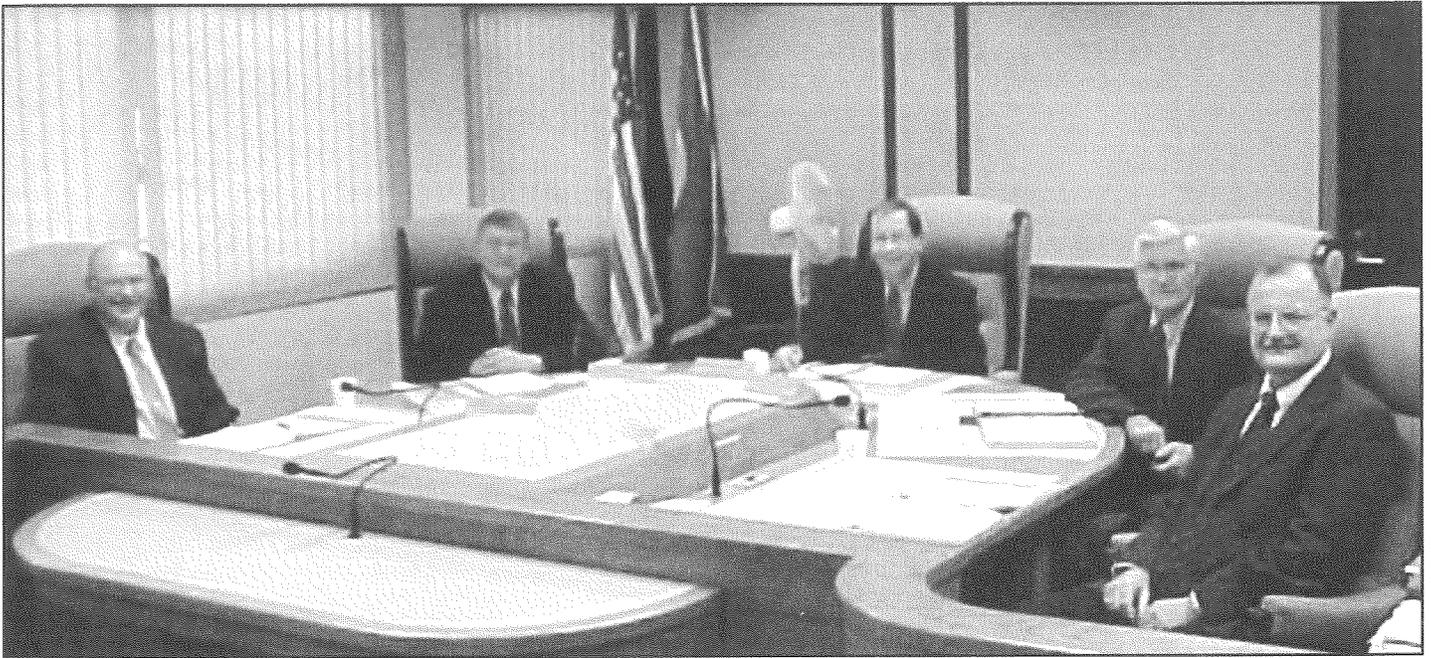


FREE
Take One

Polk County Newsletter

Spring 2001



2001 County Board (left to right): Jerry Jacobson, Fertile, District 1; Warren Affeldt, Fosston, District 4; Warren Strandell, East Grand Forks, District 2; Eugene "Jeep" Mattson, East Grand Forks, District 5; and Bill Montague, Crookston, District 3.

Budget, Tilden Farms, roads, ditches, water, etc.

Board changes but issues don't

With three new commissioners and a new chair, the Polk County Board will have a different look in 2001. But that isn't likely to change the issues. Chief among them will be trying to maintain county services in a situation where revenues don't keep up with the increasing needs and expenses.

The revenue shortfall is the result of at least two factors. One is that commissioners have tried not to add a bigger burden on a local ag economy that is reeling from several years of crop disease problems and continued low prices. A second reason is that the state levy limitations law, which was finally allowed to sunset last year, prevented the county (and other local government bodies) from capitalizing on the first of several years of extensive increases in the county's total property valuation.

Without levy limitations, that new valuation (\$67 million was added in 2000) would have generated additional revenue

from newly constructed or remodeled properties along with that from other properties whose valuation was otherwise increased, mostly lake properties. The additional revenue would have been obtained with little, if any impact to the owners of properties whose valuations had not increased or were not new to the tax roll.

Chair of the board for 2001 is District 2 Commissioner Warren Strandell, East Grand Forks. He succeeds Warren Affeldt, Fosston, who began 2000 as the board's vice chair but served as chairman for almost all of the year after taking over the position when Henry Vasek, rural Warren, suffered a stroke in late January. While able to return to the board, Vasek was unable to continue as its chair.

Chair position rotates

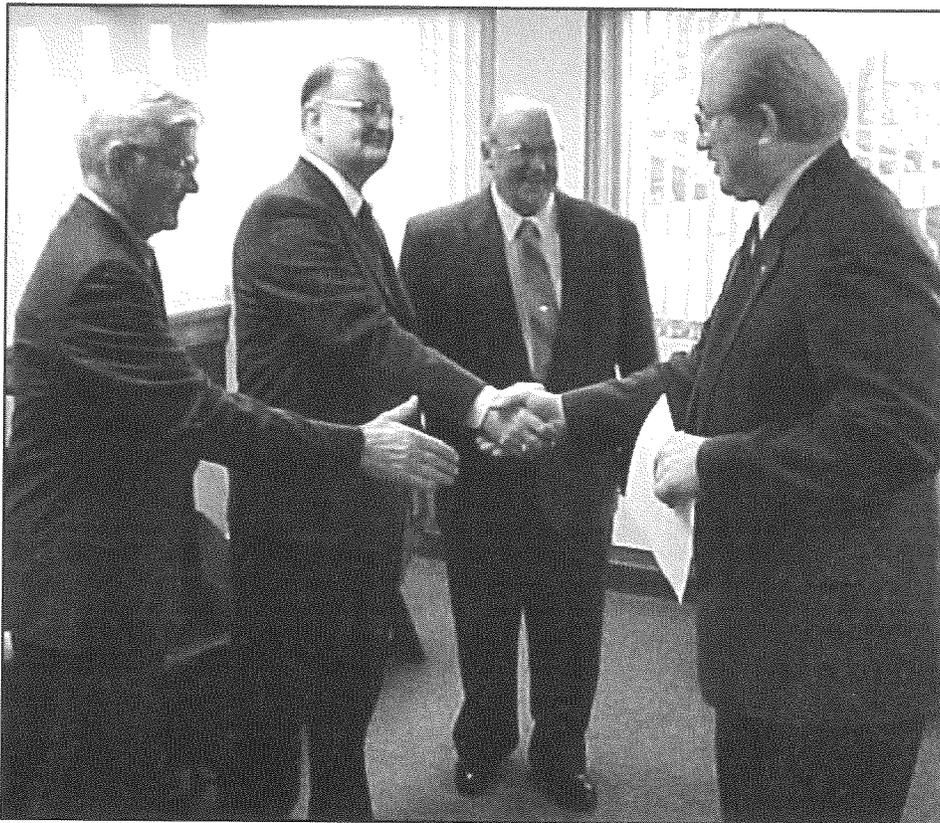
The board has long had the policy of rotating the offices of chair and vice chair

through the commissioners. Newly elected commissioners usually serve on the board for a few years before assuming an office. Following that tradition, Strandell moved from vice chair to the chair position this year. Affeldt, who started 2000 as vice chair but served as the chair for all but one month, is again the vice chair and is scheduled to serve as the chair in 2002.

In another area of re-organization, Affeldt has succeeded retiring District 1 Commissioner Don Bakken as chair of the Polk County Welfare Board. The Welfare Board, which meets monthly as a separate body, includes the five county commissioners and two at-large members, Cathy Gutterud, Fosston, and Jeanne Sanden, East Grand Forks.

Affeldt, who had been vice chair of that body, will serve as its chair until the end of the fiscal year on June 30, when Eugene

See **NEW BOARD** on Page 2



New Commissioners (L-R): Jeep Mattson, Bill Montague and Jerry Jacobson receive congratulations from Polk County Attorney Wayne Swanson, who swore them into office at the first meeting in January.

New board

Continued from Page 1

“Jeep” Mattson, the newly elected vice chair, will move up. A new vice chair will be elected at that time.

While the new County Board will be minus over 36 years of experience with the departure of commissioners Bakken, Lyle Eisert and Vasek, Strandell notes, “I think we’ll continue to have a good, solid board. “Obviously, we’re going to miss the experience and knowledge that Don, Lyle and Henry brought to the board. That can’t be replaced, but the new commissioners, Jerry Jacobson, Bill Montague, and Jeep Mattson, bring a lot of enthusiasm and have shown their willingness to take responsibility and become involved. Jeep, of course, isn’t totally new. He served three terms before retiring at the end of 1996, so he brings the experience from those 12 years back to the board.”

Tilden Farms issue

In addition to the budget matters, a major issue for 2001 will deal with the status of the 23,399-acre Tilden Farms properties, which have been sold to the non-profit Nature Conservancy, and how to secure an arrangement that would have the lands

continue to support local townships, school districts and Polk County. Word-of-mouth commitments to accomplish that have been given to the county, but a binding plan to continue payments in lieu of the current real estate taxes needs to be finalized and made perpetual.

The lands generated \$94,353 in real estate taxes for the local government bodies in 2000, with Polk County getting the largest share at \$41,768. The land is located in five townships with the largest portion of the property located in Grove Park-Tilden Township, and in the Crookston, Fertile and Red Lake Falls school districts.

Affeldt has taken the lead role for the county in the tax preservation effort and is working toward a written agreement. That agreement would then be attached to the abstract of title, which is scheduled to be donated to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for conversion into a tall grass prairie and wetland. The agreement would lock in place the plan for there to be revenues that would continue the support for local government bodies.

Gross joins County Attorney office

John D. Gross has joined the Polk County Attorney’s Office as an assistant county attorney.

A native of Canton, SD, Gross is a May 2000 graduate of the University of North Dakota School of Law and a 1997 graduate of Moorhead State University. While a student at Moorhead State, Gross, 27, competed in cross country and track, earned a trip to the national tournament in cross country in 1993. Before attending law school, he interned with the San Diego, Calif., Police Department.

Before coming to Polk County as a law clerk, Gross had clerked for the Cass County State’s Attorney Office in Fargo, and the Grand Forks County States’s Attorney Office in Grand Forks. His appointment as an assistant Polk County attorney was made Nov. 1.

In the Polk County position, Gross joins County Attorney Wayne H. Swanson, and assistant county attorneys Larry D. Orvik and Andrew R. K. Johnson. The office is located in the Crookston Professional Building, northeast of the courthouse.

Williamson re-opens coffee shop in courthouse

Laure Williamson is enjoying a good business from an appreciative group of courthouse staff and others since re-opening the coffee shop Feb. 12.

The opening follows about a six-month closure that resulted when Wanda Stroot gave up the business after 16 years to accept an increased role at the Riverview Hospital cafeteria.

A native of Crookston and daughter of Bud and Bernie Blokzyl, Williamson has worked in the food industry since 1977. She started as a waitress for Roger Johnson at the Country Kitchen and has worked either as a waitress or a cook ever since, mostly at RBJ’s Restaurant.

With hours from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m., Laure serves a daily lunch special along with short orders. “I bake at least a couple pies every day along with cookies and bars, and I get my breads and muffins from Pierre’s Bakery in Red Lake Falls. It’s going very well and the people are really nice,” she says.

Laure and her husband, Gary, a conductor for Northern Minnesota Railroad, have two children: Julia, 17, and Jamie, 16.

Meet the new commissioners:

Jerry Jacobson, District 1

A lifetime resident of the Fertile community, Gerald "Jerry" Jacobson earned the District 1 chair by defeating Gene Dufault in the November General Election. Jacobson, who had earlier emerged as the top vote-getter in a four-way race in the primary, succeeds longtime District 1 commissioner Don Bakken, who retired after serving the district for 20 years.

"After a lively campaign that was very exciting and challenging, I'm looking forward to getting into the job," he says. "I'm certainly finding county government to be very interesting and full of challenges, but the county department heads and staff have been great and I'm enjoying my association with the other board members."

Initially, Jacobson, 59, plans

to spend time "getting to know the people... the staff and many more of my constituents, and, of course, to become familiar with the ongoing issues."

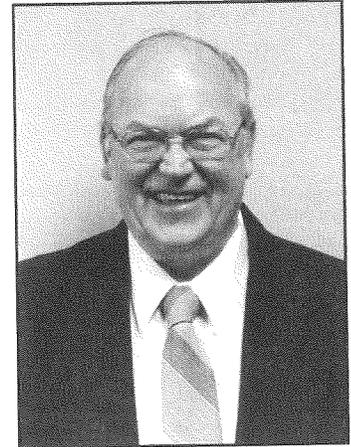
Started Valley Shopper

A 1960 graduate of Fertile High School, Jacobson attended Bemidji State University before becoming a sales representative for the Friden Co., a graphic arts equipment firm. He started the Valley Shopper advertising publication in Crookston in 1969 and the North Star Shopper in Thief River Falls in 1973. Both publications were sold in 1975 with Jacobson and two partners then forming the Tri-County Press advertising publication in Grand Forks.

Jacobson, who sold his interests in the Tri-County Press in 1983, continues to operate a

screen printing business in Fertile. He also published the circulars for the Hartz grocery store group from 1974 until the organization stopped doing business a year ago, and managed the The Shopper publication at Halstad during 1999.

Jacobson and his wife, Lynn (Erikson), who grew up at Beltrami, have four children: Geoffrey owns and operates Printing Plus at Thief River Falls with his wife, Tammy (Dillabough); Steven and his wife, Dawn (Faldet) live at Erskine, where he works at Lakeside Building Center; Amy and her husband, Matt Bounds, live at Jordan, Minn., and own and operate the Dairy Queen Store at Shakopee, Minn.; and Elizabeth, who lives at Moorhead, is a skin care and massage therapist in Fargo.



Jerry Jacobson

Jacobson, a past president of the Fertile Community Club, has been active in the little Norway Lutheran Church at Fertile, serving as vice president, president and trustee. He and his wife also work with the American Field Service organization in arranging and coordinating host families for foreign exchange students.

Bill Montague, District 3

Crookston businessman Bill Montague is excited about his new position as a Polk County commissioner. "I'm really looking forward to serving the people of District 3 and all of Polk County," he says.

After being the top vote-getter in a five-way primary race, Montague defeated Don Diedrich, rural Warren in the General Election. He succeeds Lyle Eisert, Crookston, who retired after serving Polk County as a commissioner for 12 years and as a deputy sheriff for 28 years before that.

Good relationship

Montague says he has been impressed by the abilities of the county department heads and all staff, and notes, "There has been a good relationship between them and the board, and I'll certainly work to have that continue." He is con-

cerned, though, about the state of the rural economy, about business on main street, and about the decreasing population in outstate Minnesota. He wants to see county, city, township, state and federal government all work together to address those issues.

A native of Crookston and 1961 graduate of Central High School, Montague attended both the University of Minnesota and University of North Dakota, before graduating from floral school in California. He and Carol Pester, also of Crookston, were married in 1964 and lived at San Jose, Calif., for two years while Montague worked in the floral business there.

Purchased floral business

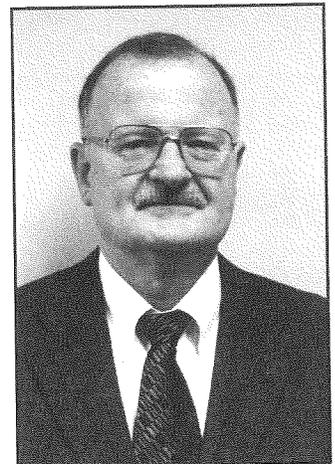
They purchased the Zitzer family floral business interests

and returned to Crookston in the fall of 1966. In addition to operating Montague's Flower Shop, they also started Willow & Ivy gift shop in 1998. Both are located in downtown Crookston.

The Montague's have three grown children: Paula, a partner in the government affairs & public relations firm of Goff & Howard, and her husband, Jim Howard, live in Forrest Lake, Minn.; Patrick, who works in sales for Minnesota Marine of Ham Lake, lives in Mounds View, Minn.; and Christopher, a surgical pathologist, lives in Spokane, Wash. They have four grandchildren.

Served fire and police

Montague is a member of the North Central Florist Association, Florist's Trans World Delivery System (FTD),



Bill Montague

Elks, Eagles, Sons of the American Legion, Crookston Chamber of Commerce, and First Presbyterian Church. He has been a member of the Crookston Fire Department for 30 years and is retired from the Crookston Police Reserve, which he served for 20 years.

Meet the new commissioners (cont.):

Jeep Mattson, District 5

After a four-year hiatus following his retirement in 1996, Eugene "Jeep" Mattson, rural East Grand Forks, has returned to Polk County Board as the commissioner from District 5.

Mattson, who had previously served three terms (12 years) on board, defeated Henry Vasek, rural Warren, in the November General Election. Mattson had earlier finished as the top vote-getter in a four-way race in the primary election.

Missed the job

"I found out that I really missed being a commissioner," Mattson says of his return to public life. "I have always enjoyed trying to help people with their problems and want to continue to do that. As a commissioner the first time, I quickly learned that it was best to involve the appropriate department head in finding the solution to a problem right from the start, and that's what

I always tried to do."

Long interested and involved in water issues, Mattson will make that an area of his concentration.

The most difficult decision in his first 12 years, he says, was to support the Minnesota Department of Transportation's preferred route for eight miles of State Highway 220 improvements south from Alvarado. "I really would have preferred to have the highway go straight north from East Grand Forks all the way to Highway 1, but that would have meant that Polk County would have had to take over the maintenance of the original state highway. The county just didn't have the money to take over that maintenance and it wouldn't have made sense to have two hard-surface roads just a mile apart."

By contrast, the completion of other roadwork — especially the reconstruction and

paving of both CSAH 20 and CSAH 21 — rank among the most satisfying efforts of his first 12 years, he says.

Elected in 1984

Mattson was first elected to the board in the fall of 1984 when he won a four-way primary and then defeated Jim Mongoven in the general election. He was re-elected to a second four-year term in 1988 when he defeated Vasek, and won a third term in 1992 when he ran without opposition.

Mattson and his wife, Mary Ann, have five children: Christine (Mrs. David) McGaha of Bloomington, Minn., is a property manager; Susan McDowell of Moorhead, is a home decorator; Erick, a mechanic at Reiten & Young Implement, and his wife, Kathy, live in Grand Forks; Scott, who has taken over the Mattson farming operation, and his wife, Tracy, live north of East Grand



Jeep Mattson

Forks; and Rebecca is Rocky Mountain District manager for Nokia Internet Communications at Scottsdale, AZ. The Mattsons have eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Mattson is a member of the East Grand Forks Heritage Foundation, of Bethany Lutheran Church, rural East Grand Forks, and of The International Coalition and several other boards and commissions that deal with flood issues.

Lanning is engineer/administrator of Red Lake Watershed District

David C. Lanning is the new engineer-administrator of the Red Lake Watershed District, having assumed the position last fall. He succeeds Chuck Fritz, who had resigned last summer to accept a position with the Red River Basin Board in Moorhead.

Lanning's appointment as engineer-administrator was effective Sept. 18, 2000. He had previously owned an engineering business at Fairbanks, Alaska.

A native of St. Paul, Lanning worked as a small contract logger in the Washkish, Minn., area for seven years in the 1970s before moving to Alaska

in 1980.

While his wife taught school in the small village of Noatak about 400 miles north of Fairbanks, Lanning studied civil engineering at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks.

After graduating in 1986, he worked as a project engineer on a large harbor project that was being constructed on St. George Island in the Aleutian Islands. When that job was completed, Lanning returned to the University of Alaska-Fairbanks to earn a masters degree in 1989 in civil engineering and then opened his own engineering firm in

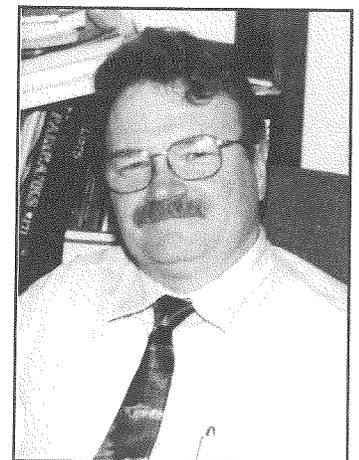
Fairbanks.

The return to Minnesota, he says, was spurred by his grandchildren.

"My daughter, Vanessa, and her husband, Ted Osborn, live in Crookston and have four children," he says.

"There are, of course, a lot of issues facing the watershed district," Lanning says. "One of my main goals, at least initially, will be to work to unify the efforts of the watershed with the local government bodies.

"To really be effective, we all have to be working on the same page without any division and controversy."



David C. Lanning



Retirement event — Commissioners Henry Vasek, Lyle Eisert and Don Bakken, left to right, were recognized at a retirement coffee party in December. The event included the presentation of a number of awards and certificates of appreciation.

Retiring county commissioners are recognized

Retiring commissioners Don Bakken, Lyle Eisert and Henry Vasek received plaques from Polk County along with a number of other recognitions during a courthouse farewell event held Dec. 22.

The President's Award, one of the most prestigious honors of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), was presented to Bakken by Becker County Commissioner Carolyn Engebretson, who served as president of the 87-county organization in 2000.

Bakken, who represented District 1 for 20 years, was also recognized for his extensive involvements in health and human services concerns receiving awards from the Minnesota Social Services Association, Region 1 Public Health Directors & Community Health Administrators, AMC Health & Human Services Policy Committee, and State Community Health Services Advisory Committee.

He was also cited by Northwest Minnesota Household Hazardous Waste Management, University of Minnesota-Crookston, University of Minnesota Extension Service, and the Polk County Extension Committee.

Eisert, who represented District 3 for 12 years after earlier serving as a deputy sheriff for 28 years, was recognized by the Region 1 Public Health Directors and Community Health Administrators, University of Minnesota Extension Service, Polk County Extension Committee, and University of Minnesota-Crookston.

Vasek, who suffered a stroke at the beginning of his fourth year in office, was cited by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Polk County Extension Committee and University of Minnesota-Crookston.

Polk County Board Meeting Times

- 8:30 a.m. on the 1st Tuesday of each month
- 1:20 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday
- 8:30 a.m. on the 4th 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.

Commissioners: Dist. 1 — Jerry Jacobson; Dist. 2 — Warren Strandell; Dist. 3 — Bill Montague; Dist. 4 — Warren Affeldt; Dist. 5 — Eugene "Jeep" Mattson.

County's septic system ordinance less restrictive

Polk County has recently made some changes to its septic system ordinance. According to state statute, counties may adopt by ordinance local standards that are less restrictive than the state standards in areas of low population density or in those areas where conformance to the rules is difficult.

A citizens committee was formed in the spring of 2000 and a preliminary ordinance was drafted. Members of the committee were: Tim Olson, Fertile, and Allyn Roley, Warren, both system installer-designers; Chuck Lariviere, Crookston, representing the Polk County Planning Commission; John Jeffrey and Paul Driscoll, both representing Huntsville Township; Steve Moen, Higdem Township; John Rehder, Farley Township; Jim Knox, Bygland Township; and Donna Christianson, Mentor, a realtor. Working with the committee were: Jon Steiner, county environmental services administrator; Nancy Ellis, county zoning administrator; Scott Deckert, county environmental technician; and

Wayne Swanson, county attorney.

The changed ordinance was adopted on Dec. 19 following a public hearing held by the County Board.

Under the new rules, a septic system drain field can be installed on lots of five acres or more in size with only two feet of unsaturated soil between it and the seasonal high water table, instead of the three feet otherwise required. However, the state of Minnesota does not allow these local standards to be used on lots that are in the 100-year flood plain or in shoreland areas of the county. Other factors to determine eligibility include soil type, vegetation, existing drainage, and distances from wells and property lines.

The Planning & Zoning office predicts that approximately 10 percent of new systems may be eligible for the alternative local standards. For more information, contact the Planning & Zoning Division of the Polk County Environmental Services Department at 281-5700. — **Scott Deckert, Polk County Planning & Zoning**

Marben becomes new District Court judge, remodeling effort is complete

Kurt J. Marben, who took the oath of office and was sworn in as a new 9th District Court judge at ceremonies in Thief River Falls on Dec. 29, has his chambers in the Polk County Courthouse.

Space for those chambers along with extensive remodeling on the "courtroom floor" of the courthouse was completed in late February. The \$260,000 project includes a new hearing room, which combined with two courtrooms, will allow three separate court actions to be conducted at the same time.

Judge Marben, 48, who went to work immediately after taking the oath of office, had previously practiced law in Thief River Falls for the past 23 years. Born in

Grand Forks, he grew up and graduated from high school in 1970 at Tracy, Minn. He earned a bachelors degree at Bemidji State University in 1974 and received his law degree from the University of Minnesota in 1977.

He joined the practice of Curtis Charlson in Thief River Falls in 1977, later becoming a partner in the firm. Following Charlson's retirement, he was a partner in a practice with Michael Jorgenson. Marben and his wife, Brenda (Laidley), who grew up in Thief River Falls, have three children: John, 18; Ann, 15, and Beth, 11.

While in practice, Marben was recognized by the American Research Corporation as a leading attorney in the area of civil litigation and also had an A-

rating from the Martindale & Hubble rating organization. He has served on the board of governors of the Minnesota Bar Association. His professional and civic memberships have included the American Board of Trial Advocates, American and Minnesota Trial Lawyers Associations, American and Minnesota Bar Associations, Lions Club, Northland Community College Foundation (board member and president), and Thief River Falls Baseball Association (past president).

With Judge Marben's appointment, a new five judge, five county work area has been organized. Other district judges in the rotation group are: John M. Roue and Richard C. Taylor, both of whom also have chambers in



Hon. Kurt J. Marben

Polk County; Michael J. Kraker, Mahnomon County; and Dennis J. Murphy Pennington County. The five counties in the rotation are Polk, Norman, Red Lake, Mahnomon and Pennington.

PCA monitored 'ashphalt' overlay project to resume when weather allows

Work on the "ashphalt" overlay project on CSAH 13, which was stopped by weather late last fall, will resume this spring as soon as conditions allow, according to Polk County Highway Engineer Roger Diesen.

In the project, ash generated in the incinerator at the Solid Waste Resource Recovery Plant in Fosston is being used as a part of the overlay material.

State approval for the demonstration project on 2.25 miles of the county highway was granted early in 2000 after questions about design, environmental monitoring, base line sampling, and performance evaluation had been addressed. Work started on the

project late last summer but was stopped by snow and ice last fall.

For the project, the Office of Environmental Assistance provided a \$52,400 grant for environmental testing, while the Minnesota Department of Transportation office in Bemidji conducted tests to determine the acceptable amount of ash that could be used in road construction materials.

Materials to be evaluated

The project also includes 350 feet of paving in the Polk County Landfill, where the materials are to be evaluated in three years.

In the overlay trial, ash is being substituted for a portion of the gravel used in asphalt

mix. The mix includes 40 percent "old" ash and 20 percent "new" ash as a percent of total aggregate. The old ash is that which was generated prior to the installation of the up-front separation unit at the incinerator in 1996. The new ash being used was generated after the up-front unit was put into use.

While the use of ash in road construction is in a trial stage in Minnesota, it has been used successfully in other parts of the country and in Europe for many years, according to Bill Wilson, manager of the Solid Waste Resource Recovery Plant.

Wilson notes that up to 80 percent of the ash generated at the incinerator could be used in road construction materials

and that this could reduce local costs for hauling, disposing and managing ash by about \$100,000 a year.

Serves 5 counties

Owned by Polk County, the incinerator became operational in August 1988. It receives and burns solid waste from five area counties — Beltrami, Clearwater, Mahnomon, Norman and Polk. The resulting ash has normally been disposed of in the Polk County landfill facility near Gentilly.

The other 10 solid waste incinerator managers in Minnesota have actively supported the Polk County test project. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is monitoring the work.

Polk County Employee Anniversaries in 2001

| <u>Hire Date</u> | <u>Employee</u> | <u>Job Description</u> |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 30 Years | | |
| 09-07-71 | Vickie Hughes | System Controller Opr IV |
| 11-09-71 | John Schmalenberg | County Coordinator |
| 25 Years | | |
| 03-01-76 | Beverly Wangen | Accounting Clerk II |
| 03-10-76 | Robert Bjerk | Engineering Tech IIIC |
| 05-24-76 | Rita Plante | Home Health Aide |
| 09-15-76 | Walter Keller | Deputy/Sergeant |
| 11-16-76 | Barbara Oseth | Extension Educator |
| 12-06-76 | Thomas Nelson | Maintenance II |
| 12-27-76 | Laureen Anderson | Appraiser Tax Officer II |
| 20 Years | | |
| 05-04-81 | Michael Steffen | Custodian III |
| 08-03-81 | Mary Schmidt | Administrative Assistant I |
| 08-17-81 | Valerie Bjerk | Administrative Assistant II |
| 10-16-81 | Michael Raymond | Maintenance II |
| 15 Years | | |
| 01-07-86 | Cynthia Peterson | Financial Worker |
| 02-18-86 | Douglas Axtell | Fiscal Supervisor I |
| 05-01-86 | Mark Letexier | Patrolman |
| 08-01-86 | Jennifer Kvaale | Financial Worker |
| 09-23-86 | Renee Vaudrin | Support Enforcement Aide |
| 10 Years | | |
| 03-01-91 | Richard Sanders | Construction Engineer |
| 04--91 | Michelle Erdmann | Secretary Receptionist |
| 04-22-91 | Kathy Wenzel | Social Worker |
| 05-06-91 | William Green | Administrative Assistant I |
| 07-29-91 | Bruce Lindgren | Maintenance II |
| 09-03-91 | Ellen Strickler | Clerk Typist Cashier II |
| 09--91 | Joan Lanctot | Home Health Aide |
| 10-01-91 | Mary Gieskeke | Administrative Assistant I |
| 5 Years | | |
| 01-08-96 | Jon Volker | Engineering Tech IIB |
| 01-22-96 | Dave Emanuel | Patrolman |
| 04-01-96 | Todd Rue | Utility Maintenance |
| 04-01-96 | Roger Beiswenger | Patrolman |
| 04-03-96 | Rosa Gutierrez | Financial Worker |
| 04-23-96 | Linda Widrig | Clerk Typist Cashier II |
| 04-27-96 | Judee Butenhoff | Dispatcher |
| 05-01-96 | Colette Ketchum | Clerk Typist Cashier III |
| 06-10-96 | Marna Johnsen | Social Worker |
| 08-26-96 | Steven Nelson | Custodian I |
| 08-26-96 | Carolyn Woehle | Social Worker |
| 09-09-96 | Mary Winkler | Sort Line Operator |
| 09-09-96 | Joanne Martin | Sort Line Operator |
| 09-09-96 | Renae Sistad | Sort Line Operator |
| 09-23-96 | Stephanie Olson | WIC Dietician |
| 10-12-96 | Rick Kappedal | Sort Line Operator |
| 11-26-96 | Bruce Hanson | Loader Operator |

Road work on tap in 2001, but fund reductions a worry

The updated 3-5 year construction program has not yet been completed, but the projects scheduled for the current construction year were included in the previously approved plan.

It is anticipated that contracts will be awarded for two grading projects on 11 miles of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 66 in Huntsville, Sullivan and Northland/Tabor Townships between CSAH 17 and CSAH 21 and between CSAH 21 and CSAH 23.

A future grading project on CSAH 66 between CSAH 23 and the Polk/Marshall County line is also planned and is anticipated to be completed in 2002. Future plans include all-weather surfacing on CSAH 66 between CSAH 17 and the north county line.

Also planned for construction in 2001 is approximately 6.5 miles of CSAH 17 between Trunk Highway 75 and CSAH 13. Future bituminous surfacing is also in the plans for this segment of road. Right-of-way acquisition has already begun for this project and hopefully all will go well.

Surfacing on CSAH 6 & 24

Also scheduled are surfacing projects in the east end of the county on CSAH 6 and CSAH 24. The project on CSAH 6 begins at the easterly edge of Fosston and runs northeasterly to the intersection of CSAH 3. The project involves grade-widening and surfacing along with several sections of realignment. This will also include some curb and gutter and storm sewer in the area within the proximity of the city limits. The project on CSAH 24 involves surfacing of five miles of previously reconstructed roadway.

Included in the construction

program will be several bridge replacement projects. The projects will consist of installation of box culverts and, in some instances, span bridges. The funding for the bridge projects will come from three outside sources, federal, state bridge bonding, and town bridge account funds. The matching funds for non-eligible items on these projects will be local funds, either township or county as appropriate.

Due to a reduction in local funds on the county level, local effort on the County State Aid System and reconstruction on the County Aid System has declined for the past few years and may continue for the next several years. The local levy for the Road and Bridge Fund exceeded the \$2 million mark in 1995 and since has been reduced to \$1.7 million for 2001.

Funding is concern

The current trend of reducing revenue-generating sources in state government is also of great concern. Vehicle license fees generated approximately 50 percent of the Highway Users Trust Fund (HUTF). The recent reduction of these fees without a dedicated alternative funding source could seriously affect the State Aid allocation received by the counties and cities. If a dedicated alternative funding source is not put in place, the county's allocation will be reduced and the number of projects will likewise be reduced. The HUTF is also a source of funding for the Town Bridge Fund, which would also be affected. Therefore, if the proposed program is to remain healthy, we must make our legislators understand that we could be experiencing a serious shortfall in funding. — Roger Diesen, highway engineer

County Public Health marks 70 years...

Doors opened in 1931 with staff of one

Polk County Public Health, formerly known as Polk County Nursing Service, is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year!

Our agency first opened its doors in 1931 with a staff of one to provide health care to school children. Over the years, the agency has expanded its services to meet the needs of residents throughout the county. This article on Home Care will be the first of five to give an overview of the types of services we provide.

In 1967, Polk County Public Health became one of the first Medicare certified home health agencies in the area. Since that time, the entire system of delivery and payment of home health care and the entire system of community based long term care has become increasingly complex in terms of client populations, the range of available services and financing methods. The following story demonstrates our work with the ill and frail individuals of our

communities.

An 82-year-old female with cardiac problems and diabetes, who lived alone in an old farm house, was seen at the emergency room several times with chest pain and shortness of breath. A referral was made for an evaluation visit. The public health nurse did an assessment and found out that the woman had not been taking her medications properly, resulting in a worsening of her cardiac symptoms.

Arranged assistance

Additionally, she was having difficulty preparing meals and was unable to bathe herself. The nurse assisted with ordering medication and setup, made a referral to the Meals on Wheels program and made arrangements for a home health aide to come in three times a week for assistance with bathing and personal care.

Intervening with this woman may have prevented a hospitalization and/or

admission to a nursing home.

Community based nursing saves dollars and allows people to be cared for in their home, an option they overwhelmingly prefer.

The average payment Minnesota hospitals receive per day for a client on Medical Assistance is \$1,062. The average monthly cost for nursing home placement is \$3,346. A weekly nursing visit and three home health aide visits per week would cost approximately \$856 per month. There are a variety of Minnesota programs that may help with the financing of long-term care in the home depending on the needs and circumstances of the client.

Please call 281-3385 and ask for Sheri Altepetter, Home Care coordinator, if you have questions about the various programs and eligibility requirements or would like to request an evaluation visit. — **Brenda Menier, Polk County Public Health director.**

Innovative approach helps county gain control of 'Out of Home Placement' costs

Insight and follow-through are at work in Polk County as staff of the Social Services Agency continue efforts to gain control of the high costs associated with children who have been placed out of their homes when a crisis has occurred.

Thanks to a receptive Polk County Social Service Board, an "innovative" approach taken by the agency in 2000 has begun to positively impact the services available to families in these crisis situations.

As a result, what had been a seemingly static range of 90-100 children in placements, away from their homes each and every month for the past five years, has begun to decrease.

Intervention working

Starting with referrals from schools, law enforcement, the courts, the community, and from family members, the innovative approach being used by the agency has allowed the use of more staff to intervene in family crisis situations. The increase in service help from the agency is resulting in decreases in the number of children

being placed out of their homes, and for those being placed, stays are becoming shorter.

The agency has also been able to work with children already out of their homes, to bring some of these children back to their families and friends earlier than in previous years, because of the intense focus on working with all family members in building on their individual and group strengths.

Multiple strategies including earlier and more intense staff work with families, and the use of shorter and less restrictive placements (including recently developed local therapeutic foster homes), when placements are required, are combining to favorably effect numbers in placement and the corresponding costs for these services.

These innovations have initially cost the agency in terms of money for staff, since no outside funding was found to assist the county with this issue. However, year-end data reveals several positive factors.

First, families and children, along with

the referral parties, all report favorable results of the use of our family-based preservation services. Second, statistics show a reduction in on-going out-of-home placements of 15 to 25 percent, and a correspondingly significant reduction in the costs to the county for these placements.

At least cost neutral

As a result of these reductions in numbers and costs, any of the "new" staff costs to the agency have been at least matched by savings in service costs (payouts to vendors/providers), keeping the agency within the strict guidelines set by the county board and the local social service board concerning the requirement of "...at least cost-neutrality in any expansions undertaken."

The new year provides fertile ground for continued pursuit of our current successful innovation, and offers the agency and the county more opportunities to advance services while maintaining our responsibility of sound fiscal management for the benefit of our citizens and taxpayers. — **Bill Green, administrative assistant.**