



Issue 01

# County Administration Newsletter

*Vision & Stewardship*

January 2014

## Administration

Reflecting on the past year, we have an opportunity to make positive changes that affect both our personal and professional lives. My past year was certainly filled with many blessings, including my appointment to serve all of you here at Burnett County! While there is always some fear in the unknown, such as starting a new job in a place where no one knows you, I am thankful for where I find myself today!

Even though I began only a couple short months ago, I have had an opportunity to get to know many of you! My on-going assessment of the organization has been both educational and

enlightening, as laws and process differ from Minnesota.

Listening to many Supervisors it became apparent that timely information is king when making policy decisions, and that communication of information varied in the past. This newsletter is designed to provide information to you that will hopefully assist you in your policy-making, answering constituent questions, and provide ongoing happenings across County departments. I hope you find the information in this monthly newsletter beneficial.

As for the administration department, we have been fo-

cused on listening to the departments and preparing a plan to address the following;

- 1) Employee Compensation
- 2) Personnel Policy Manual
- 3) Department Policies
- 4) Capital Improvement Planning
- 5) Communication between all levels of the organization
- 6) Financial Trend Analysis

All of these items and many more will be addressed during 2014. Details will be provided in upcoming issues!

Happy New Year!

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## Emergency Management

The communications/tower project is ongoing. Towers and antennas are being set up and the new narrowband radio system is in development.

A contract with Ayres & Assoc. has been signed for a design/

feasibility study to upgrade the PSAP/Jail control facility.

A \$6000 exercise grant was applied for to conduct a series of exercises involving the airport, Public Health, hazmat and law enforcement. An EOC training

class is scheduled for Feb. 14 for county staff. An LEPC meeting is scheduled for Feb. 18. A Tabletop exercise is scheduled for the Village of Grantsburg on Feb. 24.

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## Land and Water Conservation

The LWCD is working with two lake groups on Coarse Woody Habitat Structure projects. This conservation practice has come to be known as “Fish Sticks”. Fish Sticks means a large woody habitat structure that utilizes whole trees grouped together and then attached to the



Juvenile panfish swim among the branches of a fish stick

shore or anchored to the bed or bank, and are then partially or fully submerged near the shoreline. Fish Sticks provide many benefits to the water body by creating natural habitat, producing fish, producing food for fish, and reducing erosion, just to mention a few. We are working with the Mallard Lake

Association on fish stick installation at four sites on the lake (last year we installed 5 structures on Mallard Lake). We are also working with the St. Croix Tribal Environmental Department to install up to 12 fish stick structures on Upper Clam Lake. We were able to get both of these projects partially funded by a DNR grant which will cover approximately 70% of the costs.

## Forestry

As we work towards closing out year 2013, the Forest & Parks Department continues to work on many different ongoing projects, from the large land trade with the DNR to finishing up our storm damage timber sales from the 2011 wind storm to the many recreational trail projects that currently exist waiting to be completed. Of all these different ongoing projects, it has to be the initial work from the 2011 storms that we are most looking forward to having finished in the near future. We assessed 25,000+ acres of the county forest of which 7311 acres of storm

damaged timber was sold. To date we have cut and salvaged approximately 94% of that volume. We have fixed numerous buildings, cut trees, ground stumps and repaired miscellaneous infrastructure in twelve different parks and boat landings. We cleared 100+ miles of snowmobile trails, ATV trails, bike trails and county forest roads. Much of this was done in cooperation with our many trail user organizations. Although the workload that this storm event caused will continue for many years to come, I believe we have made it through the toughest portion of

the work, and that would be dealing with the sheer destruction of everything it hit. We are now onto the work of regenerating our forests, adding new and updating our infrastructure, and making our trails better than they were before the storm. I plan to give a short power point presentation to the County Board within the next few months to show in more detail the impacts that the July 2011 wind storm had on the County Forest and our Parks, as well as highlight all the work that has been accomplished.

## ADRC

This past fall Barb Engelhart became the new Dementia Care Specialist of the ADRC! The Dementia Care Specialist (DCS) is a trained social worker, specializing in the needs and concerns of people living with dementia, their caregivers and family, and the professionals working with people who have dementia. Anyone who has

concerns/questions about dementia or Alzheimer's can also utilize the DCS. This position does cover the entire two county service area so Barb may be hard to catch in the office. You may want to call ahead to ensure she is there to meet.

Barb has been developing a lending library of books and

DVDs related to caregiving. Anyone one interested is welcome to connect with Barb for more information. Also if you have any recommendations or donations please contact Barb at 877-485-2372.

## Airport

General aviation airports receive a standard grant of \$150,000 for development and equipment purchases annually. When that money is spent, the Airport Sponsor (Burnett County) agrees to a list of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements called Grant Assurances. These requirements are in effect for the useful life of the item purchased, which usually means

15-20 years. An Airport Sponsor can opt not to spend the entitlement and submits paperwork to indicate this desire to the Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics (BOA). In this case the money gets spent at another airport at the discretion of the BOA. The airport foregoing their entitlement can recommend the BOA spend the money at another specific airport. Burnett County has re-

ceived several entitlements from Grantsburg Airport in the past six years. The Grantsburg Board recommended on January 13 that its entitlement be provided to Burnett County. If received, the County is intending to spend the monies on the fuel system upgrade as necessary per the WI Department of Commerce.

## Child Support

Agency goals for 2014 will continue to focus on the importance of establishing paternity for non-marital children, establishing as well as enforcing child, spousal and medical support orders for all cases that are referred to our office or when

an application for services is received.

2014 began with challenges for many who pay or receive child support. The extremely harsh weather we have been experiencing has adversely affected many child support payers

who work out of doors. With little or no income this past month many were unable to meet their obligations and, as a result, families received only sporadic child support payments. We're all looking forward to warmer weather!

## Health & Community Services

It is the beginning of a new year and for the first time in well over a year, the Health and Human Services department is fully staffed. The department is taking this opportunity to begin some strategic planning as we look forward to 2014. Each unit is evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of current staffing, and determining the most effective use of time, staff strengths and financial resources. We are also

planning to improve and increase the use of technology to assist with time tracking, targeted case management, improving revenues claimed and addressing efficiencies for billing and case documentation.

**Economic Support:** The extremely cold weather and high cost of propane has increased the demand for crisis assistance through the Wisconsin Home Energy Program. The Economic Support Unit in Health and

Human Services is receiving about 10 crisis call per day from consumers requesting assistance with heating fuel costs. Based on the current cost of propane, the average 200 gallon delivery is costing over \$600, plus an additional trip charge. At this time, the HHS crisis program is requiring that the resident pay some amount toward the cost of fuel, to try to ensure that the crisis dollars can go as far as possible.

## County Clerk

The County Clerk's office has completed most of our 2013 to 2014 updates. Preparation and transitioning to the new year has begun.

One of our main focuses for 2014 will be the spring and fall elections. Fortunately we will not have a spring primary

which will save the county thousands of dollars. This also allows our office more time to schedule and conduct necessary election trainings and prepare for the upcoming spring election.

The spring non-partisan election will include County Board

of Supervisors, school board members, village trustees, one municipal judge (Village of Webster) and one referenda to be held in the School District of Siren. Burnett County, as a whole, has no contests at the state level.

## Land Information

All Real Estate and personal Property tax bills were printed in December, which was approximately 33,200 tax bills. Once a few more items are wrapped up we will "rollover" to 2014 and begin the entire assessment/taxation process for 2014. The GIS website averages about 5,500 page views per month, on weekdays

it averages about 250 users per day. We are starting to plan for two big projects in 2015, they are countywide aerial photography and countywide LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging). Both of these projects will have a positive benefit for all property owners of the county, along with benefiting many departments at the county. There

is some proposed legislation (SB -414) that may affect the assessment and municipal board of review timeframes that we are keeping an eye on. Section corner remonumentation and maintenance is progressing in T41N-R15W. Data maintenance and enhancement is constantly ongoing.

## Treasurer

December, January and into February, the twenty four town and village treasurers are collecting 2013 real estate and personal property taxes. As the towns/villages receipt tax payments, they submit by their batch files of payments by email to our office. The batch files are then imported into the

County's tax system. By January 15, the towns/villages calculate a partial settlement. Based on the percentage of taxes collected that the town/village treasurer has in hand on December 31, they will payout to each taxing jurisdiction their share of the tax jurisdiction's levy. Another settlement is

done by February 20 for the balance of their collections through the end of January. We have been refreshing the town/village treasurers on how the municipal tax collections program works, answering lots of questions from taxpayers and town/village treasurers along with our normal daily routine.

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## UWEX

UWEX is happy to announce the filling of the 4-H Youth and Families Development Educator position with Beth Johnson. Beth currently works with UWEX Green Lake County as a Family Living Agent. She has previously worked in Washburn County in interim position in both 4-H and Family Living. She is very enthusiastic and passionate about her work and will be a great addition to UWEX and Burnett County. She currently has been programming using Strengthening Families and Raising a Thinking Child curriculum. Partnerships have been a key for her delivering programs to families in the community and also the county jail. She is very excited to be closer home and to partner with key county organizations and departments. Beth will begin working with Burnett County on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A series of business workshops

will be held in February – March. The First Steps program is intended for those thinking about becoming entrepreneurs. With *First Steps*, you can assess your strengths and weaknesses as a potential business owner, learn how to analyze the feasibility of your business idea, and get familiar with the information you need and where to find it. You will discover your own answers to questions such as:

- Do you have the right personality, skills and life situation to start and manage a business?
- Do you have a good business idea that will meet a customer need and make a profit?
- What kind of investment will be necessary to start your business?

The Entrepreneurial Training Program is an eight week class running once a week from February 6 – March 13. This workshop is more in depth and if you

do all of your homework, you will have a complete business plan at the completion of the workshop. Coursework addresses legal and financial issues, staffing, accounting, record-keeping and marketing. In addition, individual counseling and coaching will help you plan and prepare to request financing from banks, investors and public institutions. In addition to these to programs a workshop on social media for businesses will be held (Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>). For more information contact Mike Kornmann at 349-2979 or visit our web site at <http://burnett.uwex.edu>. We are also holding a Business Plan Contest in cooperation with the Burnett County Development Association, Bremer Bank, and Community Bank. Entries for the business plan contest must be submitted by May 15<sup>th</sup>. The winner can win up to \$2,500 cash and the opportunity to qualify for a zero interest loan up to \$10,000.

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## Highway

Burnett County has been awarded two Federally Funded projects for the upcoming cycle (2013-2018). First is for CTH H from Delano Road to CTH EE (3.9 Miles) the estimated cost for this project is \$2.1 million dollars which will be funded by the Federal Program for 80% and the remaining share of 20% to be paid by Burnett County. The second project is for a bridge replacement in Roosevelt Township; the bridge was built in 1920 and is functionally obsolete and structurally deficient. The replacement costs are estimated to be \$310,000.00 which the costs will be shared by the Federal Program 80%, County 10% and the Township

at 10%. Both of these projects are scheduled to be designed in 2015 and build the next year.

The process is underway with the WIS DOT to obtain Disaster Damage Program funds for CTH H, C and T. These roads had excessive damage due to increased hauling of timber products following the Wind Storm in July of 2011. This program is new and Burnett County is the lead agency in recovering funds to repair infrastructure roads back to their original condition prior to the storm. The estimate submitted to the WIS DOT for county highways was estimated at \$1.3 million dollars which will be

funded at 70% with the remaining 30% paid by the county. These repairs will be scheduled over a two year period to help lessen the financial burden. County H has been repaired and upon approval we will submit for reimbursement and use the funds to cover our expenses for the next road and so on. The goal is to repair the roads without increasing the levy.

The projects scheduled for 2014 on County Highways are: CTH B from Herrick Road to Soderberg Road (3.52 Miles) and CTH M from STH 70 to CTH D (2.5 Miles).

## Finance

The workload of this department during January is focused on preparing W-2 forms for employees and 1099 forms for those that have performed contracted services for the county during 2013.

There is also mandatory filing of federal and state forms related to this data. In addition, detailed auditing is necessary to make sure that A/P and receipts are charged /credited to the proper year.

Continuing education plays an important role in making sure that Burnett County is compliant with tax law (sales tax, IRS regulations, payroll, etc.) The

The winter Season is squarely upon us, the following information is current thru Jan 10, 2014:

Number of storms or incidents thus far: 32

Number of inches of snow thus far: 44"

Number of ice events > .25": 3

Frost under the highways average: 71"

Payroll Clerk attended a webinar regarding Wisconsin Labor Law earlier this month. On March 7<sup>th</sup>, the Fiscal Manager and Finance Manager will be attending the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Government Training Academy put on by our auditing firm, CliftonLarsonAllen.

The closing for 2013 will continue until May when the auditors will be present to file our State Form D that is due by May 15<sup>th</sup>.