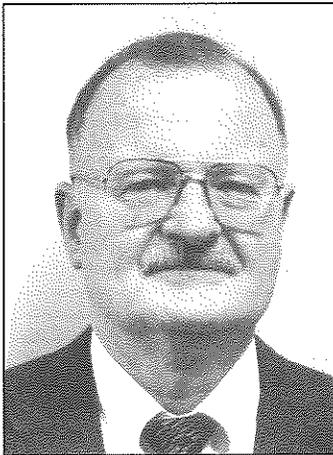


Polk County Newsletter

Spring 2004

Montague is new chair

Board re-organizes for 2004



Bill Montague

Bill Montague, Crookston, is serving as chair of the Polk County Board in 2004. The commissioner representing District 3, Montague succeeds Eugene "Jeep" Mattson, East Grand Forks. Montague had been the vice chair in 2003. The new vice chair is District 1 Commissioner Jerry Jacobson, Fertile.

The leadership changes on the board occurred as a part of the annual re-organization that occurs at the first meeting in January. The board maintains a policy of rotating the offices of chair and vice chair among the

commissioners.

Jacobson also currently serves as the chair of the Polk County Local Social Services Agency Board, with District 2 Commissioner Warren Strandell, East Grand Forks, as the vice chair. The Social Services Board, which meets monthly as a separate body, is made up of the five county commissioners and two at-large members. Unlike the County Board, which operates on a January-December year, the Social Service Agency Board operates on a fiscal year basis from July 1 through June

30.

Ongoing budget concerns, building issues and how any new state legislation might affect operations will be among the most pressing issues that the Board will deal with in 2004, according to Montague.

"With the cooperation of department heads and of all county employees, we have been able to withstand the extensive reductions made by the state in the HACA (Home & Agricultural Credit Aid) operational supports that are

See BOARD, Page 2

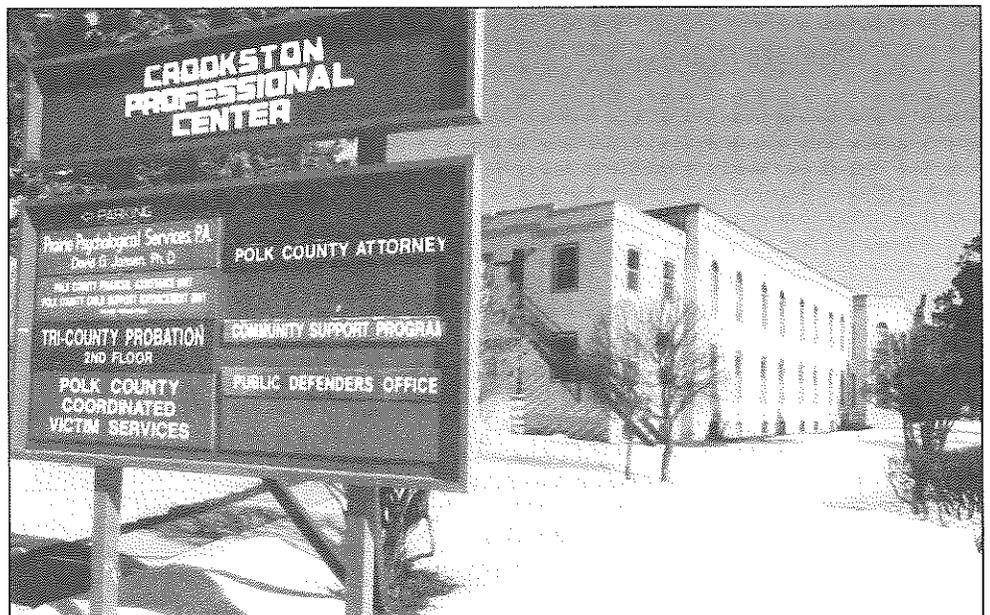
Aging Professional Center to be retired

Replacement of office building is planned

The questions of "who, what, where and why" are being asked regularly as Polk County officials deal with the issue of replacing the aging Crookston Professional Center building.

The "why" was answered last summer when the County Board toured the 104-year-old building, which is located in the block northeast of the courthouse. The tour resulted in agreement that the old building, which was purchased by the county in 1992 with the expectation that it would provide needed office space "for about seven years," should be replaced because of concerns of safety and efficiencies.

"We've known for some time that major improvements would be needed to make the building comply



See PROFESSIONAL, Page 2

104-year-old building housed St. Vincent's Nursing Home for many years

Professional Center replacement eyed

Continued from Page 1

with fire and other code regulations but with its age and general condition, we can't justify spending a lot of money on something that has a limited future," said County Board chair Bill Montague. "The building, which was never meant to be an office building in the first place, has served the county well, but the board is in full agreement that the time has come for it to be replaced."

Built as a hospital

Originally built as a hospital, the building served as St. Vincent's Nursing Home for many years before becoming an office building and eventually being purchased by the county. Currently located there are the Income Maintenance and Child Support divisions and one social worker unit of the Polk County Social Services Department, the County Attorney's Office, Minnesota Public Defenders office, Polk County Probation Services, and Migrant Health Services.

Montague and Commissioner Warren Strandell are the County Board's representatives on the Building Study Committee. Both served in the same capacity when the county purchased and remodeled the former Maury's TV & Appliance store building in East Grand Forks into what has become a very successful and efficient satellite facility.

One-stop center

The East Grand Forks building currently has offices for seven agencies in a one-stop service center. Those agencies include: Polk County Social Services, Polk County Public Health, Tri-County

Corrections/Probation, Northwest Mental Health Center, Child Care Resource and Referral Office of Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Minnesota Workforce Center, and the First Call for Help program.

Other members of the committee, which has been meeting regularly over the past six months, are: County Coordinator Jack Schmalenberg, County Building & Grounds Superintendent Jan Skyberg, Social Services Director Kent Johnson, County Public Health Director Brenda Menier, County Attorney Office Manager Norma Johnson, Northwest Mental Health Center Director Dan Wilson, Tri-County Community Corrections Director Susan Mills, and Minnesota Workforce Center Manager Carolyn Toupin.

