

Polk County Newsletter

Fall 2009

2010 budget to require 1.32% levy hike

The County Board has adopted a "preliminary" budget for 2010 that will require a 1.32 percent increase in the levy to pay for the \$18,585,185 in projected operational expenses that are dependent upon property taxes.

This 1.32 percent levy increase matches the levy limit that was set for the county by the State of Minnesota and comes at a time when Gov. Tim Pawlenty has projected the unallotment of \$490,327 from the \$1,936,908 in County Program Aid (CPA) that Polk County had been certified to receive.

Counties are required to submit preliminary levies to the State of Minnesota in September and determine a final levy amount in December. Law does not allow the preliminary levy to be increased but, while it is unlikely in Polk County because of all of the demands, it could be reduced.

Overall, Polk County operations will require a \$58,749,376 budget in 2010. The additional revenue needed to accommodate this total figure will come from fees and from state and federal aids, operational sup-

port and grants.

Key factors in determining the preliminary budget were the loss of almost a half-million dollars in County Program Aid (CPA) and the effect of the 1.32 percent levy limit.

No special levies

Provisions in state law allow counties the opportunity to backfill the lost CPA dollars by exercising a "special levy" option to maintain certain operations and programs at 2009 levels. However, the County Board had no desire to institute that option.

Instead, the Board has adopted the position that if the legislature and the governor reduced aids and programs, it should not be the county's role to place the burden of restoring them on its residents in the form of added property taxes.

Only good for one year

The Board also noted that the special levy option was only available for one year and would do nothing more than put a Band-Aid on the problem... that the shortfall would resurface in budgeting for 2011.

At the request of commissioners, the different county departments reduced their budgets by an average of about 2.5 percent from the budgets that were in place for 2009. As a part of the budgeting process, some departments agreed not to fill vacant positions, while others cutback on programs, equipment replacement, etc. The budget reductions were accomplished as a team effort.

This preliminary budget does not include funds for salary increases for the more than 300 county employees but it does provide for step increases in the salary schedules.

Wage contracts for all six organized employee groups and salary agreements for those employees who are not organized will expire at the end of 2009. This will require that a negotiating process be conducted. Also not addressed to date is the recent news of a 15.5 percent increase in health insurance costs.

Tougher times ahead

While Polk County has reserves that could be tapped to maintain programs and opera-
See BUDGET, Page 2

New Polk County plat book to go to press

The new, full-color Polk County Plat Book that has been in the making over the past two years is now in a final phase of editing and will soon go to press.

The book is expected to be available for sale in mid to late October, according to County Auditor-Treasurer Gerald Amiot.

The 500 copies of the book will be printed in an 8 1/2 by 11-inch format. It will sell for \$35 plus tax.

The book will be available at the Auditor-Treasurer's Office. The last plat book was published 10 years ago in 1999.

Further information about the availability of the book will be announced in the news media as the printing process progresses.

Public Health & its partners make H1N1 plans, vaccine coming

Polk County Public Health is working with many community partners in the ongoing effort to plan for the second wave of the H1N1 flu threat.

Weekly shipments of H1N1 vaccine may begin arriving in mid-October. This vaccine will be shipped to public health agencies, hospitals and clinics. The priority populations will be vaccinated first, including pregnant women, parents and caregivers of infants less than 6 months old, infants, children and young adults (ages 6 months through 24 years), health care and emergency medical services workers, and people with certain health conditions age 25 through 64 (such as asthma, heart, lung and kidney disease). This is a voluntary vaccination.

We will be scheduling vaccinations at

schools, encouraging parents to bring their children for voluntary vaccination.

Information will be going out by radio, newspaper and letters to parents when the locations, days and times are determined.

We may open mass dispensing vaccination sites in East Grand Forks, Crookston and Erskine. The decision to open mass dispensing sites will be determined by the demand for vaccination.

Possible flu centers are being planned with clinics, hospitals and public health agencies working together. Flu centers would be opened if the governor declares a state of emergency and clinics and hospitals are becoming overwhelmed with influenza

See H1N1 PLANNING, Page 2

Budget

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tions, the County Board is not likely to use these funds to solve the 2010 budget shortfall. Instead, it is reserving that possibility for later years when the loss of more CPA and grant funding is possible. A structural deficit in state operations in the next biennium, which will begin on July 1, 2011, is now projected to total \$6.4 billion.

'One-time' issues

In addition to trying to maintain current operations and jobs as much as possible, the County Board has two "one-time" issues that must be addressed.

These issues include completing the remodeling needed to move the Social Service operations that are still located in the Professional Center to quarters that were vacated when the District Court moved from the upper floor of the Government Center to the new Polk County Justice Center almost two years ago. Besides the efficiency of having all of the social services based in Crookston under one roof in the Government Center, this project will eliminate the expense of having to heat and otherwise maintain the 109-year-old Professional Center building that has more than served its purpose.

The second issue is that of the Wayne Hotel. Should the funding needed to resurrect the three-story building into a 24-unit, income-based housing facility not be obtained, the

building will need to be removed and this would become the financial responsibility of the Polk County.

Good news for some

There is good news for some property owners, however, in that the "county portion" of their tax bills for 2010 should generally be acceptable. This is because of two factors:

- Total valuation of property in the county — for the purpose of assessing real estate taxes — has increased by \$33.7 million as the result of new construction, pipeline construction and adjustments in the valuation of utilities.

- Increases in the valuation of tillable agricultural lands in the county — ranging up to 20 percent in some areas — will create a tax shift that will benefit property owners in the other tax classifications. The upward adjustment of tillable ag land valuations is required by state law on the basis of the sale prices in recent transactions.

This added valuation has increased the county's total tax base to just over \$3 billion.

The effect of adding the new and/or increased valuation to the tax base could mean that some property owners — especially homeowners whose properties did not experience an increase in valuation — might actually see a reduction in the "county portion" of their tax bills.

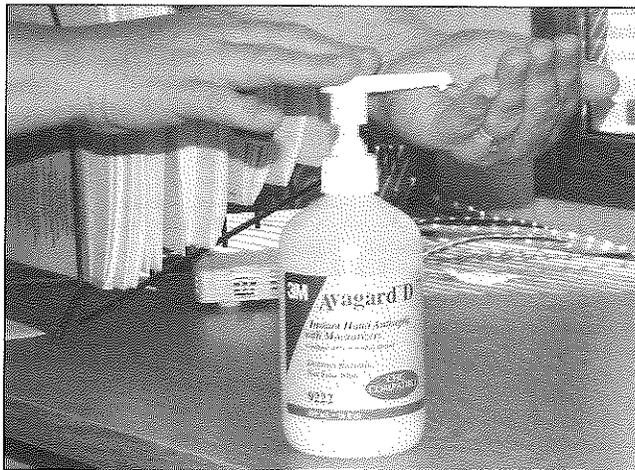
Flu threat continues, hard to predict

Novel H1N1 influenza is again making front page news as the threat from this new flu virus grows. The virus is circulating and making people sick — like it did at the Minnesota State Fair and is doing it across the nation and worldwide.

In Minnesota and throughout the United States, almost all of the flu occurring now is being caused by novel H1N1.

Influenza is notoriously difficult to predict. As fall approaches, novel H1N1 could simply go away, stay with us with no change in the severity of the illness it causes, or develop the ability to cause more severe illness, possibly even mimicking the severe, life-threatening pandemic of 1918.

Most scientists expect to see a "second wave" of illness in the fall caused by novel H1N1. Because novel H1N1 is a completely new virus — one that has never been seen before — it is less likely that people will have



Prevention includes washing your hands

any immunity to it.

Medications

Antiviral drugs like Tamiflu and Relenza currently appear to be effective in treating novel H1N1 flu. These drugs need to be individually prescribed by a physician.

Enough antivirals for slightly

more than 1,000,000 courses of treatment from state and federal stockpiles currently is available for use in Minnesota.

Efforts are currently underway to develop a vaccine for novel H1N1 that could be available by mid-October or even earlier. — **Minnesota Department of Health**

Tax abatement program has spurred growth

The Tax Abatement Program that is available to communities in Polk County has benefited the owners of 159 new single family homes, who through the six years of its existence have been refunded a total of \$456,877 of their property taxes.

In the program, participating cities, school districts and Polk County agree to refund the first two years of property taxes as part of an effort to promote the construction of new homes.

In Crookston, where the program was initiated in 2004, 43 homeowners have gotten back \$70,050 from their property tax payments.

New homeowners in East Grand Forks, where rebuilding as the result of the devastating 1997 flood of the century has been ongoing, 181 homeowners have been refunded \$375,443.

Other communities participating in the program and their number of beneficiaries and tax refunds include: Fisher — 4 homes built and \$2,169 refunded; Fosston — 2 homes, \$6,111; and McIntosh — 1 home, \$3,104.

Some homeowners have received both years of the abatement, while others have a second year coming. Still others will be a part of the program beginning this year.

H1N1 plans

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patients. Flu centers would be a place for assessment, treatment, triage and education for people with influenza symptoms.

There are many things that you can do to prevent the spread of influenza. It is vitally important to wash your hands frequently, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve, stay home if you are sick and stock up on things you and your family will need if you are sick.

There is a great deal of good information on the internet:

www.cdc.gov

www.health.state.mn.us

Please contact us if you have questions — **Sheri Altepeter, PHN, Polk County Public Health director**

RRV Juvenile Center to try 90-day hold plan

The Red River Valley Juvenile Center will soon begin the process of transitioning its 8 secure "detention beds" from a maximum 8-day hold capability into one that can hold male and female youth for up to 90 days.

The change will be made on a trial basis, the success of which will be judged next fall during the budgeting process for calendar year 2011.

Located adjacent to the Polk County Law Enforcement Center in Crookston, the Red River Valley Juvenile Center is a part of the Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC) agency that also operates the Northwest Corrections Center jail and provides probation services for its three-member counties (Norman, Red Lake and Polk).

The 8 secure detention beds are used for juveniles, who are taken in under arrest. The facility also has 8 beds on its non-secure side for juveniles whose issues and circumstances don't require secure housing. There are no limits for length of stay on the residential (non secure) side of the building.

Limited to 8 days

Prior to the upcoming change, a juvenile's stay in the secure detention section of the facility was limited to 8 days during which court appearances were conducted and arrangements made for him or her to be transferred to a center in some other community (usually Bemidji) that was licensed to provide services for a more extended stay.

The change to a 90-day holding capability was chosen over the prospect of closing down the center — both the secure and non-secure sections — following the loss of some \$90,000 in state funding that, until 2010, had been available to the detention operations that were only licensed for the 8-day stay.

The funding was lost as a part of budget-cutting efforts in the last session of the state legislature. Also a concern was a summertime low of having only two juveniles in the center for a brief time during August. That enrollment had returned to a more normal number of juveniles by mid-September.

Occupancy down

Juvenile centers are experiencing low numbers statewide, according to the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). Several centers are reporting that their numbers are down up to one-half and a center in Olmstead County in southeastern Minnesota has begun the process of

closing. In northwestern Minnesota, juvenile centers at both Bemidji and Moorhead (Clay County) have also experienced low occupancy numbers. No contributing factors have been readily identified for the decreased numbers.

"This move should certainly help us," Susan Mills, administrator of Tri-County Community Corrections, says of the change to a 90-day hold facility and the need to keep operating costs under control. "We will have to ramp up our programming but the change to a 90-day hold won't require us to add any more staff. We can accomplish everything that needs to be done with our present staff."

24-hour staffing

The 24-hour staffing of the center requires that one male and one female counselor is on duty around the clock. Counselors can supervise both secure and non-secure sides of the center.

"The only additional cost of converting to a 90-day facility," Mills says, "will be the one-time purchase of some new software for about \$3,000. The benefit will be that by having the ability to hold juveniles in our facility for 90 days, we will be able to eliminate the cost of paying per diems to the other centers where they otherwise would have to be sent for extended treatment. And there is a big benefit in keeping the kids in our three-county area where they are close to family and support."

Mills notes that preliminary approval for the change to licensure to operate a 90-day hold facility has been granted by the DOC. The agency has also agreed to waive a requirement concerning the location of an outdoor recreation area.

Besides the cost of paying per diems to centers licensed for longer term stays, according to Mills, would be the investment of local tax dollars — initially by the cities for the delivery of juveniles to a center and later by Polk County through court orders to provide transportation for subsequent court appearances and for some family and social service staff visits.

Issue of operating costs

In ongoing discussions during the past several months, the Northwest Regional Corrections Board, which oversees Tri-County Community Corrections, had weighed the issue of the cost of operating the center in 2010 (estimated at \$530,519) versus that of closing it down and buying services at other centers (estimated at \$520,911 for the first year).

The cost of closing the center included some one-time expenditures, such as

unemployment costs for up to 11 fulltime employees, along with the expense of having to send juveniles to other facilities. The estimated savings through closure for the year 2010 were said to total \$9,608.

An effort to improve the center's financial situation is to be a focus of the upcoming trial period. That effort will include offering services to nearby counties and enhancing the services that can be provided by the Northwest Mental Health Center, which is located just across the street.

Overall budget reduced

Making the decision to endorse the 90-day option easier for the six-member Corrections Board, which is made up of two commissioner members from each of the three counties, was the fact that it was able to approve a preliminary budget for TCCC operations in 2010 of \$7,637,797 that was \$125,493 less than the budget approved for 2009.

Preliminary budgets that must be set each year by mid-September cannot by statutory requirement be increased — although they could be decreased — when the final budgets are submitted to the state in December.

Of the total budget, the three member counties will have to provide \$4,753,488. Polk County's share, based on a formula that considers demographics, probation and jail use, will be 86.9 percent of that amount. Norman will contribute 7.6 percent and Red Lake 5.5 percent.

Reservation system is working, Tillberg Park to be added

It is September and the camping season will soon be coming to an end. This year, we have taken another step out of the dark ages and have implemented an online reservation system.

You can now go online to www.co.polk.mn.us, click on park permits and reserve a spot at Polk County Park on Maple Lake. This also allows you to pay online via credit card. Or, you can still pay at the campground office.

We will be implementing this system for Cross Lake Tilberg Park in 2010. We still have seasonal or monthly sites available at Tilberg but only have weekend sites available at Maple Lake.

The camping season begins in early May and lasts until Oct. 1. — **Richard Sanders, Polk County engineer**

After 20 years of building, managing, upgrading, and caring for award-winning operation...

Wilson to retire from Waste-to-Energy Center

Willard "Bill" Wilson has announced plans to retire at the end of the year after 20 years as facilities manager of the national award-winning Polk County Solid Waste Resource Recovery Center at Fosston. He has also been manager of the Polk County Landfill near Gently since 1991.

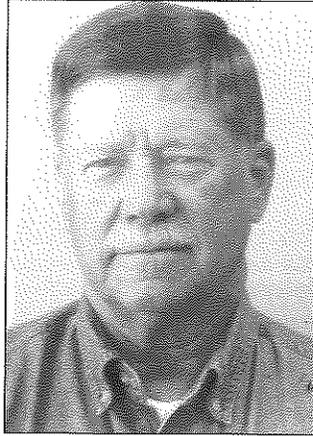
The waste-to-energy plant has been recognized at the North American Waste-to-Energy Conference in Miami, Fla., in 2001 and again in 2006 as the "Materials Recovery Facility of the Year in the United States," an award determined by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. The plant continues to be considered one of the top such facilities in the country.

Challenge but rewarding

"It has been a challenge," Wilson says of trying to keep up with state and federal rules and regulations, "but also very rewarding because of all the tremendous support that I have received. I've always had tremendous support from the Polk County Board, from the other four partner counties, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA), the City of Fosston, and many others.

"One of the keys to this successful operation is the dedicated employees that we have had over the years. They have made my job easier and very enjoyable. It is satisfying to know that a facility of this magnitude is in the hands of so many capable employees."

After earning a degree in mechanical engineering from Vanderbilt University at Nashville, Tenn., Wilson worked for Ford Motor Co. at plants in Nashville, Dearborn, Mich., Mahwah, N.J., and in St. Paul and had been owner-operator of Liberty Tool & Engineering in Minneapolis before being hired by the consulting firm of Toltz King Duvall & Anderson in Minneapolis to supervise the construction of the waste-to-



Bill Wilson

energy plant for Polk County.

Became the manager

After about two-years of construction and startup (1987-89) of the then \$6.8 million project, Wilson assumed the role as manager of the plant as an employee of Polk County.

Each day, the plant's two waste combustors burn about 100 tons of municipal solid waste collected from about 85,000 residents in the five-county region (Polk, Beltrami, Clearwater, Mahanomen and Norman counties).

The incineration process meets and surpasses all state and federal clean air rules. Heat from the burning process is used to create steam, which is then sold to three food-processing firms in Fosston — Sun Opta Ingredients, Minnesota Dehydrated Vegetables, and Specialty Products & Technologies.

When excess steam is available, it is fed to a turbine generator to generate renewable energy.

Designed MRF

Using Wilson's design, a materials recovery facility (MRF) was constructed in 1996 to remove objectionable and problem materials from the waste stream. These materials were causing excessive wear and tear on the combustors resulting in significant downtime and maintenance repair costs.

Besides removing items from the waste stream that could be detrimental to the facility and the atmosphere, other materials are extracted that can be recycled including aluminum cans, cardboard, paper, and scrap iron, which are all sent to market and reprocessed into usable materials.

Again using Wilson's abilities, an air pollution control retrofit to meet new Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) air rules was completed in 1999 and the turbine generator that produces renewable energy was installed in 2005.

Paid half the cost

Grant funding from the State of Minnesota was obtained to pay for approximately one-half of the initial capital costs for the MRF, air pollution retrofit and the turbine generator projects. The waste-to-energy plant has also received \$2 million in other grant funding.

In addition to operating the plant, Wilson has been instrumental — along with Polk County Highway Engineer Rich Sanders — in the coordination and completion of demonstration projects that substitute waste combustor ash for natural aggregate in road base and asphalt surfacing on county road projects.

A fifth such project will be completed this construction season (See Page 6).

The use of ash created by the incineration of solid waste in road projects has been accomplished without negative environmental impacts or personal health and safety dangers and has greatly reduced the space needed for ash disposal in the lined cells at the landfill.

Highly efficient

With the sale of the steam that is generated, the sale of recyclables, the generation of electricity, and the use of ash, Wilson believes that the facility is about as efficient as it can get.

"All of this helps us to maintain the tip fee for the residents and businesses in the five counties," he says. "One of my goals has always been to make a difference and continue to seek ways to improve our operation.

"The support that we have been given has been key to the successful plant operation, along with the acceptance that the plant has received. I've always had an 'open door' policy," Wilson says of being ready to show people what goes on inside the operation.

"I think that once the residents of Fosston and others found out what we do, they were impressed. They didn't know there was that kind of equipment in the plant or that there was that much emphasis on the control of emissions. A lot of them left the plant saying, 'Wow, this is impressive.'

Positive reactions

"Those positive reactions were among the rewards that you get from trying to run a place like this, which can be controversial."

Bill and his wife, Carol, have five children — three sons, two daughters and nine grandchildren ranging in age from three to 12. All three sons currently reside in the Minneapolis area and the daughters are located in Castle Rock, Colo., and San Marcus, Calif. Bill and Carol have recently purchased a home in The Villages in Florida, a retirement community located 40 miles north of Orlando.

"Initially, we plan to spend considerable time during the winter months there and return to Minnesota for the summer," Bill says. "Eventually, our plans are to sell our home here and move to Florida permanently. We are extremely blessed to have our health and look forward to a full active retirement including plans to travel around this beautiful country visiting friends and family."

Polk County Attorney's Office

Activity Summary
Jan.-June 2009

Felony & Gross Misdemeanors

Complaints prepared	159
Sentencing hearings	141
Committed to state prison	24
Probation violation hearings	279
Committed to state prison	17
Total committed to prison	41
Jury trials	4
Defendants convicted	4

Misdemeanors

Guilty pleas	39
Trials	0

Appeals

Polk County Attorney's Office	5
Minnesota Attorney Gen. Office	0

Juvenile Cases

Delinquency petitions	18
Child in need of protective services (CHIPS) petitions	45
Delinquency hearings	180
EJJ probation	0
CHIPS hearings	133

County Welfare

Commitment petitions*	17
Commitment hearings	32
Guardianship petitions	9
Guardianship hearings	11
* <i>Mentally ill and/or inebriate</i>	

Child Support

Child support hearings	92
Paternity hearings	181

Maps Available

Polk County maps showing the street and avenue locations in the rural addressing system are available at the Highway Department and Auditor-Treasurer's Office.

The cost is \$2 each.

Storm, emergency notification to be available through Instant Alert Plus services program

Immediate and accurate information about tornado warnings, winter storms and other emergency announcements is available to Polk County residents who register for the new Instant Alert Plus services program.

Established through a business partnership between the Polk County Sheriff's Office and Honeywell Business Solutions, the free alert service can disseminate information through a variety of communications methods, including phone lines at your home, business or work, cell phones and e-mail, according to Deputy Director of Polk County Emergency Management Nancy Shafer.

The Instant Alert Plus is tested the first Wednesday of each month and is funded by 9-1-1 monies.

The web link for sign-up is: <https://iaplus.honeywell.com/PolkCountyAlert>.

Residents will need to create a user name, password and PIN as a part of providing information on how they can be registered to receive the information.

Persons, who do not have e-mail, can register by going to the website from a computer at a library or that of a friend or relative. Those who would like assistance in getting registered or desire a presentation can call Shafer direct at 218-470-8275 for help.

Shafer is also director of Polk County's 9-1-1 Dispatch Center.

The Polk County Emergency Management and the Sheriff's Office will be conducting several town meetings to assist the public in the sign-up process. In addition to county residents, information will be provided to persons who do not live in Polk County but have properties on the lakes or stay in the campgrounds.

Parnell modification to allow water to outlet south when not a problem

The Red Lake Watershed District Board of Managers has approved a modification to the Parnell Impoundment that will allow floodwaters from Judicial Ditch 60 — after they overtop a connection channel to the West Pool of the impoundment — to flow back into the East Pool. The modification will allow that water to flow downstream in Judicial Ditch 60.

This modification will not permit water to be released south into Judicial Ditch 60 at times when it could affect possible flooding situations in Crookston or when that ditch cannot adequately handle it.

The project, which was approved by the RLWD Board following a hearing held on Aug. 13 and is to be completed this fall, will involve cutting a low level ditch to connect the two pools in the impoundment.

This will allow up to 3 feet of water to move from the West Pool back to the East Pool during high water periods. Screw gates on two 48-inch culverts in the connecting ditch will control the movement of the water.

Under the existing operational procedure, once water overtops from the East Pool to the West Pool of the impoundment it can not be directed

back to the East Pool and must then outlet west into Polk County Ditch 126.

The approved modification will better allow the district to transfer flood waters from one ditch system to another thus allowing a more proportionate drawdown of the impoundment. This will assist in reducing flooding problems that often occur in areas along the Polk County Ditch 126 and Judicial Ditch 60 legal drainage systems.

The cost of the project, estimated to be about \$61,000, will be paid for by the Red Lake Watershed District from its construction project funds.

Middle, Snake, Tamarac Watershed has new managers

Vig, Sonsteli reappointed to Sand Hill River Watershed Board

Harold Vig, Fosston, and Gordon Sonsteli, Erskine, have been reappointed by the Polk County Board of Commissioners to new three-year terms on the Sand Hill River Watershed District Board of Managers. Their reappointments were made in April.

Vig has served on the watershed board since May 1994 and Sonsteli has been a voting

member since May 2002.

Other members of the board of managers are: Robert Brekke, Jr., Nielsville; Stuart Christian, Erskine; and Roger Hanson, Beltrami. The watershed has its offices at Fertile.

New members of the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District Board of Managers are Roger Hille,

Warren, and David Bakke, Newfolden. They took office on Sept. 1.

Hille is new to the board while Bakke had previously served a three-year term from 2003 to 2006. The new members, who were appointed by the Marshall County Board of Commissioners, succeed Loren Zutz and Eldon Elseth, both of Warren, who completed their

terms on Aug. 27.

Marvin Hedlund, rural Oslo, is Polk County's representative on the Middle-Snake-Tamarac board. Other members, all from Marshall County, are: Doug Sorenson, Warren; John W. Nelson, Oslo; Ben Kleinwachter, Strandquist; and Alvin Nybladh, Stephen. The watershed has its offices in Warren.

5th ash utilization project now nearing completion

Polk County has now completed four Demonstration Research Projects (DRP) utilizing combustor ash from the Waste-to-Energy plant in Fosston. Three projects used the ash as a partial replacement for aggregate in hot mix asphalt road paving projects. A fourth project used the ash as a replacement for clay binder materials in Class 5 road base materials.

The asphalt projects substituted from 12 to 15 percent combustor ash for natural aggregate, while the Class 5 project consumed 20 percent ash substituting completely for the clay binder materials. As a conservative measure, all ash-amended materials were encapsulated with virgin asphalt and Class 5 mix.

The results for all four projects show little or no environmental impact and no worker health and safety issues. The three asphalt projects demonstrated improved structural performance and greater flexibility from the ash-amended asphalt as compared to conventional asphalt. Performance data is not yet available for the ash-amended Class 5 project.

Combustor ash from landfill

In total, these four projects have consumed over 18,680 tons of waste combustor ash saving valuable landfill space and natural resources. The Polk County waste combustor in Fosston generates over 6,000 tons of ash each year.

Economically the three ash-amended asphalt projects are competitive in cost to conventional asphalt on a per-ton basis. Also economic evaluation indicates that ash-amended Class 5 has the potential to be competitive with virgin Class 5 mix when included in the bid documents. Response from the contractor and Highway Department inspectors comparing conventional Class 5 with ash-amended Class 5 is very positive.

Polk County Solid Waste, in conjunction with the Highway Department and MPCA approval, is currently completing another ash-amended Class 5 project. This is the continuation of the original CSAH 41, which extends another 5 ¼ miles to the east.

The Highway Department included the use of ash in the Class 5 base materials in the bid documents, which included hauling of the ash from the landfill to the crusher. It was felt that including the hauling in the bid process would produce more favorable prices as opposed to requesting an extra after the contract had been awarded.

Used 8,500 tons of ash

Construction methods used for the first project were followed. However, for this project the ash-amended materials were only used as a base in the widening sections. Ash usage totaled 8,500 tons, which is well over one year's production from the waste-to-energy plant.

Some worker breathing space monitoring was performed and ditch bottom run-off water sampling devices will be installed for future testing to confirm the previous results which showed no negative environmental impacts.

A complete report will be submitted to the MPCA later this year including performance and economic evaluations. This report will include a request for the Agency to issue a Case Specific Beneficial Use Determination (CSBUD) to Polk County.

A CSBUD would allow Polk to perform future beneficial projects using waste combustor ash in a similar manner without first obtaining MPCA approval. The use of ash not only extends the life of the Polk County Landfill but also provides environmental benefits with the avoidance of using natural aggregate and clay materials. — **Bill Wilson, Polk County Solid Waste, and Rich Sanders, Polk County Highway Department**

Montague named to state steering committee

Polk County Commissioner Bill Montague has been named to a 10-member, statewide steering committee that is to review and develop performance and outcome standards for the delivery of human services.

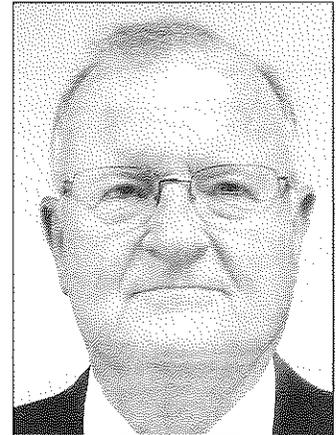
Montague is one of two members on the committee representing the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), where he is a member of the Health & Human Services Policy Committee. He is also a past chair of the Minnesota State Community Health Services Advisory Committee.

Kittson County Social Services Director Kathy Johnson is one of two members representing the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA). She is the only other member of the committee from northwestern Minnesota.

Make-up of committee

The make-up of the committee also includes three Department of Human Service administrators and three members appointed by the commissioner of Human Services. There are also provisions for two alternates representing MACSSA and for six others from professional organizations and agencies, who can provide professional support.

The performance and outcome committee was formed in response to Gov. Tim Pawlenty's legislative proposal to consolidate county social service agencies into large



Bill Montague

regional organizations as part of an effort to improve efficiencies and reduce costs.

Assignment

The assignment of the committee, as described in state law, is to "develop a uniform process to establish and review performance and outcome standards for all essential human services based on the current level of resources available, and to develop appropriate reporting measures and a uniform accountability process for responding to a county's or human service authority's failure to make adequate progress on achieving performance measures."

The accountability is to focus on the performance measures rather than inflexible implementation requirements.

The committee will make its recommendations to the legislature.

New V.A. clinic now open

A new Veterans Administration (V.A.) Outpatient Clinic opened at 3221 32nd Ave. So. in Grand Forks on Sept. 9. Hours are from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

A pre-opening ribbon-cutting event for the public was held

Aug. 18.

Veterans, who would like to transfer their care to the new Grand Forks clinic or who are not currently enrolled for V.A. health care benefits, should contact the Polk County Veterans Service Office at 218-281-3066.

Thompson Bridge replacement now underway

Oct. 1, 2010... that's the date that a new Thompson Bridge is scheduled to be open for traffic across the Red River.

Located midway between East Grand Forks and Climax, the bridge connects Polk County State Aid Highway 9 (also known as K T Road) with Grand Forks County Road 7 in North Dakota.

Some 1,100 vehicles a day currently use the existing bridge. Built in 1940, the structure has been determined to be hydraulically, structurally and geometrically deficient. While still considered safe for travel, it has been literally sliding down the river bank on one, if not both of the river for several years because of soil movement.

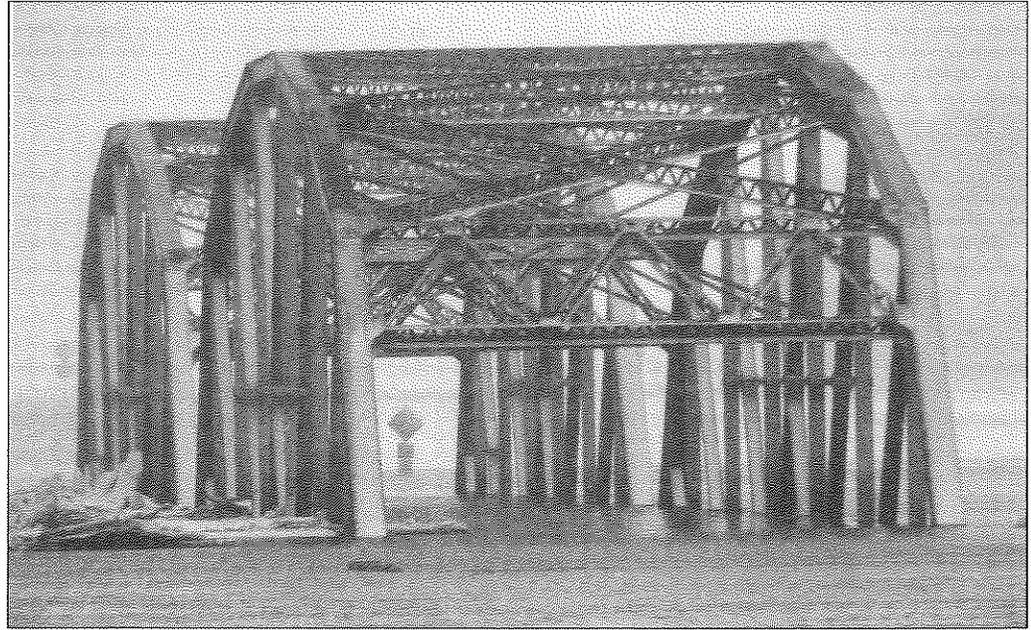
'High and dry'

Construction of the new "high and dry" crossing began soon after the low bid of \$7,396,452 by the Robert R. Schroeder Construction Co. of Glenwood, Minn., was accepted. That bid total amounts to a substantial reduction — about 16 percent or \$1.4 million — from the most recent project estimate of \$8.8 million, according to Polk County Engineer Richard Sanders.

Five firms bid on the project with the second low bid (submitted by Landa Construction, Black River Falls, Wis.) only \$70,000 higher at \$7,466,959. Schroeder recently completed building the Greenwood Street Bridge in Thief River Falls and before that built a bridge over the Red River west of Perley, Minn.

Stimulus funding

Most of the cost of the project will be covered by \$7.92 million in American Taxpayer Recovery Act (the federal economic stimulus program) monies that have been allocated for the bridge. When right-of-way, approach roadwork, engineering and other costs are considered, Polk County's local requirement will total about \$600,000, which is more than \$400,000 less than what had been anticipated, according to Sanders. The local requirement money will come



The Thompson Bridge was under water again in 2009

from the County's share of state aid dollars that are collected through the gas tax. Grand Forks County will also have a local requirement share for costs on its side of the river.

Polk had lead role

In the fall of 2007, at the suggestion of Sanders and Grand Forks County Engineer Richard Onstad, the two counties — with Polk County in the lead role — began working to have a plan in place in the event that federal money would become available ahead of the scheduled 2012 replacement date.

With soil borings done and design work all but completed by structural engineers at the Widseth Smith Nolting engineering firm in Alexandria, Minn., the project was essentially "shovel ready" when the stimulus package funding became available this year.

"That was our intention... to have a plan on the shelf and ready so that we could move ahead as fast as possible if federal money were to become available," Sanders says. "We had been positioning ourselves for replacement in 2012 but, if new money became available, we wanted to be ready to do it sooner. The money became available

this year and we were ready. The planning paid off."

The deck of the new bridge will be three feet above the level at which the Red River peaked in the flood of the century in 1997. It will have a curb-to-curb width of 40 feet that will provide a much safer situation, especially for farm equipment and truck traffic. The existing bridge, which has only a 24-foot wide deck and only 16 feet of vertical clearance, had a rating of only 34.10 (on a scale to 100) when inspected in the fall of 2006.

Can adjust to movement

The new bridge will be a 12-span steel beam structure with a total length of approximately 1,209 feet. It will be constructed with features that will allow for adjustments to be made to accommodate movements that occur due to instability of the Red River Valley soils.

These features are common on bridge crossings of the Red River of the North due to the very poor and very unstable nature of the native soils. The bridge sub-structure experienced major soil movement on the North Dakota side in the summer of 2004.

Following a resetting of the west truss then, the bridge

moved back to within an inch of the 2004 position in just two years. The subsequent resetting that was required in 2006 resulted in damage to a jacking plate, which now precludes future adjustments that would likely have been needed.

Road alignment to change

In addition to the bridge construction, approximately 7,900 feet of approach reconstruction will be necessary to transition between the existing roadway and the new bridge. The roadway alignment will also be altered in the vicinity of the bridge in order to improve sight lines.

The new bridge will be constructed approximately 200 feet downstream from the existing bridge and will have a top of deck elevation approximately 13 feet higher than that of the existing bridge. This new alignment will remove the existing vertical curve currently located in the vicinity of the crossing and will meet a design speed of 55 mph, which matches the regulatory speed for the roadway.

The old bridge will remain open for traffic through the construction period for the new bridge after which it will be removed.

2010 Census important to Polk County

The 2010 U.S. Census that will be taken on April 1st is especially important to Polk County in that the population number that is determined will affect the federal and some state aids that will be distributed through the next decade.

Census forms are to be mailed or delivered to households in February and March 2010.

For the county to receive the same level of funding that it has been receiving (for highways, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, etc.), it will need to maintain a population of 30,000 or more residents.

Basis for funding

The last census showed a Polk County population of 31,369. That number, based on shrinking rural populations, makes it especially important that all county residents get counted. Nationwide, \$300 billion in federal and state funds are distributed based on census counts.

Address verification work in advance of the census has already been completed, according to Cynthia Madigan, a partnership specialist for the U.S. Census Bureau. Her office, which will be established in Bemidji on Oct. 1, will supervise some 50 office staff and about 1,000 field worker enumerators in northwestern Minnesota.

Recruitment for those positions has already begun. Persons interested in those positions must begin by calling toll free 1-866-861-2010.

Complete Count Committees

Complete Count Committees are to be formed in each county. These committees, which will be appointed by elected officials, will be involved with the development and implementation of outreach and awareness campaign efforts. That work will involve educating residents that the census is easy, important and safe in that there need be no fear of the government or of confidentiality concerns.

The Bemidji office will be located at 705 5th St. NW, Bemidji, MN 56601.



Without project funding, the days of the once majestic Wayne Hotel will be over

One more try to be made for money to resurrect Wayne Hotel

The success or failure of an application that is to be submitted to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency this fall asking that a project to restore the Wayne Hotel in Crookston be made eligible for tax credits and receive significant grant funding will in all likelihood determine the final outcome for the historic but deteriorating structure.

The results of that application, the third attempt by Metro Plains Development, LLC, St. Paul, to save the three-story building won't be known until January 2010.

Should the credits and funding not be secured then, it is all but certain that the more than 110-year-old structure, also known as the Palace Hotel, will be torn down.

Purchase agreement extended

After the most recent attempt to gain the needed tax credits and funding was turned down in January 2009, the County Board agreed to extend the purchase agreement with Metro Plains until early in 2010 to accommodate one more attempt to save the structure.

Since the process is competitive statewide, moving up the funding ladder is not guaranteed by having been an applicant in the past, according to John Errigo of Metro Plains. He reports that the organization will submit a new application in advance of the Oct. 1 deadline.

If successful, the building will be rehabili-

tated to provide 24 income-based housing units. JLG Architects, Grand Forks, has been involved in the design for re-use of the historic building.

Constructed in the 1890s, the building has been vacant and in a state of deterioration since 1996. Polk County inherited the legal obligation to serve as caretaker of the property for the State of Minnesota when the building tax-forfeited on Sept. 3, 2003.

With restoration — as opposed to the cost of demolition — in its best interests, Polk County has offered to donate an adjacent parcel of land for parking and to provide a 30-year, \$250,000 deferred, interest-free loan to assist the project.

Substantial completion required

The loan would not be disbursed to the developers until substantial completion of the project has been reached and would provide for lump sum repayment at maturity.

Located in the Crookston Historical District, the building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Demolition and removal, the alternative to a restoration project, would require the completion of an EAW (Environmental Assessment Worksheet) to address potential hazards associated with the demolition process for the structure and also comply with certain historical requirements. The cost of demolition was estimated several years ago to be in excess of \$250,000.

Reese will lead effort to instill healthy choices

Sarah Reese of Polk County Public Health is transitioning into a new role as one of three regional coordinators in a statewide effort that will emphasize locally driven plans to create sustainable, systemic change that supports healthy choices.

Reese's position, as one of three coordinators in an eight-county area in northwestern Minnesota and the activities that will be conducted over the next two years will be paid for by a \$1 million State Health Improvement Program (SHIP) grant.

Statewide effort

Statewide, the legislature appropriated \$47 million over two years for a program that is to address policy, system and environmental change related to obesity and tobacco prevention across four sectors — communities, schools, work-sites and healthcare.

"The main essence of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice for all citizens. Across Minnesota, the Statewide Health Improvement Program will work to tackle the top three causes of preventable illness and death in the United States: tobacco use, physical inactivity and poor nutrition," Reese says.



Sarah Reese

A native of Crookston, Reese has a bachelors degree in Community Health Education from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and a masters of science degree in Health Promotion from Nebraska Methodist College. She and her husband, Jerrod, live in Fisher. Reese has been Public Health's community facilitator for alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse prevention for youth the past almost three years.

The prevention program, which is being conducted by the Minnesota Department of Health, is a pioneer effort that is of particular interest to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

16 properties on the block

Tax forfeiture sale is planned on Nov. 4

Some 16 tax-forfeited properties in Polk County will be offered for sale to the public on Nov. 4, according to County Auditor-Treasurer Gerald Amiot.

The sale date was set after the state's land management agent, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, had determined that the state didn't have an interest in retaining ownership of the properties.

In the tax-forfeiture process, counties serve as custodian of the properties for the State of Minnesota until a new owner is determined.

To be advertised

A legal description of the properties, the basic sale price and terms of sale will be advertised in the county's official newspaper. The Exponent in East Grand Forks, and in other newspapers in the county in advance of the sale.

Owners of record or mortgagees of the tax-forfeited properties are allowed to repurchase them — and thus remove them from the sale proceedings — by paying up the total amount of past-due taxes, penalties, interest and

special assessments that are owed.

Minimum prices set

A county review team consisting of Amiot, Assessor Robert Wagner, Environmental Services Administrator Jon Steiner, and Commissioner Don Diedrich recently inspected the properties and established minimum purchase prices for each.

At the sale, an oral bidding process will be held to determine the highest bidder. All past-due taxes, special assessments, penalties and interest assessed against the properties will be cancelled for the new owners.

Special assessments that were in place prior to forfeiture are subject to reassessment by cities and other governmental entities to the new property owners following notices and hearings as prescribed by state statute.

No terms/cash only

No installment terms will be accepted at the sale. Sales are cash only.

Additional information is available by contacting the Auditor-Treasurer's Office in the Government Center.

Flood damage mitigation

Pre-application submitted

In response to the spring flooding that occurred in 2009, Polk County has submitted a pre-application to the Minnesota Recovers Task Force for flood damage mitigation activities. Flood damage mitigation may include: acquisition, relocation or elevation of flood damaged or flood-prone properties.

In May and June of 2009, the Polk County Planning & Zoning Department conducted visual surveys and initial damage inspections, along with mail inquiries to at-risk

properties that were identified in 1997 as having sustained significant damage but were not eligible for acquisition under the Substantial Damage Program.

Polk County is in the process of preparing a full application for the flood damage mitigation program. Application deadlines and funding appropriations are expected to occur in October 2009. — **Jon Steiner, Polk County Environmental Services administrator**

Mahnomen commissioner is new AMC District 3 director

Mahnomen County Commissioner Charles Pazdernik, Waubun, has succeeded Polk County Commissioner Warren Strandell, East Grand Forks, as the District 3 representative on the board of directors of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).

District 3 includes eight counties (Kittson, Mahnomen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake and Roseau) in northwestern Minnesota.

Pazdernik, who had served as the district's alternate director, was elected the director at the

spring meeting of the organization held in Hallock on June 4.

In addition to serving on the state board of directors, Pazdernik will lead semi-annual meetings in the district to refine the association's policy and platform positions and to receive and provide information on specific county government issues and concerns. Strandell had completed a two-year term on the state board.

Elected the new alternate director for the district was Polk County Commissioner Bill Montague, Crookston.

Summer's road construction work featured bituminous surfacing

Labor Day has come and gone and the 2009 construction season is almost complete. The only work that will still be under construction by the time you read this article is the Thompson Bridge project. It is detailed in a story on **Page 7** in this newsletter.

Projects completed this year include:

- **CSAH 4** in Lengby — reconstruction with curb and gutter/sidewalk.
- **CSAH 25** from Lengby to South County Line — bituminous overlay.
- **CSAH 41** from CSAH 12 - CSAH 10 — grade widening/overlay.
- **CSAH 41** from TH 75 to CSAH 14 — bituminous surfacing.
- **CSAH 102** from CSAH 4 in Lengby and south to Spring Lake — overlay.

• **CSAH 110** from TH 75 in Climax, east to the school — overlay.

This work was completed using state gas tax funds and state aid bonding dollars.

We also had some major flood damage to roads this spring and are working to get all the repairs completed.

This year was the first year in many that we did not replace any township bridges. We have several bridge plans submitted and approved but they are awaiting funding.

If any townships have bridges that are structurally deficient, hydraulically deficient, or functionally obsolete (too narrow for today's equipment), they should talk with us. We can look at surveying and replacing them. — **Richard Sanders, Polk County engineer**

3-parties to utilize new salt shed under construction in Crookston

Polk County, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the City of Crookston have contracted with Greyston Construction Co., Shakopee, Minn., to construct a new 5,500-yard salt shed in Crookston. The three units of government will share in the use of the facility.

This will allow us to store enough sand/salt mixture for one year of use. Construction began on Sept. 8 and will be completed in early October.

This project was part of Polk County's maintenance plan to make our snow plowing operations more efficient throughout the county. Other items that had been completed in prior years were:

1. Purchase of 3 new trucks in 2004.
2. Construction of an addition to our Fosston Shop to store 2 of the trucks.

3. Construction of a salt shed in Fosston.

4. Construction of a salt shed in Trail.

5. Construction of a new Fertile Shop and the addition of one truck there.

6. Replacement of 2 motorgraders and 1 truck with 1 motorgrader and 2 trucks.

We've developed a plan to share our salt facilities with MnDOT. We use material from some of MnDOT's facilities and they use material from ours. We just keep track of who takes how much. This arrangement reduces the travel time previously lost by both the county and the state in having to go all the way back to their own salt facilities when another site was close by.

All this work will help with the winter snow plowing operations by making our routes shorter and our operations more efficient. — **Richard Sanders, Polk County engineer**

County property valuation now tops \$3 billion

As determined by the Polk County assessor for the purpose of assessing property taxes that will be payable in 2010, the valuation of real estate in the County now totals \$3,067,010,300.

That new total amount of valuation represents an increase of \$168,573,100 over 2009.

• Of the new total valuation amount, residential properties in cities account for 27.2%.

• 43.7% is for tillable agricultural lands.

• Non-tillable ag lands account for 10.8%.

• Commercial and industrial properties account for 6.1%.

• Building sites (rural homes and garages on 1 acre) account for 4.4% of the total.

• Seasonal recreational properties account for 5.9%.

• All other, 1.9%.



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** — Fraud suspected; **When** — Date of occurrence; **Where** — Address of person

Call the Polk County Sheriff's Office:
1-218-281-0431

or the toll free
Minnesota Welfare Fraud Hotline
1-800-627-9977
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

You may remain anonymous



Susan Mills

Mills named to corrections task force

Susan Mills, executive director of Tri-County Community Corrections, has been appointed to the Minnesota Corrections Strategic Management & Operations Advisory Task Force.

Created by the 2009 Legislature, the task force is to provide an assessment to identify strategies and make recommendations to improve the efficiency in corrections and reduce inmate per diem for the Department of Corrections.

Appointed by governor

Mills' appointment is one of eight made by Gov. Tim Pawlenty to the 15-member task force that is to report to him and to the legislature by Feb. 15, 2010. The task force is to be retired on June 30, 2010.

Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC), an agency formed through a joint powers agreement developed in 1975 to provide corrections services for Norman, Red Lake and Polk counties, operates the new 218-bed Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail facility in Crookston. It also provides probation services for the three counties.

Mills will represent counties and agencies in the state that operate jails under the Community Corrections Act. She has been employed by TCCC for 33 years including the last 24 as its executive director.

Some land use fees adjusted to be comparable, reflect regulations, costs

The Polk County Board has approved increases to specific Land Use Permit fees as recommended by the Polk County Planning & Zoning Department. The changes were based upon the fees charged in neighboring counties for similar permits, or upon changes in staff time as a result in regulatory changes and mandates.

The Land Use Permit fees that were changed by action of the County Board on Aug. 18, 2009 include:

Septic Systems Permits:

Residential Septic System:	\$150.00
Commercial Septic System:	\$200.00
Holding Tanks:	\$200.00
Self-installed Septic System:	\$300.00
Additional Site Visits:	\$50.00

Public Hearing-related Permits:

Variance:	\$300.00
Conditional Use Permits:	\$300.00
Plats/Subdivisions:	\$300.00 + \$50.00/lot
Planned Unit Dvlpmnt:	\$300.00 + \$50.00/unit
Campgrounds:	\$300.00 + \$50.00/unit
After-the-Fact Variances:	\$1,000.00

Other:

Land Alteration Permit:	\$100.00
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The new Land Use Permit Fees are effective Jan. 1, 2010. Unless modified above, all other permit fees shall remain at the same rate as they were in 2009.

Polk County has engaged in countywide land use regulation since the early 1970s. Most of the current regulations are based upon the Polk County Zoning Ordinance that was adopted in the early 1990s as a requirement of the Department of Natural Resources Shoreland and Floodplain Ordinances.

For more information on the need for a Land Use permit, please contact Polk County Planning & Zoning at 281-5700 or 1-800-482-6804, or visit our website at: www.co.polk.mn.us/list_departments/environmentalServices/planningAndZoning.aspx — **Jon Steiner, administrator, Polk County Environmental Services**

Solid waste assessment increased

The Polk County Board of Commissioners has approved increases in the Solid Waste Fee Assessment that appears on the property tax statement and funds refuse disposal costs incurred at the county's incinerator in Fosston.

Aside from the disposal tip fee at the incinerator, the County must pay a hauling cost to move waste between facilities and remit to the State of Minnesota a tax of 9.75% (for residential waste) and 17% (for non-residential waste) of the disposal cost.

The assessment also funds the management of special wastes (such as yard waste, fluorescent bulbs/ballasts, used oil, appliances, auto batteries, etc.), recyclable materials (cardboard, paper, aluminum, tin, plastic and glass) and the

Household Hazardous Waste Program.

Residential Fee assessments will increase from \$88 per year in 2009 to \$100 per year in 2010. Disabled and second-residential assessments will increase from \$50 to \$60 for 2010. The residential assessment was previously at \$96 in 2002.

Non-Residential Fee assessments are volume-based. The lowest rate on the current assessment schedule (2009) is \$88. The lowest rate on the 2010 assessment schedule will increase to \$120. The schedule for non-residential assessments increases incrementally with the volume of waste generated. The average increase from 2009 to 2010 is approximately 15%.

Although the increase in

assessment rates for 2010 may appear quite substantial, it should be noted that the assessment rate had not changed since 2004. In 2004, the assessment rate decreased from the previous year.

It is the county's intent to try to maintain the 2010 assessment rate for several years before making another adjustment.

For more information on the Solid Waste Program or services, or to obtain a copy of the 2010 Fee Assessment Schedule, please contact Polk County Environmental Services at 281-6445 or 1-800-482-6804 or visit our website at:

www.co.polk.mn.us/list_departments/environmentalServices/index.aspx. — **Jon Steiner, administrator, Polk County Environmental Services**

Affeldt is new chair of Social Services Board

Polk County Commissioner Warren Affeldt, Fosston, has been elected the new chair of the Polk County Social Service Board. He assumed the office on July 14 succeeding Commissioner Don Diedrich, Warren. Commissioner Bill Montague, Crookston, is the new vice chair.

Lay-Board Member Paula Waters, Crookston, is the new secretary of the board. The secretary

position alternates annually between lay-board members Cathy Gutterud, Lengby, and Waters. Besides the five county commissioners, the make-up of the Social Services Board includes the two lay-board members.

Waters' reappointment to the board for another two-year term was recently approved by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Conversion project slated

The Polk County Board will open bids in mid-October for a project to convert the second (upper) floor of the Government Center for use by Social Services and to create a one-stop Taxpayer Service Center on the first floor.

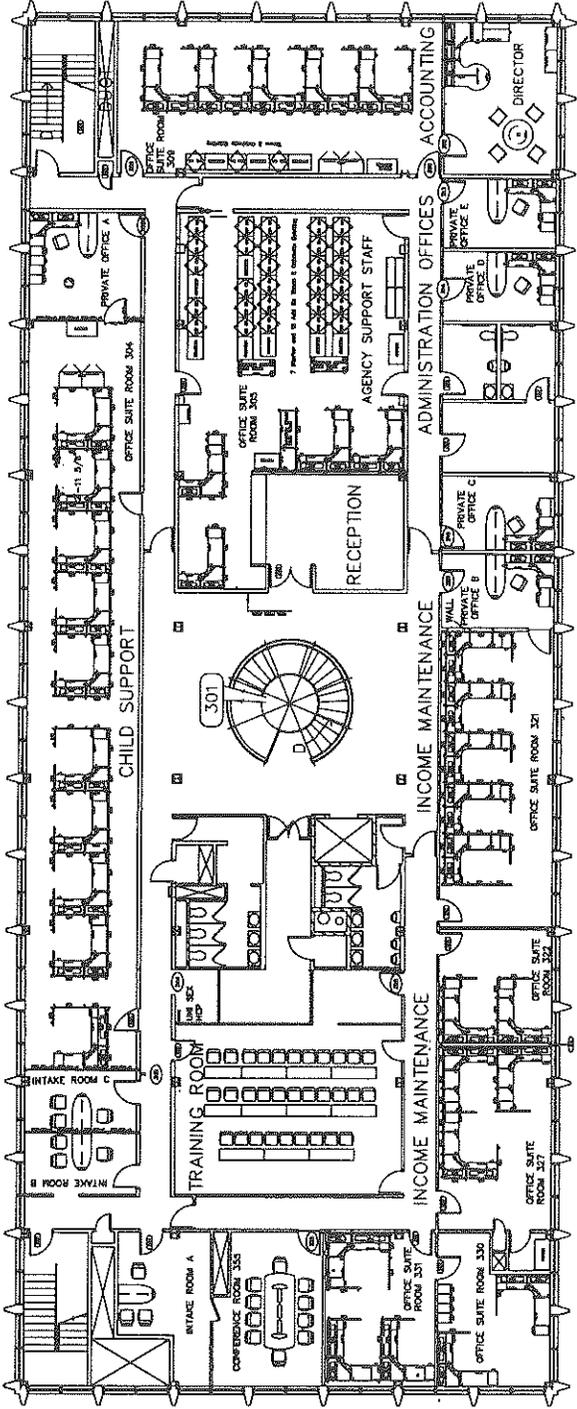
Some other more minor work is planned on the ground (lower) floor, which is also occupied by Social Services.

The bidding process will include several alternatives to allow the County Board to possibly exclude different parts of the overall project depending upon cost.

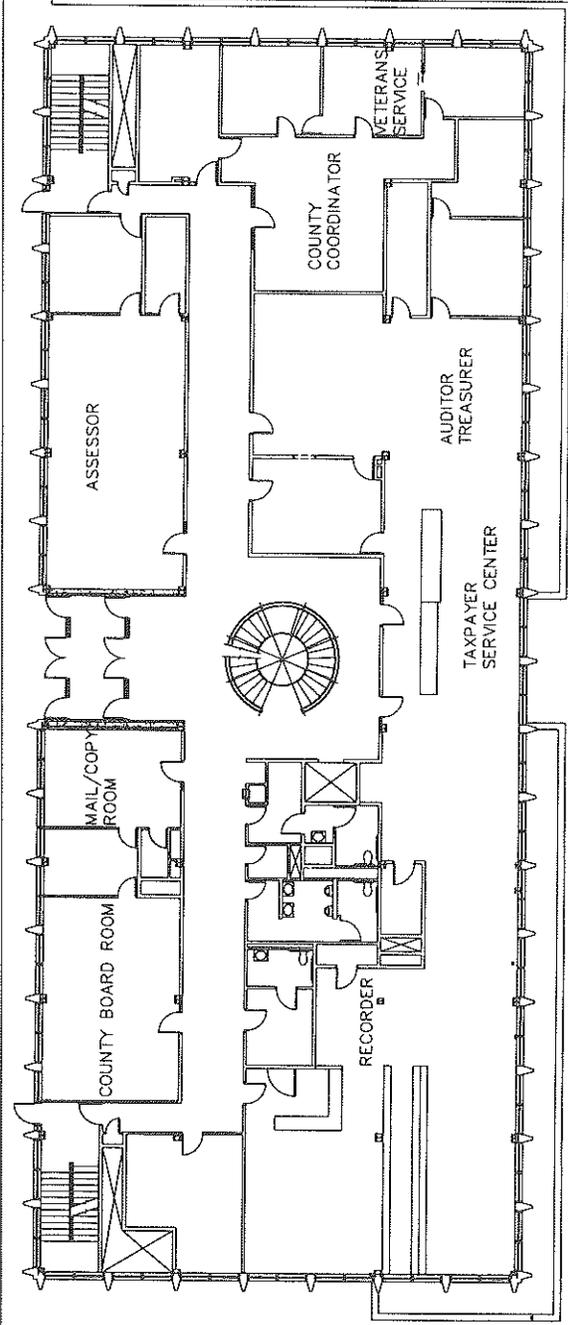
Conversion of the second floor for use by the Social Service offices that remain located in the Professional Building will improve efficiency by having all of that department under one roof. This space became available when District Court and Court Administration and County Administration moved to the new Polk County Justice Center.

A priority of the overall project is to close the 109-year-old Professional Building, which is costly to maintain and to heat.

The Taxpayer Service Center feature is designed to allow residents to do most all of their business in one-stop by having staff there from the Auditor-Treasurer's, Recorder's and Assessor's offices.



Second (Upper) Floor — For Social Services; previously occupied by District Court & Court Administration



First Floor — Changes to create a one-stop Taxpayer Service Center