

POLK COUNTY

Newsletter

INSIDE: The
New Roaring 20s
Means Change

See Page 2

Fall 2025

LOCAL

Louise

New mural
highlights several art
pieces across Fosston



When looking for fine arts you might think you have to travel hundreds of miles to a bustling city to visit a theater or fancy art gallery. Contrary to that belief there is plenty of beautiful art only a few miles away for most Polk County residents in ... Fosston?

That's right, Fosston is home to several art pieces with the most recent being completed in August. The new mural located on the backside of Prairie Pines Dental office is attracting a lot of attention according to Stephenie Anderson, board member of the City of Fosston Arts & Culture Commission.

"We've seen a lot of positive response on Facebook," Anderson says. "We're getting more traffic in the alley area and that's caused more people to contact us about painting a mural on their building."

New Mural

From conceptualization to completion the project moved quickly. The artists, Trey Everett and Ross Hier, were picked from six applicants. The grant was approved last fall and painting began early summer of this year.

Their conceptual idea looked much different from the finished project, but the

thought behind it was there, according to Cassie Heide, Fosston City Administrator. "The owner of the building wanted a nature theme, and the artists put their own spin on it by hiding several images within the mural," Anderson elaborates.

Fosston's motto of "Where the Prairie Meets the Pines" was the inspiration for artists Everett and Hier. "We wanted to highlight that idea in the mural," says Hier. "We included a lot of iconic species that reside in the area."

Hier's initial watercolor depicted a fall scene, but it transitioned to a spring scene

Above: The mural painted by Trey Everett and Ross Hier on the backside of the Prairie Pines Dental office.
Kirby Vossler / City of Fosston

as they decided to focus on loons, "The shift to spring changed some of the (animal) species and wildflowers that we're included," he says.

Everett felt the overall idea never changed much, but where the largest change came when the project shifted from one wall to two. "That gave us

MURAL Page 3

The New Roaring 20s Means Change

No one is confusing these 20s with the 20s of a hundred years ago, and today's "roaring" is not the sound of jazz but that of the ever-increasing speed of change we are living through. The tables are tipping today towards increased information of all kinds and we are feeling it at the County.



CHUCK WHITING
Polk County Administrator

“ Truly, time is money, and the money is your tax dollars. Our efforts are to be as efficient and productive as possible.

As of this writing we are enjoying a beautiful sunny fall in early October, but the pressure is on to improve our capability to process information both for efficiencies and awareness.

Starting with our finance processes, we've been implementing new budgeting software and switching payroll programs, all while carrying on our usual work. The staff involved can see the benefits despite the heavy lifting that comes with software transitions.

The day comes when these things not only just have to be done, but we also have to utilize improved software capabilities to provide more and accurate data for work efficiencies and decision making. Truly, time is money, and the money is your tax dollars. Our efforts are to be

as efficient and productive as possible.

One huge area where this is most apparent is in our Social Services department where so much data interaction takes place between the county, state, and individuals in need. Just as help is important to our residents, so is accountability that state and federal funds are used appropriately.

The software utilized for county interactions with the state is simply antiquated. Those of you over 40 may remember "DOS" platforms, and if you are under 40 dos simply means "two" in Spanish.

The state's disc operating system software that counties are required to use serving our residents is extremely slow, cumbersome and not reliable.

Social workers are often left watching a spinning wheel on their monitor after pressing enter

to process information or even a data point. This "wheel of death" sometimes times out and the input process starts all over again making an already difficult job exasperating.

Legislators now after seeing the demos are beginning to understand and software solutions are being discussed. Time is of the essence.

There is a practical need as well. Federal changes stemming from the huge budget bill passed earlier this year will take into account error rates processed at the county level.

To lose funding for people in need due to software errors from outdated software isn't right on any level. It hurts people in need but also is a waste of taxpayer money supporting the system in place.

Rolling out two small software changes for the county as I noted above is a headache and I imagine the state's efforts will be many times more difficult.

The conversation has started at the state level and Minnesota counties are at the table. Feel free to watch a recent legislative committee hearing on the matter, about 1:05 into the hearing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILETvRIWb9U>

While much of the hearing touched on the impacts that may come with the federal budget, counties are required to administer a multitude of programs that come with federal and state funding.

Note the concern is in regards to counties abilities to utilize the technology systems provided by the state.

2026 preliminary levy set at 4.5% increase

Public hearing set for Dec. 2

At the September 23 Polk County Board of Commissioners meeting, the 2026 preliminary levy and budget hearing time and date were set. The preliminary levy was set at \$29,675,137, or 4.5% higher than the final 2025 levy.

Counties and other local units of government are required to set a preliminary levy by September 30 each year setting the levy increase limit over the prior year.

The Polk County Board usually sets the preliminary levy in the neighborhood of 5%, and then as the final budget issues are determined, targets closer to a 3% levy increase. Staff and

commissioners are again working on the 2026 budget with that goal in mind.

The same preliminary levy resolution also sets the public hearing date and time for the 2026 budget. That hearing is set for Tuesday, December 2 at 6:00 p.m. in the County Board meeting room in the Government Center in Crookston.

The public is invited to this meeting and welcome to comment or question the proposed 2026 budget. The final adoption of the budget will happen at the final Board meeting of the year scheduled for December 16.

An issue the Board will have to contend with is a significant increase in the levy needed for Polk County's portion of the Tri-County Community Corrections facility (the jail) at the Justice Center.

The increase is due to a change in contracted health services provided as required for the jail population. The change was not anticipated but appears will be an ongoing obligation in a limited contracted health services environment.

Still the goal will be to minimize the impact on taxpayers knowing we could be facing some difficult decisions in the next few years. On the positive side, 2026 is the last year a

levy is needed for the 2008 jail construction debt.

Watch for your "Truth in Taxation" notices that will be mailed in mid-November for information on all local units of government budget hearings and levy impacts for your properties.

Again, all meetings are open to the public for your comments and questions.

Chuck Whiting
Polk County Administrator

County Board Meeting Times

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

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

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

MURAL

From Page 1

so much more room to include a large scene.”

With the larger scene it allowed some other ideas to form. Initially the artists wanted to include nods to the building owner, Casey Holland, and the dental business the mural is painted on. The nods included a tooth and an ice cream cone, which is a reference to the Dairy Queen, which Holland also owns.

With the larger canvas it got them thinking about more easter eggs. “There’s a number of words, a tree frog, a type of spider, and a few other things,” says Everett. “It’s kind of a fun interactive mural.”

Art Revolution

Over the past several years Fosston has been under a cultural revolution thanks to the City of Fosston Arts & Culture Commission.

Established in 2017 the commission comprised of five to seven members has been behind several art projects across the city, including the recent mural.

The Arts Commission

has received six grants since its inception for various projects around town, including touching up the Thirteen Towns mural, the city of Fosston mural, and the newest mural completed this year.