Location an issue

The "where" question relates to the location of a new office structure — could it be provided as an addition to the courthouse or constructed as a separate building on the current site of the Professional Building. Parking and accessibility issues have been a part of the discussions.

Discussions have placed importance on the benefit of having all of Social Services "under one roof." Social Services currently has offices in two separate ground level areas of the courthouse plus the units that are based in the Professional Building.

In the preliminary planning that has been done by the architectural firm of

Widseth Smith Nolting, the County Attorney's Office and space for public defenders would have ready access to the courtrooms and Court Administration offices. Public Health, which is located in office space at 721 Minnesota St. in southwest Crookston, would also be brought into the complex to allow a closer working relationship with Social Services among other agencies.

Leasing considered

Space that could also be provided through long-term lease agreements for Northwest Mental Health, the Minnesota Workforce Center and Tri-Valley Opportunity Council is also being considered.

The question of "how" deals with how to pay for a building project. While size, location and construction costs have not been determined, county officials believe that available fund balances, which have been developed and ear-marked over the past six to eight years to address future capital needs issues, could be tapped to pay for a significant portion, if not all of a building project.

"The County Board and Building Committee will be discussing this project in great detail over the next few months," Montague says, "and, if all proceeds well, we could be in a position to begin construction yet this year."

Board

Continued from Page 1

given to counties. In fact, our financial condition is very good. That situation is even more important now," he says, "because the time has come for us to deal with some serious building issues. Having available funds with which to work will make addressing those issues much easier both for the board and for property owners in the county."

The most immediate of the building issues involves replacement of the 104-year-old Crookston Professional Building, which houses the Income Maintenance and Child Support divisions and one social worker unit of the county's Social Service Department, the County Attorney office, and County Probation program. Also a concern is how to deal with the steadily growing issue of overcrowding of the jail space at the Northwest Regional Corrections Center in Crookston.

Beginning in January

Montague to head state Health Services Advisory Committee

Polk County Commissioner Bill Montague, Crookston, is serving as the chair-elect of the State Community Health Services Advisory Committee (SCHSAC).

The committee, which has 51 voting members representing the community health boards in Minnesota, advises and makes recommendations to the commissioner of health on matters relating to the development, funding and evaluation of community health services. The committee also makes policy recommendations to the Association of Minnesota Counties organization, which represents the

state's counties on legislative matters.

The 51 voting members include one each from the 25 single county health boards (including Polk County), the four large city health boards, and the 22 multi-county health boards. Staff members of the State Department of Health participate in discussions but do not vote on the issues.

Current committee chair is Rice County Commissioner Heather Robbins, Northfield. Crow Wing County Commissioner Ed Larsen, Pequot Lakes, is the past chair. Montague will become the chair in January 2005.

Affeldt elected chair of Minnesota Rural Counties Caucus organization

Polk County Commissioner Warren Affeldt, Fosston, is the new chairman of the Minnesota Rural Counties Caucus (MRCC). The organization represents 22 rural counties in northern and west central Minnesota on issues dealing with the legislature and state government agencies.

Affeldt, who succeeds Lake County Commissioner Clair Nelson, Finland, was elected at the annual meeting of the organization held Jan. 9 at Bemidji. The new vice chairman is Roseau County Commissioner Orris Rasmussen, Roseau. Marshall County Commis-



Warren Affeldt

sioner Delray Larson, Gatzke, is the organization's secretary-

treasurer.

Among the issues that MRCC will be watching this session will be one that requests funding for a proposed 10-ton highway route from Roseau to Minn. Highway 92 at Gully in Polk County. Other issues of concern deal with the "impaired waters" legislative proposal that is being sought by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency as a way to charge an administration fee against properties that have septic systems, the need for additional general highway funding, and any measures to change current drainage laws.

Negotiations completed for 5 work groups

New wage agreements are in place to continue Polk County government services and operations as normal for the next three years. Four of the six organized employee groups have approved new wage and benefits contracts, while the other two groups are reviewing proposals.

The new agreements, which cover the period from Jan. 1, 2004 through Dec. 31, 2006, provide two percent salary increases in each of the three years along with a one-time \$50 per month increase in the total benefits package. The same wage and benefit increases were provided for the 101 employees in the Social Services Department, who are not organized, as well as for administrative personnel in the other departments.

Talks expedited

The negotiations, according to Commissioners Warren Affeldt and Bill Montague, who represented the County Board, were expedited this year by work that had been done in developing the previous three-year wage and benefits contracts.

The organized employee bargaining groups and number of members in each are:

- American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, 57 (office and public health nurse workers).
- International Union of Operating Engineers (known as "the 49ers")-Maintenance Division, 19 (Highway Department maintenance workers).
- 49ers-Engineering Division, 11 (Highway Department engineers).
- 49ers-Solid Waste Division, 26 (Transfer Station and Incinerator workers).

The members of two locals of Law Enforcement Labor Services (LELS) are currently reviewing new contract proposals. Local 216 represents eight dispatchers in the Sheriff's Department, while Local 57 represents 23 Sheriff's Department deputies.

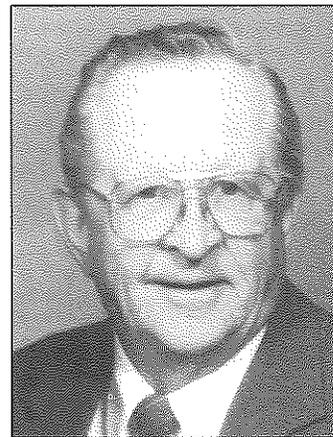
For 3-year term

Carlson joins Red Lake Watershed board

Allan Carlson, Erskine, is the new member representing East Polk County on the Red Lake Watershed District Board of Managers. He was appointed to a three-year term on the board by the Polk County Board to succeed Dennis Nikolayson, Erskine, who had served in the position the previous six years.

"I'm finding the issues that come before the board to be very interesting," Carlson says. "They are more complex than I ever thought, but I know the area and its soils and the board and the staff are good, knowledgeable people, who are helping me get up to speed. I'm looking forward to taking care of the needs and concerns of Polk County."

A native of Fosston, Saskatchewan, Carlson moved to the Erskine community with his family when he was 13. A 1946 graduate of the Northwest



Allan Carlson

School of Agriculture in Crookston, he was a route salesman for Eddy's Bakery for 10 years before working in the engineering department of Garden Valley Telephone Co., Erskine, from 1968 until 1988. In that job, Carlson was involved with "burying a lot of cable from Erskine to

Fourtown to Clearwater County," he says.

While working for Garden Valley Telephone Co., he and his family also owned and operated the Dairy Queen store at Mentor for 11 years (1967-78).

From the success he had in growing geraniums in his backyard, Carlson started Oak Grove Nursery in 1991 and operated that business until selling it to his daughter and son-in-law in 2000. He is a member of the board of directors of the Inter County Community Council, the community action agency located at Oklee.

Carlson and his wife, Elaine, who were married in 1951, have four children: Bob, Erskine; Ron, Alexandria, Minn.; Kathy (Patrick) Paquin, Erskine; and Gary, Minneapolis.

County Board Meeting Times

8:30 a.m. on 1st Tuesday of each month

1:20 p.m. on 3rd Tuesday

8:30 a.m. on 4th Tuesday

All meetings are open to the

public.

Commissioners:

Dist. 1 — Jerry Jacobson

Dist. 2 — Warren Strandell

Dist. 3 — Bill Montague, chair

Maps Available

The new Polk County map, with labels showing the street and avenue locations in the new rural addressing system, is available for sale at both the County Highway Department and at the County Auditor's Office. Cost of the maps is \$2 each.

Polk County Employee Anniversaries in 2004

Hire	Employee	Department/Position
35 Years		
5/1/69	Don Juvrud	Public Wrks-maintenance supt.
30 Years		
6/14/74	Rand Hughes	Assessor-appraiser/tax off. IV
8/21/74	Ralph Montreuil	Transfer Station-landfill tech.
10/14/74	Michael Pahlen	Public Wrks-physical plant tech.
25 Years		
1/2/79	Norma Johnson	Co. Attorney-office mgr.
3/1/79	Bruce Anderson	Public Wrks-stock clerk
6/5/79	Verna Gatheridge	Auditor-clerk typist cashier III
8/20/79	Kathleen Mertens	Social Svcs-executive ass't.
9/17/79	Arlene Berry	Social Svcs-office support spec.
20 years		
5/9/84	Karl Erickson	Sheriff-chief deputy
8/1/84	Kent Johnson	Social Svcs-director
15 Years		
1/1/89	Willard Wilson	Solid Waste-facility mgr.
3/6/89	Bob Schauer	Sheriff-clerk typist cashier II
4/24/89	Teresa Genereux	Social Svcs-accounting tech.
5/1/89	Todd Spray	Sheriff-patrolman
5/17/89	Todd Trandby	Transfer Station-landfill tech.
6/1/89	Rhea Grove	Attorney-administrative ass't. I
6/12/89	Celeste Morris	Auditor-clerk typist cashier IV
6/19/89	Betty Solie	Social Svcs-case aid
10/1/89	Joanne Beiswenger	Public Health-RN II
10/1/89	Joanne Lemke	Public Health-clerk typist II
10/2/89	Larry Orvik	Attorney-ass't. co. attorney
11/6/89	Keith Swenson	Sheriff-patrolman
11/15/89	Terry Dusek	Auditor-clerk typist cashier III
12/20/89	James Arneson	Social Svcs-supervisor
10 Years		
1/4/94	Karen Warmack	Social Svcs-supervisor
1/24/94	Randall Sondrol	Sheriff-drug task force
2/23/94	Mary Olson	Social Svcs-social worker
5/2/94	Karen Biermaier	Social Svcs-child support off.
5/11/94	Pam Cornia	Attorney-clerk typist cash. IIIA
6/6/94	Nancy Shafer	Sheriff-dispatcher
6/6/94	Debra Hanson	Social Svcs-case aid
6/28/94	Rebecca Baatz	Social Svcs-case aid
8/1/94	Randall Olson	Public Wrks-maintenance II
8/29/94	Randall Huot	Public Wrks-prev. mtc. tech
5 Years		
1/1/99	Warren Affeldt	County Board-commissioner
1/21/99	Ron Dennison	Auditor-accounting officer
2/3/99	Erik Sandberg	Solid Waste-baler/forklift opr.
2/22/99	Bradley Hillman	Social Svcs-social worker
6/1/99	Beverly Johnson	Assessor-clerk typist cashier III
6/1/99	Todd Lewis	Public Wrks-sign person
6/18/99	Peggy Vizenor	Social Svcs-case aid
6/28/99	Melissa Brault	Social Svcs-case aid
8/1/99	Connie Desrosier	Recorder-clerk typist cashier III
8/1/99	Les Goodwin	Veterans-veterans service officer
9/1/99	Karen Broekemeier	Social Svcs-social worker
9/20/99	Christine Delisie	Social Svcs-financial worker
12/13/99	Scott Oliver	Public Wrks-eng. tech II-B

Another big road work year scheduled

Spring is just around the corner and before you know it the orange road construction signs will start going up. Polk County has another big construction season ahead.

Map at right details the work planned in 2004

Not only will there be numerous road projects but also a number of township bridge replacements.

The following roads will be grade widened and have a bituminous overlay constructed:

- CSAH 9 from TH 220 to TH 75 (in Crookston)
- CSAH 1 from TH 75 (in Nielsville) to TH 9.

This work will include widening the shoulders and flattening the existing in-slopes.

The following gravel roads will have bituminous surfacing and aggregate shoulders constructed:

- CSAH 44 from TH 2 (13 miles east of Crookston) to CSAH 53

• CSAH 66 from CSAH 17 (3 miles east of East Grand Forks) to CSAH 21

Span bridges will be constructed in Northland and Sandsville townships and approximately 15 box culverts will be installed throughout the county.

The total value of the work planned this summer is approximately \$8 million.

Motorists are asked to be patient when in construction zones not only on Polk County roads but also on state and other roads. The contractors and government employees will be working long hours to get the work completed and they don't need impatient drivers screaming at them because you might have to wait a few minutes before traveling on.

If you have any questions concerning this year's construction program, please give our office a call at 218-281-3952 and ask for either Darin Carlstrom at ext. 2003 or me at ext. 2001. — **Richard Sanders, County Engineer**

Rural addressing to be ongoing

With all 2,465 rural road intersections in Polk County now signed and some 4,350 individual rural addresses determined and signed, the natural assumption would be that the rural addressing project has been completed.

Wrong, according to Polk County Highway Engineer Richard Sanders.

The work will never really be done, he says, because new addresses and signs will always be needed as new home locations are established.

For those who might need to know how to obtain an address number and sign, he offers these instructions:

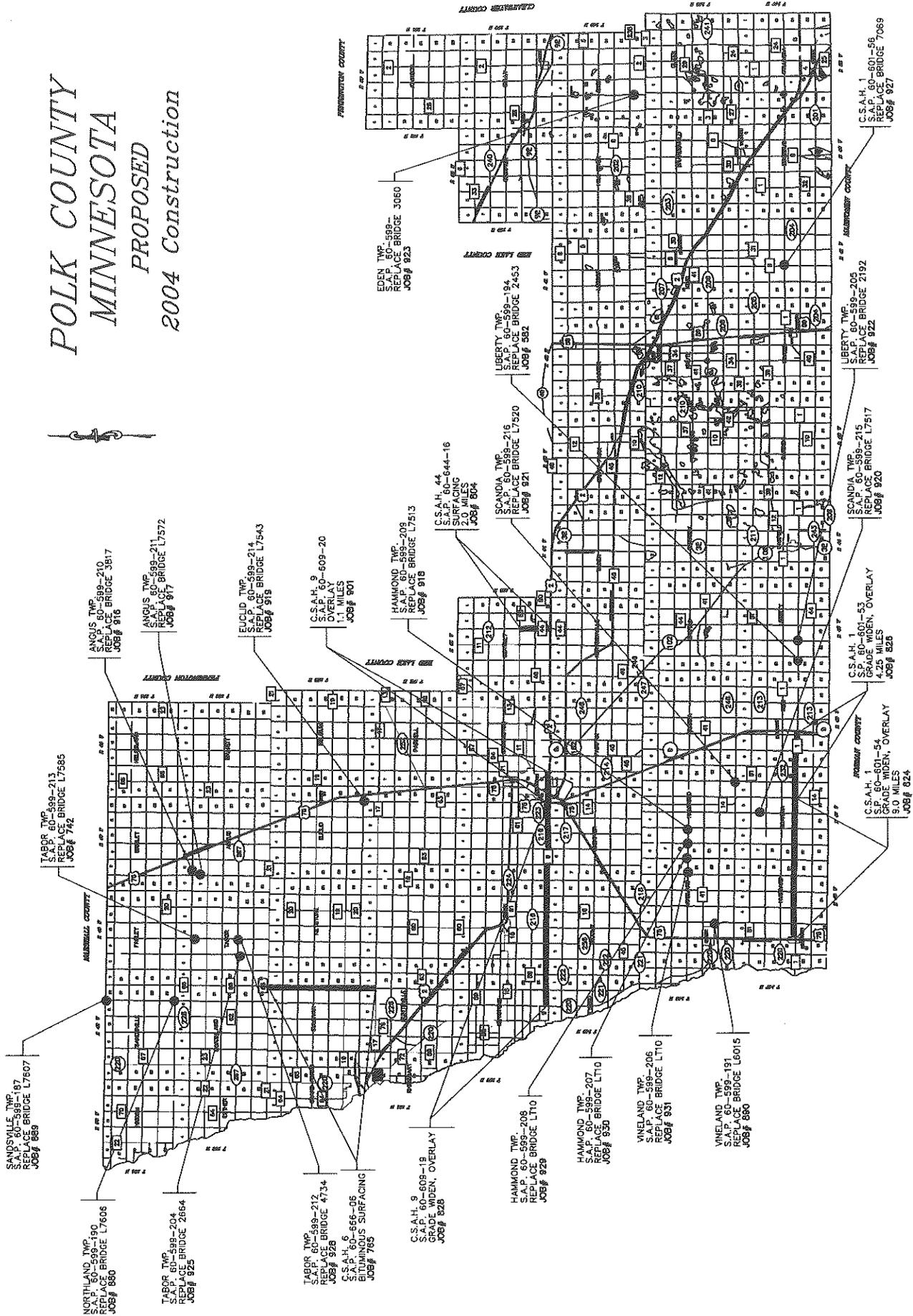
Contact the Polk County Highway Department office in Crookston to receive an application form. Information provided on the form, along with a

\$50 payment to cover the cost and erection of the sign, will set into motion the process whereby the county's consultant will determine the address based upon the GPS (geographical positioning system) location. That address will then be provided both to the resident and to the local Post Office.

When the list of new addresses needed has reached 40 to 50, the new address signs will be ordered. The Highway Department will erect the address signs.

Rural residents are asked to pay attention to the intersection signs when driving throughout the county. If an intersection seems to be signed incorrectly, or if a sign appears to need some maintenance, the Polk County Highway Department should be contacted.

POLK COUNTY MINNESOTA PROPOSED 2004 Construction



Task force formed to study alternatives

Jail crowding problem is growing

A task force consisting of commissioners and law enforcement officials from Polk, Norman and Red Lake counties has been formed to research and consider alternatives to address the ever-growing problem of jail crowding at the Northwest Regional Corrections Center in Crookston.

The mission of the group, which met March 1, is to develop a long-range game plan to address the problem. With at least one of the possibilities likely to be expansion of the jail, the effort will include researching the cost of developing additional beds. The effort is intended to involve and educate the public, which will have a say in the final plan.

Owned by Polk County, the Corrections Center building houses both the Polk County Sheriff's Department and the jail.

Joint powers agreement

The jail, which has served the three counties since its was opened in 1976, is operated by the Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC) system that was created through a joint powers agreement developed between the three counties in 1974. The portion that each county contributes toward the cost of operating the jail is determined by its use of the facility and corrections services.

In recent years, the jail has regularly had prisoner occupancies that exceed its licensed limit of 32 "secure" beds. That situation presents safety issues both for prisoners and the professional staff while stretching state regulations.

However, because of a solid record of operation of the jail, the Minnesota Department of Corrections has allowed TCCC to temporarily house additional prisoners above the licensed limit — up to a safe number — after which it must find beds at other facilities. TCCC recently had as many as 14 prisoners "out" at other jails in the region, some as far as 200 miles away.

High cost for beds

At the average of from \$55 to \$60 per prisoner per day, that projects to a cost of \$25,000 for a month. For a full year, the cost would be \$300,000... plus those expenses related to transportation and deputy time.

TCCC has "rented" as many as 926 bed-days in a year (1999). In the first two months of 2004, it has already rented 524 bed-days.

The task force was formed at the request of the Regional Corrections Board, which consists of two commissioners each from

Jail facts

DOC licensed jail capacities:

Center (med.-max. security).....	32
Annex (minimum security).....	49

Actual average daily populations:

1991.....	72
1997.....	82
1999.....	99
2001.....	89
2003.....	86
DOC recommended daily pop.	65

No. beds leased from other counties:

2003 (Full year).....	274
2004 (Jan.-Feb.).....	527

Cost of leased jail beds:

2003 (Full year).....	\$13,152
2004 (Jan.-Feb.).....	\$25,766

No. Resident Days:

	Male	Female
1998.....	29,485.....	2,823
1999.....	32,726.....	3,541
2000.....	27,094.....	3,004
2001.....	29,604.....	2,708
2002.....	25,123.....	2,632
2003.....	27,783.....	3,464

the three counties. Board members are: Warren Strandell, chair (Polk); Warren Olson, vice chair (Norman); Ron Weiss, secretary (Red Lake); and directors Warren Affeldt (Polk), Lee Nielson (Red Lake) and Steve Bommersbach (Norman). Susan Mills is executive director of TCCC.

Criminals must pay

Discussion items at the meeting included that the public wants criminals to pay for their deeds with real jail time but that finding a place to lock them up isn't that easy and can become very costly. In addition to covering the expense of "farming out" prisoners is the problem of finding beds in other facilities. The jail crowding issue is a statewide problem.

Compounding the issue, members of the group noted, is that the Minnesota Legislature has responded to the peoples' message about locking more of 'em up by passing new legislation, but that it hasn't provided for its state prison space needs. As a result, the legislature has determined that state prisoners will serve the last year of their sentences in local jails, further contributing to the jail bed shortage problem for counties.

\$64 million question

The corrections board is dealing with the \$64 million question of trying to determine the point at which the cost of renting jail

space (when it is available at other facilities) reaches that of paying for construction projects to create additional beds.

With the average cost of constructing a new, single "secure" jail cell at \$100,000, cost estimates for construction projects quickly run into the millions of dollars when that number is multiplied by the number of beds that are projected. Compounding the situation is that, at current funding intentions, the State of Minnesota is only planning to pay counties something less than \$12 a day to house the "short term" prisoners that it sends back to local jails.

In an attempt to reduce its jail crowding issues, Tri-County Corrections regularly operates two fulltime crews in a Sentence to Service program. The program allows prisoners to reduce their jail time by one day for each day of work performed on community projects. Another 30 offenders of non-violent crimes are currently paying for the cost of leasing electronic home monitoring equipment that allows them to serve time at their homes. Without the use of house arrest sentences and without the STS program, another 30 beds would be needed on a daily basis.

Meth problem

The increasing crime rate, especially from meth cases, doesn't present a bright side to the crowding problem. Another more recent contributor to the growing number of incarcerations has been the increased number of beds needed for female prisoners. Beds for female prisoners has increased up to three times the number needed only a few years ago.

Besides the regional corrections board members, others participating in the first discussions were:

District Judge John Roue; District Judge Richard Taylor; county commissioners Richard Andring and Ed Miller (Norman), Nancy Haugland and Velma Oakland (Red Lake), and Eugene Mattson and Bill Montague (Polk); county attorneys Greg Widseth (Polk) and Dan Geller (Red Lake); Polk County Chief Deputy Sheriff Karl Erickson; Red Lake County Sheriff Leslie Arlt; Polk County Coordinator John Schmalenberg; and Polk & Red Lake County Court Administrator Nancy Narlock.

Other TCCC staff participating in the discussions are: Assistant Administrator Bret Burkholder, Director of Court Services Tami Jo Lieberg; Security Supervisor Andrew Larson, and Administrative Assistant Jean Clauson.

Authority for larger facility was requested when Northwest Regional Corrections was built

The Northwest Regional Corrections Center opened in 1976 with space for 28 prisoners. Polk County, as the host county and owner of the new jail building operated by Tri-County Community Corrections through a joint powers agreement with Norman and Red Lake counties, had requested authority to construct a considerably larger facility but the Minnesota Department of Corrections, at that time, would only grant a license for 28 beds. Besides male and female prisoners, the new jail also held juvenile offenders.

By the early 1980s, the facility was already too small to house the average daily population that had quickly grown to 50 or more offenders. To address that issue in 1985, TCCC renovated a nearby building that had been constructed as a TB sanitarium at the turn of the century and more recently had housed the Glenmore facility for chemical dependency treatment.

Again became too small

The newly named jail "Annex" building provided space for 36 minimum security adults. A state grant paid for the remodeling that was needed. However, within three years that facility was already too small, requiring TCCC to add additional staff to meet DOC requirements for allowing it access the second floor and increase the number of licensed beds to 49.

Between the Corrections Center building and the Annex, licensing then allowed as many as 81 prisoners to be housed in the two facilities. Seven of the beds in the Annex were used to house juvenile offenders, but that space, too, was outgrown within two years.

Juvenile facility

Polk County then embarked on a project to construct an addition to the Corrections Center building for a Juvenile Facility. It contains eight secure detention beds and eight residential, non-secure beds for adolescents who are from 10 to 18 years old.

Today, the Corrections Center has space for 32 maximum/medium risk prisoners. The Annex has space for 49 men in a minimum security status.

The need for jail space has far outweighed the space available during the

past decade. In an attempt to hold the costs for leasing jail space from other counties in check, both adult facilities operate above licensed limits on an ongoing basis. However, TCCC has regularly faced jail populations that have forced it to lease jail bed space from counties as far as 150 miles away.

Bed cost plus time

Leasing jail space requires prisoner transport at the expense of the Sheriff's Department plus the cost of the bed, which has a range of \$50 to \$60 per day, per bed. In the first months of 2004, TCCC has experienced a continual need to lease bed space. As many as 14 prisoners/day were housed in other counties in one month at a cost of \$25,000. As northwest Minnesota experiences an ever tightening of jail capacity, finding beds at any cost has become very difficult.

While the high cost of leasing beds from other counties is obvious, the risk of operating in excess of licensed capacity creates other concerns. Prisoner assaults, fights and other incidents are more frequent, presenting the possibility of danger to staff and to the prisoners while subjecting the buildings to more damage.

Control becomes problem

The ability to control behavior and maintain order can be considerably undermined by a high population in jail facilities, even those with excellent safety and operational inspection records.

As the Regional Corrections Board has continued to struggle with the demands of the growing population, new laws and legislative action also affect the numbers of people going to jail and the length of time served. In the three-county area, the judiciary and prosecuting attorneys have made many concessions to use electronic home monitoring and other programs to decrease some jail sentence lengths, but the crowding issues and concerns continue to grow.

In fact (especially with the advent of the fast-growing meth problem), all projections are that there will be little choice but to provide more jail space or to allow criminals to go unpunished. — **Susan Mills, Executive Director, Tri-County Community Corrections**

Tax abatement plan available for new housing

Cities in Polk County now have the opportunity to offer a tax abatement program designed to promote the development of new, single-family home construction.

The tax abatement program, which was first proposed to the County Board by the City of Crookston, was expanded by the commissioners to be available to all cities in the county. The program requires participation by the three primary taxing authorities — the city, school district and county. It applies only to new construction.

Abatement of property taxes is offered for two years — the first two years in which payment is based upon the completed, full value of the dwelling. In the program, eligible homeowners would receive and pay property tax statements as normal and then apply for abatement of the city, school district and county portions of that bill.

Cities are charged with the responsibility of initiating and operating the abatement program, which is to apply for construction during a two-year period.

Valuation notices contain some adjustments

Notices of Valuation mailed to Polk County property owners in mid-March include some changes.

Due to the number of sales and the increasing prices of those sales, pasture/woods property values have been increased countywide from \$150 per acre to \$300 per acre. Properties previously considered "waste," including mainly swamps and small bodies of water not considered as wetlands, have been increased from no value to \$50 per acre. The value of tillable lands were not changed on a countywide basis.

Due to reappraisal, significant changes have been made in the values of some homes — especially for older houses — both in town and in rural settings. Current comparable sales continue to be the basis for all valuation assessments.

Questions about valuations can be addressed to the Assessor's Office, (218) 281-4186.

Bosco & Thunder building a reputation

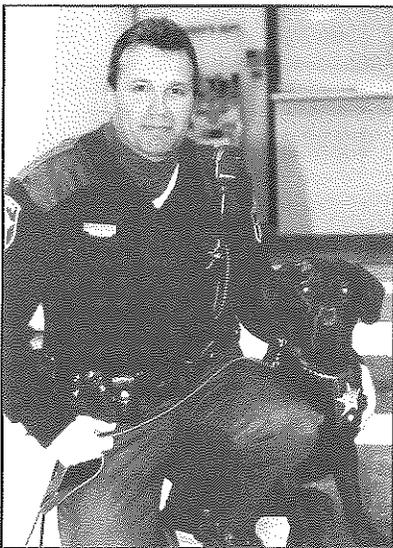
Canine Patrol aids war on drugs

With the help of their new partners, Polk County deputies Dave Emanuel and Trent Stahlecker have really become effective at sniffing out crime.

Those new partners — Bosco and Thunder — are graduates of the Canine World of Dogs program at Petersburg, Mich. Since joining the department in November, the canine officers have been key participants in several drug finds and arrests.

The specific strength that the dogs bring to the department is that they are 20,000 times better at picking up a scent than a human being.

Bosco, a two-year-old Golden Retriever, rides with Emanuel. Thunder, a two-year-old Black Lab, has a place in Stahlecker's car. Usually, they ride in the back seat but when that space is needed for an offender, they go upfront. Off duty they become pets in the Emanuel and Stahlecker families.



Deputy Trent Stahlecker and partner Thunder

Ready to go

The dogs, Stahlecker says, seem to like their jobs. "They know when it's time to go to work. If I start getting my uniform on, Thunder follows me all over the house. He's ready to go."

The dogs are trained to be drug dogs and for tracking as opposed to dogs that are trained to provide protection or to attack. "As a result, we can transport an offender with the dog in the car, which wasn't the case with the county's previous

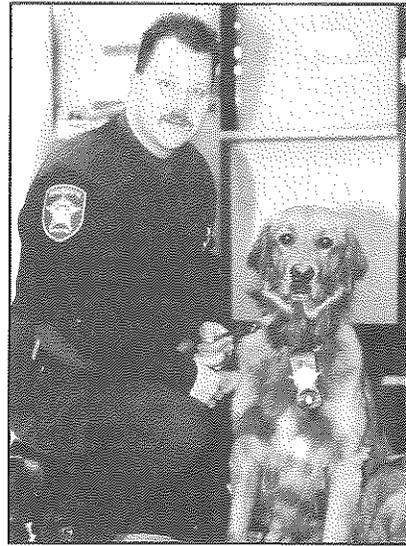
dog, Nicko," Emanuel, a nine-year member of the department and a 20-year veteran in law enforcement, says.

Nicko, a German Shepherd trained to provide protection, had worked with Deputy Jim Tadman for six years before being retired in 2002.

Prior to passing an aptitude test to determine their ability to perform services for law enforcement, Bosco and Thunder had been pets. Bosco was rescued from an abusive situation, while Thunder had been offered to Canine World of Dogs when his owners determined that they could no longer provide for him. Each received 600 hours of training in such areas as narcotics detection, tracking, evidence discovery, and obedience before ever meeting Emanuel and Stahlecker.

Puppy Boot Camp

When that acquaintance was made it was done as part of some 200 hours of bonding and further training during two weeks of intensive work. "The training was very demanding," Emanuel says. "We went for from 15 to 18 hours a day the whole time. They called it 'puppy boot camp.' We went through narcotics training in a building and in open areas. We worked on tracking people who might have become lost or missing and on tracking suspects. We spent time on evidence recovery... worked in the woods and in warehouses and in other settings, too. It was non-stop. The school is world-renowned for its trained dog."



Deputy Dave Emanuel with his partner Bosco

The Zavoral Construction Co., East Grand Forks, and Jim and Nina Palubicki, Fosston, each contributed \$5,000 toward the cost of the dogs and the expenses involved with the training for Emanuel and Stahlecker. Other contributions from private and organizational sources support the costs for veterinary services, food and equipment. In addition, the East Grand Forks American Legion Auxiliary has agreed to provide bullet-proof vests for the canine deputies.

Emanuel and Stahlecker have made

significant contributions, too. Each has spent from \$300 to \$500 of their personal funds to buy materials and then build kennels for the dogs. "That was our contribution to the program," Stahlecker says. "We really believe in it and in its benefit for Polk County."

A return to Michigan for both the dogs and their handlers is scheduled within a year for training and certification in air scenting. That training, which can be used in situations such as the search for Dru Sjodin, was included in the initial \$9,000 price for the dogs.

Great asset to county

"The dogs," according to Sheriff Mark LeTexier, "are a great asset to law enforcement in Polk County. They've already proven their worth many times and in many ways, but especially in that they provide another tool in our fight against drugs."

To date, the dogs have been extremely valuable to the department's Drug Task Force Unit in locating meth labs and discovering a number of different kinds of narcotics in houses, buildings and in vehicles during traffic stops. They have recovered evidence, tracked offenders and have worked in collaborative efforts with police departments in Crookston, East Grand Forks and Fosston along with the Grand Forks Police Department, Cass County (N.D.) Sheriff's Department, Clay County Sheriff's Department, Minnesota State Patrol, North Dakota Highway Patrol, and even the Winnipeg Police Department.

School visits, demonstrations and educational efforts have also been a regular part of their work. "We stop at schools as a part of our regular patrol shifts," Stahlecker says. "The kids see us in the halls. The dogs are friendly so the kids can pet them. This gives us a presence in a completely different light. We're trying to send a strong message in the schools of saying 'no to drugs' and the dogs have an influence in doing that."

Emanuel and Bosco recently visited 14 different classrooms in one day in Fosston. "We've given a lot of demonstrations to show how the dogs find drugs and we've gone through a few schools on drug searches, too. The dogs are gaining quite a reputation in the drug community. We want to send the message that Polk County is not going to tolerate drugs and that if you bring drugs into Polk County, Bosco and Thunder are going to get you. Whether it's now or later, they're going to get you."

Bosco's nose adds new bite to law

Editor's Note — The drug dogs now working with the Polk County Sheriff's Department have made a number of detections of controlled substances since joining the department in November. One of the more significant discoveries is described in this news release prepared by the Polk County Attorney's Office.

Press Release

March 8, 2004

Based upon an investigation by the Northwest Minnesota Drug Task Force, the Crookston Police Department, the Polk County Sheriff's Department, and the Red Lake County Sheriff's Department, the Polk County Attorney's Office has filed criminal complaints with Polk County District Court charging Pedro Maldono Rodriguez Jr., age 37, of Crookston, and Glen Eric McGee, age 43, of Crookston, with numerous offenses relating to the possession with intent to distribute approximately one pound of cocaine.

What follows in this press release is the probable cause portion of the criminal complaint filed by the Polk County Attorney's Office:

During the early morning hours of March 5, 2004, Crookston Police Officer Ryan Bergquist stopped a Ford Explorer belonging to and being driven by Pedro Maldono Rodriguez Jr. in Crookston. Officer Bergquist reported to Polk County Deputy Sheriff Randy Sondrol that he saw Glen Eric McGee get out of this vehicle with a bag and that McGee went into his residence at 430 Main St. in Crookston.

Polk County Deputy Sheriff Dave Emanuel was dispatched to the scene where the Ford Explorer had been stopped and his trained drug detection dog, Bosco, alerted to the presence or close association of a controlled substance on the exterior driver's door, the back panel/door, the interior driver's seat and the back area of the Ford Explorer.

Deputy Sondrol had obtained information that Rodriguez and McGee had returned from Texas with a substantial quantity of cocaine. As a result, Deputy Sondrol and Red Lake County Deputy Sheriff Brad Johnson then went to McGee's residence and spoke to him. McGee stated that he had been in Texas for the past few days with Rodriguez and another person and that he was on probation and did not have permission from his probation officer to leave the state.

Deputy Sondrol told McGee that he had information that Rodriguez had returned from Texas with a shipment of cocaine and possibly a handgun. Deputy Sondrol asked McGee if he was involved in the transportation of this cocaine. McGee stated, "Okay, come here," and the officers followed him into his bedroom. McGee then reached into a closet and retrieved a bag from the floor.

This bag was filled with 60 individually wrapped baggies of white powder. Deputy Johnson took possession of the baggies.

McGee later pointed out that there was a .45-caliber Colt Gold Cup semi-automatic pistol in a bag under the dresser in his bedroom and Deputy Johnson took possession of it as well. The officers also discovered and seized two ammunition magazines and a partial box of .45 caliber ammunition.



Improvements make Transfer Station more efficient

Grapple loader now in use at Transfer Station

The Polk County Transfer Station improvement project is now nearly complete.

The project, which began in the fall of 2003, involved the construction of a 60x100-foot addition to the tip floor area of the building in Crookston to provide more floor space and increase ceiling height. The extra space and height was necessary to accommodate the use of a grapple loader that is used to handle waste materials and load semi-trailer-style waste containers in a more cost-effective and environmentally-friendly transportation option.

