



THE GAYLORD HUB

Volume One Hundred-Twenty-Two, Gaylord, Sibley County, Minnesota 55334 2150-0400

Thursday, January 24, 2008 - No. 12

Sibley County achieves 98% tax collection rate

Sibley County achieved a 98.47% tax collection rate as of Dec. 31, 2007. That was higher than the 97.85% collection rate in 2006 and nearly the same as the 98.4% tax collection rate in 2005.

Tax collections totaled \$17,828,068.93 out of an anticipated \$18,105,219.71, according to Treasurer Mary Fisher.

The tax collection rate for property located in the 17 townships was 99.32%. Alfsborg Township achieved the highest tax collection rate at 99.94%. Other collection rates for the townships were: Washington Lake - 99.83%, Moltke - 99.82%, Kelso - 99.7%, Dryden - 99.68%, Henderson - 99.62%, Cornish - 99.57%, Grafton - 99.57% Bismarck - 99.56%, Green Isle - 99.54%, Transit - 99.38%, Arlington - 99.32%, Severance - 99.3%. Sibley - 98.8%, Faxon - 98.45%, Jessenland - 98.11%, and New Auburn - 97.8%.

The tax collection rate for property located in Sibley County's seven cities was 97.04%. Gibbon achieved the highest tax collection rate at 98.47%. Other collection rates were: Winthrop - 97.77%, Gaylord - 97.53%, Arlington - 96.94%, Henderson - 96.74%, Green Isle - 95.73%, and New Auburn - 94.84%.

County court administrator now helping McLeod County office

Sibley County Court Administrator Karen Messner is now wearing two hats, at least on a temporary basis.

Messner assumed duties January 14 as acting court administrator in McLeod County. She was appointed to the acting position after Bob Schmidt left the McLeod County Court Administration position to take a

5,842 cars were shipped on local rail line last year

"We're heading in the right direction."

Those are the comments from Bob Suko of the Minnesota Prairie Line.

5,842 cars were shipped on the Minnesota Prairie Line in 2007, an increase from about 3,200 in 2006.

Suko reported that the Minnesota Prairie Line is continuing to operate with two trains.

Minnesota Prairie Line officials also said that they were working on a signal problem at Gibbon. The signal was installed on Sibley County Road 2. Sometimes the signal starts flashing.

They also reported that the City of Green Isle would like a stop sign installed at a crossing on State Highway 25. Minnesota Prairie Line referred the city to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Repairs to a wood truss bridge near Wood Lake were also completed.

Out-of-home placements costs of children above



Full steam ahead! Exhaust from Heartland Corn Products, located on Highway 19 near Winthrop, could be seen from several miles away Saturday as sub-zero temperatures created this scene at the ethanol plant. The area experienced its coldest temperatures since last February. Temperatures dipped below zero Friday afternoon and stayed there until noon on Sunday.

Partly due to staff vacancies -

Human Services expenses end year under budget

Expenditures were under budget for Sibley County Human Services in 2007, according to Emma Woods, fiscal supervisor.

Expenditures totaled \$3,614,454, or 94% of the \$3,852,071 budget.

Shortage of staff was one of the reasons for the department being under budget. There were turnovers in several positions during the year, according to Director Vicki Stock.

Stock had budgeted for an additional child support officer position in 2007 and it wasn't filled until mid July. The child support aide position was vacant for three months.

There was a vacancy in the department clerical unit for about

Other reasons for the department being under budget, according to Woods, were fewer paid county burials, fewer family based services provided in the child protection area, fewer clients than anticipated in chemical dependency, fewer day treatment costs and 72 hour holds, lower program costs for developmentally disabled clients, and lower costs for elderly transportation services.

Department revenues totaled \$3,780,573, or 98% of the \$3,852,071 budget.

From Dec. 31, 2006 to Dec. 31, 2007, the Human Services' operating balance grew by \$166,118.80. The operating bal-

ance, as of Dec. 31, 2007, was \$4,353,032.91, up from \$4,186,914.11 on Dec. 31, 2006.

Stock said that \$101,000 that Sibley County received from South Country Health Alliance, that had been in the fund balance, has been spent. It was used for the new county telephone system, defibrillators, County Service Center parking lot, handicapped accessible doors, and a staff retreat.

Sibley County has an additional \$517,914 from South Country Health Alliance that has been placed in a separate fund.

Down from 20 in 2006 - Thirteen new homes were built in county in 2007

Thirteen new homes with a value of \$2.8 million were constructed in rural Sibley County in 2007.

This is down from 20 new homes valued at \$4 million in 2006, according to the Sibley County Environmental Services Department.

In 2007, Environmental Services collected fees for 266 zoning permits, totaling \$58,704. This is down from 2006, when fees were collected on 317 permits, totaling \$81,430.

The most common permit issued was a setback certificate. 109 were issued in 2007.

Setback certificates are issued

over-the-counter for out-buildings, such as a shed or barn, according to the Environmental Services Office.

81 sewer permits were issued, down from 106 in 2006.

There were 48 land use permits issued, the same as one year ago. There were 16 conditional use permits, down from 25. Seven variances were issued, down from 10 in 2006.

Four penalties were issued totaling \$2,250. There was one permit for rezoning, the same as in 2006.

No platting permits were issued, down from six in 2006.

Two companies have most late fees - Rail Authority to develop policy on delinquent fees

A new policy for collecting delinquent permit fees is being developed by the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority.

Permit fees are charged to businesses and communities who have utilities and other items in the railroad right-of-way or under the track. Rail Authority and railroad operator approval are required to obtain the permits.

The new policy was proposed at the Rail Authority meeting January 16 in Gaylord.

According to a report presented by administrator Julie Rath, there are nine entities that have delinquent permit fees. Eight of the nine entities owe the Rail Authority permit fees totaling \$20,535.50. One business owes \$200 for a permit fee but it is in the 30-day category.

Three-fourths of the 90 day delinquent fees are from two telephone companies, Redwood County Telephone, which owes

of the parties are waiting for clarification on issues from Attorney Dave Schauer before they pay their bills.

The Rail Authority decided to work with Schauer to develop a policy requiring that in order for new permits to be considered, outstanding billings from 2007 and 2008 must be paid. It was proposed that this policy take effect March 30, 2008. In addition, the Rail Authority proposed charging a \$1,000 service charge in addition to the permit fees if the accounts are not paid.

In other business, the Rail Authority:

- Approved a lease agreement between Heartland Corn Products and United Farmers Cooperative to share side track between the ethanol plant and elevator facilities.

- Acknowledged receipt of a letter from the City of Gaylord, expressing that it would like to