The city of Fosston shares in the cost of the art projects alongside any grants they receive, says Heide. “We have so much art across town. It’s definitely an economic driver for us as many stop and come into our community instead of just passing through.”

“We also have Sorenson Art Gallery within the theater space at the library, the Viking ship sculpture on the fitness trail, and the Flight of the Deco sculpture,” adds Anderson.

Each mural in Fosston has a different purpose, whether it’s the Thirteen Towns mural that details the history of the town or the nature mural that keeps people mentally engaged, says Stephanie. “Our ultimate goal is to keep creative minds glowing.”

“The art is about inspiring younger people to know they could one day have their work on display,” adds Cassie.

The Arts Commission isn’t stopping yet, though. There’s an additional mural planned on the backside of the Hugo’s Express building. “We’re applying for a grant right now for that one and we’re working with Native American artists for the project.”

Other potential projects include more sculptures, utility box wrapping, and a garden tour.



Kirby Vossler / City of Fosston

A sign painted on the new mural provides clues to different easter eggs hidden throughout the painting.



A mural painted by Kirby Vossler on the side of a building on W. 1st St. in Fosston

Tim Albrecht / Polk County

Save some money and please slow down



JIM TADMAN
Sheriff's
Notes

Fall is in full swing and as winter approaches we need to slow down. Over the past 5 months (5/1-10/1) we have had 29 DWI arrests. We wrote 154 speeding tickets and issued 404 warnings for speed during that same time frame.

The highest speed recorded during that time was 126 mph. We had a few others in the 100's and several in the 90's.

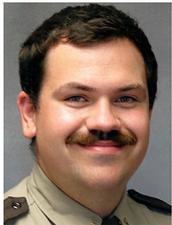
We are coming into the months for high deer movement in the morning and afternoon. Speeding tickets are not cheap anymore. I always say, there goes a day of work down the drain. Save some money and please slow down.

New Hires

Everyone always asks, who is the new deputy? Well, I'm happy to introduce our 3 newest Patrol Deputies, Justin Schreier, Nathan Siemieniewski, and Seth Senn.

Deputy Justin Schreier

I am from Grand Forks, ND. My father is Marc and my mother is Julie. I have one older brother named Anthony.



Schreier

I went to high school at Red River High School. I then attended the University of North

Dakota and graduated with a Bachelor of Criminal Justice and Sociology. This last fall, I attended Northland Community & Technical College in Thief River Falls and completed my MN Skills so I could be a licensed Peace Officer in Minnesota.

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 then did some job shadowing in search of an

idea 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 was 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.

Hobbies: I enjoy deer hunting in the fall, I am a part of bowling leagues in the fall through spring, and I enjoy hanging out with my friends. I also am a big UND hockey fan and follow them throughout the year.

Fun Fact: My favorite football team is the New York Giants.

Favorite Snack: Any form of seasoned pretzel. Dots are my favorite!

Deputy Nathaniel Siemieniewski

I grew up in a small town south of Crookston called Shelly, MN.



Siemieniewski

My father was the fire chief for 18 years, so I grew up around the department and helped form who I am today.

I attended high school at Climax Shelly High School and went to college here at the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

What inspired you to choose law enforcement as a career path? Getting to know the law enforcement officers in the area helped me pick my path. I also knew from a young age that I would help people in one form or another.

Hobbies: I enjoy a lot of outdoors activities such as hunting, fishing, and hiking. I also love spending time with my cat and my family at home.

Fun Fact: I played four sports in high school, and one club sport and one official sport in collage.

Favorite Snack: My favorite snacks would have to be the Chobani flip cups.

Deputy Seth Senn

I grew up in rural east Polk County. I have a beautiful family of three and two chocolate labs who are great hunting partners.

I attended school at Win-E-

Mac and graduated high school in 2015. I went to college at Northland Technical & Community College in Thief River Falls.

What inspired you to choose law enforcement as a career path? I was inspired to enter law enforcement through my involvement in other service organizations.



Senn

I was in the MN Army National Guard for six years and involved in local volunteer organizations. I felt public service as a calling and wanted to

serve my community.

Hobbies: My hobbies include hunting, fishing and spending time outdoors with family and friends.

Fun Fact: I can play the banjo.

Favorite Snack: Coffee and doughnuts.

ICAC

The Polk County Sheriff's Office Investigations Unit is an affiliate of the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. The task force is a network of investigators that work to investigate and prosecute those who exploit children online, and to educate parents and children about potential online risks. This task force works closely with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

The following stats are relating to PCSO investigations from August 2024 to August 2025:

- ▶ 25 total ICAC investigations
 - ▶ 4 reactive cases, 21 proactive cases
 - ▶ 3 Federal cases
- ▶ 3 child victims were rescued from ongoing sexual abuse
- ▶ 10 newly identified child victims through digital media
- ▶ 16 suspects arrested or charged in Polk County
- ▶ Case referrals to Illinois, Montana, Missouri, Wisconsin, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Canada, Sweden, and India
- ▶ 45 search warrants were written
- ▶ 32 devices (cell phones, computers, etc) forensically examined

▶ 6 presentations were given to approximately 160 people

Polk County Investigations did a total of 49 forensic examinations, 18 of which were for various cases other than ICAC.

Winter Prep

To get your car ready for winter, you should check and maintain your tires, battery, fluids and wipers. Additionally, you should prepare a winter car emergency kit with essential items like blankets, a first-aid kit, and traction aids.

Vehicle Maintenance

Tires: Inspect your tires for tread depth and ensure they are inflated to the manufacturer's recommended pressure. Consider using winter tires for enhanced grip on icy or snow-covered roads.

Battery: Check your car's battery and cables for corrosion or damage. A weak battery can fail in cold temperatures.

Fluids: Ensure your antifreeze/coolant is at the correct level and suitable for cold weather. Fill your windshield washer reservoir with a high-quality winter fluid that contains de-icer.

Wipers and Lights: Replace worn wiper blades and check that your headlights, brake lights, and other exterior lights are clean and functional.

Brakes: Have your brake system inspected for wear, as functional brakes are crucial in winter conditions.

Heater/Defroster: Make sure your car's heater and defroster are working properly to provide visibility and comfort.

Emergency Kit Essentials

Warmth: Pack blankets, hand warmers, and winter clothing like gloves and boots.

Tools: Include a snow shovel, ice scraper, flashlight, first-aid kit, and jumper cables.

Traction: Carry a bag of sand or cat litter to help your tires gain traction if you get stuck on ice.

Communication: Keep a fully charged cell phone and a portable phone charger.

Food and Water: Pack non-perishable snacks and bottled water for unexpected delays.

Be Safe.

