



Issue 11

# County Administration Newsletter

*Vision & Stewardship*

January 2015

## Administration

It's incredible how quickly time seems to pass by...I can hardly believe that I have been working for Burnett County for more than a year. While coming to a new job can be stressful and difficult to find solid footing, my experience in the last year has been the complete opposite. The staff of the County as well as the villages are truly among some of the best I've worked with and it has made all the difference. I can honestly say that we accomplished more this last year than I had anticipated, and it is because of the people in this organization.

From experienced department heads and competent staff, to elected officials who trust and work with staff. The County, in my opinion, is moving in a positive direction.

In the last year, several departments have updated policies, communicated more effectively across departments, streamlined benefits to reduce costs, and engaged in open and respectful conversations regarding service delivery and priorities of services. In addition, the County continues to rollout the narrowband system, review space

needs, and prepare plans for a future highway and forestry facility. Creating financial stabilization policies and processes are also ongoing. While much of this work entailed conversations that were difficult at times, I appreciate the openness and respect everyone exhibited.

As we begin the New Year, I thank you all for your spirit of collaboration this past year and look forward to our successes of 2015.

- Nate

## Aging and Disability Resource Center

For over 25 years, the Burnett County Nutrition Program has delivered nutritious meals to the homebound, elderly and ill in the area.

The success of this program centers on the extraordinary core of volunteers who contribute their time, caring and concern for our participants. When a home delivered meal volunteer brings a meal to the participant, most of the time, the volunteer is the only person they see for the week. Having someone to say

"Hi, how are you doing today?" can mean the world to them.

One of my focuses for 2015 will be to start a program for community businesses to get more involved in volunteering and delivering meals to our participants. My goal is to have one business each month for one day deliver meals. I will be reaching out to the ADRC Board & Burnett County Board to be involved in this program as well. Participants hear about what is happening in our county

from other people or the local paper and it would be an honor for them to shake your hand and share their opinions.

Webster School District has been involved with our program for a year or two now. We have had kids come into the Webster and A&H site to help and the congregated participants have asked when they will be coming back. I believe getting our youth involved in this valuable service

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would have a tremendous impact on our participants. Reaching out to the coaches, athletic directors and school groups of each school will be a priority as

well. Many participants read about what is happening with local sports and school functions in the paper and to have that one on one interaction, even if it is for a few minutes, could light up someone's day.

Volunteering not only gives you a great satisfaction in what you are doing, but also will have a positive change in the population that we serve in this community.

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## Emergency Management

Wisconsin is vulnerable to a variety of disasters. The state has incurred disaster-related damages totaling nearly \$3 billion in the last three decades, with almost half of that occurring in the '90s alone. These losses can be reduced through mitigation activities. It is estimated that for every dollar spent on mitigation, \$4 in future damages can be avoided (\$5 for flooding). Hazard mitigation breaks the cycle of damage and repair. Mitigation actions reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards. These preventative actions can be simple, such as elevating a furnace in a basement that sometimes has water on the floor. Mitigation can also have a comprehensive approach, such as relocating buildings out of

the floodplain or strengthening critical facilities to prevent wind damage and provide stronger shelter.

On a recent trip out west, I spent the night at a campground in downtown East Grand Forks, MN. It was located on the banks of the Red River and had paved streets and curbs. The area was formerly a neighborhood that repeatedly flooded each spring. It was more cost effective for the Federal government to "buy" them out and raze the homes than to continue to pay for repairs after each flood event.

Closer to home, I had several dead or dying popple trees around my house. Interestingly, insurance would not pay to have them removed even

though significant roof damage would occur should they fall. I paid a tree service to mitigate potential damages by having them removed. From a monetary perspective, it was comparable to the deductible on my homeowners insurance. From the "peace of mind" perspective, it was win.

Burnett County has received a grant from the Federal government to update our County Hazard Mitigation Plan during the next year. The update is required every 5 years and ensures that we remain eligible for disaster aid after a Presidential Disaster declaration. We will evaluate the threats, risks and vulnerabilities we face and plan mitigation strategies to reduce vulnerability.

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## Forestry and Parks

With the end of the year fast approaching, the Forest and Parks Department has been busy trying to finish up some projects. One of the biggest projects has been the bridge over the St. Croix River on the Gandy Dancer Trail just north of Dan-

bury. We have been working with the MN DNR over the last few years to rehabilitate the bridge. And in mid early November the project was finally completed. It was a cooperative project between Minnesota and Burnett County where each had

to secure 50% of the funding for the work. The rehabilitation project totaled around \$820,000, with Burnett County funding half of the project. Burnett County's funding came through grant monies from the Snowmo-

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bile, ATV and Recreational Trail Aids programs. Other than staff time and travel, no funds for that project came directly out of the Burnett County General Fund. To secure such a large amount of money from these various funds can be a rather

daunting task, and Susan Ingalls, Burnett County Recreation Coordinator, should be commended for her excellent grant writing skills and communication with the various recreation counsels that helped fund this project. We could not have asked for the project to turn out any better. If you get the

chance, we encourage you to go see the bridge and the beautiful view from it.

One other project that the Forest and Parks Department has just

started is a new grant opportunity for the towns and villages that either have county forest lands within their boundaries or offer a direct main access route to county forest lands that is routinely used. This grant is known as the "Burnett County Forest Town/Village Road Grant." The purpose of the grant is to provide some funds to towns and villages to help fix roads that continually have issues. This will be a 50/50 cost sharing grant opportunity. A letter and the grant information have been mailed to all the town and village clerks and chairmen. For more information, please contact the Burnett County Forestry and Parks Department.



## Health & Human Services

Flu viruses are constantly changing- they can change from one season to the next or they can even change within the course of one flu season, which is called "drifting". As a result, there is always the possibility of a less than optimal match between circulating viruses and the viruses in the flu vaccine.

The most predominately seen virus during this flu season is the Influenza A (H3N2) virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found that about half of the circulating H3N2 virus this season is different from the H3N2 virus that is present in the vaccine.

This may reduce how well the vaccine protects against those "drifted" H3N2 viruses. However, it is possible that vaccination may still provide some cross-protection against the drifted viruses, lessening severe flu-associated outcomes like hospitalization and death.

In addition, keep in mind that the flu vaccine contains three or four flu viruses (depending on the type of vaccine you receive). This means that even when there is a less than ideal match or lower effectiveness against one virus, H3N2 in this case, the vaccine still protects against the other viruses including H1N1

and Influenza B strains.

Given all of this information, the CDC, the Burnett County Health Department, and Burnett Medical Center continue to recommend flu vaccination as the best way to protect against the flu. For more information, please call the Burnett County Health Department at 715-349-7600, or Burnett Medical Center at 715-463-5353.

*Written by Sarah Denn, Burnett County Public Health Nurse, and reviewed by Jeffrey Groshens, MD, Burnett Medical Center. Information provided in part by the CDC.*

## Land and Water Conservation

Each year the Land and Water Conservation Department sponsors an Annual Tree, Shrub and Wildflower Sale. This sale, now in progress, offers plants for sale to the general public which may be used for any purpose. These plants are great for shoreline restorations, residential landscaping, wildlife habitat, or any other planting opportunity.

The species available include:

- **TREES:** Colorado Blue Spruce, Red Oak, Red Pine, White Spruce, Red Maple, White Birch, White Pine, and Balsam Fir (which is already sold out!).

- **SHRUBS:** Red Osier Dogwood, Juneberry, American Plum, Choke Cherry, Ninebark, Grey Dogwood, and Red Splendor Crab Apple.

Trees are offered in bundles of 25; shrubs in bundles of 5. All of the plants are bare-root stock and average 9" - 12" tall.

Native wildflowers are available in 4 different collections of plants or 2 different selections of seed mix.

Pick up date will be the end of April 2014 for the trees and shrubs, and the beginning of June for the wildflower collections and seed.

Since orders are taken on a first come - first served basis, we encourage customers to order early to be sure to reserve the species and amounts that they are interested in.

Anyone interested in ordering product may contact the Burnett County Land and Water Conservation Department, County Government Center, 7410 County Road K, # 109, Siren, WI, 54872 or call (715) 349-2186. The brochure and order form can also be printed from our website: [www.burnettcounty.com](http://www.burnettcounty.com) and then navigate to the Land and Water Conservation page.

## Maintenance and Grounds

On those really cold, below zero days, one of the common winter time complaints here at the Government Center is - why is it so cold, especially near the floor in my office? The answer is - it is mostly a design issue with the building itself. With the exception of the jail's cell blocks and a few offices up there, all of the other offices are heated with forced air from the ceiling along with some ceiling radiant heat panels. This is not the most efficient way to heat (trying to force heat downward) but this was the cheapest way to install a heating system during the construction. Typically, there would either be forced air vents near the floor level or radiators

below the windows on the outer walls or a combination of both but that would have cost more to install.

Many of the office workers have little choice in how their office is set up, but if you have some wiggle room, some things to think about are:

- Having your desk directly under a radiant panel is great for the top of the desk - but below the desk your feet will be cold.
- Sitting close to the outside wall that has windows will make you feel cold too. Our window frames are a commercial type that are hollow aluminum and are not insu-

lated, these can get very cold.

- Sitting directly under an air vent will make you feel cold because of the dry air between heating cycles.
- Ideally, having your back to an inside wall, away from the direct air flow of an air vent, would be best.

Other than dressing warmly, there are limits to what can be done with the system we have.

Remember, there is a policy ban, within the Government Center, on high wattage space heaters that have exposed heating elements. These have been

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deemed unsafe, use huge amounts of the more expensive electric energy, and disrupt the temperature sensors of our

HVAC system.

Hang in there - meteorological winter ends at the end of February, but then again meteorological spring can be a doozy too.

## Register of Deeds

Burnett County Register of Deeds, Jeanine Chell, is urging county residents to take advantage of a free service now being offered by the Register of Deeds to help protect people against property fraud. People can sign up through the county's website to receive Property Fraud Alerts from an automated database that monitors activity involving land records filed in the Burnett County Register of Deeds Office.

According to the FBI, there is no faster growing white collar crime in this country than property and mortgage fraud. The Property Fraud Alert system notifies individuals when transactions involving their name are recorded in the Register of

Deeds Office. While Property Fraud Alert does not prevent fraud from happening; it provides an early warning system for property owners to take appropriate actions should they determine possible fraudulent activity has taken place.

A common property fraud scenario involves a criminal filing a bogus deed making it appear that the actual owner had transferred ownership of a parcel to someone else. The criminal then takes that deed to a bank, fraudulently obtains a mortgage and then disappears with the money. While it can happen to anyone, perpetrators of property fraud often prey on the elderly, people in long term care facilities, and absentee property

owners.

Those who are interested can sign-up online by clicking on "Property Fraud Alert" on the Register of Deeds page of the Burnett County website. Go to [www.burnettcounty.com](http://www.burnettcounty.com), click on Departments, select Register of Deeds, and select Property Fraud Alert. Or call the Burnett County Register of Deeds office at 715-349-2183 with questions.

The service is easy to sign up for and offers a little extra peace of mind. Participants can choose whether to receive their alerts via e-mail or over the phone. The free service and database are managed and maintained by Fidlar Technologies, the county's software provider for land records.

## Treasurer

Our annual fall meeting with the municipal treasurers was November 19. Bill Lewis was here and gave the municipal treasurers a refresher course on the tax payment posting system that he maintains. The town/village treasurers have their tax bills to mail and are ready to start receipting property tax payments that are due by Janu-

ary 31. By January 15, the town/village treasurers will settle with the county, schools and WITC for collections received through December 31.

We have been working with Point and Pay to set up the County Clerk's office with option to collect certain payments by credit card at their counter.

Offices we now have set up to collect certain payments by credit card are: Register of Deeds, Forest/Parks, UW-Extension, and County Clerk. Our office has offered the option of payment of delinquent property taxes and the July 31 installment by credit card/E-check since 2005.

## University of Wisconsin-Extension and Tourism

Agriculture Agents Kevin Schoessow and Otto Wiegand serve Burnett, Washburn, and Sawyer Counties. Schoessow appeared on Wisconsin Public Radio "On Garden Talk". On Friday, November 21, he was the guest on Wisconsin Public Radio's "The Larry Meiller Show" from 11 am - 12:30 pm (rebroadcast Saturday from 7 am-8 am). His focus was on general gardening with emphasis on soil.

Kevin also provided a program

on January 14 at the Burnett County Government Center and January 22 at the Spooner Ag Station about Farm Bill information for crop producers to explain the new insurance program.

Otto put together the quarterly agriculture newsletter and provided grant writing for NRCS grazing funding.

Upcoming agricultural activities include pesti-

cide applicator training, beginner grape school, Master Gardener volunteer training, and grape pruning workshops.



## Veterans' Services

In response to the issue of delayed appointments, wait lists, and follow-on legislation requiring VA to schedule appointments within 30 days or pay for an outside provider, veterans who were enrolled in the VA Health Care system as of 11/01/2014 received Veterans Choice cards in the mail. These cards look like insurance cards; however, they are not insurance cards and require pre-approval before use. The following criteria must be met to use the cards:

1. Appointment must be pre-approved as a result of VA not being able to schedule an appointment within 30 days, OR
2. The veteran's home of record

exceeds 40 miles, in a straight line, from the nearest VA facility (not necessarily the nearest facility that can provide the needed service), OR

3. The veteran would need to travel by plane or boat to get to appointment, OR
4. A geographic challenge exists that presents significant travel hardship such as mountains or a large body of water (there are none in Burnett County).

The number to call for pre-approval is (866) 606-8198. This number is also located on the cards.

This is only a 3 year program, a

short term fix, and only certain providers, not all, will accept the Veterans Choice Card. When a veteran calls for pre-approval, contact personnel will be able to provide information on the nearest provider(s) to the veteran.

### January Dates of Interest

- 4 First Nat'l Elections (1789)
- 15 Pentagon completed
- 17 Operation Desert Storm began (1991)
- 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 27 Vietnam Peace Accord signed (1973)
- 28 U.S Coast Guard established (1915)

## Airport

Airport based services can be vital to the survival and significance of the facility. Among pilots of aircraft of all sizes, the two most important airport based services are fuel sales and maintenance. While Burnett County Airport (Airport) offers fuel sales as a service, market demand drives the necessity for other services. For the past 2½ years, Cameron Smith I.A. (meaning Authorized Inspector) has been performing airframe and powerplant maintenance services out of a County owned hangar under the business name C.T. Aero L.L.C. Cameron has performed various services on aircraft from

the smallest single engine piston driven aircraft to some light jets. Much of the work he performs is for owners of aircraft based at the field or for owners who realize they have a problem in flight or upon landing in Burnett County. A few others even fly in purposely to have their service done here by Cameron.

Cameron's prior experience came while working for Rare Aircraft Inc. based in Fairbault and Owatonna. Rare is in the business of refurbishment and overhaul of vintage and unique aircraft. Cameron started his business at the Airport one day

a week and after two years had established enough of a client base to make the move to full time. Annual inspections are the majority of the work Cameron performs but he has also worked on just about all of the major components of aircraft from "prop to tailfeathers". At least 15 years (most likely more) have passed since aircraft mechanic services have been available at Burnett County Airport. By all accounts, the presence of a full time based mechanic will do nothing but improve the usability and viability of Burnett County Airport.

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