

# Polk County Newsletter

Fall 2006



## Best in state

The Willing Workers 4-H Club's Barn Project won the grand champion award in the Community Pride Project division at the recent Minnesota State Fair. Earlier, the club had earned the Association of Minnesota Counties' 2006 Community Leadership Award for the barn project. Used during the recent Heritage Days event in East Grand Forks to house the club's annual

petting zoo, the 36x80-foot barn, which was built in 1918, was donated to the club by the Curtis Amundson family. More than 150 individuals and businesses contributed in excess of \$31,000 in cash, materials or professional services to finance the move and restoration of the barn on the Heritage Grounds.

## Flu shots available at drill

Polk County residents are encouraged to participate in the Fall Flu Shot Drill on Saturday, Oct. 28 — and to get their annual flu shot at the same time.

The drill will be held between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at Lysaker Gym at the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

The drill is being designed, according to Polk County Public Health Director Sheri Altepeter, to help prepare health professionals and volunteers for the possible operation of mass dispensing clinics during a pandemic situation when thousands of people would need to be medicated in a short period of time.

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## On schedule & within budget

### *Jail-Justice Center to become beehive of work this winter*

Construction of the new 236-bed Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail and adjoining Polk County Justice Center is on schedule and within budget as the work moves toward completion in late 2007.

"I'm really pleased with how the work is progressing and with the contractors that we have on the job," Jon Otterstad, on-site construction manager

for CAM (Construction, Analysis & Management), Inc., Brainerd, Minn., says. CAM has been contracted by Polk County to serve as its construction manager.

Including a transition period during which staff of Tri-County Community Corrections will be trained in procedures for the management of prisoners in the new direct supervision design, the jail is

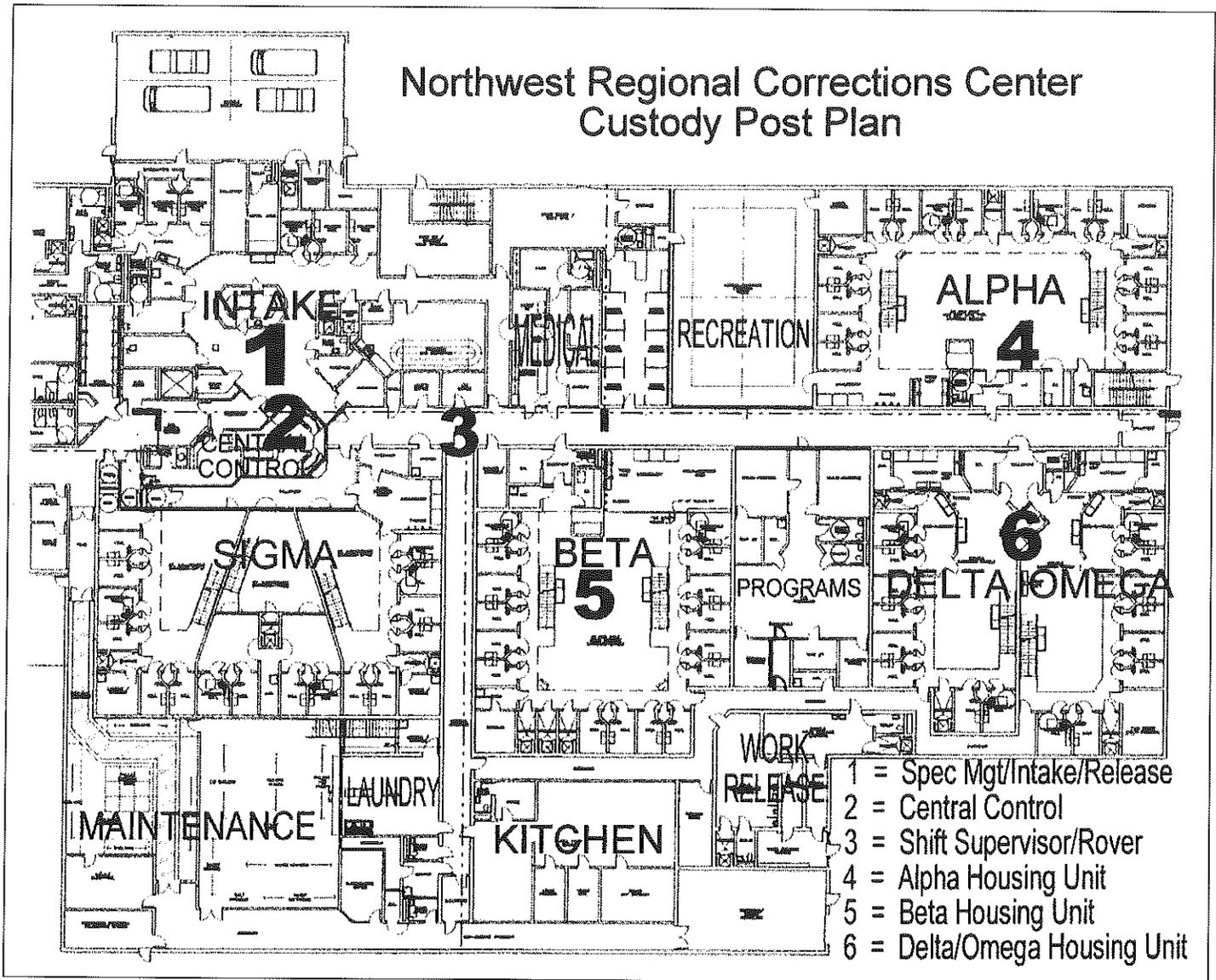
scheduled to be in full operation by or possibly even before Jan. 1, 2008. The new design will allow one security officer to oversee up to 60 prisoners.

The third phase of bidding, which included all work required for completion of the building, was conducted in May when 32 individual contracts were awarded. Those contracts included such categories as plumbing, heating/

ventilation/air conditioning, electrical, security system, cabling systems, generator, masonry, concrete floors, carpentry, woodwork, drywall/plaster, windows, doors (entry, indoor office, security and the overhead doors for the sally port), tile, terrazzo, carpeting, painting, wallcoverings, elevator, sitework, parking lots, and more.

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## Northwest Regional Corrections Center Custody Post Plan



### Jail staffing plan

The numbers in the diagram above indicate staff positions needed to operate the jail. The post indicated by No. 1 will work in the Intake/release area and also help supervise the Special Management

“Sigma” pod. The No. 2 staff position will operate Central Control and watch the Sigma area. No. 3 is the shift supervisor/rover, who will be available to back-up any area. The corrections officers

at the Nos. 4, 5 and 6 posts in the Alpha, Beta and Delta/Omega pods will supervise those areas. During night time lock-down, not all shifts will be filled.

## Design extremely important in providing most efficient and safe jail staffing plan

It is often said that the cost of construction of a new jail is dwarfed by those of operating it over life span of the facility.

The 24-hour/7-day operation in a jail setting requires considerable support to maintain a safe environment. Thus, there is great incentive in the jail facility planning process to be very attentive to achieving the most efficient design possible.

Minnesota state jail operation standards require different levels of staffing dependent on facility design and bed capacity. The new facility is designed to hold two inmates in the majority of cells in large housing “pods.”

#### Good design

Additionally, the design is rectangular with a common corridor, which is very efficient

in the movement of prisoners, in managing construction costs and in mechanical operation.

As a part of the opening of the new jail in 2008, Tri-County Community Corrections is required to file with the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) this fall a proposal for staffing the new facility.

The new 236-bed facility,

which is an increase of 155 beds over current jail capacity, and will require additional staff for safe operation.

#### Approval required

State regulations require DOC review and approval of the design and staffing component both prior to construction and opening of the facility.

In meeting state jail stan-

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# Jail-Justice Center construction on schedule & budget

## Continued from Page 1

With significant worldwide price increases for such materials as steel and cement, some of the low bids exceeded the estimates in certain categories. However, the increased costs have been absorbed into the construction budget, which includes a contingency fund for such developments. Also available to pay for increased costs for certain materials is income earned from the investment of the bonds that were sold to finance the jail portion of the project.

The Justice Center will be paid for from existing Polk County funds.

## All contracts are in place

"While now tighter than we'd probably like," Warren Strandell, current chair of the Polk County Board and also chair of the Northwest Regional Corrections Board that oversees operations of the Tri-County Community Corrections agency, says, "we aren't in a situation where projected costs exceed funds available to pay for them and all the contracts to complete the project have been awarded.

"We were able to eliminate some of the features that were included in the architect's plan, but those cut-backs won't really affect the final product. The County Board is of the opinion that we are only going to do this once and that we want to do it right the first time."

With the roof in place and sealed, work inside the massive structure is now progressing at a good pace, according to Otterstad.

## Under floor network

On the ground floor, construction is currently being focused on placing the extensive network of electrical conduit and plumbing that will be placed under the floor where it will be secure.

Once that piping is in place, the concrete floor can be poured and work can start on building the masonry walls in the jail area and on erecting the steel studs and sheetrock walls in the Justice Center.

On the second floor, much of the concrete floor topping is already in place and many of the walls, both in the Justice Center and jail have been framed. The heating/ventilation/air conditioning equipment is located inside the building on the second floor.

On the exterior of the building, the base coat for parking lots will be placed this fall to provide a hard surface for workers' and delivery vehicles and to prevent a lot of mud and dirt from being brought into the building during construction. The finish course for the parking lots will be applied next summer.

## Windows on order

Windows for the Justice Center are

scheduled to arrive and be put in place in late October and early November. This will seal the building for inside work through the winter.

"We have all the pieces of the puzzle in place," Otterstad says, "and we haven't come onto any major design flaws or problems. There are always a few change orders that seem to come up but I can't see that there will be anything that will be a serious issue. By next summer, we'll be painting, hanging doors, laying flooring, working on the woodwork in the Justice Center, and putting the security system into the jail. We'll be winding up construction by fall. I'm pleased with our progress."

## Workforce to increase

The workforce on the job through the summer has regularly ranged from 30 to 35. With the building sealed and outside work generally ended later this year, the workforce inside the building is expected to double or more.

"There will be a lot of people who will be clamoring for inside work here through the winter," Otterstad, a native of Bemidji who has worked in construction management for CAM since 2000, says. "Our job as the construction manager will be to coordinate all the work and keep it moving along."

# Jail design promotes efficiency, staff safety

## Continued from Page 2

dards, each full-time security post within the jail requires five persons to cover all shifts in the seven days per week staffing rotation. This includes sick leave, vacation and training time.

## Posts/pods are named

The security posts are noted in the accompanying drawing as ALPHA, DELTA/OMEGA, BETA, SIGMA, INTAKE, and CENTRAL CONTROL. Each unit is named distinctly in order to easily identify locations in emergency situations and for common jail communications.

The required Staff Coverage Plan of the DOC defines custody posts, which meet the rules of direct supervision and the needs identified by Northwest Regional Corrections Center (NWRCC) staff.

## Minimum coverage needs

The objective of the staffing plan is to determine the minimum coverage needed for staff and inmate safety based upon the fixed posts as well as the proper coverage for intermittent activities that occur in the jail.

Each pod or living unit is designed to contain as many as 60 inmates at one time. An exception is SIGMA, which is designed to handle the most difficult inmates in a "locked down" environment. It has 56 beds.

Each of three housing units can be operated in direct supervision by one staff post. The highest security unit is SIGMA, the special management unit that will be staffed by shared posts in the INTAKE and CENTRAL CONTROL areas adjacent to the unit. The

unit will be backed up by a supervisor rover position

In addition to custody staff, food and health services staff will be provided by vendor contract. Jail staffing will continue to include required programming, adult basic education, maintenance, and supervisory/administrative staff.

## 8.5 positions

The proposed staffing plan for jail operation requires an additional 8.5 positions, which is less than the original projection for new hires. If approved, this staff complement will handle the total eventual capacity of 236 inmates.

However, the reasonable expectation is that the facility will not reach its total capacity for several years and therefore some savings in positions may be possible or could be off-set by contract income from other

entities.

Tri-County projects savings of approximately \$400,000 annually in funds currently budgeted as expense for obtaining jail beds in other counties. This does not include savings in the current inmate transportation expense for the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

## Contracts for bed space

Long-standing contracts with the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the DOC are expected to continue with some increase in usage in the new building. The Federal Marshal's Office has expressed interest in new contracts for bed space as well.

Increased income and/or cost savings will help balance the additional staffing costs. — **Susan Mills, administrator, Tri-County Community Corrections**

## Moves from Assessor's Office

# Cote named new County Recorder

Michelle Cote is the new Polk County recorder.

A county employee for the past 18 years including 17 in the Assessor's Office, Cote succeeds Marlene Hanson, who retired on Jan. 31, 2006, after a 29-year career in the office. Maxine "Micki" Newhouse had served as the interim recorder while a permanent replacement was being sought.

A licensed senior accredited Minnesota assessor, Cote had served as deputy assessor in the Assessor's Office and was the principal lakeshore appraiser and the appraiser for the City of Crookston. Her duties included analyzing and interpreting all sales, mapping of sales and land value data, preparing reports for equalization meetings, attending and conducting equalization meetings, and directing staff on appraisal matters.

### Assumed post June 19

Cote, who assumed the recorder position on June 19, had worked at Strander Abstract, Inc., Crookston, as a bookkeeper and doing title



Michelle Cote

work for 3-1/2 years before joining the Polk County Auditor's Office as a "floater" in 1988. She moved to the Assessor's Office the next year.

### Smooth transition

"I'm still learning the new job, which involves a lot of little details," she says of moving to the recorder position. "I'm really enjoying it. The staff has been very instrumental in making this a smooth transition for me. I've spent a lot of time

going through the files trying to familiarize myself with things and all of the activities that have occurred. And I'm now getting involved in the budgeting process, which I like because I've always liked working with numbers."

A native of Oregon, Cote graduated from Milwaukie, Ore., High School and attended Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, Ore., before earning a B.S. degree in business administration in 1984 at the University of North Dakota.

She has also completed administrative and appraisal courses and seminars developed by the University of Minnesota and the State Department of Revenue.

Cote and her husband, Rick, who works at Dee Manufacturing in Crookston, live at Mentor. They have two children: Jessica, 22, works at Fair Meadow Nursing Home in Fertile, and Jordan, 19, is a freshman at Minnesota Community College in Wadena.



Nancy Shafer

## Shafer heads Dispatch Center

As a part of a restructuring of duties in the Polk County Sheriff's Office, Nancy Shafer has been promoted by Sheriff Mark LeTexier to the position of director of the Dispatch Center.

Shafer, who joined the department as a dispatcher in 1994, succeeds Allen Wagner in the position.

The promotion frees Wagner, who is both the director of Polk County Emergency Services and transportation officer for the Polk County Sheriff's Office, for other duties that are likely to occur when the new Polk County Justice Center and Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail become operational.

### Worked in North Dakota

A native of Crowley, Texas, Shafer graduated from high school there in 1987. After a year of junior college in Texas, she relocated to Devils Lake, N.D., where her mother has relatives. Shafer was a dispatcher at the Lake Region Law Enforcement Center in Devils Lake for three years.

While there, she met and married Kent Shafer, a Devils Lake police officer. They moved to Crookston in 1992, and Nancy became a Polk County dispatcher two years later. The Shafers have two sons, Phillip, 14, and Sam, 11.

## Flu shots available at drill

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As a part of the drill, residents age 9 and above will have the opportunity to receive their annual influenza vaccine. There will be a \$20 cost for those without Medicare or Medical Assistance.

One additional site at which the influenza vaccine will be offered is expected in 2007 with a third site planned in 2008.

Partners with Public Health in developing the emergency plans include Polk County Emergency Management, fire departments, law enforcement, hospitals, clinics, mental health, schools, Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP), Polk County Social Services, and many volunteers.

Public Health, which has registered about 45 volunteers and could use up to 100, is currently recruiting volunteers to assist with the mass dispensing plans. Three upcoming meetings are planned for volunteers.

Those meetings will be held at 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 9, at the Polk County Human Service Center in East Grand Forks; at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11, at Mount St. Benedict in Crookston, and at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, at the Polk County Public Health office in McIntosh.

Further information about the need for volunteers is available by contacting Altepeter or June Bergh at Public Health in Crookston, 281-3385.

## Strandell & Beiswenger advance

The only county race on the Primary Election ballot occurred in District 2 where incumbent Commissioner Warren Strandell, East Grand Forks, with 231 votes, and Roger Beiswenger, Fisher, with 208 votes, won the right to advance to the General Election ballot on Nov. 7. Monte Ruch, Fisher, had 71 votes.

The election was required to reduce the field of candidates to two.

Countywide, only 2,436 voters out of 17,234 registered voters, or 14.1 percent, cast ballots in the Primary Election.

## For 21 townships in eastern Polk County

# State orders land valuations increase

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has ordered an across-the-board 20 percent increase in the valuations of both tillable and non-tillable agricultural lands in 21 townships in eastern Polk County.

The increases are in addition to the 25 percent tillable valuation increases that were initiated by Polk County for the 2006 assessment.

State law requires that property valuations be set at from 90 to 105 percent of market (or actual sale) value. Since comparable sales are used to determine the worth of properties, it is actually the buyers and sellers who determine the values.

### **Not the same tax increase**

While the new valuations for the 21 eastern townships will naturally result in real estate tax increases for the property owners, those taxes will not increase at the same percentage as that of the valuation increases. There are also many other variables in the property tax system that affect the final tax bill. Valuation increases simply build the base against which local governments levy taxes to pay for their ongoing operations.

The effect of the increased valuations in the 21 townships will show up in taxes that become payable in 2007.

"In the past," County Assessor Robert Wagner says, "a lot of the activity (increase in valuations because of sales) was occurring in the western part of the county. But in recent years, larger increases have come in the eastern townships."

### **Western parts of county spared**

The western part of the county, which received increases ranging from 5 to 20 percent a year ago (while the eastern part of the county was getting a 25 percent hike), won't be subjected to either county or state-ordered valuation increases in the 2006 assessments.

Wagner received word of the state-ordered increases in June in a letter from the Minnesota Department of Revenue. It read:

"I reviewed your appeal related to the 2006 State Board of Equalization with Property Tax Division staff. We acknowledge that you have made substantial changes in your agricultural values the last couple of years. Your efforts are appreciated.

"However, the valuation increases have not been enough to result in an acceptable adjusted ratio or to equalize border values to an acceptable level. Our decision is to implement the State Board Orders as recommended by your regional representative, Brad Averbek.

"Equalization of agricultural border values is a priority for this year's State Board of Equalization. The eastern portion of Polk County had 32 ag sales with an adjusted ratio of 77.8 percent — far lower than the acceptable range of 90 to 105 percent. In addition, Polk County's ag border values are out of line with the neighboring counties."

Gordon Falkman, director, Property Tax Division, Minnesota Department of Revenue, signed the letter.

### **Thought to have been sufficient**

"At the time that we made them," Wagner says, "we thought the 25 percent increases that we instituted at the local level were sufficient to reach the state minimum of at least 90 percent of actual sale prices. But, in retrospect, the state ordered increases are justified as recent farmer-to-farmer sales have been above even the new county determined valuations."

The information about land sales is a part of the Certificates of Real Estate Value that have to be filed as a part of sale agreements. "We spend a lot of time verifying that information," Wagner says,

pointing out that only the actual amount paid for real estate is used in determining values.

It was those sales that triggered the state-ordered increases.

Ag land property owners won't receive written notice of the state-ordered valuation increases, according to Wagner. "They won't see the new valuations until the tax bills are mailed at the end of March," he says.

With the new CAMA computerized assessment system now in place, Wagner notes that his office will be able to check additional sales before determining valuations. "We've gone beyond the pencil and paper process that was so time consuming and limited the number of sales that we could look at."

### **No concern about jail bonds**

As the eastern county ag land owners — and all property owners in the county — wait for next year's tax bills, they won't have to be concerned about the cost of debt service for the bonds that were sold to finance the jail portion of the new Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail that is under construction in Crookston. The first payment against that debt was already provided for in the current year tax bills.

While property owners in eastern Polk County are getting bad news, Wagner says, there is good news for downtown commercial property owners in the City of Crookston. By state order, those valuations are being adjusted downward by 10 percent.

In the future, the Assessor's Office is looking to implement the Green Acres Program, which may help soften the impact from non-farm rural land sales. Further information on this will be communicated to the property owners as it becomes available to the Assessor's Office.

## Sand Hill Watershed managers reappointed to 3-year terms

Veteran Sand Hill River Watershed District managers Harold Vig, Fosston, and Gordon Sonstelie, Erskine, have been reappointed by the Polk County Board of Commissioners to serve addi-

tional three-year terms.

Vig was first appointed in 1994 and then reappointed in 1997, 2000 and 2003. Sonstelie was initially appointed in 1997 and was previously reappointed in 2000 and 2003.

## 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  
chair  
Dist. 3 — Bill Montague  
Dist. 4 — Warren Affeldt  
v. chair  
Dist. 5 — Don Diedrich

# New tools for managing Canada thistle

Have you noticed how abundant Canada thistle has become in northwest Minnesota?

It appears to be present on every stretch of roadside, telephone or powerline right-of-way, non-cropland area, CRP field....oops.... not CRP as these areas are systematically being cleaned up. But this invasive plant is firmly established everywhere else that crops are not grown.

Canada thistle has been difficult to manage because it has an extensive perennial root system. Canada thistle has roots of two distinct types. There are vertical roots that may penetrate the soil 6 to 10 feet and function to store water and nutrients.

These roots seem pretty effective at finding water and many have observed that even during the drought we experienced this year, Canada thistle plants were not willing from a lack of moisture.

Each plant also produces lateral roots that may extend horizontally up to 20 feet in one season. The lateral roots produce abundant dormant root buds that are the source of new shoots. Thus, if the strategy you have used doesn't completely kill the root system some of the dormant root buds on the lateral roots will be released and the plants will re-establish on the site.

Canada thistle has been easier to manage in cropland because of tillage and the annual applications of herbicides. The herbicides labeled on non-cropland have offered in-season suppression but typically the root systems were not completely controlled and within a year the patches often re-established. It has usually taken a concerted effort of yearly applications to control infested areas.

## Can you control Canada thistle with mowing?

You generally won't find Canada thistle persisting in lawns, so frequent mowing can be an effective control strategy. Some research has suggested that mowing on a 20-day cycle may be necessary to reduce Canada thistle populations. In our experience at St Hilaire, mowing one time at early flowering stimulated the plant to produce new shoots from the dormant root buds and at the end of the season we had more Canada thistle stems than if we had not mowed at all (compare mowing versus untreated or all of fall applications versus untreated in Table 1).

## Are the new herbicides labeled in non-crop areas more effective than past products?

Yes. Milestone and ForeFront which contain the active ingredient aminopyralid offers significantly better control of Canada thistle than other labeled products. In trials at St Hilaire in 2005 and 2006, the control of Milestone and ForeFront aver-

Canada Thistle Control with Herbicides Applied at Two Timings at St Hilaire, MN					
Treatment	Rate	Thistle Population-1		Visual Control-2	
		7/7/05	9/19/05	9/19/05	6/14/06
<b>Spring applications</b>					
Curtail	2 pt	1,496	231	82	76
Curtail	4 pt	1,463	190	83	90
Redeem+NIS	3 pt+.5%v/v	960	68	95	99
Cimarron					
Max A+B+NIS	.25 oz+1pt+.25%	832	195	87	83
2,4-D Ester+Rifle	2pt+1pt	1,792	286	79	70
Tordon 22K	1.5 pt	2,184	143	88	96
Milestone	5 oz	1,363	57	95	99
Milestone	7 oz	1,526	16	99	99
ForeFront	2 pt	1,713	93	91	97
ForeFront	2.6 pt	1,552	12	99	100
mowing		1,217	2,231	0	0
<b>Fall applications</b>					
Curtail	2 pt	2,142	3,229	-	75
Curtail	4 pt	2,364	2,832	-	77
Redeem+NIS	3 pt+.5%v/v	1,530	1,893	-	83
Cimarron					
Max A+B+NIS	.25 oz+1pt+.25%	1,157	1,460	-	51
2,4-D Ester+Rifle	2pt+1pt	2,201	2,721	-	23
Tordon 22K	1.5 pt	1,433	1,863	-	99
Milestone	5 oz	1,243	1,869	-	100
Milestone	7 oz	1,714	2,775	-	100
ForeFront	2 pt	1,458	2,054	-	99
ForeFront	2.6 pt	1,859	2,608	-	100
Untreated		1,878	2,057	0	0

1 — Thistle population is the total number of thistle stems in the treatment (4 replications: 3,600 sq ft)  
 2 — Visual control is an estimate of the % control of Canada thistle  
 CRP: Mixed stand of brome, Kentucky bluegrass, quackgrass, big bluestem, alfalfa, red clover, milkweed, many others  
 Plots are 30 by 30 ft with 3 ft mowed alleyway between plots  
 Plots treated with tractor mounted CO2 sprayer using 8001 flat fan nozzles at 35 psi at 10 gpa  
 Table 2 — Application information at St Hilaire, MN.

Treatment application	Application date	Mowed	Thistle stage at
Spring application	7/7/2005	No	Late bud (1% bloom)
Fall application	9/23/2005	Yes (on 7/13)	rosette

aged between 99 and 100 percent control after one year (Table 1). Treatments with 99 percent control will become re-infested from the roots but the high level of control means there may be three or more years of effective suppression before an additional treatment is necessary.

## What do we know about Milestone and ForeFront?

These two herbicides are not restricted use products so you do not need pesticide licensing to purchase and use them. These herbicides are not volatile and are not a risk for leaching into groundwater. They have very low toxicity to birds, fish, mammals and aquatic invertebrates and do not have grazing restrictions when applied to pastures.

These herbicides will carryover in the soil for more than one season. Milestone and ForeFront are fairly broad spectrum products that are effective on most thistle species, spotted knapweed, curly dock and many other broadleaf plants and have good

forage grass safety. There is a risk from drift of these products and you need to be careful when spraying around broadleaf crops such as soybean, sugarbeet, sunflower, and many tree species as they are very susceptible to injury from these herbicides.

## What is the correct time to spray Canada thistle?

There are two application windows for spraying Canada thistle. The first application timing is when the thistle is at its lowest carbohydrate reserves in the spring which is at the late bud through early flowering stages of development. In northwest Minnesota this is normally at the end of June or the first part of July. The other timing to spray Canada thistle is in mid to late September when the plant is actively translocating carbohydrates to the root system for storage over the winter. — **Carlyle Holen, extension educator/associate professor, University of Minnesota-Crookston**

## Wagner is state president

Polk County Assessor Robert Wagner this month (September) assumed the presidency of the Minnesota Association of Assessing Officers (MAAO).

The organization, which has membership from all 87 counties, works closely with the State Board of Assessors and the State Department of Revenue in dealing with legislative issues, assessment policy and in organizing the education program for assessors that is provided through St. Cloud State University.

The State Board of Assessors was established by the legislature in 1971 for the purpose of designing, reviewing, supervising, coordinating and approving courses in assessment practices along with establishing criteria for determining assessor qualifications.

### Code of conduct & ethics

At the direction of the 2005 legislature, a team including the Board of Assessors and representatives of MAAO and



Robert Wagner

of the Department of Revenue was formed to develop a code of conduct and ethics for all licensed assessors in the state. The objective was to ensure that property owners in Minnesota receive the most accurate and equitable assessments possible of their property.

The State Board of Assessors includes two county assessors, two members of the staff of the State Department of Revenue, a city assessor, a

local (township) assessor, a private appraiser, and two members from the general public.

In addition to annual spring and fall conferences for the general membership, the MAAO Executive Board also meets another four to six times a year.

### Was vice president

Wagner had served as first vice president and in several other positions with MAAO prior to moving now to the presidency. The son of Arleen and the late Norm Wagner of Fisher, he grew up working on the family farm, earned a degree in business education from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, farmed, was a substitute teacher and worked as a licensed real estate salesperson before joining the Polk County Assessor's Office as an appraiser in 1987. He succeeded Dale Halos as the county assessor in December 1996. Wagner and his wife, Jane, live in East Grand Forks and have three grown sons.

## County Park improvements completed

Campers at the main Polk County Park on Maple Lake are enjoying the new bathhouse along with upgrades to the electrical, water and sewer services that were completed this spring and early summer as part of a major improvement project.

The work, which was begun in spring 2005, represents a \$600,000 investment in the park, which has 20 full hook-ups, 15 water & electric sites, and 15 "electric only" seasonal campsites. There are also nine primitive sites. Additional boat docks have also been provided.

In conjunction with the improvements, rules and regulations for use of the facility — one of three county facilities on the lake — have been adjusted as they concern activities and conduct in the park. Also currently under review are camping fees, along with the policies regulating how campers can rent and retain seasonal spots in the park.

To get on the waiting list for a seasonal site, contact the Polk County Highway Department, 281-3952

## Computerization of Assessor's Office is returning big dividends

A lot of expectations for reducing staff, increasing efficiencies, maintaining better records, and having less paper came with computerization of the business world.

For Polk County, the investment made during the past few years in "computerizing" the Assessor's Office is returning dividends. Not only does the county have better and more accurate property records and many new efficiencies and capabilities but the department is now in a position where one staff position is going to be eliminated.

### Position to be eliminated

The department, which has lost two highly experienced appraisers in the past few months, is only planning to replace one of them. "The work can now be absorbed by staff with one less appraiser," County Assessor Robert Wagner

says.

The ability to reduce staff, Wagner notes, is because of the CAMA computerized records system that has been put into place over the past two years. In addition to maintaining information on properties and their valuations, the computerized system allows appraisers to record information on laptop computers while making their field inspections and then to transfer it into the system electronically on their return to the office.

### Recorded by pencil

In the past, information collected while in the field was recorded by pencil on note cards and, upon return to the office, was transferred by hand to the permanent record cards.

"With the CAMA system, we've become a lot more efficient," Wagner

says. "Without it, we wouldn't be able to even think about a staff reduction."

### Lost a lot of experience

The two experience personnel who have left the Assessor's Office in recent months are Michelle Cote, who was selected to become the new Polk County recorder, and Greg Landa, who left the department to become the new Norman County assessor. Cote, who carried a large load of work, had logged 17 years in the office. Landa had been with the office for 16-1/2 years.

To cover the loss of two appraisers at the same time, Cote has been contracted to appraise the lakes area of the county on her own time for one year. The arrangement with Cote will allow time for the incoming new appraiser to become familiar with the county and the position.

## Influenza pandemic: It's when not if

# County and its partners working to prepare

We all have been hearing a lot about an influenza pandemic in the newspapers and on radio and television. We are being told that it is not a matter of "if" but a matter of "when" a pandemic will start.

An influenza pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of influenza disease that happens when there is a new/novel strain of influenza that has not been encountered in our lifetimes. Our bodies would not have immunities built up to fight this novel strain. We expect that a pandemic will last 12-18 months and come in 2-3 waves, each lasting 6-8 weeks.

### Overdue for a pandemic

We have had 10 influenza pandemics in the last 300 years. Scientists believe that we are overdue for a pandemic.

There have been three pandemics in the 20th century. We have been hearing a lot about the 1918-1919 pandemic, which was very severe, causing 675,000 U.S. deaths and 50 million deaths worldwide. The 1957-1958 pandemic was a moderate one, causing 70,000 U.S. deaths and 1-2 million deaths worldwide. The 1968-1969 pandemic was the least severe, causing 34,000 U.S. deaths and 700,000 deaths worldwide.

There are many differences between the seasonal flu and pandemic flu. Every year in the U.S., 5-20 percent of our population gets the seasonal flu. This causes 200,000 hospitalizations and about 36,000 deaths each year. Infants and the elderly are at risk of complications.

A list of supplies to store in your home is provided below. When we have a pandemic, we will expect that 30-40 percent of those who are employed will not be working. This will have a huge effect on the food supply chain, including the harvesting/processing/canning of food. This will also affect the truck drivers who transport food and supplies and the people who work in grocery stores. It will be very important to have extra food and supplies in your home, including medications.

### Stay healthy

There are many basic things we all can do to stay healthy.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you have symptoms of influenza, stay home from work, school and social gatherings.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Get your yearly influenza vaccine.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods, get exercise, and get enough rest and sleep.

### Many partners

Polk County has been working hard to plan and prepare for a pandemic. We have many important partners and we are all working together.

Some of these partners are: Polk County Emergency Management, Sheriff's Department and Social Services, First Care Hospital, RiverView Hospital, Altru Clinics, ambulance services, law enforcement, fire departments, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, University of Minnesota-Crookston, Northland Community and Technical College, Win-E-Mac School, HAM radio operators, KROX Radio, Crookston Times, Northwest Mental Health and the Minnesota Department of Health, and many others.

We had a successful regional drill on May 11 involving 13 northwest Minnesota counties and three tribes. We exercised our plans to transport and dispense medication from our pharmaceutical cache in Bemidji to the dispensing sites. There are three dispensing sites in Polk County.

If we need to get medication out to a large number of people, we will need many people working together at the dispensing sites.

### Volunteers needed

Volunteers are a vital part of our plans. If you are interested in being a volunteer, please call our office (218-281-3385) and complete a volunteer enrollment form. We currently have 45 volunteers registered and meet with them twice a year for training. — **Sheri Altepeter, PHN, director, Polk County Public Health**

# Pandemic preparations check list

You can prepare for an influenza pandemic now. You should know both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic outbreak and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. This checklist will help you gather the information and resources you may need in case of a flu pandemic.

### Plan for a pandemic:

• Store a two-week supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. This can also be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disas-

ters.

- Have any non-prescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.
- Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.

### To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:

- Teach your children to

wash hands frequently with soap and water and model the correct behavior.

- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues and be sure to model that behavior.
- Teach your children to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick. Stay home from work and school if sick.

### Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, beans, and soups
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
- Protein or fruit bars
- Soap and water, or alcohol-based (60-95%) hand wash

- Dry cereal or granola
- Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Thermometer
- Dried fruit
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Crackers
- Vitamins
- Canned juices
- Fluids with electrolytes
- Bottled water
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Canned or jarred baby food and formula
- Flashlight
- Pet food
- Batteries
- Other non-perishable items
- Portable radio
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags

- Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers
- Family & emergency health information and contacts (names, land line and cell phone numbers)

### For More Information:

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)  
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hotline, 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636), is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

TTY: 1-888-232-6348.  
Questions can be e-mailed to: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov).

• Links to state departments of health can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/other.htm#states>.

— **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

## Zoning administrator post in flux

# Anderson joins Environmental Services staff

The Polk County Environmental Services Department has a new environmental technician but will likely continue to operate without a zoning coordinator until later this year.

The staff changes involve Dean Anderson, who joined the department in March as its environmental technician, and Nancy Ellis, who resigned in mid-July to take a position with the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Until the staff opening can be addressed, Jon Steiner, Environmental Services Department administrator, will serve as the interim zoning coordinator through the rest of the busy fall season.

### Second time in job

This will be the second time that Steiner has served as the county's zoning coordinator. He previously worked in that capacity from 1997-1998.

"Bringing in a new person immediately," he says, "would require spending a lot of time training him or her on the job,



Dean Anderson

which wouldn't be very practical with all of the activity that goes on during the construction season."

A native of East Grand Forks where he graduated from Senior High School in 1989, Anderson has completed the state requirements for licensure as a septic system inspector. In addition to handling inspections and applications for new septic systems, he is also actively involved in the haz-

ardous waste program and in planning and zoning issues.

### Succeeded Deckert

Anderson, who joined the department after Scott Deckert left for a position with the City of Buffalo, Minn., earned a B.S. degree in conservation natural resources from the University of Minnesota-Crookston in 1995.

Prior to coming to Polk County, he had worked at New Flyer in Crookston for two years and at Ideal Aerosmith, Inc. in East Grand Forks as an electronics installer for eight years. He and his wife, Leslie, who is a quality control inspector at Ideal Aerosmith, live in East Grand Forks. Anderson has a daughter, Devin, 2, and a stepson, Jake Rudy, 10.

Ellis, who had joined the department as an environmental technician after the flood of 1997, moved into the zoning coordinator position a short time after Kathleen "Kitty" Kennedy left to become zoning administrator for the City of Ely, Minn. That was at the

same time that then environmental services department administrator Katherine Logan also resigned to join her husband at his new job in Rochester, Minn.

### Advanced quickly

With the department then two people short, Steiner, who had joined the office as the environmental technician in 1995, was quickly advanced first to the zoning coordinator and then to the Environmental Services Department administrator position. His duties in 1997 and 1998 also included handling the county's flood-related voluntary acquisition and demolition programs.

"I expect the office will be a very busy place through the remainder of the construction season," Steiner says. "Once construction activity winds down, there will be time to fill the open position and provide the training needed for that person to become familiar with the county and its zoning regulations."

## *Without state legislation, County sets recycling fees for CRT devices*

The 2006 legislative session concluded once again without the passage of a comprehensive collection and recycling program for Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) containing devices.

CRT containing devices — such as televisions, computer monitors and laptop computers — were banned from disposal during the 2005 legislative session. The ban went into effect on July 1, 2006.

"It's unfortunate for our citizens," Jon Steiner, Polk County Environmental Services administrator, says, "that the proposed bill that would have required the manufacturers of these products to pay the collection and recycling cost of these obsolete CRT devices wasn't approved.

"Despite repeated attempts by legislators from both parties, the bill was not allowed to receive a

vote on the House floor," he relates.

With no comprehensive program for the collection and recycling of CRT devices and the ban going into effect on July 1, local units of government were required to create programs to comply with this law. As a result, Polk County adopted the following fee schedule for the recycling of CRT devices: Screen size (measured diagonally) 20" at \$10 per unit; 20-35" at \$20 per unit; and 35" at \$30 per unit.

The Transfer Station in Crookston and the Recycling Center in Fosston both accept CRT devices during regular business hours for the fees listed above.

For more information on the CRT ban, facility operational hours or directions to either facility, please contact Polk County Environmental Services at 281-6445 or 1-800-482-6804.

## Dr. Hanson becomes County medical director

Dr. Rolf Hanson succeeded Dr. Erik Kanten as the medical director for Polk County Public Health on Sept. 1.

A member of the medical community in Crookston since 1979, Dr. Hanson is a family physician with an active obstetrics practice and is the branch chairperson for the Altru Clinic in Crookston. He also serves on the board of Northwest Mental Health Center and has served as chief of the medical staff at RiverView Hospital and as medical director of Glenmore Recovery Center, all in Crookston.

Born at Northfield, Minn., Dr. Hanson earned his undergraduate degree at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and his medical degree from the University of Minnesota Medical School in Minneapolis. His internship and residency were at Cook County Hospital in Chicago. Board certified in family practice since 1977, Dr. Hanson worked at public health clinics in Phillips, Wis., and Chicago before moving to Crookston.

