

Todd County hears updates

By Karin Nauber
Todd County reporter

Several department heads updated the Todd County Commissioners at their Mar. 15 work session. Those reporting included County Recorder Cheryl Perish, Health and Human Services (multiple reports) and Sheriff Don Asmus.

Perish outlined duties in the recorder's office throughout the year including an overall look at income and expenditures, the recorder equipment fund, the activities of the compliance fund and comparisons of the funds between 2014 and 2015.

The recorder's office was compliant in meeting the statutory timeline in 2015 at a rate of 95.91 percent. This was shown by the number of compliant documents they processed which was 4,740 out of a total of 4,942 documents.

Her report also showed that foreclosures were down in 2015 and that sales and mortgages were up over 2014.

Overall, her department showed to be "a burden on the General Fund of \$72.09," according to Perish.

According to the Vital Statistics Report Perish presented, there were 469 births in 2015 compared to 519 in 2014; 168 deaths compared to 180 in 2014 and 87 marriages compared to 83 in 2014.

The Health and Human Services (HHS) Department gave several updates on its various activities throughout the year.

Heidi Brings gave a report on the Nurse Family Partnership Program and the things that program has done for young families. She also reported on WIC (Women, Infants and Children) nutrition program.

She said that there are 618 monthly participants in Todd County and that about \$465,433 in vouchers go out annually to Todd County families.

The public health portion provided 557 vaccinations last year.

"We see ourselves as a 'safety net' for those who don't want to go to their own provider or do not have a provider for this," said Brings.

Administrative Services Unit Manager Jena Peterson gave a report on the financials for both the public health and social services side.

Commissioner Randy Neumann said that the county had a population of 25,857 and wondered how many children were served by the department and how many were served overall by the HHS program.

Peterson said she did not know, but she would research it.

HHS Director Jackie Och talked about further reductions in expenses and revenues they were looking at for 2016.

The last item for HHS was about developing a home health aide pool of employees to help with consistency with their clients. It has been a challenge to get applicants and to maintain a pool of them.

With fewer people available, when someone has to help with other clients, it causes more disturbances with the clients and the caseloads.

Och said they would like

to maintain a pool of 12 part-timers, although they had not met that goal in a long time. These people would earn vacation hours, but would not be eligible for other benefits.

They asked if they could run these requests through the personnel committee instead of bringing them to the board each time.

Commissioner David Kircher said he wasn't sure they could give the authority to the personnel committee or department heads to hire, even though he was not opposed to the plan. He also felt they should consider keeping a pool of 14 and when they get down to 10 people they should advertise.

Commissioner Rod Erickson felt they could work on streamlining the recruiting process.

Kircher added that he thought they should state that they are establishing a pool.

The final year-end report came from Asmus for the sheriff's department.

He said that the trend was up for more calls for service and that the Initial Complaint Report (ICR) number went up, too. An ICR is issued when the complaint requires a written report.

Calls for services rose from 18,114 in 2011 up to 21,930 in 2015. Calls for service include everything from criminal activity to stray dog complaints and everything in between.

He reported that the AEDs (Automated External Defibrillator) have been used three times since they've been put into the county squad cars.

Kircher asked about the number of bookings that the department does.

Asmus reported that they are getting calls daily for bed space in the jail.

The final discussion item was brought forward by Assessor Chris Odden related to the generalist position that is vacant and shared between the assessor, auditor/treasurer and recorder's offices.

He said they have discussed rewriting the job description for that position.

"We have met multiple times to discuss what we want. We rewrote the job description and discussed this within the personnel committee," said Odden.

The position should be able to answer tax questions for customers without needing to wait for someone else or be shuffled to another person.

He said that the generalist fund is sufficient to cover up to a Grade 9 for three years. The generalist position is currently at a Grade 5.

Because of rewriting the job description, they would have to submit it to Springsted for re-evaluation.

"We won't have a problem financing the position no matter what it comes back at," said Odden.

Kircher said, "Well, you will in three years."

Odden said that was not necessarily true as they would be hiring at a lower step.

"The taxpayer will be better served as well as our offices in general. We are losing efficiency now," said Odden.



Staples Elementary's night at the museum

Staples Elementary fifth grade students participated in an overnight camp-in at the Science Museum of Minnesota, March 10-11 and explored exhibits that fit the theme of "Best of 30 years" for the 30th anniversary of the museum. The students also visited the Minnesota History Center during the trip to St. Paul.

Top left, Nicole Carter and Meghan VanAlst work

on experiments; top right, Spring Hofstedt and Ethan Zerfoss are at the soda fountain while Emma Knutson and Keith Rollins work on the cash register (in background); lower left, Hunter Miller and Jason Trantina try out some science equipment and lower right, Jacob Knutson camps out under one of the exhibits. (Submitted photos)



The science of bones

Chloe Badger, left, holds on to a dinosaur femur bone, while Stephen Bourassa compares it to a human femur and Hudsyn Nanik, right, compares it to a moose femur. On March 9, an instructor from the Science Museum of Minnesota brought a variety of fossils to Staples Elementary and taught students how to identify and compare the fossils. (Staples World photos by Mark Anderson)



The back bone's connected

Josie Jennissen helps put together a dinosaur puzzle during the Science Museum of Minnesota's program held at Staples Elementary School March 9.

Compared to a dinosaur

Teacher Jackie Hanson, left, helps students measure themselves against a dinosaur bone. From left are Johnathan Winter, Domanick Dause and Alyce Scheler.



Brenny Funeral Chapel

- *Family owned and operated
- *Newly remodeled, handicap accessible - no stairs or ramps
- *Warm, comfortable environment with friendly, knowledgeable staff

Loyalty Discount - we guarantee we will beat any competitor's price by \$200 - just bring in the quote.

309 4th St. NE, Staples, Mn. • Phone: (218) 894-1910
Fax: 1-218-828-5095 • Toll Free: 1-800-824-5051
www.brenny.com

Trusted by local families for 38 years.

Sue Simons, Administrative Assistant

Bertha-Hewitt Kindergarten Round-Up

April 4 ~ 6 p.m.

A desk is already saved for your child at Bertha-Hewitt School!