

POLK COUNTY

Newsletter

INSIDE: Election Season is Right Around The Corner

See Page 3

Fall 2024



Tim Albrecht / Polk County

The completed roundabout at the intersection of Hwy 75 and County 21 a few miles north of Euclid, MN, is the in Polk County.

SAFETY FIRST

Polk County gets it's first roundabout

Polk County officially has their very first roundabout. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held Sept. 30 at the intersection of Hwy 75 and County 21, north of Euclid, MN, to christen the finished project.

Polk County Highway Department officials, members of the Board of Commissioners, MNDOT Officials, State Patrol, and a couple state legislators were in attendance for the ribbon cutting where Polk County Engineer Rich Sanders spoke about the project.

Sanders emphasized safety and removing the possibilities of having a fatal or serious injury crash as the driver behind the project, referencing years

of research into the increase of traffic crashes and their severity at the intersection.

Years of research

Part of that research included a theory from retired MNDOT Northwest District Staid Aid Engineer Lou Tasa.

“We found the combination of the skew angle TH 75 intersects with County 21 and the positioning of a vehicle’s A-pillar (the structural upright in between the windshield and passenger window) made it very difficult for County 21 traffic to see oncoming TH 75 vehicles,” said Tasa.

SAFETY Page 2

SAFETY IMPROVEMENT

A roundabout will increase motorist safety as this intersection consistently experiences higher crash rates. When complete the project will:

- ▶ Re-align the intersection so drivers are no longer approaching at an angle. This will increase the field of vision for approaching motorists.
- ▶ Slowdown traffic speeds for all vehicles driving through the intersection. If a car were to crash, all of the vehicles involved would be traveling at significantly lower speeds which decreases the severity of the crash.
- ▶ Increase efficiency for traffic on County 21. It will be easier, and safer, for these vehicles to cross or get onto Hwy 75.
- ▶ Install intersection lighting



CHUCK WHITING
Polk County Administrator

2025 is coming

The end of this year is in sight, but certainly not the work and events yet to take place. Some years are just like that, very busy and they never end.

Around the time you are reading this we will have had an election for everything from our local levels to our national level. So, as I write this, there is some wait and see what direction we are all going in, but we plan for what we can control for 2025.

This means the next County budget. Two things remain constant as the County Board approaches the 2025 budget.

One, the goal is to keep County government affordable and responsive to our taxpayers. This means keeping the levy reasonable while supporting needed County services to our residents.

In September the Board determined a preliminary levy increase over this year of no more than 5%. The preliminary levy is the maximum levy the Board can approve prior to the final budget and levy decisions in December.

2025 Page 2

SAFETY

From Page 1

In 2011 MNDOT and Polk County installed a Rural Intersection Conflict Warning System to help prevent crashes, but they noticed by 2021 it was losing its effectiveness. “We knew we had to do something else,” said Sanders. “The safest solution for this location was a roundabout.”

The partnership project led by Polk County was years in the making as the Minnesota Department of Transportation along with several others helped to figure out how to make the intersection safer for motorists.

One of those motorists was on hand for the ribbon cutting ceremony. Stephen, MN, native Holly Kostrzewski was involved in a serious injury crash in 1999 at the intersection of the new roundabout.

The crash left her with a traumatic brain injury, and she needed to learn how to walk and feed herself again. Holly provided a harrowing speech shortly before the ribbon cutting and conveyed how thankful she was to those involved in making the project happen.

“I’m so grateful that no one else’s family will have to go through what mine did,” she said. “We all know each other up here so when someone is hurting everyone is hurting.”



ABOVE: (Second from left) MNDOT Transportation District Engineer J.T. Anderson, Polk County Public Works Director Rich Sanders, retired MNDOT Engineer Lou Tasa, and Holly Kostrzewski cut a ribbon to open the roundabout.



LEFT: Rich Sanders listens on as Holly Kostrzewski details her accident in 1999 and the gratitude she has for all the people involved with getting the roundabout project completed.

Tim Albrecht / Polk County

2025

From Page 1

Taxpayers will receive a notice with all their property taxing jurisdictions preliminary levy and their respective budget public hearing time, date, and location. For Polk County, that date is December 3 at 6 pm in the County Board Room at the Government Center in Crookston. You are welcome to attend and ask questions and

voice concerns to the Board of Commissioners.

With much discussion about the preliminary, the general final levy goal is around 3%. I will be working with staff during the coming weeks to assure this is the result and what will be presented at the December 3 public hearing. The final budget approvals will be December 17.

The second constant is maintaining quality services to you, and that starts with the capabilities of our employees.

We are currently in negotiations with each labor group for another three-year contract. Health insurance and wages are the main issues as we continue to make sure we’re able to attract and retain our quality people.

Polk County is a large employer as you may know, but it is the diversity of our services and needed expertise that can sometimes feel like several organizations are at work. Roads, law enforcement, solid waste, records, health,

and human services all draw from a variety of expertise and a competitive pool of candidates.

Everyone has seen the labor market conditions change over the past few years, and Polk County is no different. We seek good people and want to retain them.

We are fortunate to have a good workforce, but good people have good options, so we try to stay ahead of the curve. Without them, providing needed services is very difficult.

Election season right around the corner

It's election season and that means the general election is right around the corner. The polls will open on November 5. Residents will vote in the presidential election along with city, township, county, school district, and soil & watershed officer elections.

What to Know

You must be 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, and a resident of Minnesota for at least 20 days before the election in order to vote.

Voting will take place either in-person, absentee, or via mail-in ballot. Polling places will be located in several places across the county. Only residents of those precincts can vote at their designated polling place. To find your polling place you can visit <https://poll-finder.sos.state.mn.us/>

Voters do have to be registered before submitting a ballot. Registration can be done online at mnvotes.gov, by mail, or in person. Minnesota offers same-day registration at the polls

on Election Day. If registering in-person you must provide proof of identity and residence.

Absentee Voting

Minnesota allows no-excuse absentee voting, which means voters can submit their ballot via mail or drop-off up to 46 days before the election without needing to provide a reason.

Any eligible voter can request an absentee ballot, whether they are traveling, attending college, on military

deployment, or unable to vote in person for any other reason.

Ballots should be mailed to the Taxpayer Service Center at the Polk County Government Center or put in the secure ballot drop box on the east side of the Government Center. All absentee or mail-in ballots need to be received by 8 p.m. on Nov. 5.

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

City/Township	Polling Place	Address	Polling Hours
Brandsvold	Brandsvold Town Hall	34315 370th St SE, Fosston, MN 56542	10 am – 8 pm
Bygland	Bygland Town Hall	40966 235 th SW, Fisher, MN 56723	10 am – 8 pm
Columbia	Lengby Community Hall	104 Main Ave. N, Lengby, MN 56651	7 am – 8 pm
Crookston Ward 1	St. Paul's Lutheran Church	1214 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716	7 am – 8 pm
Crookston Ward 2	St. Paul's Lutheran Church	1214 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716	7 am – 8 pm
Crookston Ward 3	First Presbyterian Church	510 Broadway St. N, Crookston, MN 56716	7 am – 8 pm
Crookston Ward 4	First Presbyterian Church	510 Broadway St. N, Crookston, MN 56716	7 am – 8 pm
Crookston Ward 5	First Presbyterian Church	510 Broadway St. N, Crookston, MN 56716	7 am – 8 pm
Crookston Ward 6	St. Paul's Lutheran Church	1214 University Ave., Crookston, MN 56716	7 am – 8 pm
EGF Ward 1	EGF Senior Center	538 Rhinehart Dr. SE, East Grand Forks, MN 56721	7 am – 8 pm
EGF Ward 1	EGF City Hall	600 DeMers Ave. NW, East Grand Forks, MN 56721	7 am – 8 pm
EGF Ward 3	EGF Senior High School	1420 4 th Ave. NW, East Grand Forks, MN 56721	7 am – 8 pm
EGF Ward 4	EGF Senior High School	1420 4 th Ave. NW, East Grand Forks, MN 56721	7 am – 8 pm
EGF Ward 5	EGF Senior High School	1420 4 th Ave. NW, East Grand Forks, MN 56721	7 am – 8 pm
Fertile	Fertile Community Center	101 Mill St. S, Fertile, MN 56540	7 am – 8 pm
Fosston	Embassy Community Center	603 3 rd St. NE, Fosston, MN 56542	7 am – 8 pm
Garfield	Garfield Town Hall	502 Elm St. SW, Fertile, MN 56542	7 am – 8 pm
Hill River	Hill River Town Hall	32526 345 th Ave. SE, Fosston, MN 56542	10 am – 8 pm
Huntsville	Mallory Town Hall	20047 400 th Ave. SW, East Grand Forks, MN 56721	7 am – 8 pm
King	McIntosh Community Center	115 Broadway NW, McIntosh, MN 56556	7 am – 8 pm
Lengby	Lengby Community Hall	104 Main Ave. N, Lengby, MN 56651	7 am – 8 pm
McIntosh	McIntosh Community Center	115 Broadway NW, McIntosh, MN 56556	7 am – 8 pm
Queen	Queen Town Hall	36481 400 th Ave SE, Fosston, MN 56542	10 am – 8 pm
Sletten	Sletten Town Hall	28488 430 th St. SE, Fosston, MN 56542	10 am – 8 pm
Sullivan	Sullivan Town Hall	11542 430 th Ave SW, East Grand Forks, MN 56721	10 am – 8 pm
Woodside	Woodside Town Hall	36817 160 th Ave. SE, Erskine, MN 56535	7 am – 8 pm

