

BLUE EARTH COUNTY COMMUNICATOR

Effectively & Efficiently Delivering Essential Services



SPRING/SUMMER 2018

Serving You

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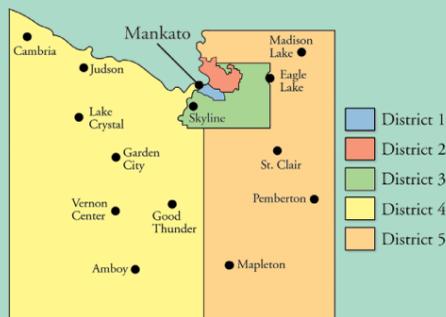
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Commissioner Districts



For more information on the County Board, visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/board

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Minnesota Real IDs: What You Need to Know

The Blue Earth County License Center will begin offering Real ID Licenses in October 2018.

The county's License Center is preparing to offer Minnesota's Real IDs as soon as they are available from the state. The Real ID is the state's response to a 2005 federal law that set minimum security standards for driver's licenses and identification cards. The new standards are required for anyone wishing to use their license or ID to travel on commercial airplanes. The state has until October 10, 2018 to comply, but it's entirely possible that a federal extension would push it as far back as 2020.

The Real ID becomes one more option for Minnesota residents for their driving, identification, and travel needs. The graph to the right gives a quick summary of their uses.

While the new Real ID cards will cost the same as a standard card, they do have additional requirements as part of the application process.

	Real ID		Enhanced Card		Standard MN Card		Passport Card	Passport Book
	Driver's License	ID Card	Driver's License	ID Card	Driver's License	ID Card		
Domestic Air Travel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Accepted until Oct 2018	Accepted until Oct 2018	Yes	Yes
International Air Travel	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Border Crossing	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Valid for Lawful Driving	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Issued to Non-US Citizens	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Acceptable After Oct. 2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not for federal purposes	Not for federal purposes	Yes	Yes

Applicants must prove their identity, date of birth, legal presence in the US, social security number, and their Minnesota residency.

If your license or ID expires prior to October 10, 2018, you must renew it when it expires. If you find that you need to apply for a Real ID card after October 10, 2018 but prior to the expiration date of your current standard license, you may do so, but you'll need to pay an additional small fee to renew early and extend your current expiration period.

Wondering what card you need? Consider the following travel options before renewing:

- A standard card will suffice if a passport book and/or card will cover your travel needs.
- If you don't want or don't have a passport book or card, you will need an enhanced card if you're traveling by land or sea to Canada, Mexico, or certain islands.
- If you don't have international travel plans and don't anticipate doing any domestic air travel, a standard card will suffice.
- If you are unsure if you'll be traveling, you should consider the Real ID at the very minimum in case you do any domestic air travel.

Real IDs and existing standard cards will be issued out of a new statewide licensing system, which will also be implemented in October 2018. This new system, along with the new requirements of the Real ID cards, will likely result in slower application times at the License Center.

The standard and Real ID cards will be available at the Blue Earth County License Center at 410 S 5th Street, Mankato. The standard, Real ID, and enhanced cards will be available at the state's Minnesota Exam Station at 2161 Bassett Drive, Mankato. Passport cards and books are available at the Taxpayer Services Department in the Historic Courthouse at 204 S 5th Street, Mankato.

Watch for more information as October approaches to help you understand your options and to get through the application process as quickly as possible.

For more information, visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/license



STAY CONNECTED
with Blue Earth County

Connect with us by mail at
PO Box 8608, Mankato, MN 56002-8608
or by submitting your comment online at
www.blueearthcountymn.gov/connect

Dust Control Notice

The Blue Earth County Highway Department will be applying calcium chloride to gravel roads for dust control this summer. The cost for two applications is \$125 per a 100-foot length by 20-foot width. Applications will take place in mid May and early August (weather permitting).

Payment must be received by Friday, May 11, 2018 or dust control application will not be made.

Mail your request with a check made to:
Blue Earth County Highway Department
PO Box 3083
Mankato, MN 56002-3083

Please flag the starting point for your dust control application. State the number of feet requested, direction for application from the flag (N, S, E, W) location (County Road Number, Section and Township), and your telephone number.

Call (507) 304-4025 for more information.

Government Center Project Update



The Blue Earth County Government Center building and renovation project, located at 410 S 5th Street, continues to progress as scheduled. Demolition of the parking ramp is complete. Ground excavation for a new parking ramp and 37,000-square foot addition to the current Government Center building has also been completed. There was a delay in pouring concrete due to the early spring snow, but the project remains on schedule.

The addition to the existing building is slated for completion in summer of 2019. Renovation of the existing building will commence soon thereafter and is expected to be completed in 2020.

During the renovation period of the project, some departments will need to be relocated. Throughout the project, our focus is continuing to provide the best customer service we can.

