

Polk County NEWSLETTER

Spring 2010

'Unallotments' create big budget problem

The focus of the Polk County Board in 2010 — and likely for several years beyond — will be to determine how to get along with a lot less while still providing needed, basic services.

"As long as the State of Minnesota has financial problems — and they are projected to continue for several bienniums — local government units (counties, cities and school districts) will have them, too.

"The fact that local governments have generally done a very good job of managing their operations and budgets doesn't make any difference when state support to local government is greatly reduced or withheld," according to Warren Strandell, who is serving as chair of the County Board this year.

The most recent bad news began in February when Gov. Tim Pawlenty proposed "unallotting" another \$893,601 in County Program Aid (CPA) as a part of his plan to balance the state budget for fiscal year 2010, which ends on June 30.

When added to the \$490,327 that was unallotted earlier, that translates into the loss of \$1,383,928 in CPA in 2010 and amounts to a 72 percent reduction from the \$1,936,908 that the county was certified to

receive to support operations and programs many of which are mandated by law. The County also lost \$241,504 in an unallotment of CPA in 2009.

County sound, but...

Strandell notes that while Polk County remains financially sound, it will have to be extremely vigilant in its decisions about spending to keep it that way. "Before the recent announcement about a further unallotment of CPA, the additional \$893,601, we were pretty well prepared for 2010 and were thinking that the years of 2011 and beyond were the major concern. Now, that crisis is directly upon us.

"We have been budget-cutting for several years. If there was any fat, it was already cut out a few years ago. Some unfilled jobs have been totally eliminated. Other positions have been left unfilled. Some services have been reduced. Everything has already been on the table, so where to go from here will be very, very difficult.

One alternative

"One of the alternatives," he says, "is increasing property taxes. No one wants increases in their property tax bill but without a big change in the economy and the way that the state does its business, that —

along with reductions in core services — may have to happen.

"The County currently has a good General Fund balance but dipping into it to balance a budget doesn't solve anything. That just puts a Band Aid on the problem for that one year. It doesn't cure anything. It only delays facing the issue for that one year."

The commissioner from District 2, Strandell, East Grand Forks, succeeded Don Diedrich, rural Warren, (District 5), as the new chair when the board re-organized at its first meeting in January. Warren Affeldt, Fosston (District 4), is the new vice chair. The chair and vice chair positions rotate annually through the five county commissioners.

Further re-organization of county government will occur in July when Commissioner Bill Montague, Crookston (District 3), is slated to succeed Affeldt as chair of the Polk County Social Services Board. That board, which meets monthly as a separate body, includes the five county commissioners and two at-large members, Cathy Gutterud, Fosston, and Paula Waters, Crookston.

See BUDGET, Page 2

Would double county workload Polk is opposing new septic rules

For those in the know, the Minnesota Septic System laws have historically been mired in controversy. In the mid-1990s, a statewide licensing program for the septic system industry was introduced and was accompanied by new and stringent design and performance standards.

As with any change and under-funded mandate, it was not received well by many local units of government nor

by those homeowners who saw estimates for septic systems increase substantially.

However, some level of regulation was necessary to ensure that septic systems were designed and installed in a manner to achieve environmental protection and protect public health and safety.

Standards changed

Fast forward to 2008 and a major overhaul of those

decade old septic system rules occurred. These 2008 changes once again raised the bar for the septic system industry, substantially altering how systems are designed, reviewed, constructed, inspected and maintained, as well as changing the standards for contractor licensing, system maintenance, and reporting and tracking requirements.

See SEPTIC RULES, Page 2

New Polk County Plat Book available

The new, full-color Polk County Plat Book is available for sale in the Auditor-Treasurer's Office at the Polk County Government Center (formerly known as the Courthouse) in Crookston.

Printed in an 8½ by 11-inch format, the book sells for \$35 plus tax. The previous plat book was published in 1999.

Septic rules

Continued from Page 1

Counties were required to adopt these standards into their local ordinances by February 2010.

Adoption of the 2008 septic system rules into the County Zoning Ordinance would have again radically altered how government regulated septic systems.

Doubled the work

These rules would have doubled the septic workload for counties in permitting, tracking and inspecting septic systems, which in turn would have greatly increased the cost of permits and professional services.

In addition, the cost of septic system components and design/installation would have greatly increased.

Much of the effect of the rule changes was aimed at consumer protection rather than environmental or public health protection.

Polk County felt that much of what the new rules strived to achieve could have been reached through consumer education/waivers and increased state enforcement of the existing rules rather than increased mandates and enhanced reporting and tracking requirements.

Sent notice

In December 2009, the Polk County Board of Commissioners sent notice to the commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) of Polk County's intention to not adopt the septic system rules required by law.

At the time, the MPCA reported 21 counties had adopted the septic system standards and 11 others were substantially underway.

Polk County was subsequently joined in opposition to the septic system rules by

the counties of: Aitkin, Kanebec, Lake of the Woods, Red Lake and Roseau.

Many other counties have made known to the MPCA that they have suspended or terminated their septic system rules adoption efforts.

These counties have begun work with local legislators on statutory changes to the septic system rules — most of these changes are targeted at three general themes:

- Re-form the septic system advisory committee to re-address the septic system rules.

- Set the septic system standards at the minimum level to achieve environmental protection and protection of public health and safety.

- Reset the septic ordinance adoption timeline based upon adoption of the new advisory committee's proposed rules.

Use existing rules

In the interim, it is Polk County's (and the other counties who do not adopt the 2008 septic system rules) intention to implement the septic system standards that are found in the existing County Zoning Ordinance.

Polk shall enforce these standards until such time as the revised septic system rules are suitable for incorporation into the County Zoning Ordinance.

For more information about the septic system program in Polk County, or to inquire about permits for septic systems or land use, please contact Polk County Planning and Zoning at 281-5700 or 1-800-482-6804. —

**Jon Steiner, administrator,
Polk County Environmental Services**

Budget

Continued from Page 1

At the same time that the Board is dealing with reductions in CPA, remodeling of the Government Center (former Courthouse) is currently underway. The project will convert the building's upper floor to house the Income Maintenance and Child Support units of the Social Services Department.

Those units, while awaiting their move into the upper floor of the Government Center, had remained in the Crookston Professional Building until air quality concerns forced them to move out of the 109-year-old building as winter was setting in.

In temporary quarters

Those workers have since been temporarily squeezed into quarters in the lower level of the Government Center, into the Polk County Justice Center, and into branch facilities in East Grand Forks and Fosston. The Government Center remodeling work is to be completed this summer.

Originally constructed as a hospital, the "Pro Building" served as St. Vincent's Nursing Home for many years before being converted into an office building in 1980s. The county purchased the two-story structure in 1992 with the expectation that it would provide needed office space for about seven years.

Besides the Social Services units, which were the last to leave, the Prop Building had housed County Attorney's Office, public defenders, and Polk County Probation before those offices were moved to the new Polk County Justice Center in early 2008.

Space became available

At the same time (early 2008), the District Court system moved from the Government Center to the new Justice Center. This is the space that is being remodeled to house the Social Services units that had been in the Pro Building.

Also as a part of the Government Center remodeling project, a Taxpayer Services Center is being developed on the first floor where persons can pay their taxes, record documents, check property valuations and more in one stop.

New wage contracts

Personnel issues in 2010 include negotiating new wage contracts with county employees. Contracts with all six of the organized employee groups expired at the end of 2009.

Two employee units — represented by Law Enforcement Labor Services, Inc. (Local 57 for deputies and Local 216 for dispatchers) have agreed to new three-year contracts that freeze wages for the first two years, provide increases in the cafeteria benefits plan to cover an increase in the cost of health insurance, some shift differential pay adjustments, and provide an increase in the uniform allowance.

Wage freeze

Another group of employees that is represented by American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees is considering a contract that would also freeze wages for two years, provide the same increase to the cafeteria plan to cover an increase in medical insurance costs, and provide some other one-time cash benefits.

Negotiations with the other organized groups and also with social service employees, who are not organized, are in earlier stages of discussion.

"County employees understand the budget problem that we are facing and are to be commended for the realistic positions that they have taken in negotiations," Strandell says. "In return, we on the County Board have pledged to do everything that we can to save jobs."

Use of Juvenile Center shows big increase

90-day hold capability bumps up occupancy

Occupancy at the Red River Valley Juvenile Center has increased significantly in recent months with 12 to 14 of the 16 beds now regularly occupied. There have been days, too, when the Center has been operating at capacity with all 16 beds occupied.

That situation represents a 180-degree change from last summer when occupancy was at one time down to as low as two juveniles (ages 10 to 18 years). That low use rate prompted discussions about possible closure of the facility.

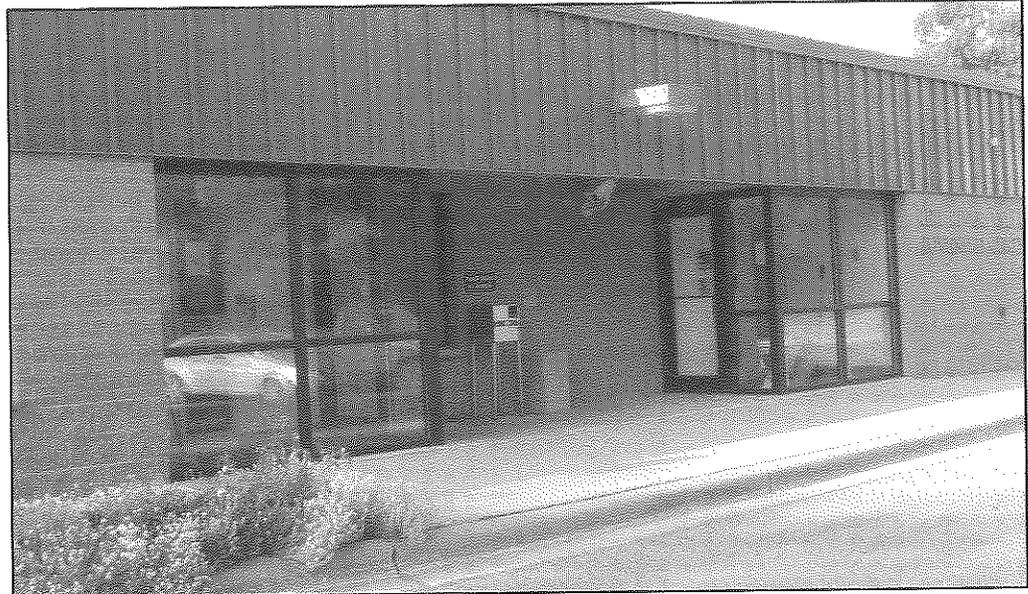
The difference from last summer to the present is directly attributed to the change that was made in the Center's licensure, which now allows it to hold juveniles on the secure side of the facility for up to 90 days.

In the past, the Center could only hold juveniles in that secure setting for a maximum of 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.

Trial basis

Approval of the change to a 90-day licensure facility was made by the Department of Corrections on Nov. 18 following the addition of some programming. The Center had operated under the 8-day hold maximum since opening in 1998. The change to the 90-day hold capability has been made on a one-year trial basis, the success of which will be judged 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).



Red River Valley Juvenile Center

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

In addition to the low numbers last summer, a factor in the discussions then about possible closure followed the loss of some \$90,000 in state funding. Until 2010, that funding had been available to secure-detention operations licensed for only an 8-day stay. The money was lost as a part of budget-cutting efforts during the last session of the state legislature.

No additional staffing

The change to a 90-day licensure didn't require any additional staffing. The 24-hour operation requires that one male and one female counselor be on duty around the clock. Counselors can supervise both secure and non-secure sides of the Center.

Conversion to a 90-day stay licensure eliminated having to pay "per diems" to regional juvenile centers that were licensed for longer-term stays, according

to Susan Mills, executive director of the agency.

Options weighed

Discussions by the Northwest Regional Corrections Board, which oversees Tri-County Community Corrections, 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 included some one-time expenditures, such as unemployment costs for up to 11 fulltime employees, along with the expense of having to pay other facilities for serving juveniles sent to them. The estimated savings through closure for 2010 were said to total \$9,608.

With the new, much higher occupancy rate, the center's financial standing has improved greatly.

Gone as expected

"Things have pretty much gone the way that we had expected they would when we were able to bring our own kids back (from other facilities) and serve them here instead. This keeps a lot of money within the three-county area and provides the important benefit of keeping our

kids at a facility where they are close to family and support," Mills says.

In addition to serving juveniles from within the three partner counties, the effort to improve the center's financial situation is also making its services available to other counties in the region. Those services include access to professionals at the Northwest Mental Health Center, which is located just across the street.

Reduced budget

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

Of the total of \$7,637,797 budget, the three member counties provide \$4,753,488.

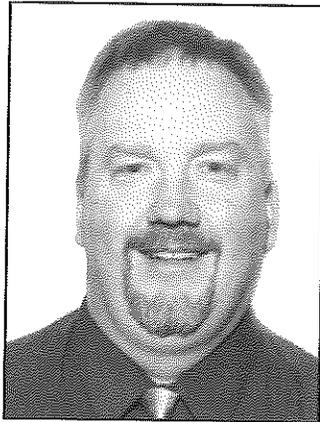
Based on a rolling formula that considers demographics, probation and jail use, Polk County's share of operational costs for 2010 is 86.9 percent. Norman contributes 7.6 percent and Red Lake 5.5 percent.

Sanders takes state office in County Engineers Association

Polk County Engineer Richard Sanders assumed duties as treasurer of the Minnesota County Engineer's Association (MCEA) during the Association's 64th Annual Conference in Brainerd in January.

A graduate of the University of North Dakota where he completed a B.S. degree in 1989, he started his work experience with a consulting firm in Worthington, Minn. He joined Polk County as project engineer in 1991, became the assistant county engineer in 1994 and received his first appointment as Polk County engineer in 2002.

He is active on the MCEA 10-ton, Website and Standards committees, is co-chair of the MCEA Technology Conference, is chair of the Research Implementation Committee, and is a member of the University of Minnesota Information Technology Standards (ITS) Board, the National Association of County Engineers ITS Board, and the



Richard Sanders

State-Aid Mission Study Task Force.

Sanders and his wife, Ruth, and two children live in Crookston. He is the president of the Crookston Blue Line Hockey Program, is a Minnesota State High School League football official and a member of his church's board of directors.

Flu shots offered

While the demand for vaccinations is down as is the suspected severity of a third wave of the H1N1 flu threat, Polk County Public Health will continue to offer the vaccine at its monthly clinics, according to Sheri Altepeter, PHN, Public Health director.

The clinics are held from 3:30-5:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the Public Health office in Crookston and at the same times on the fourth Tuesday of the month at the Polk County Human Service Center in East Grand Forks. Mass distribution clinics will be scheduled if there is an increased demand for vaccine.

To date, Public Health has conducted 67 H1N1 vaccination clinics throughout the county — at its offices in Crookston, East Grand Forks and McIntosh and at senior centers, businesses, schools and the two colleges — and has

vaccinated more than 5,000 people.

During the height of the flu threat, a flu center was maintained for eight days in later October at Riverview Hospital in Crookston.

"The immunization clinics were very successful. The second wave of the virus occurred in September and October and the clinics involved a lot of volunteer workers from Riverview Hospital, private clinics, nursing homes, the Head Start program, Northwest Mental Health, law enforcement agencies and other county agencies," Altepeter says. "We don't know if there will actually be a third wave or when that might happen."

In Minnesota, 62 deaths from the H1N1 flu have been recorded along with more than 1,800 hospitalizations. The first wave of the virus occurred in April through June in 2009.

As juvenile justice professional

Mills is presented outstanding service award

Tri-County Community Corrections Executive Director Susan Mills received the "Outstanding Service Award as a Juvenile Justice Professional" at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Association Children's Mental Health (MACMH) held late last year in St. Paul.

The MACMH organization began in 1989 as a small group of parents concerned about children with mental health disorders. Now a statewide education and advocacy organization, it is recognized by families and professionals as a primary resource for children's mental health. The organization's annual Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference draws more than 1,200 participants.

Mills, who joined Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC) as a research/training coordinator in 1976, became its deputy administrator in



Susan Mills

1981 and the executive director in 1985. Created by Norman, Polk and Red Lake counties through joint powers agreement in 1975, TCCC operates the Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail in Crookston along with probation and parole services in the three member counties.

She recently served on the Minnesota Corrections

Strategic Management & Operations Advisory Task Force that was created by the 2009 Legislature to identify strategies and make recommendations to improve the efficiency in corrections and reduce inmate per diem cost for the Department of Corrections.

That 15-member task force, which recently reported to the governor and legislature, is to be retired on June 30.

Mills served as president of the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties in both 1989 and 2005 and received that organization's Jack Young Excellence in Corrections Award in 2002. She served on the Crookston School Board (2000-2008), serves on the Minnesota Supreme Court District 9 Judicial Selection Committee and is a member of the Northwest Minnesota Women's Hall of Fame.

Polk County Attorney's Office

Activity Summary
Jan.-Dec. 2009

Felony & Gross

Misdemeanors

Complaints prepared	340
Sentencing hearings	311
Committed to state prison	48
Probation violation hearings	514
Committed to state prison	37
Total committed to prison	85
Jury trials	10/3
Defendants convicted	8/2

Misdemeanors

Guilty pleas	106
Trials	1

Appeals

Polk County Attorney's Office	10
Minnesota Attorney's Gen. Office	0

Juvenile Cases

Delinquency petitions	40
Child in need of protective services (CHIPS) petitions	76
Delinquency hearings	470
EJJ probation	0
CHIPS hearings	303

County Welfare

Commitment petitions*	31
Commitment hearings	58
Guardianship petitions	19
Guardianship hearings	28
* Mentally ill and/or inebriate	

Child Support

Child support hearings	164
Paternity hearings	287

Restoration began in 2001

Glacial Ridge Project is largest in country

A decade ago, The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota purchased more than 24,000 acres in Polk County east of Crookston for the Glacial Ridge Project, the largest prairie and wetland reconstruction project in U.S. history. It now forms the heart of the 35,000-acre Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge that was established in October 2004.

The Conservancy and its partners are transforming a landscape of fields and ditches and giving the land a chance to heal itself. The project ultimately will protect more than 16,000 acres of native and restored tallgrass prairie and more than 8,000 acres of restored wetlands, from wet meadows to open water marshes.

Because of its size and location, Glacial Ridge will serve as a hub connecting other natural areas, including 11 state wildlife management areas, two scientific and natural areas, three waterfowl production areas and the Conservancy's existing Pembina Trail Preserve.

Restoration opportunity

Less than one percent of Minnesota's native prairie remains unplowed and unpaired, and the few prairies that do survive often exist in isolated patches. Though 17,000 acres here have been altered by agriculture and gravel mining, the sheer size of the project and the small patches of native prairie that survive make Glacial Ridge an exceptional restoration opportunity.

Since June 2001, when restoration began, land stewards, partners and volunteers have restored 234 wetlands, seeded 16,500 acres of tallgrass prairie and filled in 110 miles of ditches. Still to come in the remaining two years of the Conservancy's Glacial Ridge Project is work to restore 32 additional wetlands, seed 4,500 acres of prairie, and fill in 9 more miles of private ditches as well as a mile of county ditch systems.

As the land has returned to its original natural condition, plants and animals are thriving and Glacial Ridge is becoming a significant stopover point for migrating birds, including sandhill cranes, northern harriers and marbled godwits. The preserve's prairie chicken population has also increased considerably.

More than 30 partners

Glacial Ridge enjoys the support and active participation of more than 30 partners, including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the University of Minnesota-Crookston

(UMC) as well as other federal, state and local governments.

The Conservancy works closely with NRCS through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), which is the main funding component for the Glacial Ridge Project. We have presently enrolled just under 18,000 acres within the Glacial Ridge boundaries and neighboring landowners have enrolled an additional 3,500 acres. The Conservancy is in the process of enrolling 1,800 acres in WRP by the end of this year and plans to complete all restoration work by the end of 2011.

Keith R. Mykleseth, director of the Conservancy's Glacial Ridge Project, said the project would not have remained on schedule without the help of partners and supporters. "The economic downturn has definitely made the project more challenging and we would not be where we are today without the dedicated support of our project partners and Nature Conservancy members," he said.

Pays property taxes

It's important to note that the Conservancy pays property taxes in full on the land it owns in Polk County. The Conservancy also set up a \$2,000,000 endowment fund with proceeds from agricultural land rent and gravel leases to pay for all property taxes associated with the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge. The interest will generate enough to pay the difference, in perpetuity, between FWS revenue sharing payments and the full property tax value. The endowment will also pay all Polk County taxes not covered by FWS revenue sharing payments when it owns all of the refuge land. The conservation community, including the Conservancy, has urged Congress, and will continue to do so, to appropriate sufficient funds to compensate counties at the full property tax rate through the FWS revenue sharing payment process.

Glacial Ridge is becoming an integral part of neighboring communities, and enjoys the active support of local counties and the City of Crookston. The benefits of the restoration — ecological and hydrological improvements — are contributing to economic activities as well. Surrounding agricultural lands are being enrolled into perpetual conservation easements for the benefit of farms and the surrounding communities.

Clean water supply

Many local farmers are cultivating prairie plants and selling the seed for the restoration work. Also, two wells on the

property are enabling the City of Crookston to secure a clean water supply for now and for the future. "Restoring prairies and wetlands at Glacial Ridge is a great fit with Crookston's Minnesota Department of Health wellhead protection planning process," Mykleseth said.

The potential for nature-based tourism is also providing new growth areas for the local economy. The Conservancy and FWS have four prairie chicken blinds that are set up each spring, and the Crookston Chamber of Commerce sets up reservations to view the birds. The blinds have attracted visitors from all over the United States, including Nebraska, Texas and Florida. Hunters have also enjoyed the restored lands, including disabled hunters. The FWS established a prairie chicken hunt for people with disabilities a couple years ago and has had a number of participants each year.

Visited by schools

Several area schools also visit Glacial Ridge every year. One of the major youth events is on Earth Day and is organized by the NRCS with help from the Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and FWS. In addition, students from Red Lake Falls have been conducting science classes at Glacial Ridge for the past six years and plan to keep doing so in future years.

The Glacial Ridge Project presents the Conservancy and its partners with an unequalled opportunity to conserve and restore a unique landscape, not only restoring wildlife habitat, but also contributing to our community. — **Provided by The Nature Conservancy staff**

Flood damage to roads kept to a minimum

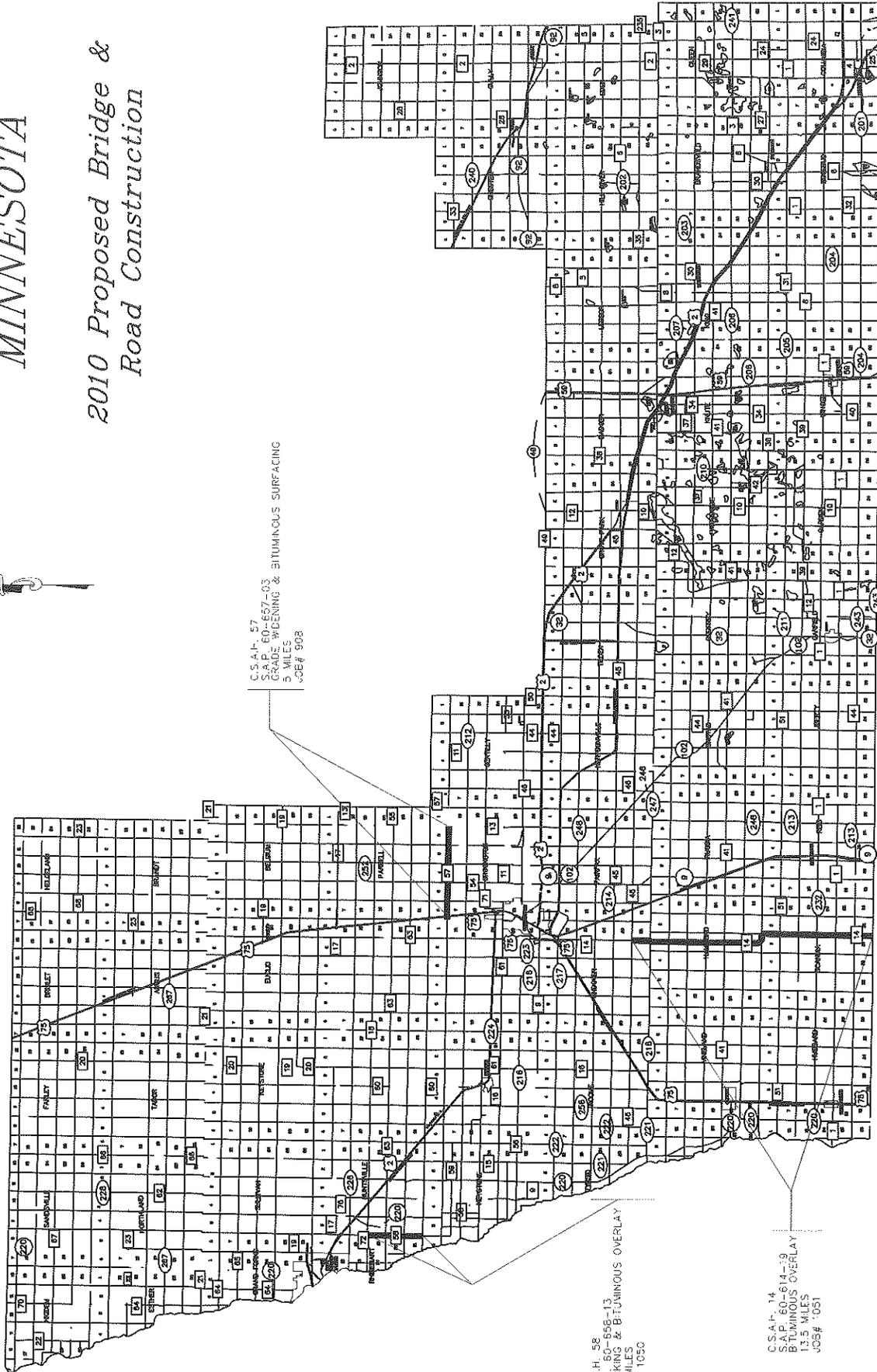
While flood damage was significantly less this spring than a year ago, 27 Polk County roads did have water over the roadway at one time or another and will need some repair.

Of the roads — all in western Polk County — that had water on them, all but four are on the County State Aid Highway system. Some of the flooded roads were closed for a time, while others remained open through the run-off.

The Polk County Emergency Services office had no reports of damage to residences or to buildings either in communities or in rural areas.

POLK COUNTY MINNESOTA

2010 Proposed Bridge & Road Construction





Piers for new Thompson Bridge now under construction were well above the Red River as the flood crest neared on March 22. The new "high and dry" bridge is scheduled to be open to traffic by Oct. 1. The \$7.4 million structure will have a 40-foot curb-to-curb width. Its deck will be three feet above

the river height that was reached in the 1997 flood, or 13 feet above the deck of the current bridge, which was constructed in 1940. The bridge will connect County State Aid Highway 9 in Polk County with Grand Forks County Road 7 in North Dakota.

Bridge work on schedule, on budget

Construction of the new Thompson Bridge is on schedule and on budget. After the wet October and with two weeks off for Christmas and New Years, you might think that the bridge construction would be behind schedule.

But to the contrary. The contractor, Schroeder Construction Co., Glenwood, Minn., was able to work throughout the winter to keep bridge construction on schedule.

Schroeder had all of the sub-structure completed and the beams set prior to this spring's

flooding. At this point, work will be shut down until the floodwaters recede. Hopefully, the weather will then cooperate and that work can resume sooner rather than later.

If you want to keep up with construction of the bridge, you can go to the Thompson Bridge Webcam website at <http://oxblue.com/pro/open/polkandgrandforks/thompsonbridge>. Pictures are updated every 7 – 12 minutes. — **Polk County Engineer Richard Sanders**

Road projects down this summer

The warm weather and quick melt of snow in the first half of March means that it is time to start thinking about this year's road construction program.

Polk County's construction program is down in the number of projects this year. The Thompson Bridge is being constructed and is to be open to traffic by Oct. 1, 2010. This project's status is detailed above.

We are currently planning on constructing three projects this year. They are as follows:

CSAH 14 — Overlay from the south County line to County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 45. With the amount of truck traffic on CSAH 14, this stretch of roadway has

begun to show deterioration and needs to be overlaid before we end up with sections of roadway that deteriorate to gravel. This project is also to be completed by Oct. 1.

CSAH 57 — Grade widen, bituminous reclamation and bituminous surfacing from Trunk Highway 75 to CSAH 13. The road has narrow shoulders and 3:1 inslopes. The pavement is starting to deteriorate with large longitudinal cracks and is rough. This project will have a mid September completion date.

CSAH 58 — Crack and overlay from County Road 225 to CSAH 72. This stretch of roadway is the last stretch of concrete left on the county road system. The concrete is

showing signs of deterioration and the panels have begun to cup, making the road rough for most trucks. This project is to be completed prior to Oct. 1.

If funding becomes available, we also anticipate replacing a number of township bridges with box culverts.

Remember to drive safely through our work zones. Not only will it keep the workers safe but yourselves, too.

If you have any questions concerning this year's construction program, please give our office a call at 218-281-3952 and talk with either Darin Carlstrom at ext. 8254 or Richard Sanders at ext. 8253. — **Polk County Engineer Richard Sanders**

Census: Both required and important

It is both required and important that you complete the U.S. Census questionnaire.

The Constitution mandates that every person living in the United States be counted every 10 years. Participation in the process is required by law.

The importance comes in the fact that some \$400 billion in federal funds are allocated based on the census count and because representation in Congress as well as legislative and other governmental boundaries are based on population numbers.

With only 10 questions — asking for name, age, gender, race, ethnicity, relationship and whether you own or rent your home — the census takes 10 minutes or less to complete.

Status on April 1

The information is to be collected as of the status that exists on April 1 or, in the case of snowbirds, as it applies to their "usual residence."

Census workers will visit households that do not return the questionnaires.

By law, the Census Bureau cannot share an individual's census questionnaire responses with anyone, including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities. The population counts are to be delivered to the President for apportionment purposes in December 2010 and to the states for redistricting purposes in March 2011.

Maintain population

For Polk 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.

The last census showed the county had a population of 31,369. Based on shrinking rural populations in general, it is especially important that all county residents are counted.

Polk and partners use mapping to wage war on weeds

Polk County, along with its partners in the Polk County Cooperative Weed Management group (PCCWM), has been at war with invasive plants within the county.

In 2009 the PCCWM group, with a grant from the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, conducted mapping in township road right of ways to identify invasive species for treatment and monitoring purposes. There were numerous sites identified last year and mapping will be conducted again in 2010.

This information is available for townships. For more information, or to obtain a map for your township, please contact the Pembina Trail Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) office at (218) 253-2646 Ext. 103.

Allies being sought

The PCCWM group is hoping to expand the current partnership of nine agencies to include all township officials and other organizations to elevate the efficiency and success in battling invasive species that negatively affect all citizens and landowners in the county.

The most commonly targeted invasive species in the county are Leafy Spurge, Spotted Knapweed, and Canadian Thistle but there are other varieties just as destructive such as Purple Loosestrife, Wild Parsnip, and Queen Ann's Lace.

The Polk County Ag Department is using specialized herbicides, roadside spray trucks, all terrain vehicles and helicopters that are equipped with global positioning systems (GPS) to help locate and eradicate invasive species.

Using GPS mapping equipment supplies the county with accurate digital data on what, where, when and how much of an application was made. The GPS information is used to develop spraying routes and also to relocate specific invasive species (e.g. Leafy Spurge) that usually need more than just one treatment to reduce their populations.

Many times invasive plants are in different stages of growth when the spray truck returns for a second application and are difficult to visibly locate, therefore, the GPS equipment is used to relocate, monitor and retreat a site, if necessary.

Less herbicide, more coverage

As the years tick by, the Polk County Ag Department is using less herbicide and is covering more roadside. This is mainly due to the use of specially designed roadside spraying equipment and herbicides.

In the past Polk County has had to utilize two spray trucks to maintain the county and state roadsides. The good news is that in the 2010 growing season, Polk County will only require one spray truck because infested acreages have been reduced along county roadsides and also because the Minnesota Department of Transportation has plans to implement its own weed control program along the state highways within Polk County.

In the past five years over 2,750 continuous miles of invasive plants have been treated along county and state roadsides by the spray trucks alone and over 675 continuous miles of cattail stands have been treated by helicopters within the legal drainage systems. — **Jody Beauchane, Polk County ag and drainage inspector**



John (Jack) Schmalenberg, left, received the Joe Reis Award for Excellence in County Management from Monty Headley, president of the Minnesota Association of County Administrators.

Schmalenberg wins 'excellence in county management' award

Polk County Coordinator John "Jack" Schmalenberg Sr. was presented the "Joe Reis Award for Excellence in County Management" by the Minnesota Association of County Administrators as a part of the annual meeting of the Association of Minnesota Counties in Minneapolis in December.

An employee of Polk County since Nov. 7, 1971, when he joined the Auditor's Office to work on personnel and other issues, Schmalenberg has been executive secretary of the Polk County Board since June 5, 1978. Over the years, that job transitioned into that of coordinator, the county's top operational position.

Most recently, Schmalenberg was the lead player in the construction of the \$25.9 million Polk County Justice Center and adjoining 218-bed Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail.

A model for efficiency in court and corrections systems, that facility was constructed at a cost much less than that of comparable facilities and will serve Polk County and its partner counties in Tri-County Community Corrections (Norman and Red Lake) for many years into the future.

His involvements in northwestern Minnesota have included serving on the Community Health Services Advisory Board from the 1980s to the present and as a member of the Lake Agassiz Regional Library (LARL) Board from 1988 through 1994. He was president of the LARL Board in 1991 and 1992.

Of a personal note, Schmalenberg grew up in East Grand Forks where he graduated from Sacred Heart High School in 1964. He earned a degree in economics from the University of North Dakota in February 1969, worked for the City of East Grand Forks in the flood fight of 1969 and went into U.S. Army (Airborne) in May 1969. He served in Vietnam where he earned the Bronze Star.

Schmalenberg and his wife, Kate, live at Fisher. He has four children — Kristy Schmalenberg (husband Randy Sauer) of Warren, N. J.; John Jr. (wife Deb) of Fertile, Minn.; Derrick of Minneapolis; and Justin of Crookston. Jack also has four grandsons (Ben and Max in New Jersey, and Bradley and Alex in Fertile), a granddaughter (Aurora) and two stepsons (Jared and Jonathan).

Mills completes 35-year career in corrections

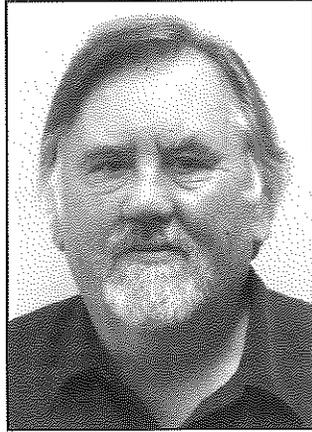
Keith Mills completed a 35-year career in corrections when he retired as assistant director of community services for Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC) on Dec. 31.

A native of Ada, he began his career as a probation agent in 1974 (one year before TCCC was created through a joint powers agreement by Norman, Polk and Red Lake counties).

Mills has trained and been a mentor to many TCCC probation agents while developing strong relationships with judges, prosecutors, public defenders and law enforcement.

He developed TCCC's Intensive Supervision Program for sex offenders in 1992 and later expanded it to include high-risk, violent offenders. He was also instrumental in developing the Group Supervision Program in 2001 and has worked on projects involving staff safety, probationary searches, probation fees, risk assessment tools, cognitive groups and the Restorative Justice program.

More recently, Mills assisted in the development of the chemical dependency treatment program for



Keith Mills

inmates while they are in jail. He was awarded the Professional Achievement Award for Excellence in Corrections by the Minnesota Corrections Association in 2007.

In retirement, he plans to do a lot of fishing, maybe find a part-time job and watch his grandchildren participate in high school football and wrestling. "It's gone by really fast and had a few ups and downs, but I wouldn't change a thing," he says of his career.

Enhancement grant to support Veterans Service activities

Polk County has received a \$4,000 State Enhancement Grant that will be used to support activities that are of benefit to veterans in 2010-11, according to Veterans Service Officer Les Goodwin.

The money will be used to pay for postage for the newsletters that are mailed quarterly, for operation of the veterans booth at the Polk County Fair, to assist homeless veterans, and for transportation for veterans to their V.A. appointments in Grand Forks, Fargo, St. Cloud or Minneapolis.

Polk County was among 47 applicants in the competitive grant process who shared the \$750,000 available in the program. The Department of Veterans Affairs had received

131 grant requests asking for a total of \$3,358,000 to support services for veterans.

County Board Meeting Times

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

County Commissioners

Dist. 1 — Craig Bunes
Dist. 2 — Warren Strandell, chair
Dist. 3 — Bill Montague
Dist. 4 — Warren Affeldt, v. chair
Dist. 5 — Don Diedrich

All meetings are open to the public

Rural Jail Grant is funding positions, equipment, radios

Tri-County Community Corrections (TCCC), which operates the Northwest Regional Corrections Center jail and Community Services-Probation for Norman, Polk and Red Lake counties, is using the \$539,306 Rural Jail Grant that it received from the U.S. Department of Justice last September to fund several positions.

Notice that the grant, which was one of only two awarded in Minnesota, had been approved arrived shortly after 2.5 fulltime-equivalent probation positions had been eliminated in budget cuts.

Recovery Act dollars

The two-year, federal grant, which was funded through the Recovery Act, is paying for a classification officer at the intake desk in the jail, an enhanced recreation officer to supervise recreational activities in the jail, an agency trainer to work with offenders in several areas, a probation agent, and a clerk.

The positions are contingent on grant funding.

Joshua Plante has assumed the position of the intake classification officer, while Susan Anderson has become the enhanced recreation officer. Both Plante and Anderson had been corrections officers and, should funding end, can return to their previous positions.

Raelene Aarhus, who had been the work release coordinator in the jail, is the agency trainer. She would also be able to return to that position should funding go away. In her new role, Aarhus will work with offenders in the areas of case planning and cognitive skills both in the jail and through Probation Services.

The grant is also being used to provide equipment including computers and radios

Kale Miller has been hired to succeed Aarhus as the work release coordinator. Arika Bergeron has been hired to work as a jail clerk, replacing Abby Morris who is moving to the Adult Substance Abuse Program, while also expanding her duties in the Northwest Change Program.

In other employment developments, Dennis Leines and Vicki Kariuki have both moved from part-time to full-time status as corrections officers.

New officers

New corrections officers currently completing their required training are Luke Slack, Penny Williams, Lindsey Mann and Jared Quanrud.

In Community Services-Probation, Kip Viau, a 19-year probation veteran, and Ryan Chisholm, who has 12 years with TCCC, have accepted lead agent responsibilities.

Those roles developed when Keith Mills, a 35-year probation veteran and assistant director of Community Services, retired at the end of 2009. His position was not re-filled as a part of budget cuts.

Also in Probation, Dale Arnold has transitioned into a probation agent, Jared Smith has been hired as a part-time secretary and Charity Reese has become associated with the ASAP program on a part-time basis.

4-H program coordinator being sought, Rongen leaves

A search is currently underway for someone to succeed Aaron Rongen as coordinator of the Polk County 4-H Program.

Qualifications for the Polk County 4-H Program Coordinator position include that applicants have a bachelors degree or four years equivalent experience in a youth development organization as a member, volunteer, leader, paid staff member or some combination of those involvements. The 4-H position was expanded from three-fifths to a four-fifths time beginning in 2010.

Rongen is an alumnus of the Fertile 4-H Club and of the Polk

County 4-H Youth Development Program. As a 4-H member, he had been a 4-H Ambassador and served as a multi-county 4-H Camp counselor and a club leader.

Karyn Santl, 4-H Youth Development Extension educator, has assumed programmatic and administrative leadership for eight northwestern Minnesota counties, including Polk County beginning April 5. Current 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator, Bob Quinlan, is retiring on May 3 after 34 years of service to the University of Minnesota Extension 4-H Program.

Miracle needed now to save Wayne Hotel from demolition

The failure of the third try at getting the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to fund a project to restore the Wayne Hotel in downtown Crookston has all but determined that the historic but deteriorating three-story, 110-year-old structure, also known as the Palace Hotel, will be razed.

In the effort to convert the hotel into 24 income-based housing units... as opposed to dealing with the cost of demolition, the County Board had agreed 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.

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.

The building is on the National Register of Historic Places. Demolition and removal will require the completion of an EAW (Environmental Assessment Worksheet) to address potential hazards associated with the demolition process and also comply with certain historical requirements. The cost of demolition was estimated several years ago to be in excess of \$250,000.

Pulkrabek gives up position

Strickler named to County Extension Board from Dist. 5

Kaydi Strickler, rural Euclid, is a new member of the Polk County Extension Committee representing Commissioner District 5.

She succeeds James Pulkrabek, Jr., also rural Euclid. Pulkrabek gave up the position earlier this year to concentrate on his crop adjusting business.

Strickler, who recently joined her brother, Brent, in the family farming operation, is a 1998 graduate of Warren High School. She earned a B.S. degree in agronomy at the University of Minnesota-St. Paul in 2003 and then worked as an agronomist for the Thompson's edible bean handling facility at East Grand Forks for five years.

She also sells Pioneer soybean, corn, sunflower and alfalfa seed, sells American Crystal sugarbeet seed and teaches classes at the non-profit AKC-affiliated Grand Forks Kennel Club that she helped organize about five years ago.

In 4-H starting as an eight-year-old, Strickler served as a Polk County ambassador, a 4-H camp counselor, and showed cattle and horses at the Minnesota State Fair a number of times.

Those experiences have provided many lifelong benefits. "I'm really thankful for that background," she says.



Kaydi Strickler

The Extension Committee oversees Extension Service activities in the county and makes recommendations about staffing and budgeting to the County Board.

Curtis Knutson, rural Fisher (at-large member), is chair of the committee with Patricia Erickson, Fertile (District 1) as vice chair. Other members are: Carol Svendsen, rural East Grand Forks (District 2); Stephanie Olson, rural Crookston, (District 3); and Doug Fjerstad, rural Fosston (District 4).

County commissioners Don Diedrich, Warren, and Warren Strandell, East Grand Forks, are also serving on the committee this year. Polk County Auditor-Treasurer Gerald Amiot is the committee's secretary.

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



Polk County Employee Anniversaries in 2010

Hire	Employee	Department-Position
11/3/75	Gerald Kovar	Highway Dept.-Maintenance Supt. 35 Years
8/4/80	Nicolette Love	Soc. Services-Financial Assist. Supr.-I 30 Years
10/1/80	James Goldsmith	Highway Dept.-Maintenance II 25 Years
2/1/85	Larry Ranum	Highway Dept.-Maintenance II
5/15/85	Margaret Schumacher	Assessor-Tax Appraiser Officer IV
5/20/85	Brian Lindberg	Highway Dept.-Maintenance II
11/1/85	Dean Rasmussen	Highway Dept.-Engineering Tech. III-C
11/1/85	Ricky J. Thompson	Highway Dept.-Engineering Tech. III-C
11/10/85	Debra Strande	Social Services-Financial Worker 20 Years
11/1/90	Terrie Johnson	Assessor-Tax Appraiser Officer IV
5/1/90	Scott Bixby	Sheriff's Office-Deputy Patrol
9/4/90	Patty Frydenlund	Environmental Svcs.-Acctant.-Secy.
10/29/90	Patrica Herndon	Social Services-Social Worker
11/23/90	Alan Erickson	Incinerator-Waste Combustion Operator
12/4/90	Randy Couette	Transfer Station-Loader Operator 15 Years
1/1/95	Warren Strandell	County Commissioner
1/9/95	Wade Burrack	Incinerator-Waste Combustion Operator
3/6/95	Mark Johnson	Sheriff's Office-Deputy Patrol
3/15/95	Brian Lundeen	Sheriff's Office-Deputy Patrol
3/15/95	Jon Steiner	Environmental Svcs.-Administrator
4/14/95	Denise Waxler	Sheriff's Office-Dispatcher
5/8/95	Mary Kaye Erickson	License Center-Clerk Typist/Cashier III
5/22/95	Terrie Oliver	Public Health-Administrative Assistant
12/18/95	Jan Skyberg	Facilities-Bldgs. & Grounds Supervisor 10 Years
1/1/00	Jim Buckmiller	Sheriff's Office-Emergency Mgmt. Asst.
1/3/00	Trent Stahlecker	Sheriff's Office-Deputy Patrol
1/24/00	Danielle Amiot	Social Services-Financial Worker
1/24/00	Kristie Wagoner	Social Services-Case Aide
1/28/00	Melissa Epema	Social Services-Financial Worker
2/7/00	Ruth Sannes	Social Services-Financial Worker
3/13/00	Molly Paulsrud	Social Services-Supervisor
3/20/00	Wendie Dobias-Osborn	Soc. Svcs.-Family Based Svc. Prvdr.
3/23/00	Valerie Bower	Soc. Svcs.-Family Based Svc. Provider
3/28/00	Robert Altringer	Soc. Svcs.-Family Based Svc. Provider
3/28/00	Terrie Heggie	Soc. Svcs.-Family Based Svc. Provider
4/3/00	Renae McLaughlin	Social Services-Case Aide
6/1/00	Cheryl Smart	Social Services-Social Worker CPS
6/26/00	Michelle Quirk	Social Services-Social Worker CPS
7/3/00	Chandra Selzer	Social Services-Financial Worker
7/6/00	Beth Greenwood	Soc. Svcs.-Family Based Svc. Provider
7/10/00	Victoria Davidson	Social Services-Financial Worker
7/10/00	Kenneth Dionne	Sheriff's Office-Deputy Patrol
8/21/00	Kenneth Sannes Jr.	Highway Dept.-Maintenance II
10/5/00	Lori Nystad	Public Health-Accounting Clerk II
10/12/00	Melissa Hesby	Social Services-Child Support Officer
10/16/00	Michael Norland	Sheriff's Office-Deputy Patrol
11/13/00	Dana Johnson	Attorney's Office-Victim Assist. Specialist 5 Years
1/1/05	Don Diedrich	County Commissioner
4/4/05	Matthew Hitchner	Sheriff's Office-Deputy Patrol
5/2/05	Jaime Delzer	Social Services-Child Support Officer
5/9/05	Kurtis Hedman	Incinerator-Mechanical Maint. Tech.
6/13/05	Nancy Nies	Social Services-Office Support Spec.
7/1/05	Amy Ryan	Social Services-Social Worker CPS
7/5/05	Miranda Casetta	Social Services-Social Worker CPS
7/5/05	Curtis Anderson	Highway Dept.-Maintenance II
8/1/05	David Lehmann	Highway Dept.-Maintenance II
8/23/05	Donna Rae Carlson	Extension-Clerk Typist/Cashier IV
10/19/05	Megan Trenberth	Social Services-Social Worker CPS
11/14/05	James Juve	Sheriff's Office-Deputy Patrol
12/12/05	Jocelyn Haaven	Public Health-Registered Nurse II

11 townships to share in Ag Material Tax receipts

The Polk County Highway Department and 11 townships are sharing \$64,299 in the Aggregate Material Tax that was collected from gravel importers and operators in the county during 2008.

Commonly referred to as the "gravel tax," the money is meant to compensate local governmental units for damage done to their roads by the hauling of gravel.

Tax distribution

By law, the tax is distributed 60 percent to the County Road & Bridge Fund (\$38,579.20) and 30 percent to the Township Road & Bridge Fund (\$19,289.60). The remaining 10 percent (\$6,429.87) is placed in the Reserve Fund for Pit Restoration.

Money in the Township Road & Bridge Fund is passed on to the individual townships on the basis of their percentage of the number of miles of roads affected by the hauling.

For 2008, which is the latest year that totals are available, the \$19,289.60 that was collected has been distributed to the townships in the following amounts:

Belgium, 1.5 miles, \$1,625.53; Brandt, 3.4 miles, \$3,684.53; Brislet, 1.5 miles, \$1,625.53; Chester, 1.75 miles, \$1,896.45; Grove Park-Tilden, 2.0 miles, \$2,167.37; Gully, 1.5 miles, \$1,625.53; Helgeland, 1.4 miles, \$1,517.16; Hill River, 2.0 miles, \$2,167.37; Kertsonville, 0.5 miles, \$541.84; Onstad, 2.0 miles, \$2,167.37; and Parnell, 0.25 miles, \$270.92.

The 2008 collections total is down slightly from the \$66,497 collected for 2007.

Special legislation

The ability to collect the tax was created by special legislation at the request of Polk and Norman counties when Bernie Lieder was the Polk County engineer. It has been available to counties since 1980.

By 1986, 22 counties statewide were using the tax as

a way to help maintain roads.

Currently, 28 counties and four individual townships collect the tax, which is determined at the rate of 10 cents per yard or 7 cents per short ton.

Initially, the legislation called for voluntary compliance by aggregate producers. In an effort to bring all producers into compliance, the law was amended in 1997 to give county auditors (and/or township clerks) full access to an operator or importer's business records.

Activities monitored

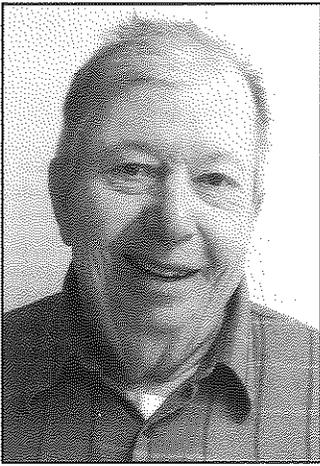
Also at that time, the Polk County Board retained Dave Goosen, who had recently retired as the maintenance supervisor for the County Highway Department, to monitor activities at gravel pits and report to the auditor-treasurer. Don Juvrud, who succeeded Goosen as maintenance supervisor and has since also retired, monitored the extraction and hauling activities in years that followed. Jerry Kovar has performed the duty since succeeding Juvrud as maintenance supervisor in January 2007.

Gravel tax collections in 1997 totaled only \$3,325. The next year, collections increased to \$78,035 and since then have ranged from the low of \$64,298.67 that was collected in the most recent year to the high of the \$104,077 that was collected for 2005 when construction activity was at a peak.

History of Gravel

Tax Collections

1997	.....\$3,325
1998	.....\$78,035
1999	.....\$77,655
2000	.....\$90,678
2001	.....\$90,391
2002	.....\$73,975
2003	.....\$86,007
2004	.....\$72,362
2005	.....\$104,077
2006	.....\$98,377
2007	.....\$66,497
2008	.....\$64,299



Albert Mandt

Mandt represents E. Polk on RLWD Board of Managers

Albert Mandt, rural McIntosh, has been appointed to serve as the East Polk County representative on the Board of Managers of the Red Lake Watershed District.

Mandt succeeds Jim Votava, McIntosh. Votava did not seek reappointment to the position after having served one three-year term.

After serving in the Army (1955-57), Mandt farmed in the McIntosh area until he went to work for the Bemidji office of the Minnesota Limited Pipeline Co., based in Rochester, Minn., in 1997. He recently retired from that organization.

Active in government

Mandt has been active in local government having served on the King Town Board for 30 years and on the East Polk County Soil & Water Conservation District Board for 15 years. He has also served on CENEX and church boards.

He and his wife, Ruth, have three grown sons.

West Polk County is represented on the Red Lake Watershed District Board by Gene Tiedemann, Euclid, who was recently elected as its vice chair. Chair of the seven-member board is Dale Nelson, Thief River Falls. RLWD offices are located at Thief River Falls.

Steiner is named interim manager of 'Incinerator'

As a part of a possible re-organization of some operations, Polk County Environmental Services Administrator Jon Steiner is now also serving as the interim facilities manager of the Solid Waste Resource Recovery Center at Fosston.

As the Environmental Services administrator, Steiner has overseen the Transfer Station, Solid Waste Planning, Recycling, Household Hazardous Waste and Planning & Zoning Departments.

Trial re-organization

Under the trial re-organization, Steiner is also assuming management of the Solid Waste Facilities Department that includes municipal solid waste, the ash and demolition landfills in Gentilly, and the Materials Recovery Facility and Waste-to-Energy Incinerator in Fosston.

The departmental consolidation and possible re-organization follows the Jan. 31 retirement of Willard "Bill" Wilson, who had held the top management position at the national award-winning waste-to-energy facility since it came on line in 1988.

Supervised construction

In fact, Wilson, a mechanical engineer, had supervised the construction of the facility — often referred to as the "Incinerator" — for two years before when he was an employee of the Minneapolis consulting firm of Toltz King Duvall & Anderson.

A native of Coon Rapids, Minn., Steiner, who earned his degree in environmental science at St. Cloud State University, worked for the Anoka County Parks Department and at a St. Cloud area solid waste transfer station and composting facility before coming to Polk County as an environmental technician in 1995.

He became the Planning & Zoning administrator in 1997



Jon Steiner

and was named Polk County's Environmental Services administrator in 1998.

Steiner served as the District 3 representative on the board of directors of the Minnesota Solid Waste Administrators Association for six years (1998-2004) and then was its president for two years (2005-2006).

A busy transition

"It's been a busy time to accomplish a possible departmental consolidation. In addition to getting to know a new staff and the details of the new position, there have been a number of projects in the works," Steiner says. Some of those activities include:

- Re-organization of the department. The long-term organizational structure of these departments is being evaluated and changes are expected as those needs are identified. "Luckily, these departments are staffed by extremely capable and qualified persons, many having several years of experience, which make this transition relatively smooth with minimal disruptions in services to the public," Steiner relates.

Repermitting process

- Polk County is going through the repermitting

process at the Landfill in Gentilly. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) issues 5-year permits for landfills and Polk County's is due to expire in 2011. With a minimum 6-month processing time, Polk County must apply for its 5-year permit renewal this summer.

- Polk County will be using ash from the Incinerator in County highway road projects for 2010. For two years, Polk County has sought a Case-Specific Beneficial Use Determination (CSBUD) to utilize the ash by-product from the incineration of processed solid waste in the construction of roads. Polk County recently received approval of the CSBUD after having demonstrated that the use of ash in road construction yields positive results for the constructed road and can be done in an environmentally safe manner.

Stack test slated

- Polk County is also in the process of preparing for its compliance stack test in April. Preparations that are underway for the stack test include shut-down, maintenance and repair of each of the incineration and boiler units, upgrading of the analyzer and emission monitoring equipment, and calibration and certification of the emission control and monitoring equipment.

All preparations have been made to prepare for the stack test. Should Polk County demonstrate compliance with the Air Quality Permit, Polk will have achieved superior performance status and that allows for a three-year stack test rather than annual testing.

Other projects in the works for 2010 include the renewal of steam contracts beyond 2010 and renewal of the Occupational Development Center recycling contract also after 2010.