(Photos by Lacia Hanson)

New Finance Director promotes efficiency

Polk County recently hired Stacy Grover as the new Finance Director. The former Director Ron Denisen retired in December of 2024 and was replaced by Grover in May.

The International Falls, MN, native pursued a degree in



Grover

finance and computer informational systems from Bemidji State University. Grover credits her father, former Director of Campus Services at Minnesota

North College – Rainy River formerly Rainy River Community College, with her desire to pursue a business degree.

After college Grover spent several years with a paper company before shifting into government finance where she worked as the Business Manager for a public school district.

“It was here I had an excellent

mentor who helped develop my skills and passion for the business,” says Stacy.

Before joining Polk County, Grover was working for the Minnesota Department of Education as an auditor principal, but was missing the type work she had done previously in government finance, she says.

“Another part was knowing the county was looking to make significant changes to the current Finance Department,” she explains. “It helps to be the new person coming into an organization with a new perspective when the organization is already open to change.”

Short-Term Goals

In her short time with the county Grover has hit the ground running. Prior to her start a new payroll system and budgeting system was chosen, which she’s been working on implementing.

The budgeting system was implemented in July and the goal is to develop a 5-year

budgeting forecast as well as developing a capital improvement plan, says Grover.

By the end of the year the new payroll system, which is a module add on for the county’s current HR system, will be implemented, she says. “The current system is not user friendly and lacks the functionality that is necessary to efficiently run and manage payroll.”

Grover feels, the change will streamline the current payroll process and allow staff to refocus their time on tasks that have a greater impact on operations. For additional efficiency they’ll also be implementing a new cash receipting system.

Long-Term Goals

She has been providing tons of change in the short term but Grover has long-term goals in mind as well. She strives to provide consistent and knowledgeable financial management to the county which brings financial stability to operations. This is done via consistent

financial reports to the county board and county administrator, and clean financial audit reports, she states.

All of Grover’s goals so far have been the result of an incredibly helpful staff, she says. “I have a lot of questions and tons of things to learn about county operations, as well as, simply getting to know everyone and what specifically they do for the county.

Grover has enjoyed returning to work with a public entity. She feels she gets to wear different hats in her role, and each role provides a differing viewpoint.

“One perspective is as an employee of the public entity where I am responsible for ensuring the financial integrity of the public’s money; and the second perspective is as a taxpayer paying taxes that support the public entity,” she says. “This gives me a unique perspective at times when giving input and assisting to make decisions that will shape the financial integrity of the government entity.”

What is the Polk County Highway Department thinking now?

If you have driven CSAH 9 from the Red River to TH 75(Crookston) or CSAH 21 from the roundabout to the east county line, you may have noticed a little difference in how each of those roads are striped compared to the rest of the county roads in Polk County.

Each of the roads is a minor arterial with higher volumes for traffic than most of our county roads. Both are posted at 60 miles per hour speed limit, and both are constructed with 8 foot shoulders, 2 foot paved and 6 foot gravel.

Polk County Project Engineer Richard Sanders has been on a committee working to find ways to reduce speeds on roadways. There are many ways to do so in the urban/suburban areas of the state, but in the rural areas, not so much.

The striping that was placed on CSAH 9 and CSAH 21 is a possible solution to reducing rural speeds. It also is a safety measure that will help prevent future centerline lane departure crashes. It also allows for future centerline rumble strips.

So the striping is a safety measure to help keep our residents and others safe while driving on Polk County roadways.

Richard Sanders
Polk County Engineer



Richard Sanders / Polk County

New striping on CSAH 9 and CSAH 21 has been implemented as a possible solution to reducing rural speeds. It also is a safety measure that will help prevent future centerline lane departure crashes.

P2P makes 29 arrests in 3rd quarter

The 29 arrests made by the Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force during the 3rd quarter of 2025 has resulted in the recovery of 578 grams of methamphetamine (meth), 34 grams of fentanyl, 321 grams of cocaine, 3.9 pounds of marijuana, and 31 grams of mushrooms, along with the recovery of 11 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 sheriff's deputies provided by Polk, Pennington, Norman, Lake of the Woods, Marshall, Norman, and Roseau counties and police officers from the three major cities in the service area (East Grand Forks, Crookston, and Thief River Falls), 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. 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 and dogs 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 Mayor Mark Olmstad, Polk County Commissioner Warren Strandell, Roseau County Sheriff Steve Gust, Assis-

SIGNIFICANT CASES

- ▶ The 42 cases investigated during the three-month period involved 24 consent searches and 20 search warrants as a part of the 29 arrests.
- ▶ A 20-year-old East Grand Forks mother died of an apparent drug overdose. Her phone was found to contain messages from her Grand Forks supplier. Ultimately, the main supplier's arrest came two days later in Grand Forks as a part of a traffic stop. Seven grams of fentanyl was found in her bra at that time. Another 19 grams were found in the Grand Forks County Correctional Center. The supplier faces a Class A felony delivery of a controlled substance in a correctional facility charge along with even more serious charge of selling fentanyl resulting in a fatal overdose.
- ▶ A long-term cocaine investigation in East Grand Forks/Grand Forks resulted in the arrest of an East Grand Forks Street Department supervisor who had one-half pound of cocaine (with a \$30,000 street value), and four grams of marijuana along with \$3,000 in cash in her rental vehicle. Her two-year-old child was in the car at the time of the arrest. Additional search warrants also found 131 grams of meth, 14 grams of cocaine, 7 grams of fentanyl, 3.8 pounds of marijuana, and \$3,000 in cash.
- ▶ Task Force officers assisted Kittson County officers in a stolen car investigation resulting in a guilty plea last week. [Roseau case is still active]
- ▶ An under-cover buy in Polk County resulted in the seizure of 57 grams of meth along with a full confession.
- ▶ Cocaine is on the rise in the region with "M box 30" fentanyl pills being replaced by fentanyl powder. Meth is the number one drug in use (based on quantity seized).

tant 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
Polk County Board Commissioner



POLK COUNTY BOARD MEETINGS ARE NOW STREAMING.

FIND US ON YOUTUBE

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YouTube

tip 411



HELP FIGHT DRUGS & CRIME.

Send an anonymous tip to the Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force. Text keyword P2PTIP to 847411, add a space, type in your tip information, and hit send.

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A service of
Pine to Prairie Drug Task Force

WCRWD makes progress toward creation

Project would be MN's first new water district in nearly 40 years

The West Central Regional Water District (WCRWD) continues to make steady progress toward becoming Minnesota's first newly formed rural water district in nearly 40 years.

The district is being established under Minnesota Statute 116A, which outlines the procedures for forming and operating a public water system through county and court approval.

The proposed district includes areas of Polk, Norman, and Clay counties, excluding those already served by the Marshall Polk Rural Water System and Moorhead Public Service, and could ultimately provide reliable, high-quality drinking water to nearly 40,000 residents and businesses.

Judicial Process and Next Steps

A final engineering survey has now been completed, marking a significant milestone in the judicial process. The next step will be a public hearing, which is anticipated to take place in December or January in Clay County District Court. All Polk County landowners located within the proposed district boundaries will soon receive an official notice directly from the Clay County District Court regarding this upcoming hearing. Please note that attendance at the hearing is not required. These notices are issued strictly to comply with the statutory procedures that govern the creation of a regional water district. The process is formal and ensures that all affected property owners are informed, even if no immediate action is needed.

Voluntary Participation

The proposed system is entirely voluntary. Cities and rural residents will be able to elect whether or not they want to receive service from the district.



Lucas Spaeth of WCRWD Presenting to the Minnesota House Bonding Tour for the Phase 1 Project Stephen Slick / AE2S

Simply put, it is a “pay for it if you want it” system. Each community will make its own decision about participation, and no resident will be required to connect or pay if they choose not to. For many, this system will represent an additional option for water supply, not a mandate.

Why Rural Water Matters

Many rural wells across western Minnesota continue to face challenges related to arsenic, manganese, and water hardness. Others are dealing with lower water supply levels or reduced well performance over time. Rehabilitating or replacing individual systems can be cost-prohibitive for small towns or households. Regional water systems like WCRWD allow communities to share costs, resources, and operational expertise, resulting in greater reliability, long-term sustainability, and better protection against drought and groundwater limitations.

As WCRWD Board Chair Lucas Spaeth notes, “The system is designed to provide a safe, sustainable, and high-quality water source for decades to come. With grant support and economies of scale, we can make this a cost-effective and flexible option for both cities and rural customers.”

Looking Ahead

Phase 1 within Polk County, as identified in the survey, will consist of a main transmission line running from Climax to Nielsville as well as over to Beltrami. The intent is to connect cities and rural residents, with future phased improvements being evaluated across the county. The detailed survey identifies transmission routes, capacity needs, and water source options, including potential partnerships with existing regional water systems that are already fully permitted and regulated.

Representatives from WCRWD participated in the Minnesota House Bonding Tour held at the University of Minnesota Crookston on September 24th, where they presented the project's regional benefits and long-term infrastructure needs. WCRWD is seeking funding support in the 2026 Legislative Session to help advance Phase 1

design and construction.

Design work and funding applications are ongoing, with state and federal assistance being pursued to minimize local costs. The WCRWD Board, consisting of representatives from Polk, Norman, and Clay counties, will continue to guide the process as the district moves closer to official formation and construction readiness.

Get Involved

Residents are encouraged to stay informed and participate in upcoming surveys and outreach opportunities. Feedback from local landowners and cities remains critical as the district finalizes its service area and prepares for implementation. For more information or to express interest in service, please visit the project website at wcrwd-ae2s.hub.arcgis.com

Stephen Slick
AE2S Project Engineer

FACILITIES UPDATES

On May 3 several Polk County departments and contractors collaborated in replacing the main power switch gear panel that powered the Red River Valley Juvenile Center and Dispatch for the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

The panel was severely outdated, and replacement parts were no longer being produced so the decision was made to replace it entirely.

Planning for the project started in December of 2022. The part was ordered after board approval in October 2023, and this part came with an expected ship date of December 2024. Facilities had a pre-construction meeting with the contractor in January 2025.

On March 26 after updating some batteries a black out test of the building was conducted to ensure the battery backup system worked due to the critical need to keep things running for Dispatch and the Juvenile Center.

Bergstrom Electric and Skinner Roofing worked alongside members of the Polk County Facilities and I.S. Departments, and Tri-County Community Corrections to complete the project.



Josh Plante / Polk County

ABOVE: A new main power switch gear panel was recently installed at the Red River Valley Juvenile Center and Dispatch in the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

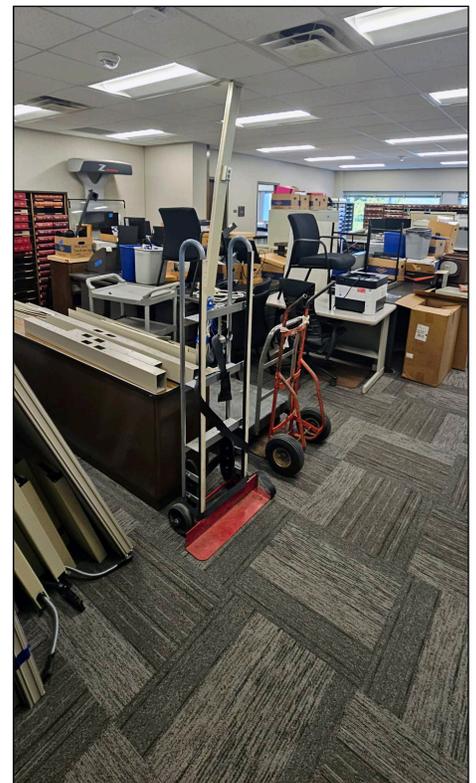
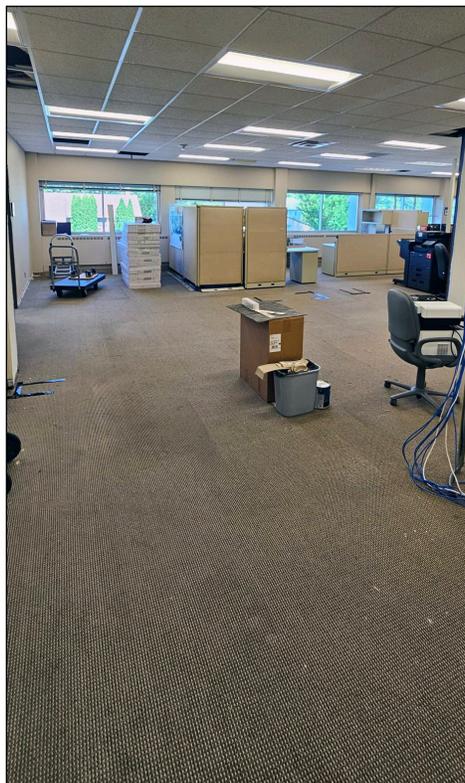
TPSC Carpeting

Many residents might have noticed the recent relocation of the Taxpayer Service Center for a few weeks. This was part of a project to replace the carpeting in their area of the Government Center.

The carpet had several issues with it including aging, being a lighter color which led to many stains, and high-traffic areas was worn out. A darker shade was chosen for the replacement carpet that was installed in 2 feet by 2 feet squares, which will make it easier to replace if it gets damaged.

The entire project took approximately 24 days to complete with most of that time involving the removal office equipment and re-assembling it after new carpet was installed.

Schulz Carpeting handled the removal and install of the new carpet, but not before there was a delay in the project after finding asbestos tile under the old carpet. Building Systems of North Dakota was contracted to remove the tiling.



BELOW: A before (left) and after (view) of the carpeting in the Taxpayer Service Center in the Polk County Government Center.

Radio Tower Fence

A fence was recently installed around the radio tower located near the Polk County Sheriff's Office. With some area radio towers getting vandalized in the past year, it was decided to add a fence around the Sheriff's Office tower.

McGlynn Fence out of Mentor was contracted to complete the fence and it was finished over a few days.

Public Health collabs on purchase of iron lung

Polk County Public Health recently had the opportunity to collaborate with several area organizations to preserve a piece of medical history.

An iron lung was purchased leading to a successful partnership reflecting on the historical consequences of polio.

“We were contacted by Grand Forks Public Health about an iron lung that had become available locally,” says Holly Blilie, Polk County Public Health BSN/RN/PHN. “Together, we explored creative ways to ensure its preservation.”

Grand Forks Public Health, East Grand Forks Heritage Foundation, Grand Forks Historical Society, and Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission worked together to present the historical piece of equipment to area residents.

Preserving History

Purchased by the East Grand Forks Heritage Foundation, the iron lung represents a tangible connection to a period of history when communities were shaped by the polio epidemic, says Blilie. “In coordinating the purchase of the iron lung, our goals reached far beyond securing a physical artifact.”

“By bringing this machine into public view, we create opportunities for intergenerational storytelling,” she adds. “Elders who remember the uncertainty and fear of those decades can share their experiences with younger generations, ensuring that this history is not forgotten.”

Beyond the purchase of the iron lung, the Grand Forks Historical Society hosted Polk County Public Health at the Myra Museum, providing a location for filming a *Remembering Polio* video.

The Grand Forks Historic Preservation also contributed by sharing local photographs that captured the spirit and challenges of that time.

The iron lung remains at the East Grand Forks Heritage Village located in Dr. Wheeler’s office within the Village Square building. They hope to share this piece of history at future community events to continue the conversation.

Public Health Progress

Polio is a viral illness that mainly effects nerves in the spinal cord or brain stem, sometimes resulting in respiratory paralysis.

The iron lung is a negative pressure ventilator that was crucial to the survival of many who contracted polio during the 1940s and 1950s.

It worked by creating a vacuum around the patient’s body, which caused the chest to rise and fall. This process forced air into and out of the lungs, allowing the person to breathe even if their muscles were too weak to do so on their own.

The iron lung serves as a solemn reminder of the isolation and hardship endured by



Holly Blilie / Polk County

Members of Polk County Public Health, Grand Forks Public Health, and the East Grand Forks Heritage Foundation pose with a recently purchased iron lung. The iron lung is on display at the East Grand Forks Heritage Village in Dr. Wheeler’s office.

Remembering Polio
Stories from the Red River Valley

Logos: Grand Forks Historical Society, Polk County Public Health, Grand Forks Public Health

many. Those afflicted with polio often experienced prolonged hospital stays, separation from family, and the anxiety of an uncertain recovery, according to Blilie.

“Making the iron lung available to our communities honors those stories and the resilience of families who endured so much,” she adds.

Beyond remembrance, the iron lung reflects on public health progress and reminds everyone on the fragility of health security, says Holly. “It is a symbol of both medical innovations and the importance of collective action in protecting one another.”

Holly Blilie
Public Health BSN/RN/PHN

POLK COUNTY BOARD MEETINGS ARE NOW STREAMING.
FIND US ON YOUTUBE.
@PolkCoGov
YouTube

ROAD CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The 2025 construction was larger than normal. In February we let a group of projects expecting them to be it for the year. Cost was about 9 million dollars. These projects included:

- ▶ CSAH 9 – TH 75 to Red River – Hot in Place Recycle
- ▶ CSAH 12 – TH 32 (Fertile) to CSAH 41 – Grade Widening/Aggregate Shoulders
- ▶ CSAH 19 – TH 75 to East County Line – Hot in Place Recycle
- ▶ CSAH 45 – TH 32 to CSAH 12 (Mentor) – Hot in Place Recycle
- ▶ CSAH 46 – TH 102 to TH 2 – Bituminous Surfacing/Aggregate Shoulders
- ▶ 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:
 - ▶ CSAH 48 – CSAH 51 to TH 102
 - ▶ CSAH 51 – CSAH 48 to CSAH 44

In late April we heard of counties getting really good bituminous prices for their overlay/surfacing projects. Typical prices were around \$62 per ton and these counties were getting prices in the upper \$40's per ton. So Polk County took a risk and let another 4 projects hoping to get the same results as the other counties, and we did. Prices ranging from \$41 a ton on the eastern part of the county and \$50 - \$54 per ton on the western half of the county. This saved the county over 1.3 million in funding from what was typical. These projects are:

- ▶ CSAH 6 – CSAH 3 to TH 92 (Trail) – Overlay
- ▶ CSAH 13 – CSAH 11 to CSAH 17 – Overlay
- ▶ CSAH 21 – Roundabout to East County Line - Overlay
- ▶ CSAH 49 – TH 32 to CSAH 12 – Overlay
- ▶ CSAH 66 – CSAH 21 to North County Line – Overlay

These projects cost \$5.63 million and were advanced from future County State Aid Funds.

All the projects were completed by October 1, 2025 except for the grade widening project on CSAH 12 which will be completed by the end of the 2025 construction season.

Richard Sanders / Polk County Engineer

Sergeant Chad “Chudley” Johnson retires after 27 years of service with TCCC

Sergeant Chad “Chudley” Johnson is calling it a career after 27 years of service with Tri-County Community Corrections. Chudley began his career with Tri-County



Johnson

in 1998 working at both the jail and juvenile center and quickly became known for his sense of humor, dedication, and unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of both staff and those in custody.

Chudley served on the transition team which was formed prior to the opening of the current Northwest Regional Corrections Center and was instrumental in developing policies, procedures and training protocols that were essential for a successful change in buildings and overall operational philosophies.

Chudley was one of the original five shift supervisors that were selected when the Northwest Regional Corrections Center opened the new facility in March 2008.

In addition to his role as Ser-

geant, Chudley took on expanded roles as the on-site go-to person for the jail's computerized security system and was one of the original Taser trainers for the agency.

Throughout his career, Chudley played a vital role in training new officers, developing operational protocols, and fostering a culture of teamwork and accountability within the facility. His experience and institutional knowledge have been invaluable in maintaining a safe and secure environment for both staff and inmates.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chudley took initiative to manage on-line Court appearances for individuals in custody and crafted a Court Sergeant role that remains in place to this day.

Chudley's retirement marks the end of a distinguished career in correctional service. His legacy of leadership, commitment to community safety, sense of humor and storytelling, will be remembered by colleagues and the broader community for years to come.

Andrew Larson
Director of Tri-County
Community Corrections

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.polkcountymn.gov/ 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 is simply misinformation and please take the time to contact our office 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 the building setbacks not being able to be 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. Our office is more than happy to answer questions and assist you through the permitting process. For more information contact Polk County Planning & Zoning Staff at (218) 281-5700.

Jacob Snyder
Environmental Svcs.
Assistant Administrator

TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS UPDATES

Changing correctional healthcare providers

Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC) will be transitioning to a new correctional healthcare provider at both the Northwest Regional Corrections Center and the Red River Valley Juvenile Center. Despite a lengthy partnership between TCCC and Polk County Public Health (the nursing provider) and Altru Health Systems (medical provider and nursing oversight), recent developments necessitated quick action and a change to a new correctional healthcare provider to ensure TCCC meets the needs of those housed at both the jail and juvenile center.

This change comes as a result of two major developments:

Staffing shortages — Polk County Public Health has struggled to recruit and retain qualified correctional nurses, a challenge facing many rural counties.

Legislative change — a new Minnesota statute (241.021, Subdivision 4f) passed during the 2025 legislative session requires correctional facilities to allow inmates to continue using any valid prescription medica-

tion they arrive with, without adjustment or substitution.

Many jail practitioners have expressed concern that the new law could result in serious injury or death due to the complexities that come from managing healthcare needs of a challenging population and subjects medical providers to increased liability. Due to this change, Altru Health Systems provided notice of their intent to terminate their contract with Tri-County Community Corrections, which ended a 17-year relationship.

While the intent of this legislation is to protect inmates' continuity of care, it has raised serious concerns among correctional health professionals.

Medical staff within correctional facilities must often weigh security, potential for misuse or diversion, and clinical appropriateness when prescribing or continuing medications. Removing that discretion and mandating that all prior prescriptions be continued may create risks both for patients and for facility safety.

This change also places sig-

nificant new financial and operational burdens on counties, who must now ensure access to a wide range of costly medications, regardless of whether safer or more cost-effective alternatives might otherwise be clinically appropriate unless authorization from the original prescriber is obtained, which can be difficult and time-consuming.

At a special meeting held on Monday, September 15, the Regional Corrections Board approved the selection of a proposal submitted by Advanced Correctional Healthcare, Inc. (ACH) to serve as the new correctional healthcare provider.

ACH is one of the nation's largest correctional healthcare contractors, serving hundreds of facilities across multiple states. The company emphasizes strong compliance, consistent staffing, and ethical standards of care, and has achieved top inspection scores and recognitions in other counties.

However, this transition will come at a steep price. Tri-County Community Corrections is projecting a **\$500,000**

increase in annual costs under the new healthcare contract. TCCC Administrative staff stress that while they are committed to ensuring appropriate medical care for individuals in custody, this legislative change has left local governments with little flexibility to balance public safety, medical judgment, and fiscal responsibility.

As this transition unfolds, TCCC will continue to monitor both the quality of care and the costs associated with the new mandate. The concern is not with the idea of inmates receiving necessary healthcare, but with a state mandate that overrides clinical discretion and leaves local taxpayers to absorb the financial impact.

The counties hope that ongoing dialogue with state lawmakers will eventually bring more balance between legislative intent and the practical realities of delivering safe, effective, and sustainable correctional healthcare.

Andrew Larson
Director of Tri-County
Community Corrections

Sentence-to-Service Program coming to an end

Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC) will be ending both the **Sentence-to-Service (STS)** and **Chore Service** programs at the end of the 2025 calendar year. These decisions are driven by a combination of legislative funding reductions and declining participation in recent years.

Sentence-to-Service Work Program

The STS program provided individuals sentenced by the courts an opportunity to perform community service work, contributing to local organizations and public projects. Participants could reduce their jail time, work off community service hours, and/or fines through this program.

Over the years, the STS program has made significant contributions to the community, including:

Assisting government and non-profit agencies: The program provided work crew services to various organizations, helping them complete projects they might not have otherwise been able to accomplish.

Community improvement projects: Participants worked on projects such as park cleanups, trail maintenance, and other public area enhancements, benefiting the local community.

Despite these positive impacts, the program faced challenges:

Loss of funding: During the 2025 legislative session, funding for the program was not

renewed, limiting the counties' ability to sustain operations.

Declining participation: The number of program participants has steadily decreased over the past several years, reducing the overall impact and efficiency of the program.

Chore Service Program

The Chore Service program specifically served individuals aged **60 and older**, assisting them with essential outside household tasks to help them maintain independence and remain in their homes. Services included:

Outdoor chores: Tasks such as raking leaves, snow removal, and changing storm windows/screens.

Minor home repairs: Assistance with small maintenance

tasks to ensure the safety and comfort of participants.

The Chore Service program has had a meaningful impact on the community, providing support to older residents who might otherwise struggle with these tasks. However, Chore Services were delivered through the STS Crew and with the elimination of a FT Crew Leader and outside work crew, Chore Services will no longer be delivered.

While TCCC regrets the loss of these programs, the agency remains committed to supporting community safety, rehabilitation, and resourceful program delivery.

Andrew Larson
Director of Tri-County
Community Corrections

Family childcare needed in county

There is a significant need for more family childcare providers in Polk County. This could be a great opportunity for individuals looking to make a meaningful impact on their community while benefiting from a flexible career.

Here's a breakdown of what might be helpful for those considering this path:

Community Need

There's a shortage of 622 childcare spots for children ages birth to 5 years old in Polk County. This presents a real opportunity for people to step in and provide quality care in their local community.

Benefits of Family Childcare

► **Close-knit Environment:** Families often prefer home childcare because it offers a more personalized, intimate setting for their children.

► **Smaller Group Sizes:** Providers usually care for 10-12 children, which allows them to give more individualized attention to each child.

► **Holistic Development:** Providers are responsible for creating activities that promote the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development of the children.

► **Flexibility:** Family childcare providers enjoy flexibility in their hours.

Licensing Process

► **Timeframe:** The licensing process typically takes around 8-12 weeks.

► **Licensing Assistance:** Polk County Social Services provides guidance and support throughout the licensing process, from the application stage to the final approval. They can answer questions, help with paperwork, and ensure the home is compliant with state regulations.

► **Training:** Aspiring providers can access the required training programs to meet licensing standards. This helps ensure

they are well-prepared to offer quality care for children.

► **Grants:** There are startup grants available to assist individuals in setting up their childcare homes. These grants can be used to cover costs such as supplies, equipment, and other essentials.

► **Further Education:** There are opportunities for ongoing education to help providers expand their knowledge and skills in child development, safety, and early childhood education. This can include workshops, on-line courses, and other training programs.

Although the process may seem overwhelming initially, with the help of the Licensing Unit and the resources available, it can be an incredibly fulfilling and impactful role. Providing quality care for young children is both rewarding and essential for the community, especially as there's a significant need for childcare for infants and toddlers.