Safety of county staff and constituents remain a high priority throughout all stages of the project. Citizens are reminded to park on 5th Street to access the building during construction.

We Want YOU to Become an Election Judge

Election judges are responsible for the administration of election procedures in the voting place.

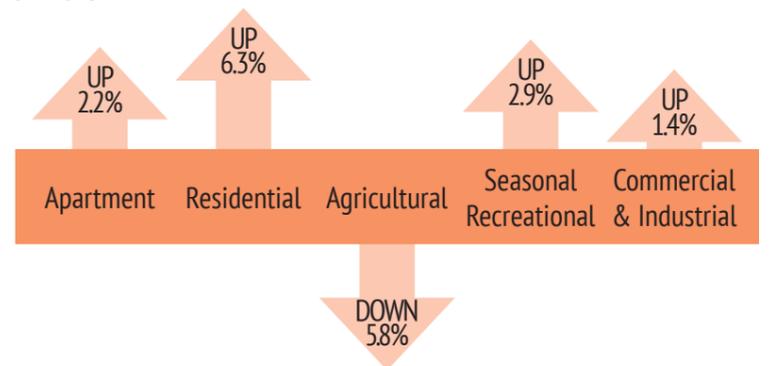
Any person who is eligible to vote in Minnesota and able to read, write and speak English is eligible to be an election judge. Student volunteers age 16 or 17 may also be eligible.

Learn more or apply online at: www.blueearthcountymn.gov/electionjudge



Market Valuation Trends

Property values are an important component of the property tax process for taxes to be paid next year, in 2019. Here are the changes for major property types compared to the 2017 assessment. Please note these are county averages and local markets may be different.



B.E. County Park Amenities

	Tent Camping Sites	Mobile Camping Sites	Electrical/Water Hookups	Bathroom	Boat Launch	Canoe/Kayak Rental	Drinking Water	Dump Station	Fire Rings/Grills	Fishing	Fishing Dock	Horseshoe Pits	Log Cabin	Nature Trail	Paddleboat Rental	Picnic Shelters	Picnic Tables	Playground	Porta-Potties	Resident Caretakers	Restrooms	Swim Beach	Volleyball Courts
Bray Park	20	33	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Daly Park	15	71	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Duck Lake				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lake George				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Rapidan Dam Park	20			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Red Jacket Trail Park				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Red Jacket Valley Park				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Williams Nature Center				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Indian Lake				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Schimek				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Wildwood				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Eagle Lake				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lone Pine				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hungry Hollow Stop				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Watonwan Stop				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Weagel Park				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

First Half Property Taxes Due May 15

Bring your statement to pay your current year taxes in any of the following ways:

By Mail. Must be postmarked on or before May 15. Send to PO Box 3567, Mankato, MN 56002-3567.

In-Person. Visit Taxpayer Services in the Historic Courthouse at 204 S 5th Street from 8am-5pm Monday through Friday.

Online. Visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov. Credit cards (2.49% fee) and eChecks (\$1.49 per transaction) are accepted.

Automated Payments. Sign-up must occur three weeks prior to a payment date. Sign-up at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/achform

Drop Box Locations. Drop boxes are located at the Historic Courthouse outside the 4th Street entrance, Downtown Hy-Vee on Riverfront Drive, and Cub Foods on Madison Avenue.

Bank Locations. Bring your tax statement to any of the following locations: Community Bank in Vernon Center, MinnStar Bank in Lake Crystal, and St. Clair State Bank in St. Clair.

Summer Road Projects

Rural and urban reconstruction projects and bridge replacements aplenty in Blue Earth County.

County Road 1 (Old Highway 66) - Reconstruction of County Road (CR) 1 will provide safe access for citizens while respecting the road's historic and natural values. Due to complex challenges, this reconstruction will be split into two projects. This spring will be the start of a two-year phase reconstructing the road from CR 90 to Mankato. This summer, CR 9 to CR 90 will be closed for three months to place surcharge fill to strengthen key areas for future construction. The 2018 segment will cost approximately \$10 million.

CR 14 from MN Hwy 83 to CR 4 - Final design and right-of-way acquisition is beginning for CR 14 reconstruction. The project includes the replacement of all centerline and driveway drainage culverts and tiles, shoulder widening, new bituminous pavement and more. This \$3.8 million project is funded by state aid and the local sales tax option.

Bridge Replacement - Completion of three bridges on CR 5 (3rd Ave) north of Mankato is anticipated in June 2018. This summer, bridges will be replaced northwest of Mapleton on CR 52 (\$830,000) and on Pleasant Mound Township T-91 north of Willow Creek (\$460,000). These projects are funded through state bridge bonds, state aid, and local funds.

Paving Projects - Bituminous pavement will be laid on CR 109 this summer following last summer's reconstruction. The road will have 12' driving lanes with 6' shoulders for improved agricultural commerce. This \$1.1 million project is funded by the local option sales tax. Overlays will also be completed on CR 1, 33, 48, 126 and 133. Turn back and state aid funding is used for this \$1.9 million project.

2017 Projects - Construction will resume on remaining 2017 projects this spring, including CR 12 from MN Hwy 83 to CR 17 (mid-August completion scheduled) and CR 14 from CR 4 to CR 10 (June completion scheduled).

Special Unit: Dive Team

Dive in with the Water Emergency Response Unit.

Did you know, in Minnesota, the sheriff has jurisdiction over all public waters within his county? What does this mean? The sheriff and his office are responsible for enforcing all laws and ensuring public safety upon all waters within his jurisdiction. Even though we are diligent in our patrol and public education efforts, accidents still happen. That is why the Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office started its dive team in 1982, with our current sheriff, Brad Peterson, as one of the original five members.



Let's look at what a drowning call might look like in 1982 vs. 2018:

1982

Five members of the Sheriff's Office show up with a boat, put on their wet suits, attach a rope to a harness and navigate waters using a series of tugs to direct the diver during a search.

2018

A coordinated team of emergency responders under direction of the sheriff get

paged to respond to a drowning and use either a jet boat, a traditional runabout boat, or both, which are equipped with side scan sonar to help locate targets for divers to dive upon.

One of 14 certified divers would put on a dry-suit, which keeps the diver dry and protects from possible contaminated water. He would put on a full-face mask equipped with full communication. This would allow the diver to have his face completely protected from the water and allow him to communicate with someone on the surface while searching the murky water.

Time is very valuable when searching for individuals; people have been saved after being submerged in cold water for up to 45 minutes.

Having more divers, better equipment, and better training allows the Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office Dive and Rescue Team to operate more safely and more efficiently while conducting searches for family's loved ones, finding evidence under water, or searching for lost articles.

Recycling 101

Sometimes, it's good to get a refresher on what you can and should be recycling. With changes in technologies and processes, even the basics change over time.

All pop and water bottles, milk jugs, and juice jugs are recyclable, but must have the caps on. This ensures the caps are recycled, and it keeps the bottles from flattening, and being lost by slipping between papers in the single sort process. Glass bottles and jars, on the other hand, should have their lids removed in order to be recycled, as the lids are either plastic or metal, and need to be separated to be recycled.

Aluminum and steel (tin) cans should be rinsed, but do not need to be flattened, and do not need to have labels removed.

Newspapers and their inserts, magazines, catalogs, cardboard and junk mail are all recyclable, and do not need to be sorted. Pizza boxes, however, are still unwanted in recycling bins because of the grease they contain, or are assumed to contain.

Relatively new in recycling bins is the gable-topped milk and juice cartons. They should be rinsed, and straws discarded.

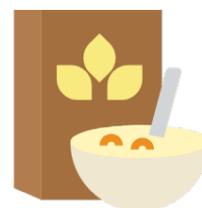
For more information, visit www.blueearthcountymn.gov/recycling



Soda Cans



Tin Food Cans



Cereal Boxes



Yogurt Containers



Glass Bottles



Junk Mail



Cardboard



Water Bottles



Newspapers

Fare For All

Fare for All is a community-supported program that supplies quality, nutritious food for up to 40% off grocery store prices. They purchase fresh produce and frozen meat then pre-pack the produce and meat into packages that range in price from \$10-\$25. To participate, there is no need to register in advance or fill out any paperwork. Fare For All is open to everyone - because they buy food in bulk, the more people who participate the better.

Visit them in Blue Earth County:

New Work Creation Outreach Church

1124 N River Drive, Mankato

Mondays, 3:30-5:30pm

MAY
21

JUNE
25

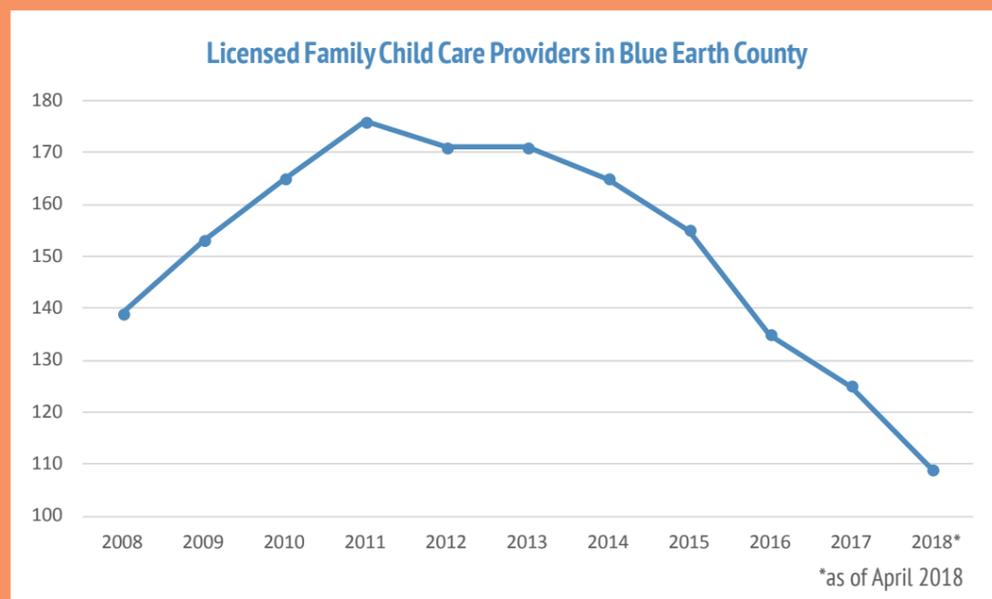
JULY
23

AUGUST
20

To learn more, visit them online at www.fareforall.org

Seeking Family Child Care Providers

The number of family day care providers in the county has dropped 38% since 2011.



For residents with young children, it probably comes as no surprise that the number of day care providers in Blue Earth County has been steadily declining since 2011. These trends are not a surprise to Licensing Services staff either who know that when the economy declines, the number of at-home providers goes up. When the economy becomes stable, those providers tend to enter back into the workforce outside the home or simply retire.

Blue Earth County is delegated by the Minnesota Department of Human Services to license providers in a setting other than a child care center; those are licensed by the State. Currently, the county has 109 licensed providers, with a capacity to serve 1,290 children. Holly Holland and Joanna Petersen, Child Care Licensors with Blue Earth County, are always looking for new providers and can help assist individuals through the licensing process.

In addition to one-on-one support, the county also offers some financial assistance to qualifying providers. Newly approved by the County Board of Commissioners,

the Childcare Forgivable Loan Program is a plan meant to increase the number of providers in small cities and townships across the county. To qualify, the provider must NOT be located within a city with a population greater than 5,000, can be home-based or center-based, and can be for-profit or non-profit. The applicant must provide full-time care (40+ hours per week) to at least five children; no more than 25% of those children can be directly related to the loan applicant. This five-year loan is forgiven in its entirety if the provider remains in business and makes interest payments for five years. Contact your city or township for more information on the application and approval process.

Searching for Child Care in Blue Earth County?

Blue Earth County makes it easy to search licensed providers within the county! Check out our interactive map showing location, school district, capacity, contact information, and other licensing materials online at www.blueearthcountymn.gov/childcaremap



Summer Reading Program

Get ready to rock at the Blue Earth County Library!

Kids 0 - 17 can earn prizes for time spent reading in three age categories and enjoy fun, educational events twice weekly in June and July during the 'Libraries Rock!' Summer Reading Program at the Blue Earth County Library.

June 1
Registration Begins

June 7
Programs Begin

August 31
Last Prize Day

Children and teens who participate in summer library programs benefit from engaging activities and opportunities, which promote literacy development and help to counter summer slide.

Brand-New Performers

The Jollypop's Billy Hartong
Punk Skunks
Science Tellers
Anjee Clay Creations
Michael Madden
Leslie "Rockin' Red" Dolby
PLUS 9 Returning Favorites!!



The Summer Reading Program is made possible by the generosity of the Glen A. Taylor Foundation and The Friends of the Deep Valley Libraries. For more information, contact the Blue Earth County Library at (507) 304-4020.

Do I Need a Construction Permit?

The Planning and Zoning Department, part of Blue Earth County Environmental Services, issues construction permits for projects in all rural areas of the county with the exception of municipalities, Lime Township and Mankato Township. The City of Mankato issues permits for Lime Township, and Mankato Township does their own zoning.

In general, proposed projects for structures or additions with a footprint greater than or equal to 120 square feet require a construction permit. Although smaller projects may not require a construction permit, the setback requirements of the county still apply. Modifications within an existing home that involve replacing a basement or converting existing living space into a bedroom also requires a permit. In those areas that are under the jurisdiction of the county, simple projects such as replacing siding, roofing, windows and doors do not require a permit. Other jurisdictions may require a permit for these projects. Please check with your local zoning authority for applicable permit requirements.

In situations where construction has commenced without a permit, a double permit fee is assessed. Unfortunately, these situations may include setback issues that lead to after-the-fact variance requests, which are also charged a double fee and have the possibility of being denied by the County Board of Adjustment. Some after-the-fact permit requests may involve activities that are prohibited within the zoning district involved. In all cases, it is best to contact the County Planning and Zoning office during the initial planning phase of your project to see what permits and setback requirements may be involved with your proposal. Planning and Zoning staff can most easily be reached at (507) 304-4381.