

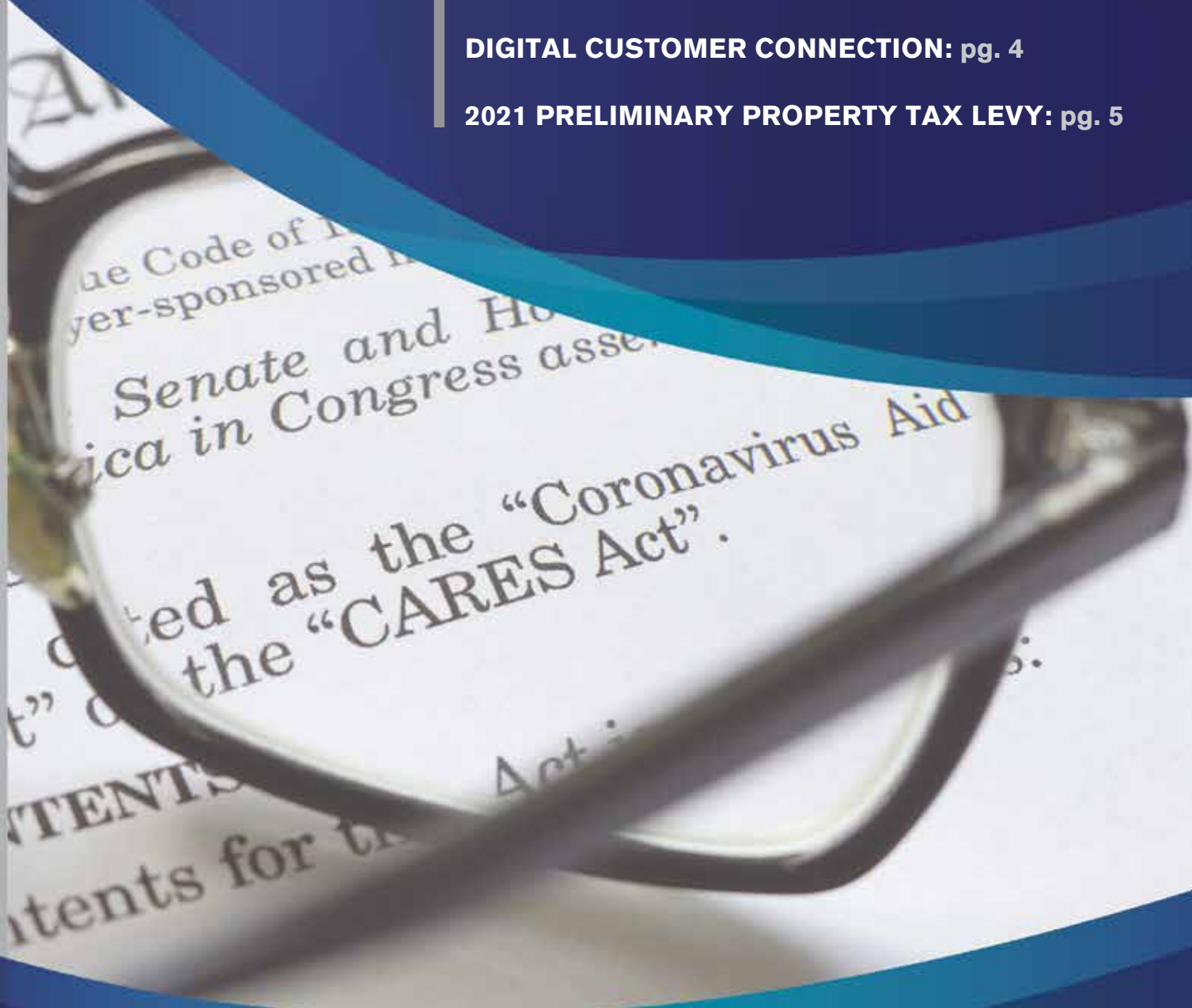
ANOKA COUNTY NEWS

Volume 3-2020

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Anoka County CARES

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act is an unprecedented, multi-faceted stimulus package passed by Congress and signed into law by the President March 27.

This \$2.2-trillion bill has provided aid to individuals and families through direct payments, small businesses through the Paycheck Protection Program, and \$150 billion has been set aside in a Coronavirus Relief Fund to help state, local and tribal governments navigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The CARES ACT requires that payments from this fund be used for expenses that:

- Are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency related to COVID-19.
- Were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020.
- Were incurred between March 1 and Dec. 30, 2020.

