership (DCDP) board, the Polk County Planning and Zoning Board, and the Polk County Board of Adjustments as vice chair.

She credits her peers and mentors within the community for offering opportunities to become a better leader and grow, which would help be a positive agent of change within the communities of Polk County

Outside of her community involvement, and several boards she serves on, Jerde enjoys being a girl scout parent volunteer, hockey mom, Washington Elementary and Our Saviors schools' Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) member, a bison rancher in Fertile, MN, and visiting parks with her family.

Jerde has lived in Crookston for the past 17 years with her husband and Crookston native, Justin Jerde. They have been married for 12 years and have two wonderful kids together, Noora (6) and William James (4).

### County Board Meeting Times

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

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

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

**All meetings are open to the public**

#### County Commissioners

Dist. 1 — Vacant

Dist. 2 — Warren Standell, chair

Dist. 3 — Gary Willhite, v. chair

Dist. 4 — Joan Lee

Dist. 5 — Mark Holy

## Commissioner Candidates - District 1

# Michelle Cote

Michelle Cote was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. She later moved to Minnesota in 1982 where much of her family is originally from and has lived in Polk County for the past 40 years. Cote graduated from the University of North Dakota with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.



Cote

Her degree served her well in 34 years of service to Polk County before retiring in 2022. In Michelle's last 11 years

as the Director of Property Records, she was responsible for administering, planning, directing, and supervising the activities and operations of the Polk County Taxpayer Service Center which consisted of the following divisions: Assessment Services, Property Records, Recording, Vital Statistics, Licensing, and Elections. In addition, Cote was responsible for implementing County Board Directives and state laws pertaining to all the divisions.

Michelle represented the County in all matters related to the department with the public, the courts, and governmental agencies. Michelle implemented proper financial controls, relating to the collection of revenue and county funds, as well as set policies and goals for each division.

As Director Michelle was the appointed Auditor-Treasurer, Recorder, and Deputy Registrar. In addition, Cote was the Deputy Clerk to the County Board where she

documented the minutes of the County Board meetings and was a resource to the Commissioners.

Cote has served on the Minnesota Association of County Officers as an executive board member and was honored recently for ten years of service. She served as the president of the Minnesota County Recorder's Association in 2017.

From 2013 to 2022 Michelle was a member of the Board of Trustees for Riverview Health Association where she was a member of the executive board and finance committee. Currently, Cote is a member of the Fair Meadow Nursing Home Advisory Board.

She also has been a member of the Polk County Fair Board as the Vendor Manager for the past 20 years. Her time on the Fair Board has been a labor of love as she's been able to utilize her management and people skills but, in a context, different from her career.

Michelle is currently acclimating herself to retirement, but that hasn't stopped her from staying busy. She and her son, Jordan, are partners in a rental housing business where they focus on small communities throughout Polk County. Cote is also a court-appointed guardian/conservator.

She and her husband have been married for nearly 40 years and live outside of Mentor, MN, on his family's century farm. They have two children; Cote's daughter Jessica Wang and her husband, Stanton, live in Fertile, MN, and her son, Jordan, and his wife, Angela, live in Woodside Township, MN. Michelle and Ricky have 3 grandchildren, Keyton, Kade, and Koldyn.

## ELECTION From Page 1

Because there were more than two candidates there will be two elections held, a special primary election and a special general election. The primary special election will be held on May 9<sup>th</sup>, which will determine the final two candidates that will run against each other in the special general election on August 8<sup>th</sup>.

Voting will take place either in-person, absentee, or via mail-in ballot. Polling places will be in Crookston - Ward 1 & 5, Fertile, Woodside Township, and Garfield Township. Only residents of those precincts can vote at their designated polling place. To find your polling place you can visit <https://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

Anyone outside of those five

precincts will have to vote either via an absentee or mail-in ballot. Mail-in ballots will automatically be mailed out to county residents before each election date. An absentee ballot can be requested by anyone that may be out of state, some examples could be they're traveling, attending college, or on military deployment, during the time of the election. With either ballot, they need to be mailed back to the Taxpayer Service Center at the Polk County Government Center.

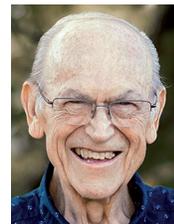
Once decided, the term of the open seat is only for one year as Jacobson had already served three years on his four-year term. Regular elections will be held in 2024 for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> District seats. Gary Willhite is currently the commissioner of District 3.

Any questions about the special elections or how to vote can be directed to the Taxpayer Service Center at 218-281-2554.

## Long-time Polk County Commissioner Jerry Jacobson passes away

There's been an empty chair at Polk County Board meetings for the last three months... the chair where Commissioner Gerald "Jerry" Jacobson would sit. Jacobson passed away on Jan. 15.

After slowing his business ventures, Jerry, a native and resident of the Fertile community, served as the Polk County commissioner from District 1 for 14 years.



Jacobson

His first job in the sale of graphic arts equipment led him to start several regional advertising shopper publications. The Valley Shopper was started in Crookston in 1969, followed by the Tri-County Press in Grand Forks, and the North Star Shopper in Thief River Falls. He also owned and operated a printing company that produced

custom printing and screen printing and he produced the Hartz Grocery circular for several years. Jerry even dabbled in farming, sold real estate, and, up until his death, made a weekly mail run for one of the shoppers.

While all of that was good, his time as a Polk County commissioner was special. He really liked being a commissioner and kept up the responsibilities of that job through all the medical problems that he fought right up until they finally overtook him.

A minister was recently heard to say that while the process of dying can be very hard for the person, the culmination of that act when instantly entering heaven is more than wonderful. A man of strong faith, Jerry is there now, but that doesn't change the fact that we miss him here with each look at the empty chair.

**Warren Strandell, Chair  
of Polk County Board  
of Commissioners**

# RRV Juvenile Center Resumes Operations

675 days have passed since the Red River Valley Juvenile Center (RRVJC) was forced to temporarily close due to water damage sustained during a somewhat freak rain event. As of March 20, 2023, the RRVJC has resumed operations providing much-needed services for at-risk adolescents in Northwest Minnesota.

During the temporary closure, local law enforcement and social service agencies were required to coordinate services and arrange for the transport of adolescents to locations in other counties which were sometimes hundreds of miles away. The placement of adolescents in need of services outside of their home counties created hardships for local agencies and the families of the children being served.

The closure of the Red River Valley Juvenile Center also resulted in significant expenditures when housing an adolescent in a secure detention environment became necessary. Tri-County Community Corrections has incurred \$370,286 in costs for the housing of adolescents in secure detention environments around the state during the temporary closure.

In an effort to limit problems that are often encountered with reopening buildings that have undergone extensive remodeling, especially when the remodeling results in workflow changes, a phased reopening plan was developed.

This phased reopening consisted of reoccupying the residential side of the facility beginning on March 20th, 2023. The residential side of the facility is utilized primarily for housing adolescents who have status offenses (meaning offenses that would not be criminal in nature if they were an adult), behavioral evaluations and programming, and Children in Need of Protective Services (CHIPS).

Many of the adolescents who are placed at the RRVJC have significant trauma histories which can manifest themselves in challenging behaviors. The phased reopening allowed the many new staff who were hired



Andy Larson /  
Tri-County Corrections

**Above:** Several cells can be seen with plenty of reading materials in the newly renovated Red River Valley Juvenile Center.

**Right:** A common area with several tables and a kitchen in the residential side of the Red River Valley Juvenile Center.



in preparation for the reopening to receive additional training and become more acclimated to the challenges that can be encountered when working with at-risk children.

The second phase of the reopening consisted of resuming operations on the secure detention side of the facility which occurred on Wednesday, April 12th. Secure detention placements are reserved exclusively for adolescents who are accused of behaviors that would be criminal in nature if committed by an adult. Despite their placement in a secure detention environment, adolescents are still provided with education and programming, and a concerted effort is made to limit the amount of time that a child remains in a secure

detention environment.

While still early in the reopening process, the upgrades which were part of the facility redesign have already proven beneficial. Clear line-of-sites, upgraded fixtures and furnishings, an additional room, and more clearly defined staff spaces and meeting rooms have created a more warm, welcoming, and therapeutic environment for the adolescents who enter our facility and are in need of our services.

During the first ten days of operation, the RRVJC received 7 placements on the non-secure side of the facility with some requested placements being turned away due to an inability

to meet the extensive needs of the child. This need for services was not unexpected as several agencies from Northwest Minnesota expressed a belief that once the RRVJC resumed operations, it wouldn't take long to fill the beds.

Less than one month after the reopening of the residential side of the facility, a waitlist for placements is already being evaluated as all beds on the residential side of the RRVJC are currently occupied with additional placement requests coming in on an almost daily basis.

**Andy Larson, Executive Director of  
Tri-County Community Corrections**

# Continuing to serve the public during staff shortage

It is the mission of the Polk County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) to provide a safe and secure environment for our citizens while promoting mutual respect between the Sheriff's Office and the public we serve. The Polk County Sheriff's Office is responsible for patrolling over 1,962 square miles.

Our office works around the clock to protect lives and property. This requires the office to perform a wide variety of functions such as wellness checks, routine patrols, arrests, warrant services, court security, business checks, prison transports, search and rescue, investigations, narcotics cases, and more.

I would like the public to know that while PCSO is committed to faithfully undertaking these duties, this office is having to do more with less staff due to retirements and personnel moving on to other positions outside the agency.

Currently, there are numerous open peace officer vacancies throughout the state of Minnesota and nationwide. The field has become very competitive with many agencies recruiting a small number of eligible applicants. Both sworn officers and telecommunications specialists (911 operators) remain in high



**JIM TADMAN**  
*Sheriff's Notes*

demand. The law enforcement community needs to find ways to attract new employees to fill the demand.

The Tri-County Corrections Center (TCCC) and Justice Center keep the PCSO busy with transport and court security details. We have seven deputies and one sergeant assigned to the Justice Center. Last year, our transport division logged 80,217 miles and 1,828 transport hours. The PCSO also investigates any incidents or crimes within the area Tri-County encompasses.

The Polk County Sheriff's Office has sixteen patrol deputy positions and four sergeant positions. We responded to 9,934 calls for service in 2022. The PCSO participates with our state and county partners on safety initiatives such as Towards Zero Death (TZD), and speed and distracting driving campaigns throughout the year. Our goal is to make our roads safe for all drivers. The PCSO

had 2,295 traffic stops in 2022.

The Polk County Sheriff's Office has eleven telecommunicator positions in our dispatch center. Currently, we have four open positions. The dispatch center answers 911 calls for police, fire, and medical emergencies in Polk County. PCSO dispatch logged 32,787 non-emergency phone calls and 8,600 emergency 911 calls in 2022.

PCSO has three investigative positions and an investigative sergeant. One deputy is assigned to the Pine to Prairie Violent Crimes Task Force. PCSO has entered into an agreement with Minnesota's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) to work together to investigate and prosecute crimes committed against children, criminal exploitation that is committed or facilitated through the use of computers, and other egregious crimes in our community.

The Polk County Sheriff's Office is also working with Alluma, Riverview Hospital, Polk County Social Services, Tri-County Corrections, and our local police departments to have a mental health crisis response team to address needs throughout our county. We strive for a quicker response to citizens in need. It is becom-

ing common to respond to a citizen having a mental health crisis. This is not a crime, it is a medical issue, and it does raise a huge concern for everyone when interacting with these people in a mental health crisis. Recently Deputies have placed iPads in their vehicles so they are able to connect a person in crisis with a mental health worker from their patrol vehicle or at the residence. Time is of the essence when helping those in need.

2022 was a good year. I am proud of this office. The deputies, the telecommunicators, and our records and administrative staff. I have said many times, this is not Jim Tadman's Sheriff's Office. I just have the honor of leading it. It takes a strong team of professionals dedicated to providing a service to Polk County, to keep our community safe. We could not do this without the public. Without your help, calling to report crimes and suspicious activity, many crimes would likely go unsolved. Thank you.

Please remember if you see something say something. We are one call away.

Thank you for your support,

**Jim Tadman is the Sheriff of Polk County**

## CHUCK From Page 1

Second, we are keeping an eye on snowmelt for flooding issues. It is hard to believe there will not be some issue somewhere but the one thing I have learned since coming to Polk County is how ready everyone is for this seasonal occurrence. We will hope for the best yet remain prepared for the worst.

Third, you may notice some changes to this newsletter. Commissioner Strandell has done the heavy lifting putting this biannual newspaper together for years now, but we know this will have to transition. This past year Tim Albrecht was hired to step in and pick this up working with

Warren for a seamless transition. It is amazing to me just how popular this newsletter is, not only with Polk County residents but with commissioners from other counties near and far. Tim will do a great job picking it up, and Warren will continue to contribute.

Fourth, Tim also brings many skills to the County organization and is looking closely at our website for improvements to make it more interactive with you, our residents. The Board agreed that one of the lessons of the pandemic was more can be done to serve constituents through the internet and our website than before. Keep an eye on this, you may find ways to do your County business easier in the coming months. In addition, Tim is also managing County Board room improve-

ments to improve sound and to allow live streaming of meetings. The Board will work on policies and practices this spring with the hope of live streaming yet this year.

Fifth, the County's largest department is Social Services. As complicated and widespread as the functions of this department are, I commend them for their ability to adjust to changing needs in our communities and to directives coming from the state. You will hear more about "family resource centers" in the coming months as counties around the state develop more accessible and informative points of contact with residents. Using American Rescue Plan funds for a new position, we have already hired an excellent staff member to coordinate the development of "FRCs" in

Polk County communities. This is a transformative change of business and one that should improve service delivery and save costs.

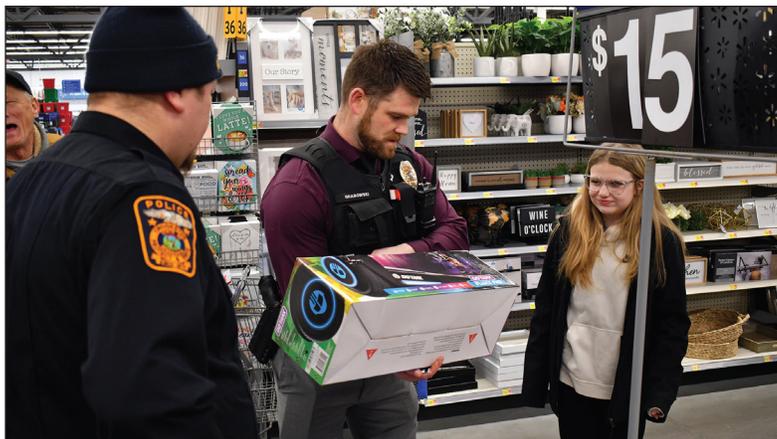
Finally, efforts continue to make needed improvements to the County's solid waste management systems. While Polk County owns and operates our transfer stations, waste-to-energy facility, recycling, and landfill, we work as a regional facility and operation with several surrounding counties. State bonding funds are being sought for robotic improvements in Fosston and prodigious planning and permitting efforts for expanding the landfill are key issues facing us right now. Other counties may also have interest in joining our group as waste processing continues to be complex and expensive.

# BETTER THAN SANTA CLAUS

Smiles could be seen across Walmart in Crookston, MN, last Christmas. Crookston area first responders took part in the annual Shop With a Hero event in December. The event is a way for first responders to provide local children and their families with a little extra cheer during the holiday season.

Officers from the Polk County Sheriff's Office were joined by the Crookston Police Department, City of Crookston Fire Department, Crookston National Guard Armory, and Crookston Area Ambulance. First responders took 21 children from across the county shopping at Walmart.

Each child was given a gift card and was escorted around the store by a first responder as their personal shopping buddy. Nerf guns, hoverboards, toy trucks, and more were flying off the shelves.



**Tim Albrecht / Polk County**  
**Above:** Polk County Sheriff's Office Deputy Cox pushes a shopper around with several toys already loaded up in his shopping cart.

**Left:** Crookston Police Department's Sergeant Grabowski grabs a hoverboard for his shopper during Shop With a Hero at Walmart in Crookston.

**Below:** First responders from the Polk County Sheriff's Office, Crookston Police Department, City of Crookston Fire Department, Crookston National Guard Armory, and Crookston Area Ambulance pose for a group photo with area children before venturing into Walmart to shop during the holiday season.



## Two county bridges need replacement

Polk County has two bridges over the Red River of the North that need replacement. Bridge 5767 (Nielsville Bridge) has been closed since 2015. Bridge 7097 (Climax Bridge) is currently restricted to 78,000 lbs.

The Climax Bridge (7097) is scheduled to be replaced in 2023-24 and is partially funded with federal funding on both the Minnesota and North Dakota sides of the river. The remainder of the funding for Polk County's portion of the project will hopefully come from bonding funds approved by the Minnesota State Legislature or by either County State Aid Highway Construction Funds or Polk County's Local Option Sales Tax dollars.

The Climax Bridge (7097) will remain open during construction. The new bridge is to be constructed on a new alignment. In Traill County, the roadway will be raised, and a culvert installed to help prevent the road from being overtopped during normal flooding.

The Nielsville Bridge (5767) will remain closed until funding can be secured to replace it. In the past, Polk and Traill counties have submitted yearly applications to the U.S. Department of Transportation for a Rebuild-



Rich Sanders / Polk County Engineer

Bridge 5767 in Climax, MN. The bridge is scheduled to be replaced in 2023-24.

ing American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant.

The project received high marks but was never selected for funding. With the new Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) transportation bill that Congress has approved, another type of grant was created called the Bridge Improvement Program (BIP). This is strictly for bridges that need to be replaced.

Polk County, as the lead agency, submitted a grant application to replace not only the Nielsville Bridge but also the bridges at Hendrum between Norman County and Traill County in

North Dakota and at Georgetown between Clay County and Cass County in North Dakota.

These three fracture-critical bridges over the Red River of the North need replacement.

Because this grant application considers bridge bundling, which the U.S. Department of Transportation favors and has funded in the past, Polk County is hopeful that its application will be selected for funding. The County is asking for \$23.4 million in federal funding (80%) with the remaining 20% coming from the five counties.

Rich Sanders,  
Polk County Engineer

## Polk and GF Counties to share in funding consultant on inter-city bridge crossing

The City of East Grand Forks has been the lead governmental body (in consultation with the City of Grand Forks) in the solicitation of proposals to hire a consultant to provide information on what needs to be provided in seeking federal grant funding for an inter-city bridge.

The initial effort to have a consultant "map the funding path" for just an inter-city bridge has been expanded to also include a bridge at the Merrifield crossing. As a result, Polk and Grand Forks

counties will share in the funding for the consultant.

The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Technical Advisory Committee, of which Polk County Engineer Rich Sanders is a member, has been involved in all discussions. The MPO Executive Policy Board, of which Commissioner Warren Strandell is a member (chair), is also involved.

The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce is involved, as well. They've promoted a two-bridge plan in

which a bridge at Merrifield would be constructed first with an inter-city bridge to follow.

A factor in bridge discussions is that the City of Grand Forks has two other significant projects rated ahead of an inter-city bridge. Those are an I-29 interchange at 47th Avenue and an underpass at the BNSF Railway crossing at the intersection of 42nd St. and DeMers Avenue. An inter-city bridge is third on its priority list.

Warren Strandell, Chair  
of Polk County Board  
of Commissioners

## Nielsville Bridge for sale for \$1

So, the joke goes, if you believe that I have a bridge to sell you..... Well, we do.

Polk County is currently in the process of selling the Nielsville Bridge (Bridge 5767). This bridge is located on CSAH 1 over the Red River of the North between Nielsville, MN, and Cummings, ND.

You ask, why are you selling a bridge? Well, the simple answer is that the State Historic Preservation Office is making us. It is part of the Historic Bridge Preservation Act.

Bridge 5767 isn't considered historic in Minnesota, but it is in North Dakota because of who designed it and when it was constructed. So, Polk County, as the lead agency in the replacement of the bridge, had to put together a marketing plan and have it approved by the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the State Historic Preservation Office of both MN and ND. We then advertised throughout the nation in different publications to see if there was someone interested in purchasing the bridge. The deadline is April 30, 2023, for anyone interested in purchasing it. The one major criterion for purchasing it is, you must reconstruct it in a place with public use. And you have to pay to move it yourself. The county's contractor will help load it, but after that, it is your baby.

So, if you would like to purchase a bridge with some historic significance, call the Public Works office and talk to either Darin (Ext. 8254) or myself (Ext 8253) and we can talk about the \$1 purchase price.

Rich Sanders,  
Polk County Engineer

## Key Retirements at the Polk Resource Recovery Facility

The retirement of any employee brings a mix of joy and sadness for both the employee and their co-workers. While retirement is a goal most look forward to someday, it also brings the loss of a friend at work, the departure of their experience and knowledge, and



**Hanson**

the unknown of how their replacement will fill the void. This is especially true of those employees who have worked the majority of their career

for the County, or within a single department within the County. The Polk County Resource Recovery Facility (RRF) began operations in 1988 and now has some employees who began their careers in those early years coming up on their retirements.

This turnover in long-term employees – those who have been at the RRF for over 25 years - began last summer with the retirement of Landfill Supervisor Jay Rhone. Jay had worked 34 years for the County as the RRF Maintenance Supervisor before transferring to the role of Landfill Supervisor. Jay was one of a few employees who had been with the RRF since those early years.

A few more retirements of employees with more than 25 years of service at the RRF will occur in 2023. Bruce Hanson and Ron Larson – both at the RRF - have recently announced their retirements in the coming months. While we celebrate

their retirements which they have worked hard to earn, we do so realizing their shoes will be difficult to fill. The RRF has several good, qualified people who can and will ultimately fill those positions, however, the loss of their knowledge and experience in dealing with situations when things are not going well will not easily be replaced.

Bruce Hanson has been with the RRF for almost 27 years. Bruce started his career as a Loader Operator in 1996, where his primary job was to load waste and monitor the operations of the waste combustor units. The Loader Operator reports to and works with, the Waste Combustor/Boiler Operator on all evening, overnight, and weekend shifts to ensure regular, compliant operations and perform routine monitoring and cleaning functions. Bruce impressed his supervisors with his knowledge, skill, and dedication.

When a Waste Combustor/Boiler Operator position opened in 2005, Bruce was the obvious choice to fill it. Bruce continues to hold that position, and he has proved his worth to the RRF department each day since that promotion. Bruce is a true professional, who has done anything and everything asked of him over the years. He has demonstrated a solid work ethic and commitment to the facility and served as a mentor to other Loader Operators and Boiler Operators to help them to build their knowledge and advance in their careers. Bruce has recently announced his planned retirement in June 2023. While he will be missed at the RRF, we

are thankful for his contributions to the RRF over the years and are hopeful for him to enjoy his well-deserved retirement.

Ron Larson has been with the RRF for just short of 35 years, since 1988 – the first year of operations. Like Bruce, Ron started his career at the RRF



**Larson**

as a Loader Operator. He served in that role until 1992 when he moved to the Waste Combustor/Boiler Operator position where he was responsible

for operating the waste combustors and boilers.

In 1999 Ron moved to the Maintenance department where his primary job duties were to maintain and conduct repairs of all equipment used at the facility, including not only the waste combustors and boilers but also the water treatment system, material recovery processing equipment, steam system and emission control equipment. Having extensive experience in all aspects of the RRF, he was elevated to the Chief Boiler Operator position (later referred to as the Assistant Manager position) when it opened in 2005.

When long-time Facility Manager Bill Wilson retired in 2010, and the County Board merged the RRF, Landfill, and Environmental Services departments, Ron was the obvious choice to advance to the Facility Operations Manager position. Ron's unique experience gave him a universal knowledge of

all aspects of facility operations. This experience and knowledge, combined with his vision and leadership, helped to shape the Polk RRF into becoming the primary component in one of the most innovative and comprehensive waste management systems in the U.S. It's safe to state that many of those initiatives would not have occurred without Ron's direct involvement and contributions. Today, many facilities like Polk are now trying to replicate or emulate those changes made at the Polk RRF which occurred under Ron's direction. Polk, and the Counties of Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahanomen, and Norman, will continue to benefit for many years to come because of Ron's leadership and vision.

The spring of 2023 will mark the end of an era at the Polk County Resource Recovery Facility (RRF) in Fosston, MN. The retirement of these two (2) long-term employees who have worked for over 25 years will represent a significant loss for the RRF. The retirement of other employees whose contributions are likewise significant, but years of service somewhat less, will also affect the RRF. However, these retirements also present new opportunities for others to advance and make their contributions in the future. We want to recognize and thank both Ron Larson and Bruce Hanson for their years of dedicated service to Polk County and the RRF, congratulate them on their pending retirements, and wish them well in their future endeavors.

**Jon Steiner, Environmental Services Administrator**

## ATP projects in Crookston and Fosston get federal funding

The Northwest Regional Development Commission is slated to receive federal funding for Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) alternative projects that are to be constructed in 2027.

The projects in Crookston, MN, Fosston, MN, Marshall County, MN, and Thief River Falls, MN, will receive 80 percent federal funding for trail alignment and extension projects. Local units of govern-

ment provide 20 percent of the project cost and pay for the cost of engineering.

Crookston's two applications partner between the city and school district for safe routes to the high school and elementary school, while also connecting other points of interest. The trail work is to connect the northeast portion of town with existing sidewalks.

The Fosston project will con-

nect a new trail system on the east side of town with the trails around the fitness complex.

The Thief River Falls project is to connect the east area of the residential portion of the city to Digi-Key and the existing trails that travel on Greenwood.

The Marshall County project improves the trail in the Marshall County Park near Florian.

A combination of the NWRDC organization with

District 2 of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the ATP determines funding for projects based on applications that it receives for projects to be delivered in communities in the seven-county NWRDC region. Funding will cover \$1.1 million in work for four projects.

**Warren Strandell, Chair of Polk County Board of Commissioners**

# Youth Advisory Board formed under PCPH

In 2018, The Polk County Board of Commissioners approved the formation of a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) under Polk County Public Health (PCPH). During the December 20, 2022, Commissioners meeting, PCPH Director, Sarah Reese, recommended a list of students for appointment as a Youth Advisory Board Member for two years. She recommended they reappoint senior Kallie Hand and appoint Lilah Zavoral, Sarah Thoreson, Olivia Ystenes, Katelyn Vesledahl, Julia Buhler, Erin Bowman, and Kyran Moen. All those recommended were appointed to the Youth Advisory Board.

The YAB provides a vehicle for young people in Polk County to become involved in governmental public health services, merging civic engagement and leadership development for high school students. By engaging youth in our agency's policies, practices, and

procedures, we bring new energy, information, and knowledge into our mission-based work through youth-targeted, age and gender-sensitive interventions.

"Our Youth Advisory Board comes together and discusses Public Health matters, advises us on what's happening in their schools and communities, and works on Public Health initiatives that are important to them. It's so exciting to have most of our Polk County schools represented, and great to have the leadership of students to share their knowledge and experience to guide us in our work. It's very important that we hear from young people; it helps us do our work and engage in the community the best we can," said Kirsten Fagerlund, Lead Coordinator at Polk County Public Health.

For more information about the PCPH YAB contact Kirsten Fagerlund at 218-281-3385 or email [kirsten.fagerlund@co.polk.mn.us](mailto:kirsten.fagerlund@co.polk.mn.us)



**Sarah Reese / Polk County Public Health**

**Left to Right:** Commissioner Mark Holy, Lilah Zavoral (Senior - Sacred Heart), Olivia Ystenes (Junior - Fertile-Beltrami), Commissioner Joan Lee, Sarah Thoreson (Junior - Climax-Shelly), Julia Buhler (Sophomore - Crookston), Commissioner Gary Willhite, and Commissioner Warren Strandell.

**Not pictured:** Kallie Hand (Senior - Win-E-Mac), Erin Bowman (Junior - East Grand Forks), Kyran Moen (Senior - East Grand Forks), Katelyn Vesledahl (Senior - Fosston), and Commissioner Gerald "Jerry" Jacobson.

## MDA ag waste collection events scheduled across Polk County

The MN Department of Agriculture (MDA) has contracted with the 10 County Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) regional facility in Bagley, MN to run its Ag Waste Collection Events in northwest MN. Polk County is part of the HHW group and accepts HHW at the Transfer Station in Crookston and Recycling Yard in Fosston which is sent to Bagley under that agreement.

Agricultural (chemical) wastes can be delivered to any of these collection events regardless of the

county where the chemicals originated. (i.e., a Polk County farmer can take their ag waste to the TRF or Warren collection event if they cannot make it to the Crookston collection event) These collections are set up for agricultural wastes, so please do not deliver other HHWs (paint, stain, cleaners, solvents, etc.) to these special events. HHWs may be delivered to the Crookston or Fosston HHW sites during normal business hours all year long.

**Jon Steiner, Environmental Services Administrator**

### MDA AG WASTE COLLECTION EVENTS IN THE NW MN REGION

- ▶ July 6th  
Kittson County  
Nutrien Ag Solutions - Hallock  
9am - 1pm
- ▶ July 18th  
Polk County  
CHS Ag Services - Crookston  
9am - 1pm

- ▶ July 20th  
Pennington County  
CHS Ag Services - TRF  
9am - 1pm
- ▶ July 25th  
Marshall County  
CHS Ag Services - Warren  
9am - 1pm

## CONSTRUCTION SEASON REPORT

Well, it's the end of March and we still have lows below zero and snow up to our waist. Road Restrictions have arrived, so please keep your weight down on gravel and restricted paved roads. At some point, the temperatures will warm causing the roads to be at their weakest. We need them to last as long as we can.

One way to maintain our roadways is to apply bituminous overlays. They typically last 15 to 20 years.

The overlays scheduled are:

- CSAH 17 from Business 2 to TH 2 near East Grand Forks
  - CSAH 20 from CSAH 17 to CSAH 19
  - CSAH 60 from TH 2 to CSAH 17 North of Fisher
- Polk County started the reconstruction of CSAH 46 from TH 102 to TH 2 last fall and it will be completed this fall.

Hopefully, we end up with a normal summer with some normal rainfall.

These projects will be paid for with our CSAH Funds that come thru the Gas Tax, Tab Fees and Motor Vehicle Sales Tax, and some American Relief Funding.

Polk County will also have three culvert replacements in Hammond Twp. These projects will hopefully be completed by October 1st.

If you have any questions concerning this year's construction program, please give our office a call at 218-281-3952 and talk with either Darin Carlstrom at ext. 8254 or Richard Sanders at ext. 8253.

**Rich Sanders, Polk County Engineer**

# App helps public connect with law enforcement

## Residents can share anonymous tips via new P2PTip app

The Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force (P2P) is increasing its crime-fighting arsenal with a new app to help residents connect with law enforcement to provide information, view alerts, and submit anonymous tips from their smartphone.

Developed by tip411, the P2PTip app puts a powerful new crime-fighting tool into the hands of community members of all ages. The P2PTip app is available for download for free via the Google Play Store or iTunes App Store.

P2P is a violent crime enforcement team (VET) made up of agents from the counties of Polk,

### ABOUT TIP411

► tip411 is a digital toolset for law enforcement that features anonymous tip capabilities via apps, text messaging, and the web as well as group alerting and secure social media publishing tools. Used in over 2,000 communities, tip411 helps agencies engage community members of all ages by enabling anyone with a cell phone to send anonymous tips that can be responded to in real-time by authorized personnel inside an agency or organization. Learn more at [www.tip411.com](http://www.tip411.com) or by following @tip411CO on Twitter and Facebook.

Norman, Marshall, Roseau, and Lake of the Woods, the cities of East Grand Forks, Thief River Falls, and Crookston, the Border Patrol, and Homeland Security.

“Our agencies collaborate to ensure community members across our area are safe and free from crime,” said P2P Board President Mike Hedlund, who is the East Grand Forks Police chief. “We must work closely

with our residents, and I believe our new P2PTip app will help us do just that.”

The new P2PTip app enables the public to share an anonymous tip with police and lets officers respond back to create an anonymous two-way conversation.

“The tip411 system has been successful in communities across the U.S.,” said Terry Halsch,

president of tip411. “Agencies of all sizes have been helped tremendously by members of the public who have sent in anonymous tips with important information that often leads to arrests.”

The P2PTip app and tip411 anonymous text-a-tip system are 100% anonymous as the technology removes all identifying information before police see the tips and there is no way to identify the sender.

Those without a smartphone can share information with law enforcement by sending an anonymous text tip via their cell phone to police by texting the keyword P2PTIP and their message/tip to 847411 (tip411).

**Warren Strandell, Chair of Polk County Board of Commissioners**

# Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force makes 217 arrests in 2022

The Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force made 217 arrests in 2022. That's more than 4 arrests a week in the eight-county area of north-west Minnesota.

The Task Force is made up of law enforcement officers provided by the eight counties and three major cities in the service area.

The arrests resulted in the seizure of 1,925 DU (dosage units) of fentanyl, 957 grams of methamphetamine (meth), 221 grams of cocaine, 200 prescription pills, 19 pounds of marijuana, and 24 weapons.

The mission of the Task Force is to identify, disrupt, and dismantle local drug manufacturers and distributors, and to assist local law enforcement agencies in violent crime investigations. The Task Force works to identify trafficking sources both local and regional and to assist in the apprehension of violent offenders in the eight-county area. It also works with other agencies in the greater region.

Polk County and the cities of Crookston and East Grand Forks each provide one officer to the team, while the City of Thief River Falls and Pennington County cooperate to provide an investigator. Counties contributing full-time investigators to the team are Lake of the Woods, Marshall, Norman, and Roseau. While not committing a full-time member, Kittson and Red Lake counties assist as needed.

### SIGNIFICANT CASES IN 2022

► Received information about a drug dealer next to a school with a literal menu of types of drugs he would provide to prospective buyers. A search warrant ended his sales career.

► During a large-scale investigation into fentanyl overdoses, we identified another independent source that resulted in the seizure of 160 “M30” fentanyl pills from California.

► One of our TFOs noticed a familiar, convicted, drug dealer driving on a suspended license. The subsequent traffic stop led to a DWI and the arrest of three others for meth distribution after

a probation search yielded 213 grams of meth. Also recovered was stolen property from a person who had been arrested for murder but didn't know his house was burglarized.

► A double overdose investigation and subsequent search warrants consumed much of our time, although we have arrested 11 people throughout the course of the investigation with more coming.

► The U.S. Postal Inspections Services has been very beneficial. The overworked Postal Inspectors now have more help to investigate drugs coming through the mail. One instance resulted in a

controlled delivery of over 300 fentanyl pills and an arrest with a confession of over 1,500 pills in a month.

► With the BCA's assistance, we executed a search warrant for child pornography and seized electronics and steroids. Our analyst quickly processed the device to provide probable cause to hold the suspect instead of waiting for a lengthy analysis.

► While investigating a meth distribution group, we uncovered a human trafficking case that led to a swift arrest and a 14-count complaint for drugs and sex trafficking.

Polk County has two officers who manage drug dogs. Marshall and Norman counties and the cities of Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks each also have canine officers available to the Task Force.

The Task Force receives approximately \$250,000 in state funding annually. The money is split between the cities and counties to reimburse them for a portion of the salaries of the investigators that they provide to the team. A portion of the grant is also used for training and purchasing necessary equipment.

The Task Force is guided by a 14-member advisory board.

The board is made up of East Grand Forks Police Chief Mike Hedlund (president), Crookston Police Chief Darin Selzler (vice president), Polk County Sheriff Jim Tadman, Pennington County Sheriff Seth Vettleson, Thief River Falls Police Chief Marissa Adam, Crookston City Council member Clayton Briggs, East Grand Forks City Council member Mark Olstad, Polk County Commissioner Warren Strandell, Roseau County Sheriff Steve Gust, Assistant Roseau County Attorney Mike Grover, Norman County Sheriff Ben Fall, Lake of the Woods County Sheriff Gary Fish, Lake of the Woods County

Attorney James Austad, Marshall County Sheriff Jason Boman, and Marshall County Commissioner Jim Duckstad.

Advisory board (non-voting) members include Polk County Attorney Greg Widseth, Red Lake County Sheriff Mitch Bernstein, Ada Police Chief Steve Hager, Kittson County Sheriff Matt Vig, U.S. Border Patrol Supervisor Erik Gubbels, Homeland Security Investigations Supervisor Josh Goldberg, and fiscal agent/board secretary Kathy Carlson.

**Warren Strandell, Chair of Polk County Board of Commissioners**

# Finseth named transportation planner for NWRDC

Tim Finseth has been named the transportation planner for the seven-county Northwest Regional Development Commission based in Warren, MN. In that position, he succeeds longtime planning director Troy Schroeder, who left the agency in January for a position with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

A native of the McIntosh, MN, area and a 1986 graduate of Moorhead State University with a degree in political science, Finseth managed the Marshall County Soil & Water Conserva-



**Finseth**

tion District for 19 years. He won a special election in 1993 to complete the term of Wally Sparby after Sparby had accepted a presidential

appointment to a position in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In his time as the District 1-A state representative in the House, Finseth served on the Agriculture Committee (including four

years as its chair), and on the Transportation, Environment, and Environment Finance, Ways & Means, Housing, and several other committees. He chose not to run for re-election in 2002 to instead put family first and stay at home. Finseth purchased the Hardware Hank store in Warren in 2006 and operated it for 16 years.

In the Warren community, Finseth has served as council vice chair and as both, a deacon and trustee at Evangelical Covenant Church, has served on the Warren-Alvarado-Oslo Educa-

tion Foundation Board for nine years, and served on the Warren Hospital Board including time as chair when it established and did fundraising for the new hospital. Finseth and his wife, Ruth, who live on an acreage in Farley Township south of Warren, have two children, a son, Cameron, 26, who works at the North Star Nursing Home in Warren, and a daughter, Sarah, who graduated from Warren-Alvarado-Oslo High School in 2021.

**Andy Larson, Executive Director of Tri-County Community Corrections**

**Andy Larson, Executive Director of Tri-County Community Corrections**

## Several bonding projects are on the solid waste agenda

Polk County Resource Recovery Facility (RRF) has been pursuing grants to undertake a Phase III Project since 2021. Polk applied for a Capital Assistance Program (CAP) grant through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) which would be funded as part of a larger Minnesota Bonding Bill for 2022. Though Polk's CAP Project was included in the MPCA recommendation for funding, the Governor's Bonding request, and was in the House proposed Bonding Bill, no 2022 Bonding Bill was ultimately passed that year. It was hoped that the Phase III Project would be included in any 2023 Bonding Bill – though it is unknown if that will occur or not at this time.

### Main goal

The main goal of the Phase III Project would be to install artificial intelligence robotic sorters (Robots) into the Material Recover Facility (MRF) to fill sorting positions that have gone largely unfilled over the last several years. The shortage of sort line staff has resulted in the shutdown of advanced processing equipment which results in valuable recyclable material being lost in the waste stream, or intermixing recyclable streams which decreases the material value. The long-term impacts of not having adequate staff levels lead to increased overtime, over-burden of existing workers, decreased productivity, and results in more downtime doing clean-up, repair, and maintenance. Installing Robots

in key sorting areas would allow existing sorters to work in areas robots cannot and the training of staff to maintain the robots utilized. This would result in more operational time, less overtime, sorting equipment on-line, more material being processed, and more materials being recycled.

The other parts of the Phase III Project include equipment at the RRF to support Robotic Sorters or improve their effectiveness. A larger air compressor and minor retrofits will be needed to install and power the Robots. Changes to chutes and conveyor belts are also anticipated to be required for Robot operations. Installation of a Bag Opener which slices the bag and empties the contents will result in more recyclable material being captured. Another screen added to the fines line would capture the smaller completely flattened aluminum and plastic containers the MRF currently loses into the fines.

### Final goal

The last part of the Phase III Project would address changes at the Compost Facility. Specifically, moving the compost process from static windrows, which periodically get turned into Aerated Static Piles (ASP), will increase the composting speed and compost pad capacity. ASPs use technology to move air through perforated pipes inside the compost pile to ensure the correct mix of air and moisture is present to maintain optimum temperatures needed to achieve material breakdown. Only after critical composting has been met

will the materials be placed into windrows to complete the process of composting, maturing, and stabilizing. Other activities include changes to the compost water sump and pad surface for acceptance during adverse site conditions.

### Other Grant Projects and Initiatives

Polk is also one of nine (9) Counties that have proactively banded together to address the anticipated fall-out of the MPCA's initiative to revise Solid Waste Rules related to Construction and Demolition Debris Landfills (C&D LFs). MPCA has engaged in rulemaking efforts which, when completed and implemented, likely will threaten the continuation of small rural C&D LFs in Minnesota. These 9 Counties include Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Polk, and Red Lake. The 9 Counties have applied for, and received, an MPCA Recycling Grant to complete a study on how to create a cooperative regional system to ensure C&D services are available throughout the region after the C&D LFs are closed. That study should wrap up in late spring 2023.

Additional Grant opportunities arose at the end of 2022. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), using funding allocated by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), created the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grant. The SWIFR Grant is a competitive grant offered across all local U.S. governmental

units. The SWIFR Grant ensures funding of at least one project per EPA Region (EPA Region 5 consists of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin). The maximum SWIFR Grant award is \$4M. Polk applied on behalf of the 6 County Partnership (Counties using the RRF which include: Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahnomen, Norman, and Polk). The project applied for was the Phase III project. If a SWIFR for this project were to be awarded, it could act as the local match to any CAP Grant award or be used as a stand-alone funding source.

Polk also applied for a SWIFR as part of the 9 County Group, submitted by Hubbard County as the lead applicant, to secure funding to implement portions of the MPCA Recycling Grant Study. The study identifies "Spokes" which will replace small, unlined C&D LFs, and "Hubs" which will be C&D LFs that will meet the MPCA's new C&D rules. If the SWIFR Grant for the 9 County Group is awarded the full \$4M in funding, it is anticipated that it will be split evenly 10 ways – a \$400K share for each of the 9 Counties and 1 share for a new eastern "Hub". The western "Hub" would be the Polk County C&D LF near Gently, MN.

Both SWIFR Grants were applied for at the deadline of February 15, 2023. According to the EPA, SWIFRs will be awarded in the spring of 2023 and executed in the summer/fall of the same year.

**Jon Steiner, Environmental Services Administrator**

# Area veterans march on state capitol



Several Polk County veterans took part in Veterans Day on the Hill in St. Paul, Minn., on March 30, 2023. Hundreds of veterans participated in the rally and marched toward the Minnesota State Capitol to show their strength and support of legislation that affects veterans across the state.

The annual event is sponsored by Disabled Veterans of America of Minnesota, who held a free lunch for veterans

and supporters at the St. Paul Armory. Shortly before 1 p.m. the attendees marched toward the Capitol Building and held a rally inside the rotunda.

Some of the topics included passing a clean Veterans Omnibus Bill, suicide prevention, property tax relief to surviving spouses, fixing the post 9/11 service bonus to include all current resident veterans, and increasing the amount for the property tax value exclusion.



**Tim Albrecht / Polk County**  
**Above left:** Veterans from across Minnesota fill the rotunda of the Minnesota State Capitol on March 30, 2023. Several speakers talked to the crowd on different veterans related legislative topics.

**Above right:** To Minnesota Veterans talk during the free lunch held by Disabled Veterans of America of Minnesota before marching on the Capitol.

**Left:** Hundred of Minnesota Veterans march from the St. Paul Amory toward the Minnesota State Capitol.



**Sarah Reese / Polk County Public Health**

From left: James Tadman, Polk County Sheriff; Sarah Reese, Director - Polk County Public Health; Andrew Larson, Executive Director - Tri-County Community Corrections; Joan Lee, Polk County Commissioner; Molly Paulsrud, Supervisor - Polk County Social Services; Shannon Kronlund, Director of Outpatient Services - Alluma

## Polk County Reaching Rural team formed to take on substance abuse

The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) announced that a team of professionals representing the criminal justice system, public and behavioral health fields, social services, and county commissioners from Polk County was chosen to be part of a select group of fellows in a new rural leadership program. The Program is called Reaching Rural: Advancing Collaborative Solutions. Program fellows will learn how to adopt bold solutions to the persistent challenge of substance use in rural communities. They'll work closely with innovators who have established successful programs in other rural communities.

The participants were selected through a competitive process. "I am excited for the opportunity to work with other leaders both from within Polk County and throughout the country to evaluate the current response to substance abuse in our communities and think creatively about how to be even more impactful in our collective efforts," says Andrew Larson, Director of Tri-County Community Corrections.

The year-long program, which kicked off in December 2022, will have a strong focus on creating engagement across rural communities and sectors. Over the course of the year, participants will benefit from virtual and in-person learning opportunities which include coaching, skill-building workshops, and local and regional asset mapping. The program will demonstrate how diverse systems with different missions can engage with one another to serve justice-involved individuals with substance use or co-occurring disorders more effectively.

The Reaching Rural: Advancing Collaborative Solutions initiative is a collaborative project providing training to a class of over 65 fellows working to adopt bold solutions to the persistent challenge of substance use and misuse in 81 rural communities across 15 states. The fellows include elected county leaders, county and tribal judges, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, public defenders, public health and behavior health practitioners, emergency management professionals, reentry coordinators, and individuals working in community nonprofits.

The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the State Justice Institute (SJI), with support from the Institute for Intergovernmental Research co-sponsor the project. The National Association of Counties (NACo) is a key partner. To learn more, visit <https://rural.cossapresources.org/reachingrural>

The Polk County team is represented by:

- ▶ Andrew Larson, Executive Director – Tri-County Community Corrections
- ▶ Greg Widseth, Polk County Attorney
- ▶ James Tadman, Polk County Sheriff
- ▶ Joan Lee, Polk County Commissioner
- ▶ Molly Paulsrud, Supervisor – Polk County Social Services
- ▶ Sarah Reese, Director – Polk County Public Health
- ▶ Shannon Kronlund, Director of Outpatient Services – Alluma

**Andy Larson, Executive Director of Tri-County Community Corrections**

## Septic system fix-up grant program announced

Polk County Environmental Services is pleased to announce the availability of a cost-share grant program that is available to property owners in Polk County that have an existing non-compliant 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 an existing system, and proximity to priority surface waters. Income restrictions do apply. A major goal within the fix-up program aims to fix "imminent public health threats." Polk County uses HUD/Federal poverty low-income guidelines to group funding grant contributions.

Households must not exceed these income guidelines, must be the landowner's homestead, not a second dwelling or rental, and applicants will be required to pay any match requirement upfront if approved. No holding tank septic systems can be installed and SSTS for new construction of a dwelling does 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, please call Polk County Planning and Zoning at (218) 281-5700. Program applications can also be found on our website at [www.co.polk.mn.us](http://www.co.polk.mn.us) under the Environmental Services and Planning and Zoning Department page. The deadline to apply for the Septic System Fix-Up Grant Program is June 1, 2023. After this date, remaining funding will be available on a first come first serve basis.

**Jacob Snyder, Polk County Assistant Environmental Services Administrator**

## 2023 AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES TASK FORCE UPDATES

The Polk County Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Task Force made a recent purchase to help protect waterways in Polk County. The Polk County Commissioners authorized the Task Force to purchase a CD3 Wayside Solar boat cleaning station from a Minnesota-based company, CD3 Systems. CD3 systems products aim to give the public tools and equipment to combat AIS spread throughout the country via the Clean, Drain, Dry philosophy.

The Minnesota 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 the necessary steps to look over all watercraft equipment after spending time on lakes and rivers. Aquatic hitchhikers continue to spread all throughout Minnesota on boats and watercraft. The cleaning stations will help lake and river users have the proper tools to combat aquatic invasive species from hitching rides on watercraft.



Environmental Services Department CD3 boat cleaning station at east shore on Maple Lake.

The AIS task force knows how important our lakes and rivers are for people recreating in Polk County. They aim to keep our waterways clean and productive for future generations of lake and river users. We are proud to have a CD3 system in our toolbox to combat AIS spread in Polk County. In the 2023 boating season, the CD3 will make its home at the East Shore public launch area located on the northeast side of Maple Lake off County

Highway 10. This access provides sufficient space to use the unit without hindering people from using public access sites throughout Polk County. Even if you are not launching in Maple Lake, stop in to test out the new cleaning station, it's free to use! For more information visit [www.co.polk.mn.us](http://www.co.polk.mn.us) or follow the Polk County Environmental Services Facebook page.

**Jacob Snyder, Assistant Environmental Services Administrator**

# Winter Closure of CSAH 61 Roadway

County State Aid Highway 61 is a gravel roadway that runs from the East limits of Fisher, MN to TH 75 near Crookston, MN.

This year Polk County Highway did something different and closed CSAH 61 from 300<sup>th</sup> Ave SW to 295<sup>th</sup> Ave SW, and from 290<sup>th</sup> Ave SW to 1 1/2 miles East. I know there were some concerns about this stretch of roadway being closed. But hopefully, this will help explain why we tried it this winter.

Through these areas of CSAH 61, there are very low dips that fill in with snow whenever the wind blows from the North. This causes the Highway Department to spend thousands of dollars to clear the roadway by using a blower and dozers to keep the snow off and pushed away from the roadway.

By closing these stretches of CSAH 61 we needed to help Lowell Township plow 300<sup>th</sup> Ave SW and 290<sup>th</sup> Ave SW in order to allow for Emergency Vehicles if needed and for residents to be able to travel North to TH 2.

So we helped plow 2 miles of township road for not plowing 2 miles of CSAH 61 and not having to spend all the extra time snow blowing and contracting to have dozers push snow back away from the road.

We haven't been able to see if it is going to benefit the roadway when it comes to spring runoff and the Red Lake Rivers flood waters. As the river rises it overtops the roadway and the road is typically closed for about 2 weeks if not longer. Hopefully, if that happens this year, the snow over the roadway will help protect it from the flood waters. Hopefully savings us some time in not having to reshape it and place gravel on it when the waters recede.

Polk County will re-evaluate its decision this summer and decide what it will do for next winter's snow plowing season.

**Rich Sanders, Polk County Engineer**

# New yard waste fees at Transfer Station

Polk County is sending a notice to the general public and commercial contractors, there are new changes for hauling large volumes of yard waste (grass clippings, leaves, branches, and logs) to the Crookston Transfer Station Facility located at 320 Ingersoll Ave. Polk County can no longer subsidize large volumes of yard waste as they have the added expense of hauling it to the Polk County Landfill compost complex. Polk

County's hauling contract has faced inflation with increased labor/fuel costs.

Please see the rates below for pricing to haul all commercial yard waste loads and large branches/logs from residents which must be weighed prior to unloading in the yard waste drop-off area. After unloading you must reweigh to get the weight of the load that was dropped off. Effective immediately all users using the yard

waste area are to enter the facility through the south access off Ingersoll Ave and leave to the south. The facility has had numerous close calls and accidents in the yard waste drop-off area, so they ask patrons to honor this for the safety of our residents and staff. Any questions contact the Polk County Transfer Station at 218-281-5700.

**Jacob Snyder, Assistant Environmental Services Administrator**

### NEW FEES

#### RESIDENTIAL LOADS

Leaves/grass/Twigs/Branches/Plants	FREE
Tree Limbs greater than 4 inch diameter and/or > 4 feet in length	\$30/ton
Trunks/Logs/Stumps/Rootballs	\$40/ton

#### COMMERCIAL LOADS

Leaves/grass/Twigs/Branches/Plants	\$20/ton
Tree Limbs greater than 4 inch diameter and/or > 4 feet in length	\$30/ton
Trunks/Logs/Stumps/Rootballs	\$40/ton

\*\*Minimum charge of \$10, and all loads over 10 yards are to be sent to the Polk County Landfill.



# Make a connection. Help save a life.

**Suicide is preventable. Anyone can make a difference.**

- Half-day training in suicide alertness skills
- Learn four basic steps to create a life-saving connection
- Widely used by professionals and the general public

## safeTALK's impact in 2016



## safeTALK works

Studies show that participants gain confidence:

- Asking people about suicide directly
- Connecting them to life-saving resources
- Keeping them safe until those resources take over

## People making a difference with safeTALK



## Upcoming safeTALK training

**Date: Friday, May 5, 8:30- 12:30**

**Location: Garden Valley**

**206 Vance Ave S, Erskine, MN**

**To register online:**

**<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ag-focused-safetalk-training-tickets-611239803707>**

**Or email:**

**[monicamariem@yahoo.com](mailto:monicamariem@yahoo.com)**

Learn more about safeTALK and see the evidence at [www.livingworks.net/safeTALK](http://www.livingworks.net/safeTALK)