County Board Meeting Times

8:00 a.m. on 1st Tues. of month
 9:30 a.m. on the 3rd Tues.
 8:00 a.m. on the 4th Tues.

County Commissioners

All meetings are open to the public. Visit www.co.polk.mn.us/calendar to confirm dates & times.

Dist. 1 — Paul Reese
 Dist. 2 — Warren Standell
 Dist. 3 — Gary Willhite, chair
 Dist. 4 — Joan Lee
 Dist. 5 — Mark Holy, v. chair



Make a Difference
Change a Life
Become a Foster Parent!
 Polk County Social Services
1-877-281-3127

Getting to know your new officers

I am proud to introduce our new Deputies Chase Olderbak, Titan Engen, and Alyssa Lang, and Community Service Officer Justin Schreier.

The new deputies are currently in our 16-week Patrol Training Program



JIM TADMÁN
Sheriff's Notes

which consists of four phases. Phase 1 is patrol activities where they learn the transport division duties and learn patrol duties including getting to know the county. Phase

2, non-emergency response, is where they start to cover some calls and work on traffic. Phase 3 is the investigations phase where they work with our investigators doing interviews, search warrants, and following up on case leads. Phase 4 is emergency response where they are taking all calls and focusing on knowing their resources and being able to work on their own.

CSO Justin Schreier is currently finishing up his mandated Skills training to obtain a MN Peace Officer License. CSO job duties are assisting with transport division duties, patrolling the lakes area, handling animal complaints, assisting with boat and water duties and snowmobile duties, assisting with vehicle maintenance, and any other duties assigned that can be handled by a non-licensed officer.

Have a wonderful fall and be safe!

Deputy Alyssa Lang



Lang

I grew up in a small town called Cokato, MN. I am the oldest of 4 kids, with 2 brothers and a sister. I went to college at UND where I graduated with bachel-

or's degrees in business management and criminal justice.

What inspired you to choose law enforcement as a career path?

I decided to choose law enforcement because my dad was in law enforcement. Growing up, one of the highlights of my day was hearing the funny stories and learning from him. As I got older, I realized there was nothing else that I could see myself doing. Being a cop was what I am truly passionate about and excited to learn from every day.

What are your hobbies?

In my free time, I love to go to the gym, UND hockey games, be at the lake, or hangout with friends.

Fun Fact

During the pandemic, I lived up in Alaska.

Favorite snack

It really depends on the day. Nerds gummy clusters are always a safe bet. I love extra cheddar goldfish to. Otherwise, a coffee or energy drink would be my go-to.

Deputy Chase Olderbak

I am from East Grand Forks, MN. My parents are Janie and Larry Olderbak, I am the



Olderbak

youngest in my family and have 2 older sisters, Paige and Brooke. I attended High School at East Grand Forks Senior High where I graduated in 2019. I

went to Bemidji State University where I received my bachelor's degree in criminal justice. I attended Northland Community and Technical College for my POST Skills course.

What inspired you to choose law enforcement as a career path?

I have wanted to be a cop as long as I can remember. Something about this line of work was always appealing to me. Now that

I have had the chance to work in this career, I have found that I have made the right decision!

What are your hobbies?

Football is my main hobby and my favorite sport. I played football in high school and college, and it is still a passion of mine.

Fun Fact

My favorite color is green.

Favorite Snack

My favorite snack is ice cream. It does not matter what flavor, if you put it front of me, I'll eat it.

Community Service Officer Justin Schreier

I was born and raised in Grand Forks, North Dakota with my mother Julie, father Marc, and



Schreier

my brother Anthony. I graduated from Red River High School in 2020. I then attended and graduated from University of North Dakota in the

spring of 2024 with a bachelor's in criminal justice and sociology. I am currently attending Northland Community and Technical College in Thief River Falls for my Minnesota Skills and I am looking to finish here in the spring so I can be licensed and become a full-time deputy.

What inspired you to choose law enforcement as a career path?

When I graduated high school, I was unsure what I truly wanted to do. I did some job shadowing in search of an idea of what to do for a career. When my cousin Amber Hettwer became an officer with Grand Forks Police Department, I decided I wanted to try a ride-along and see if that is a career I was interested in. After I attended my first ride-along, I decided this is a job that I am very interested in pursuing. I did about 15 ride-alongs with nine different departments and decided that I wanted to work for

a sheriff's office. Now, I work for a county that is right across the Red River of my hometown.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy deer hunting, and I am hoping to start bow hunting soon. I am also a part of a bowling league, and I have been bowling since I was in the 3rd Grade. I also enjoy playing and watching sports. I play lots of pickleball with friends and enjoy golfing in the summer. I am a huge New York Giants football fan, and I play lots of fantasy football with friends and family.

Fun Fact

I qualified for nationals 4 years in a row in high-school for bowling

Favorite snack

My favorite snack is Dot's Pretzels or any form of seasoned pretzels.

Deputy Titan Engen

I grew up in Gary, MN, and I have 2 older brothers and a younger sister. I went to high school at Norman County East in Twin Valley and then attended Northland Community and Technical College in Thief River Falls. I went there for 2



Engen

years and got an A.A.S. in Criminal Justice and completed their skills program.

What inspired you to choose law enforcement as a career path?

I chose law enforcement because I did not want to work a 9-5 and I wanted to make a difference in my community.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy hunting, fishing, trapping and almost any outdoor activity.

Fun Fact

I am double jointed.

Favorite snack

My favorite snack is beef jerky.

Willhite reflects on time with Polk County Board

Gary Willhite has been a mainstay on Crookston politics in a variety of aspects for over a decade and his resume is about to get a little longer. He began serving on the Polk County



Willhite

Board of Commissioners in 2017 and is approaching his third term. Serving previously in several elected positions with the City of Crookston, including mayor, along with seven years on the Board Willhite has plenty of experience and stays busy.

Gary currently serves on a handful of boards and committees, including the Public Safety Board for the Polk County Sheriff's Department, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Minnesota Extension 4-H Programs and Ag. Education, Polk, Norman, and Mahnommen Counties Public Health Board, County Parks Board, Ditch 60 Board, and many more.

Running unopposed Willhite reflected on his time on the board and what he wants to focus on in the future.

Helping Residents

Being a commissioner is the equivalent of being a resident's representative within the county. A commissioner's job is to be their voice and work toward the betterment of life for those in Polk County.

Willhite embraces the opportunity to speak with residents everywhere he goes, whether at the grocery store, in church, or even while dropping off recycling at the Transfer Station. "I get individuals that ask me questions or share concerns a lot," he says.

Recently an area farmer had concerns with the flow of water from his field, specifically Ditch 60, Gary says. "When I visited the area with him, it was

“I’ll continue to support safe transportation by keeping our seventy plus bridges and thousands of miles of roads in good condition.

— Gary Willhite, Chair and 3rd District Polk County Board Commissioner

obvious that we had an issue. I ensured the request moved forward, communicated with the department that would initiate the project, and followed up with the other Commissioners.”

Great Experiences

Serving on the committee also comes with many different experiences, some good and some bad. For Willhite one of those good experiences came while attending the opening of the new roundabout at the intersection Hwy 75 and County 21 north of Euclid, MN.

During the ribbon cutting of the roundabout Stephen, MN, native Holly Kostrzewski spoke about the accident she was in years prior and how she was grateful for all the work that was put in to make the intersection safer.

Between the amount of teamwork that went into getting the project completed and Holly's speech Willhite found it to be very inspirational. "That sight has caused so much pain and with the counties first roundabout it's much safer," he says.

Moving Forward

During his next term Willhite plans to continue keeping Polk County safe and affordable. The first focus is, illegal drug use in Polk County as it's the root cause of much of the crime in the county, he feels.

"I'll continue to support safe transportation by keeping our seventy plus bridges and thousands of miles of roads in

good condition. Also, keeping our children safe by supporting health initiatives for kids and education for parents that support safe families," adds Willhite.

For Willhite keeping the county affordable for families and business has been challenging with rising inflation. Balancing the county needs is important but so is keeping tax increases manageable for our citizens, he says.

"Utility costs, insurance rates, groceries, and gasoline prices have affected county and personal budgets," Gary explains. "So when we raise property taxes for businesses, often that is passed on to residents with higher monthly rental rates and customer prices."

Looking Back

Working with the department heads and other employees of Polk County has been the most interesting and rewarding part for him.

"Their commitment to serve the public has been overwhelming," he says. "Many of our employees have made a career here and have gained valuable experience, which makes them more successful in serving our residents."

Serving as a commissioner has been more demanding than expected for Gary, but even more rewarding and satisfying that he could have ever expected, he says. "I thank the voters for giving me this opportunity. I appreciated their vote this November."

CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

The 2024 construction season started out slow with rain in June, but once July hit it was full throttle ahead.

Here is a list of what was accomplished to date:

- ▶ CSAH 14 – CSAH 45 to TH 75 – Overlay
- ▶ CSAH 45 – TH 220 to TH 75 – Overlay
- ▶ CR 202 – CSAH 35 and 2 miles North – Grading/Aggregate Base/Turf Establishment
- ▶ CR 203 – CSAH 30 and 2 miles North – Grading/Aggregate Base/Turf Establishment
- ▶ BaseOne Stabilized Aggregate Surfacing:
- ▶ CR 267 – CSAH 20 to TH 75
- ▶ CSAH 35 – CSAH 8 to Polk/Clearwater County Line
- ▶ CSAH 63 – CSAH 60 to TH 75
- ▶ CSAH 67 – 3 miles W of CSAH 68 to CSAH 68

Polk Counties major project for the year was the construction of the Roundabout at the intersection of CSAH 21 and TH 75 North of Euclid, MN.

Polk County also helps townships out with bridge replacements on their system. This year we replaced culverts/bridges in Brandsvold, Hammond and Russia townships and installed box culverts at these locations. We also started on the replacement of the Columbia Township Bridge over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks just east of Lengby, MN. This project won't be completed until the end of 2025 construction season.

POLK COUNTY BOARD MEETINGS ARE NOW STREAMING.

FIND US ON YOUTUBE.

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YouTube

Johnson replaces Gagner on Planning & Zoning Commission

When Shane Johnson took his appointment to be a new member of the Polk County Planning & Zoning Commission last spring, he replaced a member who had been there from the beginning. That member was Rolland Gagner, who was retiring and moving from the home that he and his wife Nancy, had built on Lake Sarah in 1987.

Johnson has been president of the Union Lake Sarah Improvement Association for the past 5 years and a member of that association's board for seven years. A manager of ready-mix concrete operations for the Strata Corporation, he and his wife, Melinda, live on Union Lake.

Gagner was one of the initial members of the Polk County Planning & Zoning Commission when it was formed in 1997. As the owner-operator of Gagner Plumbing & Excavation, he had brought his septic system construction knowledge from work on properties on Union Lake and Lake Sarah to the new board. This was at a time when septic systems were a major part of the commission's work.

Prior to the planning commission appointment, Gagner had been president of the Union Lake Sarah Improvement District board for five years and a board member for seven years. In fact, Gagner had been

an organizer of that district in 1990 and was instrumental in the development of the pump drainage system on Union Lake that was instrumental in saving many lake homes when lake flooding occurred there in 1998 and 1999.

Other members of the current Planning & Zoning Commission are: Chair Mike Powers, East Grand Forks (appointed by East Grand Forks Mayor); Vice Chair Paul Jore, McIntosh (Commissioner District 4); Don Cavalier, Crookston (appointed by Crookston Mayor); Kristie Jerde, Crookston (District 1); Len Vonasek, East Grand Forks (District 2); Tom Noah, Crookston (District 3); Richard Kuzel, Angus (District 5); Arlet Phillips, East Grand Forks (Polk County Township Officers Association); Mike Schulz, Mentor (Maple Lake Improvement District); Shane Johnson (Union Lake Sarah Improvement District); and County Board Chair Gary Willhite. The County Board chair serves on the commission during the year that he/she is chair of the County Board.

Five members of the Planning & Zoning Commission also serve on the Polk County Board of Adjustment. This body hears requests for variances to the rules of the County Zoning Ordinance. That membership includes Powers (chair), Jore (vice



Courtesy Photo

From left: Retired Polk County Planning & Zoning Commission member Rolland Gagner, Board Chair Mike Powers, and Planning & Zoning Department Director Jacob Snyder during Gagner's retirement party.

chair), Jerde, Kuzel, and Noah. Vonasek and Phillips are alternates.

Warren Strandell

2nd District Polk County Board Commissioner

TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS UPDATE

The issue of substance use and abuse has been well publicized, especially with the opioid epidemic that has plagued the country beginning in the early 2000s.

While the exact rates of justice involved individuals with substance use disorders (SUD) is difficult to measure, some research shows that an estimated 65% of the United States justice population has an active SUD compared to roughly 17.3% of the general population.

Of even greater concern is the risk that current drugs of abuse pose to justice involved individuals and the professionals who work with them.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Justice, in custody overdose deaths rose by over 500% from 2001 to 2018. An even starker picture can be seen in the high rates of overdose deaths among people released from jail, especially during the first week after release.

In one study formerly incarcerated people were determined to be up to 50 times more likely to die of an overdose during the first week following release than the general population.

In response to these challenges, Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC), in collaboration with Polk County Public Health, Alluma, Polk County Social Services, and the Polk County Attorney's Office, has started an initiative intended to identify those

who encounter the criminal justice system and are identified as at risk for SUD. The initiative is intended to increase access to a coordinated treatment response while reducing the time between justice system contact and much needed SUD intervention.

Research consistently shows that coordinating an SUD response is more effective if it is implemented at a time when the individual is ready to change and can establish a connection between addiction/SUD and potentially negative consequences.

The SUD initiative is modeled after the SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment) public health approach which is intended to deliver early intervention and treatment services for people with SUD.

SUD screenings are completed as part of the formal classification process within the jail and the results of these screenings triggers follow-up from the SUD Project Coordinator and health service staff and care coordinators located within the jail.

Brief interventions are initiated within the jail and takes many forms depending on the needs of the individual. Intervention strategies range from management of significant withdrawal symptoms through medication administration to beginning intervention strategies through workbooks, group participation, access to self-help curriculum on inmate tablets or use of cognitive behavioral

programming.

While brief intervention strategies are being implemented, the SUD Project Coordinator works with interested candidates to identify funding options and coordinate completion of comprehensive assessments to determine treatment needs and resources. Once treatment needs and resources are identified, the Project Coordinator will communicate these options to attorneys handling the case to determine the suitability of expedited plea agreements, modification of release condition or other options that can facilitate treatment involvement outside of the jail setting.

While it is still relatively early in the project implementation, the SUD Project Coordinator has seen an enthusiastic response by many individuals with whom he works. Many of the inmates have expressed appreciation for having somebody advocate for them and provide guidance on accessing much needed resources.

Overcoming addiction is complicated and often-times messy, however, it is the hope that providing earlier intervention opportunities will result in better long-term outcomes for those who struggle with addiction along with their families and loved-ones.

Andrew Larson

Executive Director of

Tri-County Community Corrections

FRC expanding it's reach across the county

Polk County Social Services is about to be able to help more families across the county. Polk County Family Resource Centers has been going through a growth spurt recently with a new location opening, another on the way, and a relocation.

The newest FRC location opened in Fertile, MN, in early August. Located at the Knutson Community Center (101 S. Mill Street), services are provided Wednesdays from 1-4 p.m.

Bright Future

Reception to the new location by area families and the city of Fertile has been excellent with an even brighter future just around the corner, says Polk County Social Services Manager Victoria Ramirez.

"The City of Fertile, Fertile Public Library, and (Fertile-Beltrami) Food Shelf has been very warm and welcoming to our FRC staff and have generated a lot of good ideas of future collaboration on events and activities to serve Fertile area families," she says. "Our first event with the Fertile Library is on Sept 18th. We will be partnering up to provide a craft activity for teens."

During the initial opening the

Fertile FRC had staff available to assist families with completing forms, coordinating resources, and referrals to help meet any concrete needs such as food, housing, clothing, and more.

There are plans to expand the services available at the new location, says Ramirez. "We are in the process of working out details and hope to have a DEED worker available to help with job and career skills development during our FRC hours."

Further Expansion

Fertile isn't the only new location on the horizon with Fosston soon getting their own dedicated space at the Aurora Center for Arts/Fosston Public Library.

The FRC is still finalizing details, but they tentatively plan to have the Fosston location up and running by mid-October, says Ramirez. "Our hope is to start off operating four hours once a week."

Initially the Fosston FRC will likely offer similar base services to the current Fertile facility while exploring different partnerships with different service vendors in the area.

Expansion of the program has



Tim Albrecht / Polk County

Family Based Service Provider Nikk Caputo with Polk County Social Services hands out freeze pops during the 1-year anniversary celebration of the Family Resource Center co-located at the Crookston Public Library.

always been part of the FRC's long-term plan in order to provide better access to families across the entire county. "With our Crookston and East Grand Forks sites up and running successfully, we knew it was time to branch out to the Fertile and Fosston areas," Ramirez says.

Picking new sites wasn't just a dart throw though.

An environmental scan was done to find agencies and partners that could provide vital services to families while also having family-friendly facilities,

says Ramirez. "Our working relationship with the Crookston Library has been very strong, so partnering with Lake Agassiz Regional Libraries again was an obvious choice for us."

New locations aren't the only updates coming for the FRC. The Crookston location has secured a spot at Washington Elementary School. The scheduled opening is tentatively set for mid-October, says Ramirez. "We will still do pop-up in-service hours at the Crookston Library two days a week."

40 Years of Service



Tim Albrecht / Polk County

Polk County Social Services Director presents Cathy Guttered with an award. Guttered resigned from her position of Lay Member on the Social Services Board in June. She served on the board for over 40 years.



Polk County Social Services

(877) 281-3127

SOLID WASTE FACILITY UPDATES

Polk County landfill expansion making progress

The Polk County landfill near Gently, MN, has been involved in a lengthy process of trying to complete the requirements of the landfill permit applied for in 2015 and issued by the MPCA in 2017.

Part of that application process was an Environmental Assessment Worksheet, which included various studies and reports including those related to wetlands and flora/fauna. Since 2019 the landfill has been working to gain the wetland and plant-related permits for the mixed solid waste (MSW) landfill expansion to the east.

The last of the four wetland-related permits was issued at the beginning of 2024 by the US Army Corp of Engineers.

Once the wetland permit was issued, Polk had to then apply for a major modification (major mod) of its landfill permit to construct that portion of the landfill gained by the wetland permits – Phase 15+, which extends an additional 75 feet eastward from its current permit.

The major mod was applied for in late spring. Difficulties in getting a final acceptable major mod have stalled the process. However, the Landfill Phase 15+ construction began in July, is in progress now, and is slated to be completed in mid-October – before the major mod would be issued.

Minnesota law requires that six feet of select waste be placed across the new lined landfill to act as frost protection. Construction could not wait for the major mod to be issued as there was not enough available landfill space to make it until a new phase could be constructed in 2025.

PFAS is referred to as the “forever chemical” and has emerged as one of the most troublesome and concerning pollutants for which very little is known but seems to be found nearly everywhere and within nearly everything.

The Polk County Resource



Courtesy Photo

The landfill liner crew installs the thick HDPE plastic liner in Phase 15+ of the mixed solid waste (MSW) landfill expansion. The plastic liner is installed above the engineered clay base which is contoured and constructed to direct water that comes into contact with the waste into a collection system to prevent it from coming into contact with groundwater.

Recovery Facility (RRF – or Incinerator) in Fosston, MN, is one of three RRFs participating in a coordinated, voluntary PFAS study in October 2024 on behalf of all RRFs in Minnesota. The Hennepin County RRF in Minneapolis, the Prairie Lakes RRF in Perham, MN, and the Polk RRF were the three selected to be stack tested, and who represent the range of capacities, emission control technologies, and waste processing operations utilized in Minnesota.

Though only three are testing, all RRFs in Minnesota have agreed to share in the expense.

It is expected that RRFs will show some PFAS destruction based on other facilities limited testing, but this study will document if this assumption is true of the entire spectrum of RRF's, and to what extent PFAS destruction occurs at each site.

The expense of the wetland-related work has been significant, and the costs of nearly everything associated

with the solid waste facilities' operations have also increased. However, the fees at the facilities have remained relatively flat over the same period. Unable to hold the line on tip fees being kept flat, increases were necessary and inevitable.

In July 2024 a first phase of tip fee increases went into effect. The second phase of tip fee increases will be implemented starting January 2025. The cumulative impact of these increases will be about a 15% increase from January 2024 to January 2025. The solid waste fee assessment for 2025 will likewise see a similar increase. The exact amount of increase has yet to be officially set by the Polk County Board at this time.

C&D Landfill Rules

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is currently in the process of drafting construction and demolition (C&D) landfill rules.

This initiative started in 2019 and continued through

2024. During that period the MPCA formed a rules advisory panel (RAP) to provide input on this initiative. Hubbard, Ottertail, and Polk Counties were on that RAP to represent the northwest region of the state. The RAP concluded its work in the summer of 2023, and the MPCA went into drafting rules last winter.

A series of eight meetings were recently held by MPCA around the state to provide information to other parties that may be impacted by these new rules, and to field comments and feedback.

Meetings were held in Detroit Lakes, MN, and Bemidji, MN, for having those meetings available to northwest Minnesota.

Many counties in northwest Minnesota provided additional notice and advertising to city officials, demolition contractors, waste haulers, and area legislators – including Polk County – to raise awareness of this opportunity.

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While many who attended were appreciative of the MPCA's attempts to provide additional information, holding regional in-person meetings, and provide an opportunity to voice their comments, there also was frustration that the state had seemingly failed to realize what the impacts of these rules will have on these area communities.

The MPCA also acknowledged the value of holding these meetings and receiving comments from entities not previously engaged in the discussions and ended the process with what they believe to be input that will continue to shape their draft rules.

Key components of the intended rules will include:

- ▶ All unlined C&D landfills will need to close by a specified date
- ▶ Those closed landfills will need to have enhanced covers installed if not closed prior to a specified date
- ▶ Any new C&D landfill will need to contain a liner system to contain water that contacts C&D waste
- ▶ Any new C&D landfill will need a leachate collection system to collect and treat that water
- ▶ Financial Assurance – a special fund created to cover the future costs of closure, post-closure care and contingency action funds – will be required

All these requirements add significant additional cost to the construction and operation of C&D landfills, which in turn requires increases in tip fees.

In many cases in rural Minnesota areas, the costs associated with these requirements is prohibitive and impractical. The MPCA has not identified any practical alternative to these small, rural C&D landfills, and the only option in the state put forward by any group is the Hub & Spoke Project by nine counties in northwest Minnesota in 2024.

Attention to what this

rulemaking effort will ultimately result in will need to be monitored – and impacted parties will need to continue to be engaged in this process to make these rules practical and feasible.

Hub & Spoke Project

Polk and eight other neighboring counties in northwest Minnesota formed a partnership to address the potential impacts of the MPCA's C&D rulemaking initiative. The partnership Counties include Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Polk, and Red Lake – and include portions of Leech Lake, Red Lake, and White Earth Tribal Nations.

In 2023 the partnership received funding from the MPCA to study the C&D landfill issue in northwest Minnesota from multiple perspectives which included costs of closure, costs to comply with new rules, and alternatives to all the small, unlined C&D landfills in that region. The study was completed in early spring 2024 and used as a basis for applying for State bond funds to heavily subsidize the cost to create this new system.

Two applications were filed by Hubbard County on behalf of the partnership for funding. The first application was filed with the MPCA for a Capital Assistance Program (CAP) which is the normal option by which solid waste projects are funded with State bond funds. The second application was filed with the Minnesota Management & Budget (MMB) for direct funding via legislation. Bills were submitted by local legislators in support of that MMB request.

House and Senate bonding tours on the project were conducted in late summer/early fall of 2023.

In early 2024 the MPCA had to submit their budget request for inclusion in the Governors' bonding request. MPCA has previously not allowed or supported funding for landfills.

While the partnership insisted that the prohibition not to use CAP funds for landfills was intended to mean MSW landfills, not C&D landfills. The MPCA was concerned

with the precedent and submitted their budget request to the Governor's office without the HUB's (regional lined C&D landfills).

The partnership requested it be restored, as there was no Hub & Spoke (H&S) system without the HUB's. MPCA declined and pulled the entire H&S project from the Governor's bonding request.

The partnership retained the full H&S request via the MMB application, and made numerous visits with area legislators on the initiative. In the end the 2024 Legislature adjourned without any Bonding Bill.

In fall of 2024 both the MPCA and Senate have reached out to the partnership to inquire about the possibility of inclusion in the next Bonding Bill – perhaps as early as 2025. It appears there is interest in reconsidering the opposition to funding a HUB in the region. While these conversations have not progressed into more than an interest in further discussion currently, the partnership takes this as a positive sign and hope for a viable alternative to the current system the new C&D rules intend to eliminate.

Grant Awards

Polk County and a few other regional partner Counties submitted several grant applications to the MPCA in response to multiple opportunities offered from the end of 2023 to present.

Many of those applications were for projects that were sub-parts of the Hub & Spoke project. Polk and the partnership counties viewed this as an opportunity to incrementally phase-into the H&S Project and reduce the legislative bonding request for the project if the applications were successfully funded.

Polk was successful in securing full funding for two of these projects: an enhanced recycling project and a co-collected organics compost project. Partial funding for a third project, a gypsum and porcelain recycling project was awarded, but returned to the MPCA as it wasn't a viable project at the reduced

funding level available. Hubbard County also successfully secured funding for a commercial organics collection project.

Polk County's first funded grant, the enhanced recycling project, focuses on improvements to the MRF at the resource recovery facility (RRF – or Incinerator) in Fosston, MN.

The goal is to make strategic changes to the existing MRF which will increase the efficiency of existing recycling equipment and recover additional recyclable materials in both the waste and recycling streams it processes. Specifically, it will use a new piece of equipment to empty garbage bags so the downstream equipment can identify and remove recyclable materials.

Presently, many materials in the waste stream that are recyclable are not removed because the garbage bag that held them had ripped but did not empty.

The other major part of this project is the incorporation of a specialized screening system on the fines line (less than 2-inch size material). That screen will further separate by size the stream into three fractions which will allow more recycling to occur.

The larger fines fraction will return to the MRF to capture small aluminum and plastic containers and small metals. The middle fines fraction will contain that part of the stream which meets the glass recycling market specifications. The smallest part of fines fraction will be the dirt, grit, and small glass that does not meet recycling specs.

This will continue to be reutilized at the MSW landfill as daily cover material reducing the need to purchase virgin cover materials.

Polk's second funded grant, the co-collected organics compost project, focuses on capturing and composting organic materials.

The project has two main components, one at the RRF (compost system) and the other at the landfill (compost facility). This project relies

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heavily upon residents separating their organics at home, placing them into specialized compostable bags, and depositing those bags of organics into the same garbage cart or container that their bagged garbage is placed. In this manner, the new material stream may be collected and transported by the current waste hauler from their residence to the RRF without needing another container or incurring additional cost.

The hauler must do nothing different to transport and deliver the organics material to a facility capable of collecting and composting it.

The RRF will relocate the metering drum and the new bag opener. Between them, specialized robots will be used to identify and remove these specialized bags of organics from the passing waste stream before further processing in the MRF.

The artificial intelligence (AI) robotic sorters will be trained to identify those specialized bags.

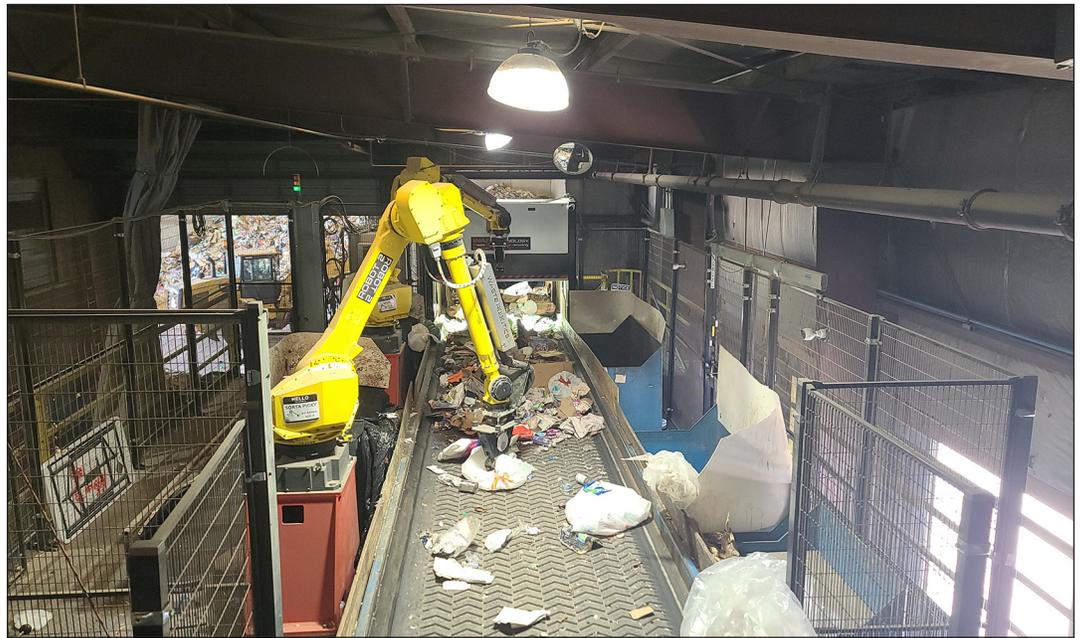
These compostable bags are special for two reasons: one, the bags will be a specific color to stand out to the AI and robots for identification and removal, and two, the bags will be constructed to a proven specification which withstands the process of collection, compaction in the garbage trucks, and passing through the metering drum without breaking and losing the organics contained inside.

Robotic arms will pick out these bags of organics and will drop them down a chute and into a bin. That bin will be emptied as needed into a larger container for transportation to the compost facility located at the Polk County landfill.

This project is a variation of a new program operating in Ramsey & Washington Counties in the Twin Cities.

The compost facility at the landfill complex will also be modified.

A portion of the compost pad will be resurfaced with asphalt



Courtesy Photo

The Waste Robotics AI Robots picking bags or recyclables in the Millenium Recycling plant located in Sioux Falls, SD. The white box over the conveyor located in the background is the AI system and camera system used to identify the bags it was trained to remove. There are two (2) yellow robotic arms placed in series which work together to remove what the AI identifies and deposit in the appropriate chute/bunker.

to withstand the higher traffic and damage incurred during extremely wet periods of time. It will also facilitate the change in compost technology to a basic aerated static pile (ASP) compost system from the static windrow system currently utilized.

To change composting systems, a large bunker needs to be constructed and an air blower connected to perforated pipes inserted into the compost pile is utilized.

The ASP system greatly decreases the amount of time required to take organic materials through the entire compost process, extends the active composting window at the facility each year (extreme cold conditions slows/stops the composting process), and the result is the composting capacity of the facility is greatly expanded without having to expand the footprint of the facility itself.

Law Changes

The State of Minnesota passed an extended producer responsibility (EPR) law in 2024. The EPR law addresses packaging materials in state.

It's odd to say a law was

passed but nobody seems to know exactly what it will do, how it will do it, or what will be done – but that is the case in this instance.

The EPR sets expectations and responsibilities but leaves all of the details up to future plans to be approved by the State, at the guidance of a yet-to-be established committee, and to be funded and implemented by an organization which is required to be self-organized as determined by the law.

The framework for this new law has some set parameters.

The plans are to be submitted to the MPCA by a specified date, and to accomplish certain expectations. The committee is to be comprised of individuals who represent identified interests. The Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) is to be comprised and funded by the packaging manufacturers – with specific exemptions.

The deliverables of the law include designing products to reduce packaging being generated, making the packaging made either be recyclable or compostable, and provide for the arrangement and recycling/composting of their packaging

with emphasis on utilizing existing infrastructure.

The funding levels that the PRO must achieve include 50% funding by 2029, 75% funding by 2030, and 90% funding by 2031 and each year afterward.

Minnesota is now one of a handful of states in the U.S. which now has a EPR law. Others are contemplating similar EPR laws.

While little is known about how this program will be rolled-out, implemented, how it will operate, or what it will accomplish, what seems certain is that once the plan is approved and committee in place, there will be significant changes in how waste will be managed in Minnesota in the future.

The State of MN passed a boat wrap law in 2024 as well. This is the stretch film installed on boats and pontoons each fall when being winterized.

How this system will be implemented is likewise undetermined, however this is a very specific activity and service, and its management is expected to be much simpler.

Jon Steiner
Environmental
Services Director

Zebra mussels confirmed in Union Lake

Zebra mussels confirmed in Union Lake in Polk County. This past July the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources confirmed the presence of zebra mussels in Union Lake, in Polk County. A lake property owner contacted the DNR after finding a zebra mussel attached to a native mussel in Union Lake. DNR staff found more than 15 zebra mussels near the public water access, which is more than a mile from the location of the initial discovery.

Union Lake has a pump that is used in certain high-water conditions. This pump already has a filter to prevent the dispersal of Eurasian watermilfoil, and it is not currently operating. The DNR will provide direction to the Sand Hill River Watershed District, which operates the pump, to ensure that any future pumping operations are modified to prevent the spread of zebra mussels downstream.

While zebra mussels and other invasive species can be introduced to a lake via private docks and accesses, public accesses are typically the first to be surveyed

for invasive species. Whether or not a lake has any invasive species, Minnesota law requires people to:

- ▶ **Clean** watercraft, trailers and equipment to remove aquatic plants and prohibited invasive species.

- ▶ **Drain** all water and leave drain plugs out during transport.

- ▶ **Dispose** of unwanted bait in the trash.

- ▶ **Never release** bait, plants, or aquarium pets into Minnesota waters.

- ▶ **Dry docks, lifts and rafts for 21 days** before moving them from one water body to another.

- ▶ **Decontaminate** watercraft and equipment

- ▶ **Spray** watercraft and equipment with high-pressure water or **rinse** with very hot water (120 degrees for at least two minutes or 140 degrees for at least 10 seconds).

- ▶ **Dry** watercraft and equipment for at least five days before using in another water body.

People should contact the MN DNR if they think they have found zebra mussels or any other

CLEAN

- Boats, trailers, and gear
- Remove all weeds, mud, and hitchhiking contaminants from axels, wheels, undercarriage, motor, prop, nets, and gear before leaving boat landing

DRAIN

- Water from boat, bilge, motor, and live well
- Remove drain plug and open all water draining devices
- Trash unused bait

DRY

- Everything at least five days before going to other waters
- (Or) Decontaminate with high pressure water (120°F or warmer)

STOP INVASIVE SPECIES! LEARN MORE AT CLEANDRAINDRY.ORG

Great Lakes RESTORATION | Minnesota DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CLEAN DRAIN DRY INITIATIVE | STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

invasive species that was not already known to be in the water body.

More information is available on the local Polk County website for additional information about

AIS prevention visit: www.co.polk.mn.us/264/Polk-County-Aquatic-Invasive-Species-Tas

Jacob Snyder
Environmental Services
Assistant Administrator

Don't forget your building permits for all building activity

We would like to remind you that Polk County Planning & Zoning requires building/land use permits for all construction projects in Polk County. If you are planning building/land use projects outside of incorporated cities, please contact Polk County Planning & Zoning staff prior to construction to determine setback 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 within 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 contractors. Contractors securing permits on behalf of the landowner must still have the landowner sign the permit application. Any contractor telling a landowner 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 in penalty fees or needs to be reconstructed or moved. It is NOT the best practice to simply do a project and ask for forgiveness. Many of these ATF situations result in wasted time and money for your construction project 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. For more information contact Polk County Planning & Zoning Staff at (218) 281-5700.

Jacob Snyder
Environmental Services
Assistant Administrator



CHILDREN'S DENTAL SERVICES

Children's Dental Services (CDS) is a nonprofit dental clinic that offers dental hygiene services to people of **ALL AGES**. Clinic sites alternate monthly at the Polk County Public Health East Grand Forks and Crookston Office.

Call
612-746-1530
or
866-543-6009
to schedule an appointment!

CDS accepts Medical Assistance and offers an income-based sliding scale for income eligible families.

PINE TO PRAIRIE UPDATE

The 49 arrests made by the Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force in the 2nd quarter of 2024 resulted in the recovery of 14.2 grams of fentanyl, 284.2 grams of methamphetamine (meth), 69.3 grams of cocaine, and 110 grams of BHO (butane hash oil), and 5 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 that it serves. It also works with other agencies in the greater region.

Made up of law enforcement officers that are provided by the counties and the three major cities in the service area, 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.

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 deputy, Kittson and Red Lake counties assist as needed.

Polk County also makes available its two deputies who manage drug dogs. Marshall and Norman counties and the cities of Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks also make their canine officers available to the Task Force.

The Task Force is guided by a 14-member advisory board. That 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 and deputy Matt Wagner, 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, a U.S. Border Patrol officer, Homeland Security Investigations Supervisor Josh Goldberg, East Grand Forks fiscal assistant Alyssa Hammen, and Polk County Commissioner Joan Lee.

The Task Force receives approximately \$250,000 in state funding annually. That 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 for purchasing necessary equipment.

Warren Strandell

2nd District Polk County Board Commissioner

SIGNIFICANT CASES

- ▶ The Task Force made seven meth buys into one group of distributors resulting in the seizure of 236 grams of meth along with subsequent arrests.
- ▶ In cooperation with East Grand Forks Police, the Task Force dismantled a group that was distributing meth near the city swimming pool. Also in East Grand Forks, the Task Force seized 16.5 pounds of marijuana, 600 vape pens, and over 2 pounds of BHO. In Thief River Falls, the Task Force seized 18 marijuana plants
- ▶ After a long-term investigation, a meth dealer working in Polk and Pennington counties was arrested. This resulted in the seizure of the 38 grams of meth that had been purchased by under-cover Task Force officers.
- ▶ Combined efforts of the Pine 2 Prairie Drug Force and the Grand Forks Drug Task Force disrupted a major drug trafficking organization when an undercover officer bought and seized over a half pound of methamphetamine. Three persons were arrested.
- ▶ A Grand Forks woman pled guilty to controlled substance sales in Polk and Pennington counties when she appeared in Polk County District Court in April.
- ▶ The Task Force has been cleared of any wrongdoing in the case where an at-large person was shot during an encounter just south of East Grand Forks in January.
- ▶ Meth continues to be the most available drug in northwest Minnesota. Powdered fentanyl has become a bigger concern. A mushroom grow has been dismantled.

Real estate valuation sees 14.9 percent increase

As determined by the Polk County Assessor for the purpose of assessing property taxes that will be payable in 2025, the 2024 valuation of real estate in the county now totals \$8,529,501,000.

This new total amount of valuation represents an increase of \$1,105,610,400 over 2023, or about 14.9 percent.

Of the new 2024 total valuation amount:

- ▶ 57.6% is for tillable agricultural lands.
- ▶ 7.5% is for all other agricultural property.
- ▶ 24.3% is for residential properties.
- ▶ 5.6% is for seasonal recreational properties.

- ▶ 1.9% is for commercial properties.
- ▶ 1.7% is for industrial properties.
- ▶ 3.4% is for building sites (rural homes and garages on 1 acre *).
- ▶ 1.4% is for "all other" property classifications.

New construction accounted for \$32,351,900 of the total valuation.

The overall increase is mainly due to an increase in the valuations for agricultural and seasonal recreational properties throughout the county due to strong markets for each property type.

The figures above are based on the 2024 PRISM 2 report (Final).

The valuation total does not take into account railroad or utility values.

*— Included in "all other" agricultural property
Updated: September 3, 2024

FOOT CARE SERVICES

Polk County Public Health offers foot care services for older adults.

MORE INFORMATION

Crookston
218-281-3072

East Grand Forks
218-773-0821

McIntosh
218-563-2010



TOGETHER WE CAN *build a better future!*



SIT LESS, MOVE MORE

Polk County Public Health promotes Challenge to get more people active

Polk County Public Health's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) has been dedicated to improving the physical health and wellness of Polk County residents since 2008.

SHIP is tasked with working at the local level throughout the state to increase and expand opportunities for Minnesotans to eat healthier foods, life free from commercial tobacco, increase mental well-being and be more physically active, the key ingredients to reducing chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes.

Regular physical activity helps improve the overall health of Polk County residents while reducing their risk for chronic disease. Other benefits of regular physical activity include improved mood, increased energy levels, better sleep and strengthened bones and muscles.

SHIP works at the community level to make it easier for those of all ages to improve their health by being physical active.

While barriers do exist for regular physical activity for rural residents, creating a greater risk of physical inactivity, obesity and health disparities, there are many opportunities, programs, and offerings to increase daily physical activity for residents.

One such opportunity is the MOVE Polk County challenge that has been an ongoing promotion to increase physical activity and daily movement throughout Polk County. Community programs such as this can have positive effects on physical activity.

Polk County Public Health collaborated with the University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) to see exactly what those positive effects could look like.

For 10-weeks in the summers of 2022 and 2023, residents were encouraged to move their

bodies and increase their physical activity through the MOVE Polk County Challenge. Dr. Anita M. Gust of UMC conducted a research study with challenge participants in partnership with Amanda Lien, Wellness Coordinator-SHIP at Polk County Public Health to evaluate various outcomes of the challenge and see how much activity increased for residents.

Participants completed a survey at the beginning and end of the challenge including demographics, physical activity, exercise motivation, and health related quality of life questions.

Additionally, participants of the 2023 cohort were offered FitBits to capture type, duration and intensity of daily physical activity. Once per week, participants were requested via text to complete a survey assessing their current level and type of

physical activity.

The study showed that weekly sitting hours were significantly reduced from pre- to post-challenge and there was increase in health-related quality of life reported (average weekly sitting hours decreased from 38.6 to 29.8 hours with 77% of participants decreasing sitting time).

Less sitting time led to various forms of activity including walking, leisure such as gardening, cardiovascular, stretching, sports such as pickleball, and resistance training.

Additional findings showed that walking was the most common mode of exercise, with 44% engaging in some form of leisure type physically activity, including 78.1% walking. Daily walking minutes across all participants increased by 49% and average daily steps were 8,240 steps. The recommended

amount of daily steps according to the American College of Sports Medicine is 10,000 steps per day with the recommended MVPA minutes of 30 minutes.

In conclusion, MOVE Polk County was effective in increasing walking and reducing weekly sitting time and may be effective for improving both physical and mental health, continued goals of the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership and Polk County Public Health.

We encourage people to continue to stay active all year-round by engaging in the many recreational opportunities in our region to improve physical and mental health and well-being. For more information in physical activity opportunities, contact Polk County Public Health at 218-281-3385.

Amanda Lien
Polk County Wellness Coordinator

FitBit Discoveries of the 2023 Cohort



Walking was the most common mode of exercise
78% indicated their recent form of exercise was walking



44% engaged in some form of leisure type PA, such as gardening, pickleball, cleaning, etc.



32% engaged in cardiovascular exercise



Average daily step: 8240*



Average moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA): 31 minutes**



Average minutes spent in active zone: 37 minutes***

*Recommended daily steps (ACSM) = 10,000 steps

** Recommended MVPA minutes (ACSM) = 30 min

***Recommended active zone = 20 min

Two warning sirens installed around Maple Lake

Many county residents may have been wondering what was being constructed around Maple Lake over the summer. Polk County Emergency Management in collaboration with the Mentor Fire Department has been working on installing two outdoor warning sirens located near the lake. The first siren is located at the Polk County Public Access on the East Shore and the second one is located at the Polk County Park.

Cell service tends to get bogged down in the Maple Lake area during the summer months due to the influx of visitors using their phones, so alerts can get delayed. “Activating outdoor warning sirens would immediately alert the public that a threat to life and safety exists in that area”, says Polk County Emergency Management Directory Jody Beauchane. “The sirens are strategically positioned on Maple Lake to maximize coverage and ensure that as many people as possible can hear the sirens when activated.”

The sirens were donated to Polk County by the City of East Grand Forks after they replaced some of their existing sirens. Wild Rice Electric Cooperative also donated time and equipment to help install the siren poles into the ground. Tom Guenther, Wild Rice Electric’s Director of Operations, remarked, “It is great to be involved in helping



ABOVE: New outdoor warning siren at Polk County Park.

RIGHT: New siren at the Polk County Public Access on the East Shore.

Courtesy Photos

the community.”

The cost to transport, wire, and program both sirens was approximately \$15,000. A successful test was completed on Friday, Aug. 9, to ensure the sirens are functioning properly.

The essential warning message of outdoor warning sirens



to those who hear them is to get to shelter and then tune in to a local Emergency Alert System

(EAS) radio or television station for information about why the sirens were activated.

Correctional facilities plagued by staffing challenges

Both the Northwest Regional Corrections Center (NWRCC) and Red River Valley Juvenile Center (RRVJC) continue to struggle to maintain staffing levels which are needed to operate the facilities. While these problems are not unique to these two facilities, that is of little consolation to those who work within the walls and are tasked with filling schedules and attempting to manage workloads.

The NWRCC has seen a consistent turnover of employees which significantly increased in volume around 2016. The reasons for the consistent turnover ranges from factors including a very strong job market (which

is evidenced by the numerous job openings that can be seen in nearly all industries), changes in workforce expectations, and the difficulties that are inherent in the corrections line of work. The NWRCC was forced to temporarily reduce the facility capacity from December 2021 to June 2022 while recruitment and training efforts were undertaken. While the current staffing challenges have not required this level of response, it’s not far off.

The RRVJC has struggled to maintain staffing levels since the facility was reopened in March 2023. During the 18 months that the facility has been reopened, the facility has

only been fully staffed for less than 3 months. Due to these staffing shortages, the RRVJC has been required to scale back operations in the form of closing or dramatically limiting use of the secure side of the facility.

The difficulties that come with working in the corrections field range from required shiftwork, missing holidays and the stress that can come from working with people who can be difficult, demanding, and are often in varying states of crisis. While there are challenges, I can attest that the positives that I have experienced in my 25 years in the field far outweigh the negatives. The corrections field provides great opportuni-

ties to make a difference in the lives of people (both co-workers and those under correctional care), allows for great advancement opportunities, and most importantly promotes public safety.

I do feel as though progress has been made over the last month, however, we aren’t out of the woods quite yet. While we have brought on several new people in both the jail and juvenile center, training takes time, and unfortunately that feels like something we never have enough of.

Andrew Larson
Executive Director of Tri-County
Community Corrections

Regional water district closer to approval

WCRWD intends to provide soft water and address aging infrastructure

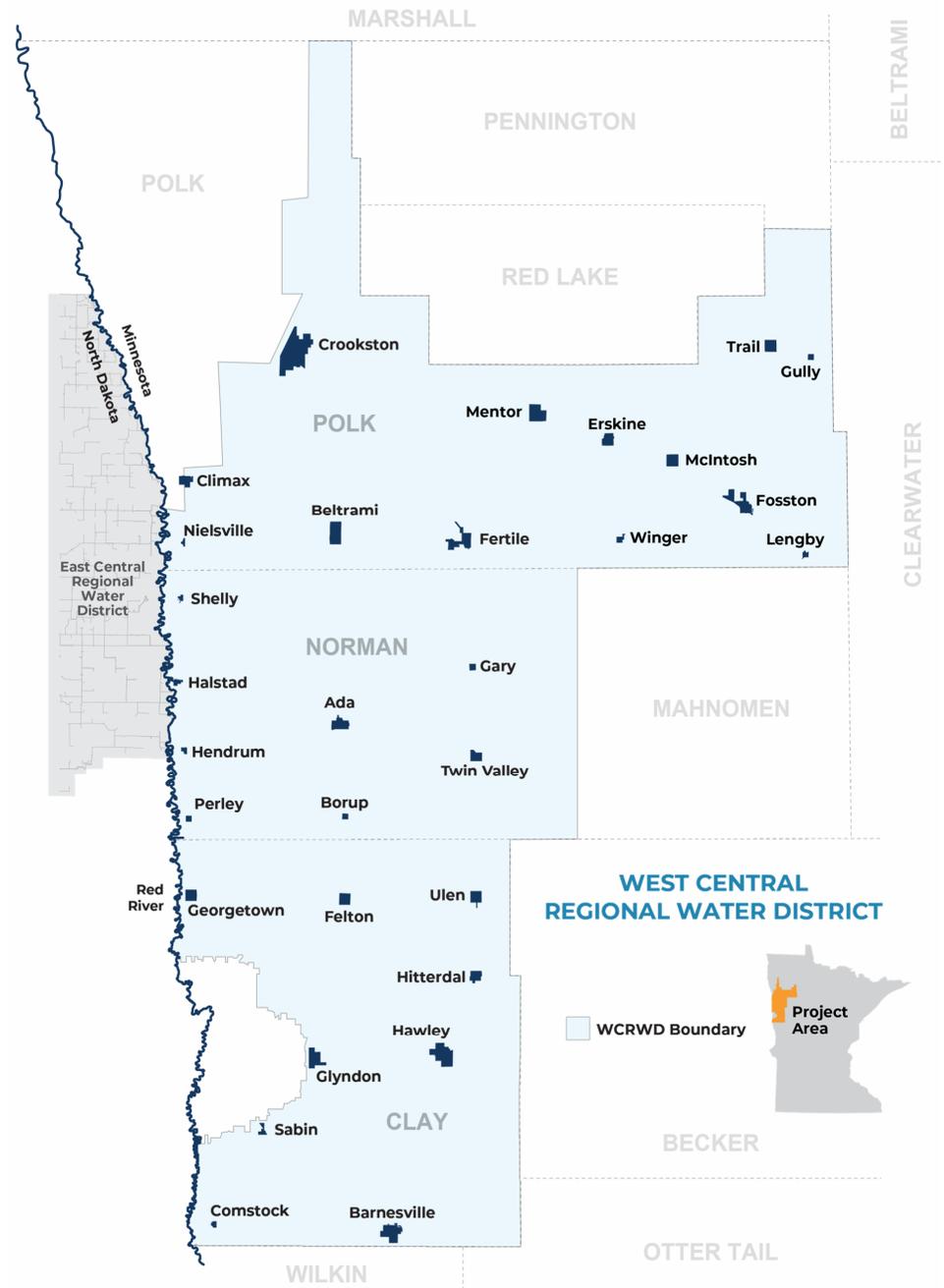
The proposed West Central Regional Water District (WCRWD) continues to move through the judicial process to complete the formation of Minnesota’s first new water district in nearly 40 years. WCRWD is about halfway through the judicial proceedings in Clay County District Court that are required to create a new water district under Minnesota state statute 116A.

A preliminary engineering survey exploring the potential and interest in forming the WCRWD has been completed and accepted by the District Court. A hearing is scheduled in the Clay County District Court on November 6th at 1:30 p.m. While the initial survey has been submitted, the first round of project interest and public notification surveys will be sent to individual landowners in potential first-phase development areas. If you’re interested in receiving water from the WCRWD in the future, please complete the survey available at www.wcrwd-ae2s.hub.arcgis.com.

The proposed WCRWD study area includes 30 cities and rural areas with a total population of about 40,000 people. It is estimated that the water need within the boundaries are approximately 1.85 billion gallons of water per year. The service area includes the geographic boundaries of Polk, Norman, and Clay counties with the exception of the Marshall & Polk Rural Water District service area in Polk County and the area served by Moorhead Public Service in Clay County.

The first phase transmission line is proposed to run between Climax and Nielsville and is expected to be constructed next year, pending approval of the water district’s creation and funding applications. AE2S, a civil engineering consulting firm, was selected to be the WCRWD engineer.

WCRWD intends to provide soft water and address the problem of aging infrastructure in the project area as well as address concerns with reliability and quality of rural wells, which could have elevated levels of arsenic or manganese. Rehabilitating existing municipal or privately-owned water infrastructure such as treatment facilities, wells, and service lines can be cost prohibitive for smaller communities and rural residents. However, regionalization efforts such as WCRWD



allow infrastructure operation, maintenance, and staffing costs to be spread over a larger population to make it more affordable. In addition, access to a high-quality water supply will improve public health and bolster opportunities for future population growth and economic development in western Minnesota.

The WCRWD Board of Directors consists of nine members: three from Clay County, two from Norman County, and four from Polk County. Polk County is represented by Commissioners Warren Strandell and Paul Reese, along with

Nielsville Mayor Michael Burd and Climax Councilman Brian Evenson. Norman County’s representatives include Commissioner Steve Jacobsen and Lucas Spaeth. Clay County is represented by Commissioners Frank Gross and Kevin Campbell, along with Don Martodom.

To learn more about WCRWD or to fill out the survey, check out the project website at www.wcrwd-ae2s.hub.arcgis.com.

Warren Strandell
2nd District Polk County Board Commissioner

TONS OF FUN

Oxcart Days offers a wide variety of activities for Polk County residents



ABOVE: Parade participants hand out candy during the Oxcart Days parade.

TOP RIGHT: A grandpa and his grandson watch the parade.



BELOW: Contestants compete in the Happy Joe's Pizza Eating Contest.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Two Shire horses wait to give residents a wagon ride.

BOTTOM: Residents check out dozens of vintage vehicles during the car show.

Tim Albrecht / Polk County