Since this funding was approved, Anoka County staff and elected officials have been hard at work to determine the best way to help the public with the nearly \$43.4 million that was allocated to the county. To ensure the funds were being dedicated to the most needed projects, a plan was devised that distributes the money into three categories: economic recovery, safety net, and local

government. Going a step further, each one of those categories has several subcategories. Business relief grants and administrative costs were included under economic recovery — the administrative funds were used to contract with providers to review and process grant applications. The safety net category comprises nonprofit relief grants, economic security, and nonprofit programming. Examples include rental and transportation assistance, and grants to nonprofits to expand services related to COVID-19. The local government category includes reimbursing staffing costs for employees whose jobs were substantially dedicated to COVID-19 efforts, facility modifications to improve safety and functionality, telework support, elections, public health services, personal protective equipment and other COVID-19 related costs.

"Anoka County is committed to managing and distributing CARES Act funds in a way that is respectful to the public, innovative to strategically position the county for the future, and fiscally responsible to be accountable to the county's citizens," said Scott Schulte, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners.

The following pages detail several of the primary initiatives utilizing CARES Act funds.

CORONAVIRUS CARES ACT

Grant Program

Aided Local Businesses, Nonprofits

To support local businesses impacted by COVID-19, the County Board allocated CARES Act funds for business and nonprofit relief grant programs. These programs helped businesses with a variety of pandemic-related costs, such as mortgage and utility payments, payroll, and reopening costs.

The first round of the grants started in late August and ran through early September. Due to funding still being available, the board reopened the grant application window for another 10 days through Sept. 18. The board also expanded the program eligibility requirements so more businesses and nonprofits would be eligible. Businesses and nonprofits that had been in operation for 6 months or more, prior to March 1, became eligible (the prior requirement was 1 year). Businesses could also have up to 50 full-time-equivalent employees as well (the previous stipulation said 50 total employees, regardless of full or part-time status). Organizations were also allowed to receive more than one CARES Act grant, from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development or a city, as long as those grants were used for different expenses. For both rounds, grants of up to \$10,000 were available.

The county set the grant criteria; one of these requirements stated in order to receive a grant from the county the business or nonprofit had to be locally owned and operated with a physical location in Anoka County.

By the end of the second round of grant submissions, 335 businesses and nonprofits had applied for a COVID-19 relief grant — 273 businesses and 62 nonprofits applied for funding, a total estimated request of \$5.7 million. Anoka County hired two local firms to help review the applicants for eligibility.

"Local businesses and nonprofits are the backbone of our community — they're where we go to eat, have our hair cut, have our cars fixed, volunteer, and procure seemingly endless other goods and services," said District 1 Commissioner Matt Look. "The impact of COVID-19 has been immense, and local businesses and nonprofits have been hit hard. This grant program has helped many area businesses and nonprofits stay afloat during this difficult time."

Virtual Rooms Expanded to Five More County Locations



In the spring, shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began to impact the county and the way services could be provided, Anoka County began thinking of ways to have face-to-face interaction with residents while maintaining safety.

These days, much county business can be accomplished via phone or email, but in some instances, face-to-face conversations are required for certain programs or for business to be conducted more efficiently and effectively.

Recognizing this need and the fact that not all residents have high speed internet or know how to use technology, the county set up a virtual room on the first floor of the Government Center to facilitate safe virtual face-to-face meetings between the public and county staff. The room is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each use. The virtual room was tested as a pilot beginning in June.

The virtual room was utilized by several departments to meet with members of the public. As the County Board set goals for CARES Act funding allocations, one of the objectives included innovations that could strategically position the county for the future. The expansion of virtual rooms was one of those innovations selected that would allow residents to avoid traveling to the

Government Center and access services closer to home in a safe environment. Additional virtual rooms will be located at:

- Blaine Job Training Center (2)
- Coon Rapids License Center
- Mississippi Library
- Ham Lake Library
- Centennial Library

Those who wish to use the existing virtual room or the new ones, once they're finished, need to make an appointment, and on the day of their meeting they must check in with a staff member at the building they're visiting. When the meeting ends, the customer should exit the room immediately so it can be cleaned and sanitized before the next appointment. The room at the Government Center is available for appointments 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.

"The virtual room at the Anoka County Government Center has been well received, both by staff and the public," said District 5 Anoka County Commissioner Mike Gamache. "Expanding this service has been a priority, and we're hopeful many more members of the public will be able to connect with county staff members via these rooms."





DIGITAL Customer Connection to Improve Timeliness, Safety of Meetings

Prior to the pandemic, most of Anoka County's services were offered only face to face. COVID-19 has resulted in the county reworking its service delivery model, and with that change comes a new option for scheduling meetings and interacting with county staff: Anoka County Digital Customer Connection.

This CARES Act-funded tool will provide online appointment scheduling, confirmations and reminders, virtual meeting room access, check-in instructions, text messaging capability, one-on-one chat sessions and more. Those who use the mobile-friendly Digital Customer Connection, which eventually will be integrated into the county's website, will find that it saves time and can result in business being conducted in an entirely no-contact fashion. Customers can sign up to interact with Anoka County staff from home, with services such as phone calls or video sessions, or they can come to an Anoka County building. Once a visitor arrives at a county building, they check in at a kiosk — which will be easy to find via signage — by scanning a QR code with their smartphone. This will automatically notify the county staff member they wish to meet with that the visitor has arrived. Instructions about where to go in the building will be sent to the smartphone. The visitor will then proceed to that building's virtual meeting room, and the customer will be able to talk with the staff member over a video conferencing system.

There will be printers in the virtual rooms, so if there are documents that need to be filled out, the customer can simply print them in the room.

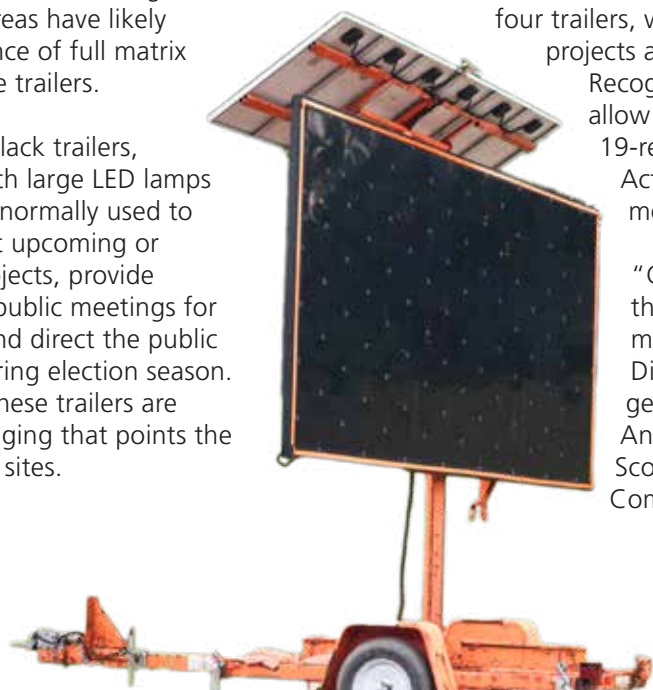
Anoka County Digital Customer Connection will be deployed first at the county's License Centers, and then other county departments, such as Economic Assistance, Social Services, Veteran Services, Economic Development, and the libraries.

"This new, no-contact way of scheduling and interacting with Anoka County staff will be a great asset for safety now, and into the future for convenience," said District 5 Anoka County Commissioner Mike Gamache. "There are many redundancies built into this system, since people will have different comfort levels when it comes to using it, so it should be easy to use and it'll be a big leap forward in Anoka County's efforts to offer more digital options to the public. The build-out of this system is being conducted primarily by local companies, with aid from county staff — we're proud to be supporting the community with CARES funds in this fashion, as well."

Transportation Division Utilizes Trailers for COVID-19 Messaging

Motorists who have driven through road construction areas have likely noticed the prevalence of full matrix changeable message trailers.

These orange-and-black trailers, which are paired with large LED lamps inlaid in panels, are normally used to inform drivers about upcoming or in-progress road projects, provide notifications about public meetings for highway projects, and direct the public to polling places during election season. During COVID-19, these trailers are important for messaging that points the way to mass testing sites.



The Anoka County Transportation division currently has four trailers, which are often used during construction projects along 413 miles of county roads.

Recognizing the need to expand this stock to allow for more trailers to be utilized for COVID-19-related activities, the board approved CARES Act funds to be used for the purchase of two more trailers.

"Clear, concise messaging is critical during this time, and adding a few more changeable message trailers to our Transportation Division's supply will help us more easily get the word out about any events in Anoka County focused on COVID-19," said Scott Schulte, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners.

Flat 2021 Preliminary Property Tax Levy Approved

Priorities Include Service Model Shift, Health and Safety

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners approved a flat preliminary property tax levy during the board's regular meeting Sept. 22.

The 2021 proposed budget reflects the priorities of the county to modernize and shift its service delivery models, and to ensure the continued safety and health of its citizens. Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding has provided some economic relief, allowing the county to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, help small businesses, and set its direction towards a sustained change in its service delivery model to continue to serve county citizens.



Truth in Taxation Meeting Dec.3

The county's public meeting to discuss the proposed property tax levy and budget for 2021 is at 6 p.m. Dec. 3. Due to Covid-19, virtual public comments will be from the Government Center Atrium. You may also send public comments by emailing RS-AnokaCountyAdmin@co.anoka.mn.us or mailing a letter to Anoka County Administration, 2100 3rd Ave N, Ste 700, Anoka, MN 55303. The Board of Commissioners will approve the final levy and budget during their 9:30 a.m. Dec. 4 regular meeting. The levy can be reduced prior to final approval, but it cannot be increased.

"It has been a painful year, in terms of the impact of COVID-19, but we've positioned ourselves to deal with it financially because of years of debt reduction and responsible budgeting," said Scott Schulte, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners. "Setting the preliminary levy at no increase from the 2020 final levy was our goal, and we accomplished that. We'll continue to revisit the budget before it's approved to see if we can pare it down further, to hopefully treat our taxpayers even more fairly than we already have. If further reductions cannot be made, we're still in a great spot with a flat levy."

Note: Anoka County only has authority over the county portion of the property tax bill; cities and school districts have their own taxing authority.

Funds Distributed to Nonprofits that Serve the Community

Anoka County dedicated CARES Act funding to nonprofit programming — this includes the expansion of services by nonprofits to benefit the community due to the impacts of COVID-19. Specifically, CARES funds were used to help these nonprofits with the following services:

Alexandra House: basic needs support	North Suburban Counseling: telehealth services	The Dwelling Place: school support/tutoring	Centennial Community Network: parent and early education tools
Impact Services: Meals on Wheels expansion	RADIUS Health: telehealth services	Hope 4 Youth: youth support	Manna Market: food support
Community Action Program: rental assistance	Touchstone Mental Health: residential treatment services: client support	Judicare: legal assistance, mediation and restorative services	Salvation Army: basic needs support for families, rental assistance
ACBC Food Shelf: food support	Youth First: distance/hybrid learning support	NACE: food support for children	
Lee Carlson Center: client assistance	YMCA: distance learning childcare support	SACA: food support/delivery	

"Nonprofits in our area provide several services that are integral to our community — physical and mental health services for adults and children, housing assistance, programs that offer support to children and families who are struggling, and help for seniors," said District 3 Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West. "Thankfully, we're able to support these nonprofits with CARES Act funds during this time, so they can continue to serve our residents."

ANOKA COUNTY LIBRARY

Resources for STUDENTS



- **Online Live Tutoring**
in English & Spanish
- **Submit Homework Questions**
- **Writing Lab**
submit essays for feedback

COLLEGE & CAREER PREP

PSAT/SAT, ACT, AP & state standardized test prep

- **Brainfuse** test prep Live FAFSA help
- **Learning Express Library**

Career exploration and college prep including practice exams and scholarship finder

STUDENT HOURS

Use computers at the library during reserved hours for students. Call for an appointment.

WiFi
Mobile Hotspot

- Hotspots for checkout
- WiFi access in library parking lots

Transparent Language[®] Online

Learn over 80 languages online.
Build listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills.
ESL for Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Korean, Chinese and Japanese speakers.

BOOKS & MORE

The Librarian Recommends

Complete the online form for personalized reading recommendations.

Novelist Plus

Discover what to read next. Find books based on mood, favorite author, subject, and more.

Upcoming EVENTS

Family Storytime (Online)

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Dec. 18
10:15 -10:45 a.m.

Bizarre History of Minnesota: Strange Stories From Our Past (Online)

Monday, Nov. 9,
6 - 7 p.m.

Story Quilts Workshop (Online)

Friday, Nov. 13
11 - 11:30 a.m.

Minnesota Lumberjack Legends and Lore (Online)

Saturday, