

FREE
Take One

POLK COUNTY Newsletter

Fall 1999

New judge to 'chamber' in Polk

The new 9th Judicial District Court judge scheduled to take office July 1, 2000, will have chambers in the Polk County Courthouse in Crookston.

And that judge, according to Polk County Court Administrator Sally Holewa, "can't get here soon enough. We have a heavy, heavy caseload and we really do need another judge," she says.

Currently, District Court judges John M. Roae, Michael J. Kraker and Richard C. Taylor handle judicial work in Polk, Norman and Mahnomen counties on a rotating schedule. Judges Roae and Taylor have chambers in Crookston while Judge Kraker has his chambers in Mahnomen.

Each year on average, each of the three judges handle 246 major criminal cases,

105 civil cases, 169 family law cases, 324 juvenile matters, 3,758 minor criminal cases, 427 minor civil cases, and 78 probate matters. These workloads are far above the state average for judges.

When the new judge begins work, it is anticipated that Pennington and Red Lake counties (together with the judge chambered in Pennington County) will be included with Polk, Mahnomen and Norman counties in a five-county, five-judge work area. This is expected to bring the workload of each judge much closer to the state average.

The addition of a new judge in Crookston will require considerable re-arranging of the workspace on the courtroom floor of the courthouse. Office space is needed for

the three judges who will be chambered there together with their court reporters and law clerks.

Plans are also being made to add one or more new hearing rooms so that the existing courtrooms can be made available for jury trials five days a week. An architect has been hired to do preliminary design work. Tentative plans include relocating court services to another floor of the courthouse and possibly moving the law library to the nearby Professional Building.

The Supreme Court uses a system called "weighted caseload" to decide where and when additional judges are needed. In that formula, each type of case is given a number value with the most complex cases

(See NEW JUDGE, Page 3)

Budget battle to continue into new year

Budgetary issues have been a top focus of County Board deliberations in 1999 and will continue to be so as work begins on developing the new budget for 2000.

Monthly and quarterly reports of the county's expenses and revenues from County Auditor Jerry Amiot indicate significant gains in the battle to balance the 1999 budget but new expenses on the horizon for 2000 — some that were unexpected — will require continued diligence.

What started out as a \$300,000 deficit budget in 1999 may now have neared balancing. That positive change is because of a combination of many efforts, not any one or two developments. "The board and the department heads have been very careful

(See BUDGET, Page 3)



Disaster declarations sought

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's denial of the spring flood disaster declaration requested by Polk County — and five other counties in northwestern Minnesota — is being appealed by the State of Minnesota. Polk County emergency services officials have estimated damage to roads and bridges at

\$2.3 million, while FEMA set damages at \$1.4 million, an amount that did not qualify for the declaration. In a separate action, Polk County has joined other northwest Minnesota counties in requesting an agriculture disaster declaration because of spring and summer damage to crops by excessive rain.

State to takeover 9th District Court

Public won't see the difference

"The public probably won't even notice a change."

That's the assessment of Polk County Court Administrator Sally Holewa concerning the scheduled July 1, 2000 takeover of the 9th Judicial District Court by the State of Minnesota.

The takeover, which was approved by the 1999 session of the state legislature, will mean that the state, rather than Polk County, will assume all costs and responsibility for operating the court system. In return, counties will give up all fine revenue plus an amount of their HACA (Homestead and Agricultural Credit) aid

that is equal to the cost of operating the court system during 1999.

With court costs spiraling upward and projected to increase even more — for such things as court interpreters, guardian ad litem orders, psychiatric examinations and new programs for which there has been no state funding — counties have generally hailed the upcoming takeover. The legislation includes state takeovers in the 5th, 7th and 9th districts along with making permanent the state takeover trial that has been underway for the past four years in the 8th District.

Holewa expects the takeover to result in

new procedures for jury management, some shared use of interpreters and other employees, and improved methods for the collection of fines and other money that is owed.

The takeover will mean that county court administration employees will become state employees but Holewa doesn't see that creating any problems. Wage scales and benefit programs, she says, will not change significantly.

"I think this takeover makes sense. It will mean that the governing body that makes the rules also pays the bill," she says.

Plan for state funding of courts started in 1977

State funding of trial courts is part of the court unification process begun in 1977 when municipal courts were abolished. This was followed by the abolition of county courts in 1982. When the county courts were eliminated the judges became district court judges and ran in district-wide elections.

Court administrators are no longer elected but are appointed by local judges with the approval of a majority of the district court judges.

Since the county no longer has control over the functions of the court, the administration of the court or the election of judges, it makes sense that the funding of the court be transferred to the judicial branch of state government because it has control of court functions.

It is hoped that tying court mandates to court budgets will result in a more fiscally responsive judicial system and insure that new rules and programs are not instituted without adequate funding.

The other benefits of state funding include the ability to share resources across counties. In the 9th District, we anticipate being able to pool our jury management and guardian ad litem coordinator functions as well as sharing employees when cases are transferred out-of-county.

Because the transfer of the court bud-

get will be done through a matching reduction in other local government funding, the counties cannot expect to see an immediate benefit due to the transfer. The benefit will be in the long term absorption of rising court costs and the funding of new mandates. Two examples that come to mind are guardian ad litem fees and parent education classes.

Guardian ad litem are persons appointed by the court to represent the interests of minors or incompetents. While the court has always had the authority to appoint guardian ad litem, it was done at the judge's discretion. Under new Rules of Court, guardian ad litem are now mandatory in many cases. In Polk County, this has increased costs from an average of \$20,000 per year to \$20,000 in the first quarter of 1999. These costs are expected to rise even higher.

In 1998, the Supreme Court passed a rule requiring all parents in a divorce action to attend a parenting class based on the "Parents Forever" model. No funding was allocated to the counties to establish these classes or to pay the instructors. Some counties were able to get volunteer instructors or grant money to hire instructors and rent space for the classes. The obvious problems with funding a program this way are that grant money runs out after

a year or so and volunteers quit or move on. It also means having to schedule only three or four classes a year and stalling the divorce process until the classes can be completed.

Because Polk County has been unable to fund its own parenting classes, we have been forced to send participants to Thief River Falls or Detroit Lakes to attend classes. These classes are either four hours long and run three nights or two full weekend days. Beginning this fall, however, we will be offering a parenting class at the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

These are the types of unfunded mandates we are hoping to avoid when the judicial system becomes financially responsible for the courts.

The advantages to individual employees will be in the higher top pay that the state offers for longevity, the ability to earn merit pay each year and in the lower cost of health, dental and life insurance that state employees may elect to purchase. At this time, the entire judicial system is undergoing a wage and personnel study and we do not know what the minimum salary will be for court administrators and their staff. — **Sally Holewa, Polk County court administrator**

Budget battle

(Continued from Page 1)

about their expenditures and those efforts are reflected in the reports developed by the Auditor's Office," County Coordinator Jack Schmalenberg says.

While the situation improved in 1999, there are new storm clouds in the sky for 2000, according to Board Chair Warren Strandell. He notes that while preliminary budget planning for 2000 included regular salary adjustments called for in the labor contracts along with other expected increases in the cost of doing business, the county will have to find a way to fund a much larger-than-expected contribution to its employee benefits package.

The cost of the benefit package will be increased \$45 a month above the normal adjustment as the result of the recent award made by the arbitrator hearing a wage dispute brought by Law Enforcement Labor Services as the bargaining representative for sheriff's deputies. Because of the "me-too" clause that is a part of all labor contracts as it concerns the benefits package and because of the county's policy of providing the same benefits for all employees, the arbitrator's decision has the effect of including all 280 county employees and results in an unexpected new payroll cost of about \$145,000.

"The board is very appreciative of the efforts by department heads and all county employees in holding operating costs in check in 1999," Strandell says. "We know that we will have to face another deficit problem in the budget for 2000 but we also realize that the budget can't be balanced at all costs. There will be a day of reckoning, if we don't remain competitive on salary issues and don't keep up with maintenance,

New judge

(Continued from Page 1)

having the highest value.

The values are established and reviewed every five years by court staff who record the amount of time a judge actually spends reviewing a case, preparing orders, letters or memorandum for a case, researching a case and actual time spent in hearings on a case. The assigned values are then multiplied by the number of each case type filed to arrive at a judge need determination. Polk County has two chambered judges but

equipment replacement and other needs.

"After three years of budget-cutting, county operations are at bare-bones levels," he says. "And to this point, there hasn't been a way to develop significant new revenues. Certainly, this is not the time for a major tax increase, even if it were possible. Commodity prices, crop disease and the weather have combined to cripple agriculture, which has always paid a big part of the county tax bill. There are some difficult decisions ahead."

The county's voluntary early retirement offer was among actions developed to reduce expenses in 1999 and beyond. The plan offered long-term, usually more highly-paid employees the opportunity to retire early. Four employees took advantage of the program. They were:

- County Veterans Service Officer Richard Ramey, who had held his position for 15 years;
- Bonnie Pokrzywinski, collection services supervisor in the Social Services Department and a 26-year county employee;
- Rita DesRosier, social services account clerk and 34-year county employee; and
- Dick Roue, a deputy sheriff for 22 years and a county jail employee before that.

Also retiring were Bill Huggett, an administrative assistant in the Social Services Department, and Chuck Averill, a sergeant in the Sheriff's Department and a deputy for the past 24 years. Both Huggett and Averill retired under traditional programs.

In addition to the efforts made by county employees to reduce expenses, the fees for many county services were reviewed and adjusted upward. Many of these fee schedules had not been updated in a number of years.

currently has a judge need of 2.51.

Because judges need to do written explanations of their decisions in many cases, it is essential that they are given time outside the courtroom to do research and to write their findings and orders. Another judge will allow some time for this.

The other new 9th District judge provided for in the Omnibus Crime Prevention & Judiciary Funding Bill passed by the 1999 session of the legislature is to take office Jan. 1, 2000, and have chambers in Brainerd.

Fritz new head of Red Lake Watershed Dist.

Chuck Fritz is the new administrator of the Red Lake Watershed District. He succeeds Lowell Enerson, who resigned in December to accept a municipal position in southern Minnesota.

Fritz' appointment was effective May 13. He had previously served as trans-



Chuck Fritz

portation planner for the Northwest Regional Development Commission, headquartered in Warren.

A native of Bismarck, N.D., Fritz, 38, earned a bachelors

degree in zoology in 1992 and a masters in natural resources management in 1997, both from North Dakota State University, Fargo. Prior to his work at the NWRDC, Fritz was employed both part- and fulltime from 1990 to 1995 by the North Dakota State Health Department in Bismarck. While doing his graduate work, he served as an assistant to NDSU research economist Jay Leitch.

Fritz and his wife, Sara, who is a child psychologist, live in Thief River Falls. They have two daughters, Savannah, 5, and India, 3.

Polk County Board of Commissioners

Don Bakken, Fertile
Warren Strandell, East Grand Forks
Lyle Eisert, Crookston
Warren Affeldt, Fosston
Henry Vasek, Warren

The board meetings are held at:

- 8:30 a.m. on the first Tuesday
- 1:20 p.m. on the third Tuesday
- 8:30 a.m. on the fourth Tuesday

Meetings are open to the public. For special accommodations or to request a spot on the agenda, call John Schmalenberg, Polk County coordinator, 281-5408.

McIntosh native held highest enlisted rank in Air Force

Goodwin named veterans service officer

Les Goodwin, a 33-year military veteran who rose to the highest enlisted personnel rank in the Air Force, has been named the new Polk County veterans service officer.

A native of McIntosh who returned to that community in 1994, Goodwin took office on Aug. 1. He succeeds Rick Ramey, who retired in May after 15 years in the position. Ramey and his wife, Barbara, recently moved to Moose Lake, MN.

"I'm really excited about this new opportunity and about the chance to be of assistance to veterans," Goodwin says. "From my military career, I naturally have some knowledge of veterans' rights and issues. I have tried to stay current, but I have a lot to learn, too."

His initial plans include visiting all veterans service clubs in the county and consulting with Ramey and regional veterans service officials. "Locally, I want to meet and get to know as many veterans as I can," he says.



Les Goodwin

Goodwin joined the Air Force in 1960 after graduating from McIntosh High School. He later earned an associate degree in logistics at the University of Maryland. His career included 20 years in Germany, including the last 15 at Frankfurt. A chief master sergeant, he was the last person at that rank to be allowed to remain on active duty in the Air Force past the 30th year.

After retirement on Nov. 1, 1993, Goodwin worked as a technical consultant for the ITT Corporation in Denver, CO. The company provides contract services for the military. As a part of that employment, Goodwin returned to Germany for two years to set up service contracts.

For the past five years, Goodwin, 57, and his wife, Mary, have lived in McIntosh, where he served until recently as bookkeeper of the McIntosh VFW Club. The Goodwins have two children: Todd, 29, and Robin Andres, 34, and a grandson, Joshua Drew, who all also live in McIntosh.

Overcrowding at Corrections Center causes safety concerns

Concern for overcrowding at the Northwest Regional Corrections Center and Annex buildings continues to build. In 1998 the Center was over-capacity 100 percent of the calendar year.

The Center exceeded recommended State Department of Corrections limits by an average of 10 beds every day during the year. Because the building is a "secure" facility for persons awaiting trial, its function is greatly affected by over-population. Of particular note is the fact that safety of staff and residents is put at risk when the building space is over utilized.

There has been terrific cooperation by the county attorney's office and the courts in working with the limitations of the building. Utilizing alternatives to jail, such as Sentence to Service, electronic monitoring, the DWI Intensive Supervision Program and jail reporting waiting lists have all helped to keep the jail population down.

Still, the number of people incarcerated continues to rise in the three-county area. In 1998, the Regional Corrections Board added an additional shift of counselors at the Annex to accommodate staffing requirements of the Department of Corrections and allow

an additional 16 beds to be opened for use at the minimum security building. This prevented the agency from having to purchase the added bed space that would have been needed without the additional beds.

However, the additional bed space provided did not affect the secure "awaiting trial" facility where space has become the major focus of current planning actions on the part of the joint powers board.

The Jail Planning Options study group is working diligently to assess the problems of jail space needs and expects to report to a larger group of officials from Polk, Norman and Red Lake counties in October. The agency recently received word that its jail planning grant request has been funded at \$85,000.

The options group includes commissioners Lyle Eisert and Warren Strandell, County Attorney Wayne Swanson, Sheriff Doug Qualley and business owner Kent Bruun, all from Polk County; Norman County Commissioner Warren Olson; and Red Lake Commissioner Lee Nielson.

— Susan Mills, director, Tri-County Community Corrections

County-based purchasing start possible in 2000

A win for clients.

A win for the area health care infrastructure.

That's what Polk County officials envision for the county-based purchasing program they want to initiate.

County-based purchasing, which is provided for by state legislation, is designed to allow counties to develop their own plans — as opposed to a state plan — for the purchase of medical services for medical assistance (MA) and general assistance medical care (GAMC) clients.

Polk County's plan has been developed over a period of almost two years by county officials and 20 health providers and citizens from throughout the county.

Implementation could begin in 2000 but many hurdles still have to be jumped, according to Polk County Coordinator Jack Schmalenberg.

The initial county plan was sent to the Minnesota Department of Health on Dec. 1, 1998, and to the Minnesota Department of Human Services on April 1, 1999.

"We're working to keep our local facilities... the hospitals, nursing homes, drug stores and, of course, the health professionals in our communities," says county commissioner Don Bakken, Fertile, who has been active in the program since it became an alternative.

State mandates valuation increases

Owners of certain classifications of property in two cities and six townships in Polk County will see state-mandated valuation increases of from 5 to 20 percent when they receive their tax statements in May of 2000.

The increases, which were ordered by the Minnesota Department of Revenue, affect the cities of Fosston and Fertile; the townships of Esther, Huntsville and Nesbit; and lake properties in Garden, Knute and Woodside.

Nielsville gets decrease

The value of residential land and structures in the City of Nielsville will be decreased 10 percent.

An increase or decrease in the value of a particular property does not mean that real estate taxes will increase or decrease by that same percentage. The Minnesota Limited Market Value Law restricts tax calculations to an 8.5 percent increase in taxable value. Many of these properties already have a limited value. According to state law, valuation for all properties is based on comparable sales that have occurred in that area.

Properties must be valued at 100 percent of market value. The Department of Revenue has granted an acceptable range of 90 to 105 percent in determining whether or not a taxing district receives an increase or decrease.

For taxes payable in 2000

These valuation changes will be effective on the 1999 assessment rolls for taxes payable in 2000.

"People have to realize that it is not what they originally paid for their real estate, or the amount of money that they have invested in it that determines the valuation," Wagner says. "Valuation is determined by what that home or property would sell for in an open market based on sales of similar properties."

The property classifications affected by the Department of Revenue mandate and the percent of increase include:

- **City of Fertile** — Residential land and structures, 10%.
- **City of Fosston** — Residential land, commercial land and structures, 5%.
- **Esther Township** — Residential land only, 10%.

- **Garden Township** — Residential land and structures (sections 1 & 2 only), 20%; and seasonal residential recreational land and structures (sections 1 & 2 only), 20%.

- **Huntsville Township** — Residential land and structures, 10%.

- **Knute Township** — Residential land and structures (sections 20, 29, 30 & 31 only), 20%; and seasonal residential recreational land and structures (sections 20, 29, 30 & 31 only), 20%.

- **Nesbit Township** — Agricultural land and structures, 5%; and residential land and structures, 5%.

- **Woodside Township** — Residential land and structures (sections 25, 26, 35 & 36 only), 20%; and seasonal residential recreational land and structures (sections 25, 26, 35 & 36 only), 20%.

Polk County Assessor Robert Wagner notes that the valuation increases for Fertile and Fosston represent a normal "updating" of values to bring them into compliance with state law.

The only "ag land" affected by the Department of Revenue order for valuation increases occurred in Nesbit Township. The increase there was based on "enough sales to determine its own market," Wagner says. "In this ag economy especially and with the weather problems that we have had, we certainly wouldn't like to see an increase in the value of farmland on a countywide basis.

Ag land values holding

"As for current ag values, the sales indicate we are still within the acceptable state sales ratio range," Wagner says. "We have not yet seen a substantial drop in the sale price of ag land this year."

The valuation increases in the certain sections of Garden, Knute and Woodside townships are limited to property on Union Lake and Lake Sarah. "We had been successful at keeping the state from ordering valuation increases for these areas a year ago but, with the increased sale prices of property sold in the past year, there was no arguing about it this year," Wagner says.

"There are several other lakes in Minnesota that have also been having

high-water problems, but the state wouldn't back-off on valuation increases for them either," he says. "The value of lake property every where just seems to go up and up and up."

Property values on Maple Lake were increased by up to 25 percent for the 1999 assessment year in determinations made by the Polk County Assessor's Office. The county's move to increase the value of properties on Maple Lake — as opposed to an almost certain state-mandated increase — had some advantages.

Retain some control

"The benefit in doing it ourselves is that we were able to retain at least some level of local control... so it doesn't have to be a blanket increase in which all property is increased by the same percentage. Instead, we had the ability to hold back increases on certain properties when it was appropriate."

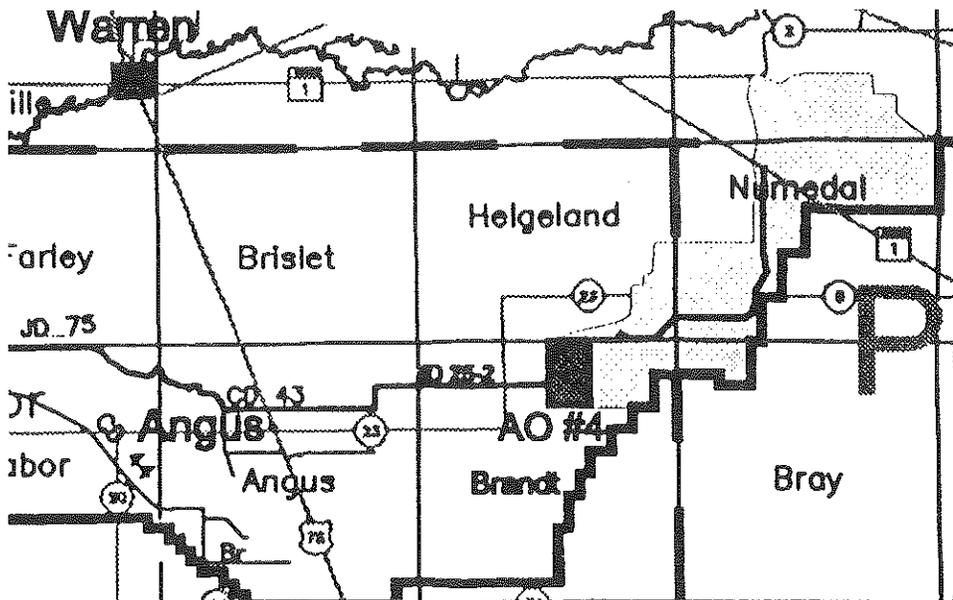
Property owners must be notified of valuation increases that are made by the county. These adjustments can then be appealed to the Board of Review. State-mandated increases can not be appealed.

With the changes for 1999, valuations of Maple Lake properties have been increased by 50 percent over three years, Wagner notes. A further re-assessment of Union Lake, Lake Sarah, Cable Lake and other lake properties, he says, will likely occur when the water finally goes down.

Good news

There is at least one item of good news in the area of property values. Market value in the City of East Grand Forks, where the flood of 1997 destroyed more than 450 homes along with a number of commercial properties, has now recovered to the point that it is very near the pre-flood totals, according to Wagner.

And, he notes, not all the new construction has been added to the tax rolls there. The full value of new property, both residential and commercial, doesn't come onto the tax rolls until a year following its construction. When it does come on the rolls, he says, the city's total valuation will be well in excess of pre-flood values.



Angus-Oslo Site #4 Floodwater Impoundment vicinity map

Ash utilization road project now slated for 2000

A test project that would utilize ash in the construction of hard-surface roadbeds in Polk County is now likely to occur in 2000.

The effort, which is being planned with state highway and environment officials, was proposed several years ago. Final approvals for such concerns as design, environmental monitoring, base line sampling, and performance evaluation are expected later in 1999.

Polk County's interests have been coordinated by the Solid Waste Resource Recovery Plant at Fosston and the County Highway Department.

Tentative approval has been given to a mix that would include 40 percent "old ash" and 20 percent "new ash" as a percent of total aggregate. The old and new ash references are to ash collected prior to the installation of the up-front separation unit at the incinerator in 1996 and that generated after it was put into use. The ash samples were tested by the Minnesota Department of Transportation office in Bemidji. These tests produced an acceptable asphalt mix design for use in a construction project.

The ash created by incineration of solid waste is currently being landfilled in the county's facility near Gentilly. The incinerator, which is owned by Polk County and became operational in August 1988, serves five area counties — Beltrami, Clearwater, Mahanomen, Norman and Polk. A site for the test area has not yet been determined and will likely be selected from among county road work projects scheduled in 2000.

Brandt Township impoundment to control 3.6 inches of runoff

The contract has been awarded for construction of the \$1.4 million Angus-Oslo 4 Impoundment in sections 3 and 10 of Brandt Township.

A project of the Middle River-Snake River Watershed District, it is designed to better control run-off from a 23-square-mile area in Polk, Pennington and Marshall counties. The project will cover 1,020 acres.

"It will have the ability to hold the equivalent of 3.6 inches of run-off. That's the amount that we had in the spring of 1997 following the ice storm. Anything above that amount would be metered out automatically," says Ron Adrian, managing engineer for the watershed. "That first 3.6 inches would be metered out really slow."

The impoundment's outlet will be into Judicial Ditch 25-2 which empties into

Polk County Ditch 43. "It doesn't change where that water is going now. It just holds it and distributes it out over time," Adrian says.

Drews Construction, Frazee, will do the work which is to be completed over 180 working days. The Red River Water Management Board will pay for 85 percent of the project with the remaining 15 percent provided from the local project funds of the Middle River-Snake River Watershed District.

"This project, I think, illustrates what is going to have to be done on a fairly large scale to control flooding," Adrian says. "Projects like this one would probably have to take about four percent of the drainage area to do a good job of controlling the 100-year flood."

Control of 'out of home placement' costs sought

As we enter the second half of the year, out-of-home placements continue to take center stage in budget concerns for Polk County Social Services. All indications are that intensive efforts need to be directed toward this critical area of service delivery for our resident families.

Projections of cost for this year currently are at the \$2 million level.

Polk County Social Services is working on several strategies to address the high cost of out-of-home placements:

- Backed by increased revenue from

reimbursements received from the federal government for work specifically done with children that are on medical assistance, the agency — with county board support — has strengthened the social service staff and has distributed some of the staff on a permanent basis into the East Grand Forks and Fosston offices. This will better facilitate the provision of services to citizens throughout the county.

- The agency is actively pursuing potential grant funds from government and private foundations in order to implement a newly proposed, intensive, early interven-

tion program. The program would place a team of para-professional social service staff into our local communities to provide the kind of assistance to families that is clearly needed.

This process guarantees to increase our front-end efforts with families and children throughout the county, while showing great potential for reducing the utilization of the more intense, usually more expensive, purchased services the county has to call upon now in working with families in crisis. — **Bill Green, administrative assistant, Polk County Social Services**

Lake-pumping could begin this fall

The high water problems that have plagued Union Lake and Lake Sarah in recent years will begin to be alleviated starting this fall, if the plan to pump water into the Sandhill River system gets off the ground as scheduled.

The plan calls for the installation of a connection that will allow water in Lake Sarah to flow into Union Lake from where it will be pumped into natural drainage that empties into the river. Neither lake currently has an outlet.

Bids to provide that work have been opened and are under review. A contractor is to be named about Sept. 21 after hearings on the project have been held.

"We'd, of course, like work to start as soon as possible. That would result in reduced lake levels yet this fall," says Dale Knotek, chair of the Union Lake Sarah Improvement Association that was

organized to address the high-water problem.

Once a contractor is selected, the installation of the pipe connecting the two lakes and construction of the pumping facility at the southwest part of Union Lake are expected to require from 30 to 60 days.

Property owners on the two lakes have battled high water for several years. Union Lake was some five feet over the normal high-water mark on July 1. Lake Sarah is similarly high.

"The levels come up with every rain, then drop a little and come up again with the next rain. The ground is just so saturated now that it can't take any more water and it all runs into the lakes," says Rolland Gagner, a Lake Sarah resident who served as the organizing officer for the association and now is chair of its

outlet committee.

Knotek notes that evaporation has little effect on lake levels. "There are a lot of cabins and homes that are sandbagged and have been for some time," he says. "And some pumps are running all the time. We're all really anxious to get that big pump into operation."

The connection between the two lakes will be installed under County Road 237 and will have controls that prevent the migration of fish. The pumping facility in the far southwest area of Union will consist of a vertical inlet structure, the pump and a 24-inch pipe that will carry water over high ground in the immediate area to the Sandhill drainage system. The Sandhill Watershed District will decide when the pump can be operated and when it can't.

Flood recovery:

Buy-outs complete; demolition slated

Many rural Polk County homeowners have either reached, or are able to see 'the light at the end of the tunnel' as it relates to recovering from the impacts of the 1997 flood. For many, repairing the flood-damaged home is now complete, or is scheduled to be completed this summer.

For those interested and eligible homeowners who participated in the County's Voluntary Acquisition Program, their homes have either been bought-out or are in the final stage of the acquisition process. The deadline for participating in the Voluntary Acquisition Program was March 31, 1999.

Polk County purchased 20 of the 25 identified rural homes located in the 100-year floodplain that sustained structural damage in excess of 50 percent of its pre-flood value. The other identified homeowners chose to either bring their homes into compliance with the floodplain ordinance in order to repair the home, or chose not to repair the home at all but retain ownership of the property without development restrictions being placed on it.

Many of the acquired homes have been cleaned out by Polk County. Appliances, tires, municipal solid waste, fluorescent bulbs and household hazardous wastes have been removed to prepare for the demolition of these structures. Demolition is scheduled to be completed early this fall.

Of the 20 homes acquired, 13 of the

structures were repurchased by the original homeowner and moved to another location. Of these 12 repurchased structures, 5 were homes which were moved to alternate locations within the region. Many of the structures repurchased by the original owner were then sold by the original owner to third parties to move and renovate.

Polk County's Voluntary Acquisition Program has spent in excess of \$909,000 acquiring these flood-damaged properties from interested and eligible homeowners. An additional \$117,055 has been spent on lot incentive and other similar programs which are used to aid homeowners in recovering from the effects of the 1997 disaster.

A second acquisition project has been proposed, and the application submitted, to the Department of Emergency Management to determine cost-effectiveness and feasibility. This project, if approved and funded, would remove homes located in the Thiel Subdivision north of East Grand Forks.

Many of the homes in this subdivision were heavily damaged in 1997, however only four sustained damage in excess of 50 percent and were eligible for the Voluntary Acquisition Program at the time. At this time, the county does not know if that program will be approved and funded.

The Voluntary Acquisition Program is

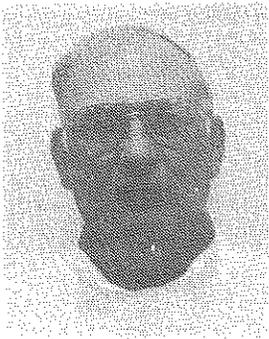
funded through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, with 75 percent of the funds coming through the Department of Emergency Management from the Minnesota Recovers Task Force, 12.5 percent from DNR and 12.5 percent from the Dept. of Trade & Economic Development. The Demolition of these acquired homes is funded 100 percent by FEMA. — **Jon Steiner, Polk County director of environmental services**

'Interim' dropped from Klinkhammer's title

The "interim" has been dropped from Nancy Klinkhammer's title as county planning and zoning coordinator.

Klinkhammer, who joined the Polk County Environmental Services Department in April 1997, became interim director of the planning and zoning division shortly after. The appointment was made permanent by action of the County Board this spring.

A native of Valley City, ND, Klinkhammer earned bachelors degrees in secondary education-biology and occupational safety/environmental services at the University of North Dakota. She had worked for the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) in Bismarck before coming to Polk County.



Don Diedrich, chair



Helmer Homme, v. chair



Barbara Hangsleben



Barbara Reitmeier



Clayton Engelstad

Meet the Planning Commission

Donald Diedrich — A Warren area farmer, he has served on commission as an appointee from the 3rd Commissioner District since 1986. He's chairman of the commission and is also a member of the Board of Adjustment.

Helmer Homme — A retired Winger area farmer, he has served on the commission since 1986. Helmer, who is the vice chair, represents the 4th Commissioner District. He's a member of the Board of Adjustment.

Barb Hangsleben — A rural East Grand Forks resident who works in real estate, she was appointed to the commission in 1982. She represents the 5th Commissioner District, is a member of the Board of Adjustment, and serves on the Minnesota State Planning Board.

Clayton Engelstad — A semi-retired farmer, he has represented the 1st Commissioner District since 1991. He is also a member of the Board of Adjustment.

Barb Reitmeier — A farm wife, Barb represents the 2nd Commissioner District. She has been a member of the commission since 1994.

Chuck Lariviere — The owner-operator of Red River Cabinets, Crookston, he has represented the townships of the county since 1995.

Rolland Gagner — A retired contractor, Rolland represents the Union Lake and Lake Sarah Improvement District. He was appointed to the commission in 1997.

Doug Thorson — Doug is retired from Control Data in Minneapolis. He was selected to represent the Maple Lake Improvement District in 1997.

James Gander — A retired businessman and former 22-year member of the East Grand Forks City Council, Jim is the appointee of East Grand Forks Mayor Lynn Stauss. He doubles as a member of the Board of Adjustment. Jim was appointed in

1999.

Donald Osborne — As mayor of Crookston, Don is automatically a member of the commission. When unable to attend meetings, he is represented by Ray Ecklund, city administrator.

Notes — The five-member Board of Adjustment decides "variance" issues in addition to normal zoning matters. These issues deal with requests to deviate from the county's zoning rules.

The chair of the Polk County Board is also automatically a member of the commission.

Meetings of the Planning Advisory Commission and the Board of Adjustment are held monthly on the fourth Friday of the month.

The findings of the Planning Advisory Commission and the Board of Adjustment are forwarded as recommendations to the County Board, which must make final decisions.



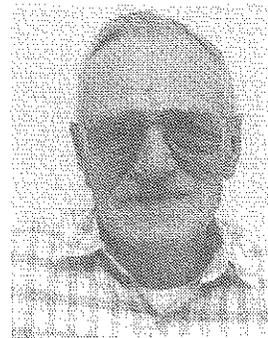
Chuck Lariviere



Rolland Gagner



Doug Thorson



Jim Gander



Don Osborne

6 surfacing jobs in summer highway work plan

The following roads are under construction this summer with work likely to continue until fall, according to Highway Engineer Roger Diesen:

CSAH 6 — Bituminous surfacing from TH 92 (1 mile west of Traill) to the north county line.

CSAH 21 — Grading and bituminous surfacing from TH 75 (3 miles north of Euclid) to the east county line.

CSAH 24 — Grading from CSAH 1 (6 miles east of Fosston) to CSAH 27.

CSAH 27 — Bituminous surfacing from CSAH 6 at Fosston to CSAH 24.

CSAH 44 — Bituminous surfacing from south county line to CSAH 1 (4 miles west of Fertile).

CSAH 71 — Bituminous surfacing from TH 75 north of Crookston to CSAH 11.

CSAH 74 — Bituminous surfacing from CSAH 2 at Gully to east county line.

The public is asked to avoid these construction project areas by utilizing alternate routes of travel, if possible, according to Diesen. The traveling public's cooperation during this construction will be appreciated. Anyone desiring further information should contact the Polk County Highway Department, 281-3952.