



BLUE EARTH COUNTY

COMMUNICATOR

Effectively & Efficiently Delivering Essential Services

SPRING & SUMMER 2016



Learning About County Government

Each year Blue Earth County offers its Citizens Academy Program that helps educate and inform residents about the programs and services throughout its 14 departments. Participants have the opportunity to tour County facilities, learn from a variety of engaging presentations and interact with elected officials and staff over the course of seven consecutive sessions. The program was first introduced in 2009 and continues to take place each spring in conjunction with National County Government Month. To learn more about the Blue Earth County Citizens Academy Program visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov. Pictured: 2016 participants with County staff at the Public Works facility.

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THE COMMUNICATOR

The Blue Earth County Communicator is published biannually to increase public awareness and involvement in county government.



**BLUE EARTH
COUNTY**

For more information about the publication, or to submit questions and/or comments, contact:

Communications Office
Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. 5th St., Mankato, MN 56001

Phone 304-4491 – Fax 304-4344
info@blueearthcountymn.gov



**Award-Winning
Publication**

by the National
Association of County
Information Officers



Effective January 1, 2016, per Minnesota State Statute 169.798 Subd. 4, insurance information must be provided at the time of registration renewal (vehicle tabs), title transfer or application for new Minnesota title/registration. Proof of insurance includes insurance company name, policy number, and policy expiration date. Vehicle owners will not be allowed to renew their vehicle registration without providing the required information.



**Required Info
for Vehicle
Registration:**

- ✓ Insurance Company Name
- ✓ Policy Number
- ✓ Policy Expiration Date

For more information regarding the new requirement, contact the Blue Earth County License Center at 304-4340.

drainageBLOG:

**An Innovative Approach
for Communicating County
Drainage Ditch Information**

The new Blue Earth County drainageBLOG works to better help communicate, educate and share information about County drainage ditches with landowners, partner agencies and the general public. Visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/drainage to learn more.



Election Judges Needed for 2016 Election

Blue Earth County is seeking additional election judges for polling places within the city of Mankato to serve on Election Day, Tuesday, November 8, 2016. Election judges are responsible for the administration of election procedures in the voting place and help guarantee that the rights of voters are protected on Election Day.

Duties include:

- Opening and closing the polls (judges work from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. or later)
- Being responsible for all election materials
- Ensuring only qualified voters are permitted to vote only once
- Distributing ballots
- Helping voters requiring assistance
- Maintaining order in the voting place throughout the day
- Registering new voters at the polling site
- Obtaining the results after the polls are closed
- Certifying the precinct election results

For more information or to complete an online application, visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/electionjudges

Help run the polls
on Election Day!

Your community needs you!
Plus, you get paid!

VOTE 2016
Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State

Those interested in becoming an election judge must first complete an Election Judge Application, and go through online training prior to working on Election Day. Election judges are paid for their service. ■

**LOCAL OPTION TRANSPORTATION
SALES & USE TAX NOW IN EFFECT**

Following a public hearing at the November 3, 2015, Blue Earth County Board Meeting, County Commissioners voted unanimously to enact a 1/2 percent countywide local option transportation sales and use tax to address growing transportation needs throughout the County. The tax went into effect on April 1, 2016 and revenue generated from the tax will be dedicated to transportation and transit needs in Blue Earth County pursuant to 2013 Minnesota legislation under statute 297A.993 that allows County Boards to impose a transportation sales tax at a rate of up to one half of one percent. Throughout September and October 2015, Blue Earth County conducted a number of public meetings to bring forward information and further discuss implementation prior to passing the tax. Several other counties throughout the State have implemented such a tax or passed wheelage taxes to help address shortfalls in transportation funding.

Within Blue Earth County, dollars from the tax will help provide funding for the \$4,223,000 annual gap in transportation dollars for the County's 430-mile County State Aid Highway (CSAH) System. The MnDOT State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT) formula estimates life cycle needs for roads in Blue Earth County at \$11,023,000 per year. Additionally, funds from the local option transportation sales and use tax will help allow improvements needed on the existing County Road system as well as expand infrastructure demands.

By implementing the tax, residents, visitors and commuters utilizing Blue Earth County roads will all share in the cost and help lessen the burden of solely relying on property taxes for transportation dollars.

For further details or to view a copy of the Department of Revenue/Blue Earth County Tax Notice, informational materials or see a list of projects associated to the transportation sales and use tax, please visit the Blue Earth County Local Option Transportation Sales & Use Tax website page at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/transportationsalestax.



**New Customer Service and Recycling Building
Opening Soon**

Construction is nearly complete for a new Customer Service and Recycling Building at the Ponderosa Landfill, which is planned to open in late spring/early summer. The new facility will increase safety and convenience for Ponderosa Landfill customers while providing greater opportunities to recycle and store

accumulated materials coming to the landfill. Once the facility is completed, general public customers and smaller self-hauled business customers will be able to drop off materials at the building, eliminating the need to travel into the fill area where large haulers bring commercial loads of waste.



PONDEROSA LANDFILL
20028 GOOSEBERRY LANE
MANKATO

SUMMER HOURS
(May to October)
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Saturdays 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

To learn more about the Ponderosa Landfill visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/landfill or call 625-7301.



**Solar Agreement to
Capitalize on Energy Savings
for County Facilities**

The Blue Earth County Board approved a 25-year community solar garden subscription agreement to cover the power purchased by the three downtown County buildings including the Historic Courthouse, Government Center and Library. The County signed on to an 11.5 cent per kilowatt hour (kWh) fixed rate with Sun Edison, an energy development company. Through the agreement, Blue Earth County will receive bill credits on Xcel Energy bills based on the solar produced. Projected savings are estimated at a modest \$9,856 in the first year of the agreement. Based on a projected 2 percent increase in electricity costs, the 25-year energy savings for Blue Earth County are projected at \$1,201,688.

Community Solar Gardens are being established around the state in response to renewable energy goals set forth by the State of Minnesota and solar tax credit programs.

Reminder: First Half Property Taxes are Due May 16, 2016

**PAYMENTS CAN BE MADE IN THE
FOLLOWING WAYS:**

By Mail. Payments must be postmarked on or before May 16 to avoid penalty and can be sent to PO Box 3567, Mankato, MN 56002-3567.

In-person. Visit Taxpayer Services located on first floor of the Historic Courthouse (204 S. 5th Street) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Online. Credit cards (2.49% fee) and eChecks (\$1.49 per transaction) can be made on the County's website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov

Automated Payments. Sign-up for the automatic payment program at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/achform.

Drop Box Locations. Drop boxes are located at the Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse (204 S. 5th Street, outside the fourth street entrance), Downtown Hy-Vee (410 Riverfront Drive, Mankato) and Cub Foods (1800 Madison Avenue, Mankato).

Bank Locations. Bring your tax statement to any of the following locations for bank personnel to assist you; Community Bank in Vernon Center, MinnStar Bank in Lake Crystal, Peoples State Bank in Madison Lake, Pioneer Bank in Mapleton and St. Clair State Bank in St. Clair.



Stay Safe CodeRED Weather Warning will alert citizens in the direct path of severe weather.

Alert Types Notifications will be sent out moments after a severe thunderstorm warning, tornado warning or flash flood warning has been issued by the National Weather Service. Only citizens in the immediate impact area will be alerted.

Caller ID You will know the call is from CodeRED Weather Warning when you see the telephone number 800-566-9780. If you would like to hear the last message delivered to your phone, simply dial the number back.

Privacy Your contact information will remain private and will only be used for severe weather alerts. You may also receive alerts in other areas that have CodeRED for community notification.

Register to Get the Call Users must opt-in to receive alerts. Register your landline and mobile telephone numbers at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/CodeRED.



Call 304-4920 for more information.





Spring Book Sale

Saturday, April 30 to
Tuesday, May 3

100 East Main Street, Mankato

The Friends of the Deep Valley Libraries are hosting their annual spring book sale! Members may preview the sale on Friday, April 29 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

On Saturday, April 30, books are \$0.50 each; on Monday, May 2 books are \$0.25 each and on Tuesday, May 3 books are \$1 per bag.

All proceeds benefit the libraries in Mankato, North Mankato, Lake Crystal and Mapleton.

Origami Airplane Class

May 24

6 - 7 p.m.

100 East Main Street, Mankato Auditorium

Origami book author Chris Harbo will teach the basics of airplane origami to adults and children ages 7 and up (accompanied by an adult).

This is a great activity for families!

Please call 304-4023 or visit www.beclibrary.org for more information.

Free Library Mail Service Available to Rural County Residents

Residents in Madison Lake, St. Clair, Pemberton, Good Thunder, Garden City, Vernon Center, Amboy and rural areas of Blue Earth County are encouraged to utilize free direct mail library services.

Patrons can find more information online at www.beclibrary.org or contact the Blue Earth County Library at 304-4021 to order materials. Materials will be mailed to you with an enclosed postage-paid return envelope. It's a free, convenient and easy way to receive books, DVD's and all your favorite library materials. This service includes full access to the State-wide library system's extensive collections, plus e-book, e-audio book and e-magazine collection materials which can be downloaded to individual reading/listening devices. This service is for rural Blue Earth County residents of all ages.

Have You Visited the Blue Earth County Library Lately?

Be sure to take advantage of services within the Blue Earth County Library System at the Mankato, Mapleton and Lake Crystal libraries.

Listed below are a few of the many offerings:

- Book Selections
Fiction
Non-Fiction
Children
Adult
- eBooks
- Audio Books and Books on CD
- DVD Rentals



- Magazines and Newspapers
- Computer Stations with Internet

• Free WiFi

• Ancestry.com

• WestLaw Databases

• Mankato Free Press Articles on Microfilm
From 1859

• Room Rental for Meetings and Events

• Pages Past Bookstore
Operated by Friends of the Deep Valley Libraries



Visit the Blue Earth County Library System website at beclibrary.org to learn more.

2016 SUMMER READING PROGRAM "ON YOUR MARK, GET SET...READ!"

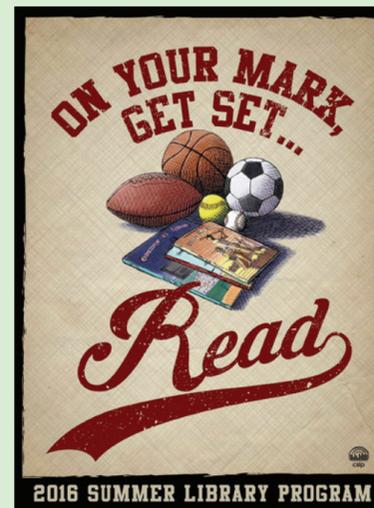
Summer Reading 2016, "On Your Mark, Get Set, Read!" kicks off on Wednesday, June 1 at the Blue Earth County Libraries. Children can earn prizes for time spent reading in four age categories and enjoy educational and entertaining programs.

BRAND-NEW PERFORMERS

- The Amazing Hoopsters
Peter Johnson
- Remarkable Reptiles
Global Games
- The Teddy Bear Band
Randy Christensen

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

- Minnesota Zoomobile
- The Hasse Family Petting Zoo
- The Oldenburg Brothers
Airplane rides
and much more!



Many thanks to key sponsor
Taylor Corporation.

Taylor



For further details contact the Blue Earth County Library at 304-4020 or visit www.beclibrary.org for online registration information.



Five Things That Should Never Appear In Your Recycling Bin

By Jean Lundquist, Environmental Services

Recycling everything you can is a good idea. However to make recycling work, all the things that contaminate recycling need to be left out, or all your work recycling could be lost.



These five things should never be placed in your recycling bin:

1. Plastic bags and other film plastic: If you must use plastic bags (there are better alternatives) be sure to take them back to the store where you got them to be recycled. Residential recycling is often sorted mechanically, and the film plastic wraps

around that equipment, causing a complete stop to untangle it. If you need to contain recyclables in your bin, use a paper bag.

2. Christmas lights and extension cords: These materials may contain valuable metal, but they are not recyclable with your residential recycling. Cords, extension cords and light strings will be accepted during open hours at the Blue Earth County Household Hazardous Waste Facility, 651 Summit Avenue, Mankato.

3. Garden hoses: These items are not made of anything that can be recycled. They unfortunately go in with your household trash for disposal.

4. Window glass, drinking glasses, ceramics, mirror glass, auto glass, canning jars and baking dishes (Pyrex): Only glass bottles and jars from food and beverages are recycled. Not all glass melts at the same

temperature, and cannot be mixed together in your bin. Ball, Kerr and other canning jars are made to withstand extreme heat, and are not recyclable in your household bin. If these items are in good condition, donate them to your favorite thrift shop. If they are broken, they go in with your household trash.

5. Shredded Paper: High quality paper is valuable to paper recyclers. However, once it's shredded, it flies around in a sorting facility and contaminates other materials. Even if contained in a paper bag, shredded paper contaminates other materials when the bag breaks open. For now, put shredded paper in a sealed bag and place with your household trash. Blue Earth County hopes to provide shredding services for individuals and small businesses later this year. Stay tuned for more information.

Recycling as much of your waste as possible is a great way to help the environment and reduce your carbon footprint. Part of your support for recycling is keeping the system running as smoothly as possible. You can help by keeping unwanted items from your recycling bin.

Remember if you miss your curbside pickup or don't have recycling pickup available, the Blue Earth County Recycling Center is available to County residents and businesses to support your recycling efforts. The Recycling Center is located at 725 Waseca Avenue, Mankato and has open hours Monday through Friday, as well as a 24-Hour Drop-off area available for most materials. If you have other questions about recycling or waste disposal questions, please contact Blue Earth County's 24-Hour Waste and Recycling Hotline at 304-4242 or visit the Waste & Recycling page on the Blue Earth County website. ■

To learn more visit the Blue Earth County website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/recycling.

Take Advantage of the Free Medicine Collection Program

CONVENIENT DROP BOX LOCATIONS:

Blue Earth County Justice Center
Sheriff's Office Lobby
401 Carver Road, Mankato
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Mankato Public Safety Center
710 South Front Street
24-hour drop box

Reminder: Sharps cannot go into the free medicine collection boxes. Home sharps should be dropped off at either of the Mankato Hy-Vee Pharmacies in Mankato for proper disposal.

For more information visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov

It's Free and as Easy as



651 Summit Avenue, Mankato

April - October
TUESDAYS, Noon to 6 p.m. &
2nd SATURDAY of Each Month
8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

24-hour Waste & Recycling Hotline
507-304-4242

There's a few new changes for visiting the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility this season!

Follow these easy steps during your visit:

1. Drive-in

Upon arriving at the facility, follow directional signage towards the unloading zone where staff will greet you. If you want to visit the product re-use center, proceed to the designated parking area.

2. Swipe Your Driver's License

Signatures are no longer needed for residents visiting the HHW facility. All you need to do is swipe your driver's license, which provides Blue Earth County with resident information required by the State of Minnesota for reporting purposes. One quick swipe and you're good to go.

3. Unload Your Own Materials

For greater efficiency and safety while visiting the HHW facility, residents are now responsible for unloading waste from their own vehicle. This new practice enables several vehicles to be unloaded at one time and allows staff to more efficiently collect ID information, check waste, provide carts, better sort the waste and answer program questions. Staff will only provide assistance if there is a special circumstance where residents are unable to unload their own vehicle.

For directions to the facility or more information about accepted products from households in Blue Earth, Nicollet, Le Sueur and Sibley Counties call 304-4242 or visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov





Volunteers Needed

Individuals and groups are invited to help volunteer throughout the 2016 growing season.

OPEN VOLUNTEER HOURS:
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Beginning June 2

Located in Weagel Park, at the intersection of State Highway 66 and Indian Lake Road near Mount Kato

Additionally, there will be a limited number of plots available for organizations/groups to adopt this growing season. Within the last four growing seasons, volunteers have helped yield approximately 20,000 of fresh produce that is donated to local hunger assistance programs such as Echo Food Shelf and the Salvation Army.

Please like the Blue Earth County Community Farm on Facebook and watch for additional volunteer opportunities and information.

For more information contact Ryan Idso-Weisz, Community Farm Manager at 382-1521.

ACCOLADES



Bob Meyer, Blue Earth County Administrator with Commissioners and Staff

Meyer received the 2015 "Joe Ries Excellence in County Management Award" from the Minnesota Association of County Administrators (MACA).



Drew Campbell
Commissioner

Commissioner Drew Campbell was recently appointed to the State Community Health Services Advisory Committee. Phil Claussen, Human Services Director serves as the alternative member for Commissioner Campbell.

Home Alone: How Old is Old Enough?

As a parent, you often wonder at what age your child can be left unsupervised or can babysit other children. The following are some items to consider for leaving your child unattended or allowing them to babysit other children.

- The age and maturity of your child
- The availability of a parent, guardian or caretaker by phone or in person
- Child's awareness of how to react to an emergency situation which may include a fire, severe weather, injury to self or others, etc.
- The health status of your child
- Your child's awareness of the dangers of appliance use (stove, iron) or unusual hazards in the home
- What is your child's reaction to being alone?
- What is your child's reaction to the babysitter?

Age-Specific Laws

- Children 7 years of age and younger should not be left alone for any period of time
- Children 8 to 10 years of age should not be left alone for more than 3 hours
- Children 11 to 13 years of age should not be left alone for more than 12 hours
- Children ages 14 to 15 can be left alone for up to 24 hours as long as they can contact their parent or other responsible adult
- Children ages 16 to 17 may be left alone for more than 24 hours with a plan in place concerning how to respond to an emergency

Supervision by Other Children

- Children under the age of 11 should not provide child care
- Children ages 11 to 15 who are placed in a childcare role are subject to the same time restrictions of being left alone listed above
- Children ages 16 to 17 may be left alone in a child care role for more than 24 hours with adequate adult back-up supervision

Consider enrolling your child in a babysitting clinic in your community. ■



For more information contact Blue Earth County Human Services at 304-4444 or visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov.

Minnesota Service CORE



Minnesota Service CORE is a nation-leading program designed to bring essential, community-based services directly to Veterans and their families across Minnesota at no cost to them. Due to its unique structure, this program also provides resources to previously underserved areas in greater Minnesota.

By partnering with Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS), CORE provides comprehensive assistance through the existing statewide network of resources. Services include individual and family counseling, financial counseling, debt management, addiction counseling, disability services and in-home counseling. The goal is to help Veterans and their families develop skills and draw on their own strengths to bring about successful and lasting family stability.

LSS case workers are based in field offices located throughout the state, including the Twin Cities metro area, Alexandria, Bemidji, Brainerd, Detroit Lakes, Duluth, Fergus Falls, Mankato, Moorhead, St. Cloud and Willmar.

For further information or assistance in connecting with the CORE program, please visit the Blue Earth County Veterans Service Office at 410 S. 5th St., Mankato or call 304-4246.

Steady Increase in Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding in Minnesota's Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Program Shows Steady Increase

From birth, breastfeeding protects infant health. Evidence of the impact of breastfeeding on future health for both mother and baby is growing. National goals for increasing breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity are currently in place. Achieving these goals will reduce health care costs and save money for families, employers, and society. Breastfeeding promotion and support is integral to WIC's work to improve maternal and infant health and to reduce health disparities.

Minnesota WIC Breastfeeding Initiation

- Breastfeeding initiation rates have increased steadily across time. Initiation rates increased 18% from 2001 (62%) to 2014 (80%). From 1990 to 2014, rates have doubled from 40% in 1990.
- Blue Earth County initiation rates in 2013 are reported between 81.9% to 92.1%.
- Mothers who participated in Minnesota WIC prenatally before their third trimester were more likely to breastfeed and, in 2014, met the Healthy People 2020 breastfeeding initiation objective of 81.9%.

The WIC program attempts to create an environment where women are supported to ensure more mothers and children get off to the best start. WIC is a nutrition program that helps families eat well and stay healthy. You may qualify if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or if you have a child under age five. WIC can provide nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and help connect you with other services in the community. WIC also provides vouchers for healthy foods like milk, cereal, eggs, beans, peanut butter, whole grain bread, vegetables, fruit and infant foods. You may qualify for WIC based on your income or if a family member participates in Medical Assistance, Minnesota Care, Food Support, Free or Reduced Price School Lunch, Head Start, or Fuel Assistance.

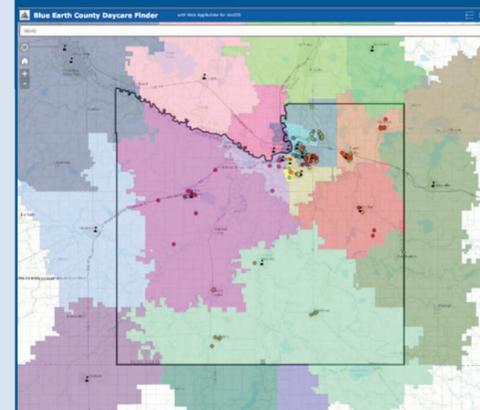
WIC will provide information and suggestions specific to your family's needs along with foods to help feed your family in a healthy way. If you have further questions or would like to make an appointment, call 304-4163. The Blue Earth County WIC clinic is located in the Blue Earth County Government Center at 410 S. 5th Street, Mankato. ■



Additional information about Blue Earth County WIC services can be found online at www.blueearthcountymn.gov.

LICENSED DAYCARE MAPPING AND INFORMATION ONLINE

The day care location map is available on the Blue Earth County website by searching Day Care Providers



Blue Earth County now offers a mapping tool that provides a location-based list of all licensed day cares throughout the County, along with information about each of the listings.

Those searching for day cares in a specific geographic location can zoom into the desired area and see all licensed day cares that appear on a map. Users can also zoom closer to see neighborhood characteristics surrounding the day care including proximity to schools and other community features.

By clicking on a particular day care site, additional information about the day care is displayed including the name of the provider, contact information, types of care provided and other reporting details associated to the provider.

Visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/daycareproviders to utilize the new tool.

Blue Earth County Human Services is looking for Adult and Youth Applicants for the Advisory Committee & Task Forces

Human Services Advisory Committee
(typically meets monthly the second Thursday at 6 p.m.)

The committee is appointed by the Blue Earth County Commissioners. The purpose of the committee is to provide input to the County Human Services Director and the County Board relating to service developments, priorities, budgeting and evaluation with the Human Services Department. This includes the program areas of mental health, community health, social services, and financial assistance.

Task Forces appointed by the Blue Earth County Commissioners, advisory to the Blue Earth County Advisory Committee:

Social Services Task Force
(typically meets monthly the first Tuesday at 6 p.m.)

This group is authorized as part of the Human Services Act which provides partial definition of how services will be provided in Blue Earth County. Members of this task force provide community input on policies and services related to child protection, child and adult foster care, adoption, family based services, vulnerable adult/adult protection, family daycare licensing, developmental disabilities, childcare funding, sexual violence and chemical dependency.

Mental Health Task Force
(typically meets monthly the first Thursday at 6 p.m.)

This group is authorized by the Adult and Children's Mental Health Acts in Minnesota statutes and has specific responsibilities to fulfill as they advise the County Board. Members of this task force provide community input on policies, treatment and services that addresses the mental health needs of children, adults and families.

For additional details about the Human Services Advisory Committee or Task Forces, please contact Noelle Bruender at 304-4064 or noelle.bruender@blueearthcountymn.gov





County Road 1, formerly State Highway 66, is an old road with a long history. Originally constructed as a County Highway, it was taken over by the State years ago. It has now been returned to the County. Recognizing the highway did not have the priority to receive much needed reconstruction as a State Highway, the County accepted the road in exchange for the State paying to reconstruct the road to modern standards. The State also placed the road on the County State Aid Highway System, providing funds for its maintenance.



The road will be constructed in two stages; Good Thunder to County Road 9 in 2016 and County Road 9 to Mankato city limits in 2018. Construction is not scheduled for 2017 because the State plans on reconstructing parallel Highway 22 from Mapleton to County Road 15 in 2017. Avoiding construction in 2017 will provide an alternative route for some of the Highway 22 detoured traffic.

The project will replace old and deteriorated pavement; improve drainage by replacing deteriorated pipes and reshaping ditches; improve safety by providing wider shoulders, flatter ditch slopes and better sight distance and improve road embankment stability at ravines and eroding river banks. Overall, the project will result in an improved two lane rural highway with ditches for drainage including 12' wide driving lanes, 8' shoulders (4' paved) and flatter slopes on the road side ditches. Additionally, the new pavement will meet all year round 10-ton farm to market standards.

Preliminary work included the clearing of identified trees to conform with US Fish and Wildlife Service requirements for the threatened species of northern long-eared bats. The next step will be to proceed with phase one of the project throughout the 2016 construction season.

For more information on the project contact 304-4025.

Dodd Ford Bridge Rehabilitation

By Alan Forsberg,
Public Works Director/Engineer

The county road 147 bridge, often referred to as the "Dodd Ford Bridge," spans the Blue Earth River in south central Blue Earth County. It was constructed in 1901 by the county to connect the agricultural area west of Amboy, Minnesota to the city of Amboy trade center and railroad station. Prior to the bridge, this link was made by crossing a shallow area of the Blue Earth River known as Dodd Ford.

This rare structure is a single-span steel pin-connected Pratt through-truss designed in a camelback configuration. The bridge is considered a "pre-engineered" design built developed by L.H. Johnson, a respected bridge builder of the time. Carlstrom Brothers, a local construction company, constructed the shallow spread footing abutments of quarried limestone rock at a cost of \$1,975 and L.H. Johnson constructed the 150 foot span Pratt truss at a cost of \$4,948 making the total bridge cost \$6,923.

The bridge served light farm to market traffic well for several decades until Minnesota's highway system and modern roads and bridges evolved to meet the demands for increased mobility and heavier loads required for the agricultural industry in the area. The bridge was closed to all traffic in 2009 due to its poor condition.

With the support of the Dodd Ford Bridge Preservation Society of Amboy, the State Historic Preservation Office recognized and acknowledge the bridge's historic status (one of only two remaining examples of L.H. Johnson's work) by listing the bridge on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Visit www.dot.state.mn.us/historicbridges/1461.html for more information about this and other historic bridges on the MnDOT Historic Bridge website.



Photo by Arthur E. Sidner

The truss was lifted from its original stone abutments and temporarily stored in the first stage of construction in 2015. The old truss bridge will now sit on new concrete abutments that will be form lined and dyed to resemble the original stone and founded on scour resistant steel piling. New steel beams and a concrete deck will support the original truss and the bridge will carry full legal bridge loads. The historic value of the truss will be preserved. The bridge will remain a one lane bridge with restricted vertical and horizontal clearance. The historic mitigation plan includes photographic documentation, interpretive plaque, observation deck and a widened shoulder for parking.

SEH, Inc. designed the project and county staff is providing survey, inspection and contract administration services. MnDOT's State Aid staff, State Aid Bridge staff and Cultural Resources Unit staff provided support in the project planning, design and funding processes.

The total construction cost of the bridge rehabilitation project is \$1.6 million utilizing a combination of state bridge bond funds and county road and bridge funding. The project is scheduled for completion in summer 2016. ■



Dust Control Notice

The Blue Earth County Highway Department will be applying calcium chloride to gravel roads throughout the County for dust control this summer. Residents will be able to purchase a set of two applications; one to be applied in late May and the other in early August (weather permitting). Standard applications for \$125 include an area of 100-ft in length by a 20-ft wide surface area. No guarantee is made for the performance of the material. However, the material has been used in previous years with good success.

Requests and payments can be mailed to Blue Earth County Highway Department, PO Box 3083, Mankato, MN 56002-3083. Please state the number of feet requested, location (County road number or section and township) and a telephone number.

Applications will not be made unless payment is received by May 16, 2016.

To obtain further details on pricing or to request the service, please contact the Blue Earth County Highway Department at 304-4025.



You Received Your Valuation Notice...Now What?

By Michael Stalberger, Director of Taxpayer Services

Annual Property Tax Statements
and Valuation Notices were mailed
in late March in a combined mailing
of 32,000 pieces of mail.

The 2016 value notice is the foundation for the property tax calculation process that will result in tax statements in 2017. Additionally, the notice marks the start of the informal and formal appeals process.

Listed below are some steps to follow after receiving your valuation notice.

Verify the Valuation Notice Information

When you receive the value notice, you should review the information provided. The valuation notice provides information regarding each taxable property's classification (the actual use of the property), its valuation and any special program enrollment. The information is based on property reviews, local property sale information, and analysis conducted by the Assessor's Office staff.

The classification of the property impacts the tax calculations in future years. It is the county's determination of how the property is actually being used.

Estimated market value is the county's estimate of what each property would likely sell for. You can use the Beacon Property Information System under property and taxes on the County website to view information the county has on your property.

Taxable market value is a calculated value used for tax purposes. The formula is set by law, and the only way it changes is if your property becomes eligible for any special programs (the ones listed on the valuation notice).

Do you think the Estimated Market Value is accurate?

If you have verified the information on the valuation notice and reviewed our county's online property information, chances are our value is a fair and accurate estimate as our data and estimation processes are reviewed by the state every year and we are required to meet standards in our estimates.

However, if you have concerns or questions, you can use a feature on our Beacon Property Information System to look at



similar properties to yours that have sold recently. Once you find your property in the online system, you click on the "Comp Search" tab and click on the criteria you want to use for comparison purposes.

Are there any other options for appealing?

Yes, property owners can follow the steps on the valuation notice to appeal to a Local Board of Appeal or the County Board of Appeal and Equalization. Not all properties have local boards to appeal to, and in those instances appeals can be made directly to the county board of appeal. Information about the appeals process is listed on the bottom of the valuation notice, as well as on its reverse side. Please note the deadlines associated with appealing property information. In either route, the property owner should still call the Taxpayer Services Department first.

An appeal to the local board or county board requires the property owner to prepare some information. At the meeting, the property owner should be prepared to explain why they think their value or classification is inaccurate. The boards prefer evidence to support those claims. Evidence can be other properties that have sold recently, a recent appraisal of the property, or other information. The boards consider this information as well as information provided by the assessor's office to make a decision.

If the property owner doesn't agree with the decision of the local board, they can appeal to the county board. If the property owner doesn't agree with the decision of the county board, they still have yet another option: Minnesota Tax Court.

Minnesota Tax Court is a specialized court that hears tax-related appeals. There are fees required for filing in tax court, and oftentimes property owners are represented by attorneys, but this is not always required. Before property owners file in tax court, we encourage them to contact the Taxpayer Services Department to discuss their concerns.

Please contact Taxpayer Services with any questions or concerns regarding any part of the valuation notice and if not resolved, utilize the appeals process available.

Taxpayer Service Specialists and Appraisers are available in the Historic Courthouse weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by phone at 304-4251. Additional information and the Beacon Property Tax System can be found under the property and taxes section of the Blue Earth County website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov. ■

Blue Earth County's
Taxpayer Services
Department serves as
a passport agency for
customers in need
of a passport for
international travel.

The Blue Earth County passport office, located in the Historic Courthouse at 204 S. Fifth Street, Mankato, has recognized a noticeable uptick in customers applying for passports. This is due to passports being a method of proving identity while traveling internationally, but also because passports are considered compliant identification for traveling within the United States. The department processed approximately 250 additional new applications and at least 300 more re-applications in 2015 when compared to 2014. County staff, on average, process about 15 new applications and 20 re-applications daily.

Before visiting our office, customers should be aware that application procedures require documentation and specific steps. Some steps may be completed ahead of time by visiting the County's website at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/passports. However, partially completed applications must be signed in front of a passport agent. Also, customers often don't realize that a check is needed for at least part of the payment that cannot be made with a credit card.

Once the application is accepted for processing, it can take six weeks for the federal Department of State to complete the passport under the normal processing fee. There is an option to expedite the approval with an additional fee. The passport office is open 8 am to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Please call our Taxpayer Service Specialists at 304-4251 with any questions.





Henrichs was honored in late 2015 by the Minnesota Corrections Association with the Board of Director's Award. The Board of Director's Award is chosen and voted by the Board of Directors to recognize exemplary service to the Minnesota Corrections Association members through participation in association activities.

Karla Henrichs
Probation Officer



Michael Maurer
Chief Deputy Paul Barta
Lieutenant

Maurer and Barta received Emergency Management Certification from Homeland Security and Emergency Management.



Thank You to Alan Forsberg, P.E. for his 27 years of service to Blue Earth County as Public Works Director/Engineer. Forsberg is set to retire on April 30.



Blue Earth County Attorney's Office Enhances Public Safety

By Pat McDermott, Blue Earth County Attorney



Over the past year, staff in the Blue Earth County Attorney's Office have worked in and out of the courtroom to serve the citizens of Blue Earth County. The County Attorney's Office has prosecuted criminals; protected abused and neglected children, families, and vulnerable adults; and provided legal counsel to the County. Along with public safety partners and communities and organizations throughout Blue Earth County, the County Attorney's office has accomplished a great deal throughout the last year to enhance public safety.

The County Attorney's Office has worked to put prevention and intervention programs in place to assist victims and decrease crime in a number of ways.

Here are just a few:

Prioritizing Prosecutions in Schools program (PPS)

In response to incidents of violence, including assaults and threats in schools, many school districts, both nationally and locally, have appropriately adopted stricter policies concerning weapons or violence in schools. Many law enforcement agencies have joined with schools in an effort to reduce violence and its effects on the school environment. The County Attorney's Office has instituted the Prioritizing Prosecutions in Schools program (PPS) to take this effort another step. PPS speeds up the response to crimes that occur on school property, on school buses, or involving any other school-related activity. It is designed to get juveniles who commit such crimes into court or an appropriate diversion program faster, so that they can be held accountable for their behaviors and choices more quickly, and with more impact. Under the PPS program all school-related crimes will be reviewed and, if appropriate, charged and filed with the court within 36 hours of receipt in the County Attorney's Office.

Truancy

We all want our children to have the best education they can get to become successful, productive adults. Regular school attendance is the best way to ensure that goal. That is why school attendance is mandatory in the state of Minnesota. Studies have shown that children who are truant from school are more likely to engage in delinquent or criminal activity, and abuse alcohol or other drugs. We need to address this problem actively to prevent today's truant from becoming tomorrow's delinquent or chemically dependent. The Truancy

Intervention Program (TIP) was started by the County Attorney's Office in 2015. Students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) receive a letter from the County Attorney's Office to attend a TIP meeting. The TIP meeting is a group meeting where the County Attorney's Office speak to students and parents about the concerns and realities of poor school attendance. The program helps parents become actively involved to ensure their children regularly attend school. This process has proven to be effective, as long as everyone follows through on their obligations. If truancy continues, the matter will be petitioned into Juvenile Court to step up the level and intensity of intervention. The Truancy Intervention Program is focused on increasing attendance, getting truant in school, and keeping them out of Juvenile Court. This benefits our community and most importantly, our children.

Juvenile Diversion

In 2015, the County Attorney's Office revised the Juvenile Diversion Program. In addition to courtroom prosecution, the County Attorney's Office is very involved with juvenile diversion efforts. Diversion is an incentive for low-risk offenders to change their behavior. The program holds offenders accountable to society, and reduces costs associated with the criminal justice system. It is the County Attorney's Office's continued belief that early intervention for juveniles through a juvenile diversion program is an effective intervention for many juveniles. Diversion is designed to use the power of persuasion inherent in the incentive of avoiding a juvenile adjudication to facilitate rehabilitation, accountability, changed thinking, responsible behavior, the payment of restitution to the victim(s), and in some cases, treatment.

Case Processing

In the areas of Adult and Juvenile Prosecution, case processing standards were implemented to ensure a timely decision-making process and that the time between a case file entering the office system and a charging/declining/referring decision is made within fourteen days. In all, timely charging decisions better serve the public and victims through quicker turnaround of cases.

The County Attorney's Office mission is to promote justice and public safety through fair, effective, and efficient prosecuting of crime; to protect the children, families, and vulnerable in need; and to provide quality legal representation for Blue Earth County. ■



For additional information contact the County Attorney's Office at 304-4600 or visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov.

Write Now!

Write & Tell Us What You Think.

The Blue Earth County Board of Commissioners and other officials are committed to providing quality service to our residents. Responding to your concerns and needs is a priority.

Please fill out the information below and leave it with a receptionist at any County office, or mail it at your convenience to:

Blue Earth County Public Information
P.O. Box 8608
Mankato, MN 56002-8608
or email info@blueearthcountymn.gov

With which County department did you have contact?

Please Evaluate:

	Excellent	Good	Poor
Courtesy of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timeliness of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value of service provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I would like County officials to know:

I have a suggestion:

Daytime Phone: _____

Thank you for your feedback. We appreciate your comments so we can serve you better!



Drew Campbell
District 1 Commissioner
P.O. Box 1283
Mankato, MN 56002-1283
387-2408 (H) / 382-1374 (C)
drew.campbell@blueearthcountymn.gov



Vance Stuehrenberg
District 2 Commissioner
2316 East Main St.
Mankato, MN 56001
388-8129 (H) / 317-3942 (C)
vances@blueearthcountymn.gov



Mark Piepho, Vice-chair
District 3 Commissioner
8 Skyline Drive
Mankato, MN 56001
345-4380 (H) / 327-4161 (C)
mark.piepho@blueearthcountymn.gov



Will Purvis
District 4 Commissioner
13798 534th Avenue
Vernon Center, MN 56090
549-3420 (H) / 317-5465 (C)
will.purvis@blueearthcountymn.gov



Kip Bruender, Chair
District 5 Commissioner
204 Joan Lane
Eagle Lake, MN 56024
257-2116 (H) / 382-2440 (C)
kip.bruender@blueearthcountymn.gov



Brad Peterson, Sheriff
Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4800
brad.peterson@blueearthcountymn.gov



Patrick R. McDermott, County Attorney
Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4600
pat.mcdermott@blueearthcountymn.gov



Bob Meyer, County Administrator
Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. Fifth St.
Mankato, MN 56001
304-4235
bob.meyer@blueearthcountymn.gov

Board Information

The Blue Earth County Board generally meets every other Tuesday in the Boardroom at the Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse, 204 South Fifth Street, Mankato. For more information and specific meeting dates and times visit:

www.blueearthcountymn.gov/board

Citizens who wish to address the Board of Commissioners at a meeting must contact Administration at 304-4284 before noon Thursday preceding the Board meeting. This is needed to manage the Board's schedule. The Board will not take action at the time of the presentation, but will direct County staff to respond appropriately to issues raised by citizens.

Blue Earth County COMMISSIONER DISTRICTS



SERVICE DIRECTORY



Blue Earth County Justice Center
401 Carver Rd., Mankato

Probation
1st Floor, 304-4750
Restitution/Restorative Justice
Adult & Juvenile Probation, Parole, Supervised Release and Diversion
Pre-trial Services/Bail Evaluation
Victim Restitution
Community Work Service Programs
Services to Drug and Truancy Specialty Courts

County Sheriff /Emergency Services

1st Floor, 304-4800
Jail
Patrol
Emergency Management
Dispatch
Civil Process
Permits: ATV, Burn, Gun
Records

5th Judicial District Court

2nd Floor, 304-4650
Traffic Tickets
Small Claims Court
Civil and Criminal Court

County Attorney

2nd Floor, 304-4600



Blue Earth County Historic Courthouse
204 S. Fifth St., Mankato

Facilities and Management
Lower Level, 304-4249

Finance
Lower Level, 304-4182

Taxpayer Services – Property Information/Passports
1st Floor, 304-4251

Assessing
Taxation
Recording
Ditch Management
Passports

Administration
2nd Floor, 304-4150
Public Information, 304-4491

Human Resources
2nd Floor, 387-8664

U of M Extension
3rd Floor, 304-4325
Agriculture & Horticulture
4-H/Youth Development
Nutrition Education Program
Misc. Program Areas



County Government Center
410 S. Fifth St., Mankato

Taxpayer Services – License Center/Elections
Lower Level, 304-4340

Driver's Licenses
Motor Vehicle/Boat Registration
Fishing/Hunting Licenses
Birth/Death Certificates
Marriage Licenses
Voter Registration/Absentee Ballots
Filing of Notaries

Veterans Services

Lower Level, 304-4246
Federal & State Benefits
Transportation to VA Hospital

Information Technology

Lower Level, 304-4204

Human Services

Lower Level/1st/2nd/3rd Floors, 304-4222
Financial Assistance, 304-4335
Social Services, 304-4319
Community Health, 304-4319
Mental Health Center, 304-4319
Child Protection/Intake, 304-4444
Child Support, 304-4166

Environmental Services

3rd Floor, 304-4381
Planning & Zoning
Building & Feedlot Permits
Shorelands/Flood Plains
Water Wells/Septic Systems/Wetlands
Recycling Center/Compost Site/Landfill
Household Hazardous Waste Center
911/Rural Addressing



Public Works Department
35 Map Dr., Mankato

Roads & Bridges, 304-4025
Road/Bridge Construction & Inspection
Permits: Driveway, Overweight/Size Loads, Utility
Culvert Sales
Swing-away Mailbox Mounts
Calcium Chloride for Dust Control
Park & Trail System, 304-4025
Camping & Shelter Reservations
Firewood Sales & Boat Rental
Agricultural Inspection, 304-4025
Weed Control & Seed Testing



Blue Earth County Library
100 E. Main St., Mankato

General Services, 304-4001
Children's & Young Adult Services, 304-4020
Adult & Reference Services, 304-4022
Fines & Renewals, 304-4010
Meeting Room Reservations, 304-4002
Administration, 304-4002
Mapleton Public Library, 524-3513
Lake Crystal Public Library, 726-2726

Serving Citizens Through County Government

Other County Facilities/Numbers

Household Hazardous Waste Facility
651 Summit Ave., Mankato, 304-4242

Ponderosa Landfill
20028 Gooseberry Lane, Mankato, 625-7301

Recycling Center
741 Waseca Ave., LeHillier, 345-4255

24-Hour Waste and Recycling Hotline, 304-4242
County TTY/TDD (Hearing Impaired), 304-4399



BLUE EARTH COUNTY

visit us online:
www.blueearthcountymn.gov