"We welcome Dr. Hanson to Public Health and really want to thank Dr. Kanten for his many years of service as our medical director," Sheri Altepeter, Polk County Public Health director, says. "We appreciate Dr. Kanten's guidance and knowledge and wish him well in his transition to RiverView Clinic."

# Polk's 'Truck Corridor' work completed

Another construction season is almost over. Dry weather this summer gave contractors a big boost in completing their work.

Our County State Aid Highway 2 project from Gully to the Pennington County line, which is a part of the 10-ton route being developing for northwestern Minnesota manufacturers, was completed in mid-September about a month earlier than expected. Eighty percent of this project was funded with federal dollars with the remaining 20 percent provided by State Aid bonding money.

Without the help of Congressman Collin Peterson and U.S. Senator Norm Coleman's allocation of federal dollars, Polk County would never have had the money to complete this project. The total cost of the work was nearly \$4.3 million including the replacement of two narrow bridges. One bridge was over the Clearwater River and the other over the Lost River.

We also flattened the inslopes to 4:1 and widened the shoulders to six feet, two of which were paved and four of which are aggregate. The two miles through the Gully swamp were

reconstructed with a design that used two layers of Tensar BX Geogrid, aggregate base and bituminous surfacing. The entire roadway was designed as a 10-ton route and has been informally named the "Tri-County Truck Corridor."

The route runs from Gully in Polk County to Grygla in Marshall County. Pennington and Marshall counties are currently constructing their portions of the corridor. Much of the Pennington stretch will be completed this fall with the remainder — from State Highway 1 to Grygla — to be completed in the 2007 construction season.

## Other projects

In addition to the township bridge replacements that are to be completed by Oct. 1, our other major project this year was the reconstruction of CSAH 41 from U.S. Highway 75 at Climax to Trunk Highway 9. This work, which was partially completed in 2006 and is being done in conjunction with Sand Hill River Watershed Project 17, will be completed in late September. — **Richard Sanders, Polk County Highway Engineer**

# Trucks, salt sheds to help fight icy roads

In an effort to become more efficient in snow removal and ice control, the Polk County Highway Department has added three snowplow trucks to its fleet and is constructing sand and salt storage facilities at Trail and Fosston.

The sand and salt storage facilities along with a vehicle storage building in Fosston are expected to be operational by about Nov. 15, according to Polk County Highway Engineer Richard Sanders.

"With the new equipment and the sand and salt storage facilities in place and ready to go," Sanders jokes, "my guess is that we are going to have a cold, dry winter."

## Report Welfare Fraud

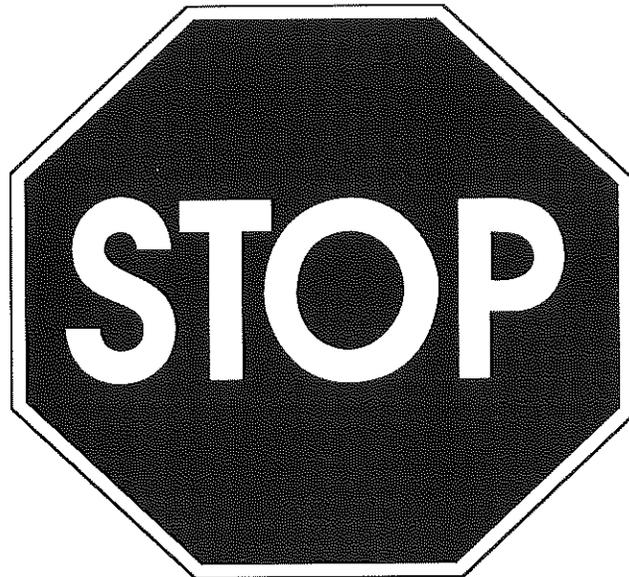
People who give false information or withhold facts in order to receive Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) aid, food stamps, general assistance, childcare or medical assistance may be guilty of fraud.

### 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

You may remain anonymous

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**

# Fosston Social Services office to get new home

The Fosston satellite office of Polk County Social Services will move to a new location — 104 No. Kaiser Ave. in downtown Fosston — on about Oct. 1.

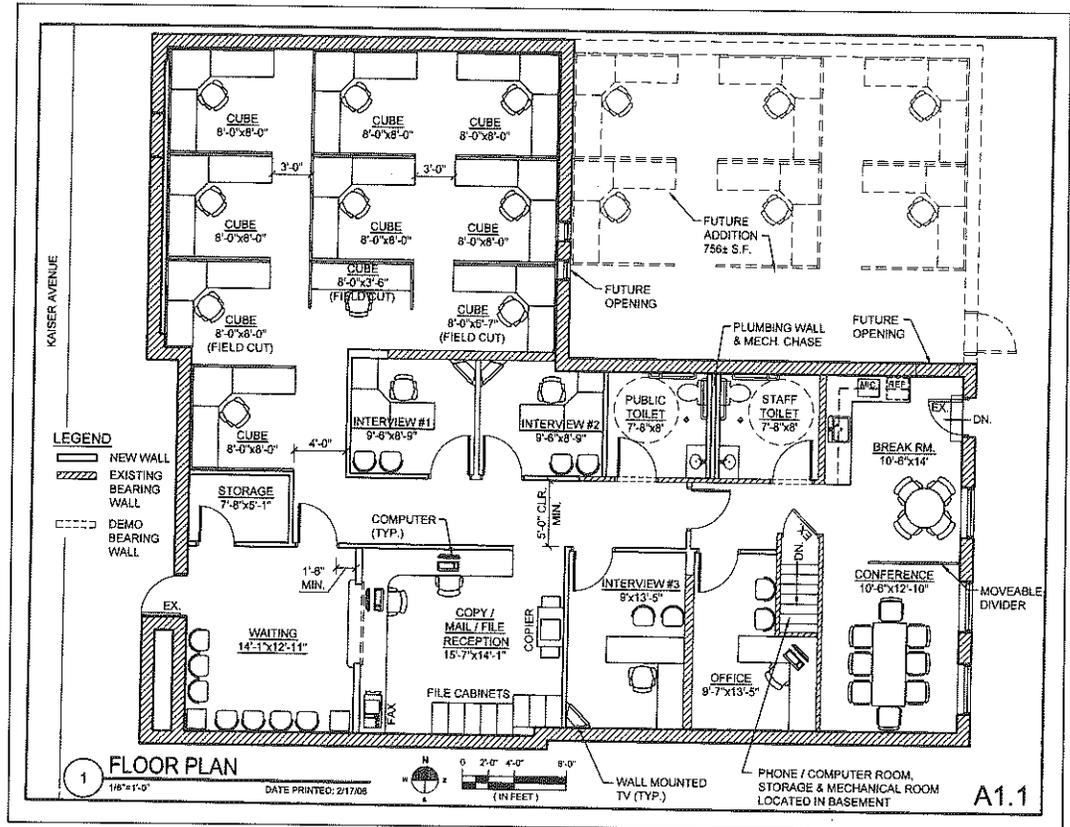
“The new quarters will allow us to better serve clients, provide more efficiency and better security for staff and will remove us from some of the other challenges that we have faced at the current location in recent years,” Polk County Social Services Director Kent Johnson says.

“We’re happy with the remodeling project that is preparing the new site for us. It will be an improvement over the current location. Except for the exterior walls, everything will be new.”

## Five-year agreement

The new space will be leased in a five-year agreement with building owner Jim Palubicki, who has been extensively remodeling the building over the past two months.

A former dental office, the building includes 2,373 square feet of space on the ground floor plus an additional 536 square feet of storage space in the basement. The new site



Move into new office space planned about Oct. 1

provides space for an addition to the building should it be needed. Parking for staff will be provided across the street as a part of the lease with clients

also being able to use on-street parking including spaces for handicapped persons.

The current location, which once was a livery stable, has

been used since being remodeled into officing in 1998.

## Polk County Attorney's Office

Activity Summary  
Jan.-June 2006

### Felony & Gross Misdemeanors

Complaints prepared	.207
Sentencing hearings	.176
Committed to state prison	.28
Probation violation hearings	.198
Committed to state prison	.18
Jury trials	.3
Defendants convicted	.3

### Misdemeanors

Guilty pleas	.43
Trials	.2
Defendants convicted	.2

### Juvenile Cases

Delinquency petitions	.15
Delinquency hearings	.30
Child in need of protective services (CHIPS) petitions	.44
CHIPS hearings	.115
Referred to Diversion Program	.29
Referred to Restorative Justice	.22

### County Welfare

Commitment petitions*	.14
Commitment hearings	.17
Guardianship petitions	.7
Guardianship hearings	.9
* Mentally ill and/or inebriate	

### Child Support

Child support hearings	.257
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## Calls to Sheriff's 'Help.us.2' Fight Meth tip line are coming in

Calls to “Help.Us.2” Fight Meth anonymous tip line of the Polk County Sheriff’s Office “are coming in but not as fast we would like,” according to Sheriff Mark LeTexier,

Educating the public not only that the tip line is there but also that information is provided anonymously is taking time, he says.

### Promotion continues

To get that word out, LeTexier always includes a pitch for the tip line as a part of the presentations on the dangers of methamphetamine that he regularly makes throughout the county and whenever else that he can.

“It’s working, but not as well as it can. We’ve gotten calls, even some from other counties and from North Dakota,” LeTexier says. “When we get calls from out of the

county we pass the information on to the appropriate authorities. Every little bit of information helps all of us.”

### More than just drugs

The tip line can be used for more than information about drug activities. “We’d like information on any suspicious activity. It might not be anything, yet it might provide information on something or tie in with information that we already have. We hope the people will call in whatever they have and let the investigating officer have the chance to check it out,” LeTexier says.

“People will ask us why we don’t use a toll-free, 800 number. If we were to do that, the call wouldn’t be anonymous. With an 800 number, you get the caller ID feature, which we don’t have with our number. Calls to the tip line are completely anonymous.”

## To make use of excess steam

# Turbine generator being installed

The Polk County Solid Waste Resource Recovery Plant in Fosston is proceeding with the installation of steam-driven turbine generator equipment to produce 'green energy' and reduce its reliance on electricity produced by conventional fossil fuel (coal) fired power plants.

Green energy is a term applied to energy produced from a biomass source or renewable fuel. The State of Minnesota has established that municipal solid waste qualifies as biomass and therefore the energy produced at the incinerator is considered as renewable energy.

### Idea had been studied

In the past, Polk County conducted several studies to determine if it was economically feasible to use excess steam to generate electricity. None of these studies showed a favorable return on the investment.

Several years ago Polk County received a grant to retrofit its air pollution control (APC) equipment to bring the plant into compliance with revised air rules and regulations.

A component of the retrofit project, which was completed

in 2005, included the addition of economizers to control flue gas temperatures for both incinerator trains. These units lower the flue gas temperature by indirectly transferring heat from the gas to the boiler feed water.

### Sufficient steam

The result is added steam capacity. Now, even with the three steam customers on-line, it has been determined that there is sufficient excess steam available to operate a turbine generator to produce electricity and reduce incoming power from the local utility.

Because of the varying steam demands from the three customers this generator will not be operational all of the time and will only offset a portion of the total electrical requirements for the plant.

The Office of Environmental Assistance (OEA) has approved using the dollars remaining in the capital assistance grant that was approved for the APC retrofit project to help fund the turbine generator project. This will provide funding for up to 50 percent of the total capital costs of the project. The capital costs are projected to be \$600,000.

### 6 to 7-year pay-back

With the help of the grant and at the current electrical rates, energy produced by the turbine will result in enough savings to provide an estimated six to seven-year pay-back and make it a feasible investment. As such, it was approved by the Polk County Board.

A portion of the savings will come from the installation of reverse osmosis equipment to further purify incoming city water and reduce chemicals added to the water to remove the minerals. The basically mineral-free water from the reverse osmosis equipment is required for efficient and safe operation of the steam turbine.

The estimated completion date for this project is December 2006. Not only will this unit make use of excess steam but it could also act as a backup in the event there is a total loss of incoming power.

And should one or more of the current steam customers elect to reduce or eliminate using steam now furnished by the incinerator, the turbine's use could even become more extensive. — **Bill Wilson, facilities manager, Polk County Solid Waste**

## New election equipment worked well

The new voting equipment used in the Primary Election on Sept. 12 performed "very well," according to Polk County Auditor-Treasurer Gerald Amiot.

"We were really pleased with how it all worked. There were a few minor issues but they were easily corrected. With the precinct counters, we were all done before 10 o'clock on election night," he says.

"We'll make a few minor adjustments before the General Election but the new equipment is a definite improvement from the way things used to be done."

Required by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) passed by Congress in 2002 as a way to ensure access, integrity, accuracy and privacy for all voters, the equipment has provisions to assist handicapped persons in voting and to allow persons to correct their ballots in the event of a voting error.

The equipment was used in 54 precincts throughout the county. The other 28 precincts use mail balloting.

Help Us 2  
**Fight  
Meth**

## The Polk County Sheriff's

Tip Line is completely

## Anonymous

Help us to fight meth and all crime. Your tips, especially when combined with other information that we already might have, could help someone's child, parent, relative or friend. — **Sheriff Mark LeTexier**

**1-218-435-7872**