By contacting Polk County Social Services, individuals can get all the details about the application process, training, grants, and other resources to make the journey easier.

If you or anyone you know is interested, don't hesitate to reach out for more information! The licensors at Polk County is Annabelle Narlock (annabelle.narlock@co.polk.mn.us) and Barbara Durden (barbara.durden@co.polk.mn.us) or call at 218-281-3127.

Molly Paulsrud
Social Services Supervisor



Would you enjoy a work-at-home career in child care?

Polk County families are in need of Family child care homes (previously called daycare homes). Children under school age, infants, and toddlers of working families have the greatest need for child care. Parents choose home family child care for many reasons.

• *Family child care offers a more close knit setting than a larger day care or center (which are also limited locally).*

• *Family child care usually consists of one provider caring for up to 10-12 children in the comfort of their own home. Providers are required to do day to day activities with each age group which provide for the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of children.*

The licensing process for a Family child care is less complex than opening a center. It takes roughly 6-8 weeks to obtain training, background studies, and complete the inspection of the child care home. Licensing for Family child care is a very thorough process. Family child cares are licensed by the State of Minnesota to comply with health and safety regulations, however, Polk County Social Services can help with the application process and will be the agency that works with a new applicant on licensing and will make a final recommendation to the state. The goal of the Polk County Licensor is to make sure that a licensed provider meets all requirements to ensure that they will provide quality and safe care to children. The Licensor is also available to answer questions and guide a new applicant through the whole process.



Polk County is in need of individuals who have the special gift of caring for children

There are many resources to assist you if you are interested in this career. Start-up grants are available.

More information can be found on the Polk County website
www.co.polk.mn.us/269/Child-Care-Licensing

If you would like to speak to someone or receive additional information, please contact

Polk County Social Services Licensing Unit
612 N. Broadway, Rm #302, Crookston, MN 56716
218-281-3127
pccs.intake@polkcountymn.gov

POLK COUNTY

Minnesota

SOLID WASTE FACILITY UPDATES

The summer of 2025 saw a lot of activity in the world of solid waste – locally, regionally and across the Minnesota. Polk, and our partner counties, have been active in trying to affect the impact upon our communities whether its minimizing negative impact, trying to guide the direction of those initiatives, or take advantage of opportunities presented to benefit the region. Below is a summary of these developments.

2024 Grants

Polk applied for and received two grants from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) in 2024 totaling over \$2.35M. The grants impact the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Fosston and the Organics Material Compost Facility (Compost Facility) at the Polk Landfill Complex. Both projects were scheduled to occur in the fall of 2025.

Both projects have been delayed due to issues with equipment delivery – whether it was missing the delivery to port in a foreign country where the equipment was manufactured or issues at the border gaining clearance to enter the U.S. – the project start date has repeatedly been pushed back. The project officially began on October 2, 2025. This was the date upon which the delivery of the last major piece of equipment was made. The project timeline is estimated to range from 6 to 8 weeks, much of the activity to occur after work hours and on weekends to minimize the impact on facility operations.

The first grant, the Enhanced Recycling Project (Recycling Grant), includes the retrofit of a bag opener and double-deck screen into the MRF. The bag opener should make all the down-stream recycling equipment more efficient and result in the capture of more recyclable materials.

A similar bag opener was recently installed in the Pope-Douglas MRF in Alexandria, MN. The impact they saw from the bag opener was a major increase in the capture of metal and plastic materials. The double-deck screen is to



Jon Steiner / Polk County

The dual-deck fines screen from Spaleck Inc. to recover small recyclables leaving the MRF and clean-up the glass for marketing. The screener is part of the Enhanced Recycling Grant.

be installed on the fines line (materials less than 3 inches in size).

This will be the first MRF in Minnesota to target small recyclables in a waste stream. The result of this modification is closely being watched by Sibelco (formerly Strategic Materials Inc – or SMI – a glass recycler in St. Paul) and Keurig Inc (Keurig Dr. Pepper – or KDP – for their coffee pod containers) and small aluminum containers). The success of this modification would lead to more recyclable material being captured and revenue received.

The second grant, the Co-Collected Organics Composting Project (Compost Grant), includes additional changes to the MRF and improvements to the Organics Compost Facility located at the Landfill Complex. The changes to the MRF include the retrofit of a robotic sorting system to remove specialized compostable bags full or organ-

ics from a passing the MSW stream. The organics bags separated from the waste by these robots would be hauled to the organics compost facility. To make this retrofit, significant reconfiguration of the MRF needs to occur.

Another component of the Composting Grant is a change in compost technology. The Compost Facility currently uses a method referred to as static windrow in which long rows of compostable materials are formed and air, heat and moisture are regulated. Periodic turning of the compost windrow occurs when the composting process slows.

Under this grant, Polk will switch to a system referred to as Aerated Static Pile (ASP) in which larger and deeper piles of compost are built. Under the pile are perforated pipes attached to air blower units. These blowers force air through the pile to aid the compost process. The result is more

compost material is processed, the composting process occurs faster, and the volume of material is managed on a smaller footprint.

The Co-Collected Organics Composting Project will be similar to the Ramsey/Washington County Food Scrap Program (<https://foodscrap-pickup.com/>). You can follow the progress of the Polk County Co-collected Compost Project at <https://www.polkcountymn.gov/634/Co-Collection-Organic-Compost-Program>.

EPR Law

In 2024, Minnesota became the fifth state in the U.S. to enact a law to address waste packaging and recycling using a concept referred to as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). In simple terms the EPR concept requires that producers of packaging are responsible

WASTE

From Page 13

for the collection, transport, processing and recycling of their products. To do so, they are required to register if they sell such products in MN, and to self-organize into what is termed a Producer Responsibility Organization, or PRO.

To date approximately 2,500 organizations have registered in MN, and they have hired the Circular Action Alliance (CAA) to act as the PRO in MN. The PRO is required to put together a plan to address the requirements of the EPR Law and based on a needs assessment. The needs assessment is to be put together in two phases: Phase 1: Preliminary needs assessment and Phase 2: Full needs assessment.

The MPCA has retained Eunomia to conduct both the preliminary and final needs assessment. The MPCA is required to approve/reject the PRO's plan, and a group of 18 appointed members of a Waste Packaging Advisory Board is responsible to review, recommend, and advise both the MPCA and PRO on matters related to the EPR law and plans.

Ad hoc subcommittees of the Advisory Board are reviewing the criteria related to covered materials subject to the EPR law, and the scope of Eunomia's preliminary needs assessment initiative. The preliminary needs assessment is supposed to be completed by 12/31/25, but the Advisory Board has recommended that the MPCA extend out the public comment periods and therefore the deadline of the preliminary needs assessment a few additional weeks given the difficulty in securing the contract with Eunomia and the impact of holidays on the schedule.

Individuals, companies, and public entities involved with matters that deal with waste, recycling or composting should be paying special attention to the EPR initiatives. All of these fields will be impacted by this EPR law, and those PRO requirements are phased in starting at 50% in 2029, 75% in



Jon Steiner / Polk County

A technician from Barr Engineering inserts a probe into a duct at the Polk RRF to capture samples of the flue gas to send to an accredited lab for PFAS testing. Samples of the RRF ash were also taken by Barr Engineering for submittal to a laboratory to detect and measure PFAS compounds as part of the PFAS Study. The Study included RRF's at Polk, Ottertail and Hennepin Counties. PFAS destruction measured in the Study ranged from 99.60% - 99.97% effective.

2030 and 90% by 2031. While those dates seem far off, when factoring in contracts, infrastructure and staffing needs and the associated planning that implementation date will be rapidly approaching.

MPCA C&D Rule Revisions

The MPCA continues to make progress toward their stated goal of adopting new rules that will address what they term 'groundwater impacts' associated with unlined construction and demolition debris landfills (C&D landfills). The stated purpose of this initiative is to eliminate unlined C&D landfills in MN, require all replacement C&D landfills are constructed with a liner and leachate collection system and enhance cover requirements for closure. As most of these unlined C&D landfills are located in rural MN, and many rural unlined C&D landfills are heavily subsidized to encourage

legal disposal, this initiative by the MPCA will have the impact of closing most of them and leaving no comparable alternative in terms of cost or convenience in its place.

The MPCA recently released its draft C&D landfill rules (C&D rules) for public comment. The MPCA continues to engage some of these impacted facilities on issues of concern and on possible means of reducing the expected negative impacts that might be realized on those communities served. At present, the MPCA anticipates they will be adopting these C&D rules in the Spring of 2026.

PFAS Testing at RRF

Polk is one of three Resource Recovery Facilities (RRFs) in Minnesota that was tested for PFAS and PFOS (a.k.a. the 'forever chemical') in its emissions and combustor ash. The other two RRFs tested were the facilities in Hennepin County

(HERC) near the Target Field and Ottertail County (Prairie Lakes) in Perham, MN. The point of the testing was as part of a study to determine the fate of PFAS in the RRFs – or the level of PFAS destruction via waste combustion.

The results of the three RRFs – which were chosen to represent the spectrum of RRFs in Minnesota from largest to smallest and no waste processing to high-level waste processing were very favorable. Based on the characteristics of waste, and the general assumed content of PFAS per ton in the waste stream, a destruction efficiency was determined. The results of these three RRFs – which is presumed to be the results of all RRFs in MN – was that less than 99.6% of PFAS were destroyed in the emissions and the combustor ash.

Because most other methods of waste management either

WASTE

From Page 14

bind or recirculate PFAS (non-destruction) or achieve destruction at much lower rates using much more costly systems, there is great interest in these findings. The data and findings from this study of RRFs in MN has been turned over to the MPCA and other interested parties for review.

Stack Test

The Resource Recovery Facility (RRF) in Fosston is required to conduct stack tests for emissions each year. After a record of compliant stack tests, the frequency of the full stack test is reduced to every third year, and testing of our emissions equipment in the first and second years between full tests. In 2025 the RRF was required to conduct the full stack test. Unit 1 passed all limits easily. Despite similar test results on Unit 2 for most limits, a large spike occurred on one of the three test runs for dioxin/furan. That exceedance was so high that it pulled the average over the federal limit (but still within the state limit).

Polk disputed the test result but could not identify any issue with the sampling protocol or lab testing. So, despite no equipment issues or breakdown, and all other parameters indicating otherwise, we accepted the lab result and immediately retested the unit. Instead of three test runs, we performed six on Unit 2. All six test runs easily passed the dioxin/furan test. Compliance was demonstrated without making any modification to equipment or operation of the unit.

Polk will now need to demonstrate

compliance for dioxin/furan on Unit 2 each of the next two years in order to get back to testing every three years.

Landfill Permit

Polk applied for its 10-year landfill permit renewal in 2015. The permit was issued, contingent upon subsequent approval of its Operations & Maintenance (O&M) and Industrial Solid Waste Management (ISWM) Plans in February 2017. The issues in the plans that agreement could not be reached over included some types of materials for acceptance, use of other materials, and compost-related issues. The compost produced from the facility was not allowed to be used off-site (i.e. sold).

Polk applied for major permit modifications in 2020 to accept certain materials for composting, approve testing protocols and to remove the on-site restriction on compost use for off-site purposes. That permit modification had not been approved.

Polk also applied for a major permit modification in 2025 to expand the MSW landfill footprint to account for limited acreage gained because of US Army Corp of Engineers wetland permits. That major modification was not approved, but the MPCA approved of the construction plans and designs and issued letters of no action to Polk for the MSW built in 2024.

On September 29, 2025, the plans required as a condition of the 2017 permit, as well as both the 2020 and 2024 major permit modifications applied for, were approved and updated landfill permit issued to Polk.

Polk is required to apply for its next 10-year permit renewal by August 2026.

Jon Steiner
Director of Environmental Services

VALUATION REPORT

As determined by the Polk County Assessor for the purpose of assessing property taxes that will be payable in 2026, the 2025 valuation of real estate in the county now totals \$8,820,778,300.

This new total amount of valuation represents an increase of \$291,101,600 over 2024, or about 3.4 percent.

Of the new 2025 total valuation amount:

- ▶ 57.7% is for tillable agricultural lands
- ▶ 8.0% is for all other agricultural property
 - ▶ This includes 2.8% for building sites (rural homes and garages on 1 acre)
- ▶ 24.0% is for residential properties
- ▶ 5.2% is for seasonal recreational properties
 - ▶ 1.9% is for commercial properties
 - ▶ 1.8% is for industrial properties
 - ▶ 1.4% is for "all other" property classifications

New construction accounted for \$32,317,300 of the total valuation.

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

Note — the figures above are based on the 2025 PRISM 2 report (Final).

The valuation total does not include railroad or utility values.

POLK - NORMAN - MAHNOMEN SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

Polk County Public Health
218-280-1117

Norman-Mahnomen Public Health
218-280-3894



All discussions, information, and treatment are strictly private and confidential.



Ada ● Crookston ● East Grand Forks ● McIntosh ● Mahnomen ● Twin Valley

TOGETHER WE CAN build a better future!



Polk County Social Services
(877) 281-3127

Foster Care Program

Why provide foster care?

- * Making a difference in a child's life
- * Foster parenting changes generations
- * To provide a temporary or permanent, safe, loving home for a child in need

If you want to make a difference today contact Polk County Social Services or visit our website at www.polkcountymn.gov

Scan this code with your smartphone.



