



Issue 02

# County Administration Newsletter

*Vision & Stewardship*

February 2014

## Administration

We hear the word budget thrown around at all levels of government. People say that money in government is “wasted” and “squandered” and that we need to “tighten the belt.” And while anyone can find examples of cavalier spending in any organization, it is in government that awareness of spending is highly visible-as it should be. As stewards of public resources it is our responsibility to recommend and spend wisely the dollars we receive.

As we start to think about the 2015 budget cycle and beyond, it’s important to think about what our budget reflects. Even though many of the functions and associ-

ated costs are a direct result of mandates, the amount of resources put into each function is a value statement. But how do we determine our values? One way is to review the history of the organization and its expenditure trends. While this has merit, it may not reflect current values or goals of the County, as historical trends tend to lag behind current value systems. After the spring election, a goal setting session will take place with the Supervisors. The intention is to have a broad base discussion surrounding county services, funding, and prioritization of resources. Understanding board values will assist staff in creating

and presenting a budget that reflects the current sentiment. As you prepare for the goal setting session, think about Burnett County today; our assets and community strengths as well as our challenges. Then picture Burnett County in five years, if you see the County moving in a direction that doesn’t support our strengths and assets or address our challenges, it’s time to evaluate priorities and allocate resources accordingly. I look forward to this discussion.

*-Nate*

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## Emergency Management

Emergency Management is conducting a short scenario-based discussion with the Grantsburg Village Board on their roles/responsibilities during a disaster. Discussing the response phase and how it transitions into the more difficult recovery phase

is important for any community. Informing them how the County EOC could be stood up to support their operations will also be reviewed. In addition, we hope to point out a few of the more difficult decisions they will have to make and of-

fer them ideas and suggestions for command and control. While disasters of any kind create challenges for communities, being prepared can assist in returning normalcy as quickly as possible.

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## Land and Water Conservation

The Wildlife Damage Abatement & Claims Program (WDACP) is administered by the LWCD (funded by fees from deer hunting licenses at no cost to the county). This program provides abatement & financial compensation for white-tailed



Deer will readily feed on corn, soybeans, and hay.

deer, black bear,

Canada goose, and turkey damage to commercial crops, apiaries, and livestock. Participants are provided abatement measures such as temporary or permanent

fencing, pyrotechnics, silage bag covers, shooting permits, trapping, or repellants to try to reduce the damage. Twenty nine bears were trapped and relocated due to agricultural impact or

for human health/safety, and 23 deer have been

shot on damage sites in 2013. If feasible, filing a claim for the loss is the next step if a participant so desires. Claims have a \$500 deductible and a maximum of

\$10,000. The WDACP Technician performs field inspections and crop appraisals to verify the type & amount of damage. Claims are calculated and submitted for payment to the claimant to help alleviate the financial impact of the damage. For claim year 2013, Burnett County producers incurred \$11,039 of reimbursable damage to their crops. 68% of this damage was from deer; 32% from bear. Thanks to the consistent effort of this program, damage claims and monetary loss are down by 60% versus 2005.

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## Forestry

As January comes to a close with extremely cold temperatures and snow depths deeper than recent years, we find our snowtrails in the best shape they have been in for many years. Businesses have reported that trail use is up and they are seeing trail users at their local businesses. However, due to the cold temps and deep snow, we find ourselves spending more time in the office preparing for the spring season. There is no doubt that spring is the

busiest season for the Forest & Parks Department. We are currently bidding out our tree planting contract and new equipment purchases, preparing the bid packet for shingling the main lodge at Camp Burnett, preparing for our spring timber sale bid opening, writing our snowmobile & atv grants for the 2014-2015 season, going through all our equipment and making needed repairs, and hoping for a minimal spring fire season. Typically we are able to get a

good start on our timber sale establishment acres during this time of year as well; however the extreme cold temperatures and deep snow has slowed this work down significantly at this time. For this reason we have had to reorganize our typical work schedule and plan to accomplish much of this work in late winter/early spring in order to catch up on what Mother Nature has slowed down for us.

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## ADRC

Earlier this month the ADRC Board had passed a small re-organization effort for the agency. Due to the mergers of the Aging offices into the ADRC over the past couple years; several positions were not as efficient for our new structure. As positions vacated they were held open to evaluate what was actually needed instead of just plugging in a replacement. Although this led to a period of being short staffed we are excited to be able to get these positions filled and start working on some new projects. These projects include

a stronger focus on Prevention Programming/Community Education as well as developing the Disability Benefit Specialist program in Polk County to match the fabulous work Wanda Washkuhn does for Burnett!

You may have heard some discussion regarding the potential of Namekagon Transit providing public transportation within Burnett County. This project is spearheaded by the Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC). The TCC is a group comprised of stake-

holders from both Burnett and Polk counties. There has been some confusion created from news articles as to the extent of involvement by the ADRC for the project. As one of the stakeholders involved in the TCC the agency does and will continue to support this venture, however there are no ADRC or county funds that are being paid out to the program. I welcome anyone with questions to contact me, Laura Neve, to discuss this further. To reach me please call 877-485-2372 and I can be reached at either office.

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## Child Support

Now that the year-end numbers are in we know that we collected \$2,410,224.52 of child support in 2013. Some individuals who receive their child support on an EPIC MasterCard debit card were adversely affected by the infa-

mous "Target security breach" that occurred between November 27 and December 15 last year. When the breach was detected MasterCard promptly contacted the 3,824 Wisconsin child support debit cardholders and issued new

cards to them. We are happy to report that our office received only a limited number of calls or complaints because of this, and our case participants are again able to access their child support on the newly-issued replacement debit cards.

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## Register of Deeds

We will soon be on our new software program for one year this April. This program enables us to do all of our indexing, viewing the documents, purchasing online and receipts all from one program, which is

a very good feature. Our old system we were working back and forth between 4 different systems and 3 different Vendors. We are looking forward to spring coming, as of right now our recording numbers

have been down for the last few months, which when spring comes recordings start going up. Numbers of recordings have been down throughout the State of Wisconsin.

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## IT

The IT department will be expanding the wireless coverage in the Government Center, as well as adding coverage in the airport and highway departments. This will give the public wifi access at the airport, and will allow the highway department to begin using internet enabled devices in the highway shop. It will also provide our Sheriff department with additional vehicle access locations. We will be continuing our

Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) compliance / network redesign project in 2014. An analogy for this project is if each of our computers were a person standing in a room; all of the Government center is standing in one big room, and anyone can talk directly to one another. Well the CJIS mandate states that the Sheriff department needs to have their own room with a locked door. It also states that

any server that holds criminal justice information needs to have its own room with another locked door. We continued with this concept and created rooms for HHS and printers as well. Continuing with the people in a room analogy: rather than kicking everyone out of the room and building walls, we decided to create a new wing. In the near future we will be slowly moving people into their new offices.

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## County Clerk

One recent project our office has undertaken is an attempt to make building wide information more accessible and reader friendly. Two monitors have been mounted in the lobby area of the Government Center on the current information wall. The monitors scroll with pages of maps of all floors and office

locations, where to go for information on specific requests and what is going on throughout the day and evening in the meeting rooms. Now the public can enter the building and see where they should go to get a question answered, to pay taxes, pay a fine, etc., and find where the room is located by

looking on the map. We are always happy to help direct people and answer their questions in person, but this provides another option to gather the necessary information you are looking for in electronic format; the manner many of us are becoming so accustomed to.

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## Land Information & Land Use

Section corner remonumentation and maintenance is complete in T41N-R15W, next project is T42N-R15W. Parcel mapping was completed in T39N-R19W (except for some publicly owned areas), next project is T37N-R14W. 2014 assessment process has begun, assessors have their work rolls. Address changes from

December tax bills have been completed. Data maintenance and enhancement is ongoing.

The Land Use/Zoning Office has contracted with Transcendent Technologies for a record tracking system. We are currently trying to get the 35,000 plus records converted to the

new system. This system will be able to automate the required 3 year notices for septic pumping/maintenance; allow pumpers to file reports online; and eventually have records available to the public online. This will be an ongoing project with all land use, subdivision and sanitary permit records.

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## Treasurer

Towns and villages have wrapped up their tax collections through January 31. Our office has been importing their final batches of receipts and making sure our records match with the towns and villages. When we are balanced with the town/village, we then calculate

the tax settlement. Tax settlement calculations are based on the percentage that the town/village has collected through January 31. The town/village will pay out to each taxing jurisdiction their amount of their levy (less the partial settlement made in January) that was in-

cluded on the tax bills for 2013. Collection percentages range from 54.03% to 61.79%. The tax settlement process is not quite done yet, there are reports and files that will be sent on to the WI Dept of Revenue.

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## UWEX

The Farm Bill was passed and signed by the President. What does that mean for Burnett County? Our nutrition educator Julie Yezek will be with us through the end of the federal fiscal year at 60%. Known as the "Food Lady" Julie does an amazing job at helping our children learn about eating healthy and trying new foods. 4-H Youth and Families Development Educator, Beth Johnson begins March 3<sup>rd</sup>. We will bring her around to meet eve-

ryone. If we miss you, please stop by and welcome her to Burnett County.

The Jordan Buck Centennial Anniversary Celebration received an endorsement from the County Board this month. There are lots of ideas out there to celebrate a legendary buck with a legendary story. If you are not familiar with the story, google the Jordan Buck or ask me for a copy of Ron Shara's 1978 article in Outdoor Life magazine. We are interested in

incorporating Jordan family members in our celebration. If you know of any, please contact me with names and contact information. Burnett County Tourism, UWEX, and other organizations will be working with Whitetails Unlimited on anniversary activities. Don't forget to watch Discover Wisconsin on March 29 which tells the story of "4 Wheels, 4 Counties" (Fox Sports North).

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## Health and Community Services

**Public Health Improvement Initiative (WPHII) Grant-** Burnett County PH was one of 9 counties in Western WI to be awarded a WPHII grant. This \$5,000 grant will be used to increase quality improvement,

performance management and accreditation readiness. The Local Health Department will complete a Self-Assessment Tool based upon PH Accreditation Board Standards, review its strengths and weaknesses, and

then select one quality improvement project to implement before September 30, 2014.

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# Finance

The Finance Department has transitioned from W-2 and 1099 filing to closing year 2013 records. The process in the past involved at least two auditors on site for two weeks. The task is currently performed by this office and involves checking all funds and accounts for accuracy. The detail that results from the closing always presents interesting data that you

won't find in the audit report. The Transportation Program for 2013 involved seven different vehicles including four retired from the Sheriff's department and three purchased Fords (Focus). The numbers below illustrate the overall program results. In addition, the expense involved with each vehicle is determined for the year and the value to the program is

assessed. Maintenance charges, fuel efficiency and insurance charges are factors involved in the analysis.

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|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Total Miles Driven    | 54,251              |
| Total Expense         | \$ 12,037.48        |
| IRS Mileage Rate Cost | \$ 30,651.82        |
| <b>Savings</b>        | <b>\$ 18,614.34</b> |