While the Transfer Station addition was under construction, household wastes were managed by using various temporary waste handling methods in the existing portion of the building with demolition and non-burnable waste materials temporarily collected in roll-off bins located outside the building. While this was not ideal and proved inconvenient for both the Transfer Station staff and the public, services were maintained during the construction process and throughout the waste loading/hauling transition period.

Operations at the Transfer Station are now returning to normal. The change to the use of semi trailers instead of roll-off containers for hauling household wastes to the Incinerator at

Fosston was made in the first weeks of January. Substantial completion of the addition occurred in mid-February with reconfiguration of the old tip floor to receive demolition and non-burnable materials completed in March.

The improvements were made to improve efficiency, reduce operational costs, improve staff and public safety and to make the facility more user-friendly. Large commercial waste loads are now deposited in the new addition, decreasing the wait times for unloading while keeping the trucks separated from other traffic.

The old tip floor is used exclusively for receiving demolition and non-burnable waste material loads. This allows more vehicles to unload at one time and thereby decreases waiting times. By decreasing wait times for unloading and adding additional capacity for material storage, it is hoped that traffic congestion in the lot during peak operating times will be noticeably reduced.

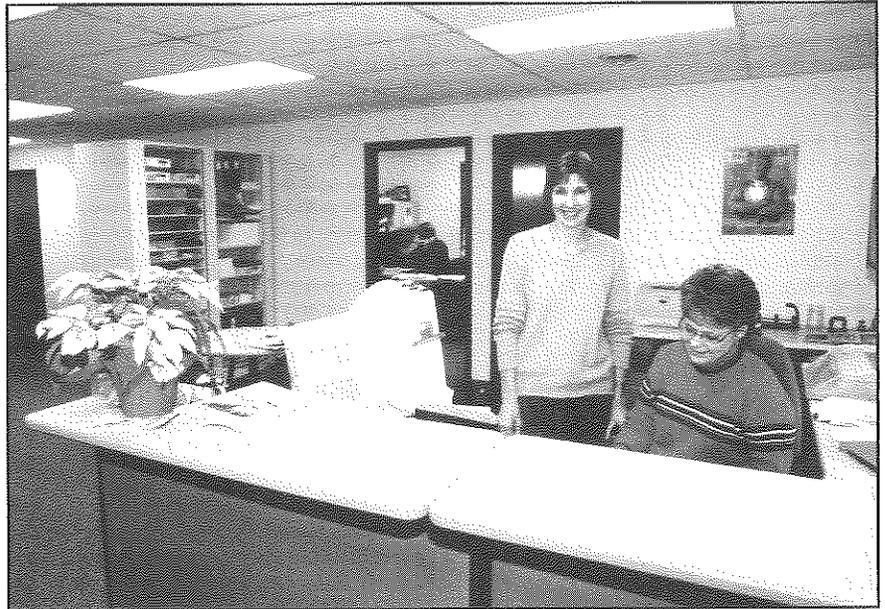
Most importantly, by changing the methods used to load containers bound for disposal facilities, the level of safety at the Transfer Station for both the staff and the public has been improved, which should make for a more convenient service and pleasant experience for everyone. — **Jon Steiner, director, Polk County Environmental Services**

Housing Committee organized for region

The recently organized Regional Housing Advisory Committee is working with state and federal housing agencies to develop housing programs for low- to moderate-income families in northwest Minnesota.

The seven counties in the Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) service area (Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau) have representatives on the committee. Commissioner Gerald Jacobson, Fertile, is representing Polk County. The NWRDC is providing coordination and support.

A successor to the former Institutional Community Work Crew (ICWC) advisory committee, the new committee meets four times a year. Two of those meetings are combined with Region I Housing Development Alliance staff professionals from area agencies involved in housing programs. The agencies include: Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Crookston; Inter-County Community Council, Oklee; Northwest Multi-County Housing Authority, Mentor; and Northwest Community Action Agency, Badger.



At home in new location

Polk County Health is now at home in its new location at 721 Minnesota St. in Crookston. At left at the reception desk

is Brenda Menier, public health director. Receptionist Christy Wiesmann is seated.

Report Welfare Fraud

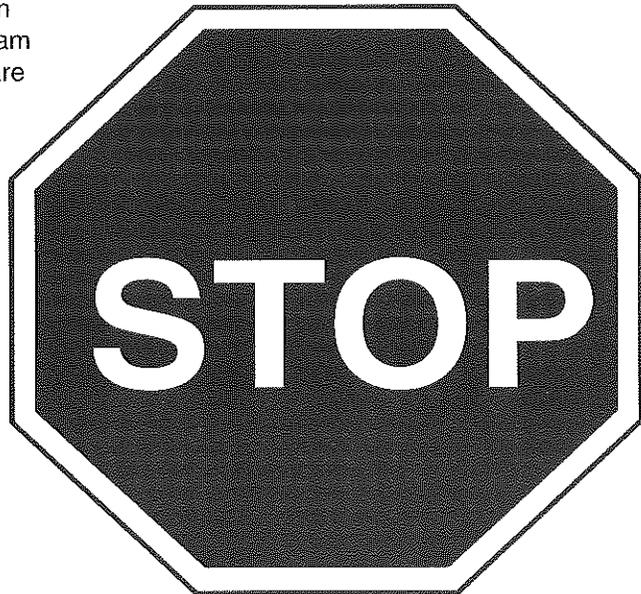
People who give false information or withhold facts in order to receive Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) aid, food stamps, general assistance, childcare or medical assistance may be guilty of fraud.

You may wish to report:

- Persons not reporting income
- Incorrect reporting of persons living in the home
- Misuse of food stamps or Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards
- Falsifying of information on application
- Unreported property and assets
- Persons receiving dual benefits (from more than one state)

What you should report:

- **Who** — The name of the person
- **What** — The fraud suspected
- **When** — Date of occurrence
- **Where** — Address of person



Welfare Fraud

If you suspect someone of misusing or abusing Minnesota assistance programs, call the Polk County Sheriff's Office at this number 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:
1-218-281-0431 (ask for extension 2249)

You can also contact the toll free Minnesota Welfare Fraud Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at:
1-800-627-9977 YOU MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS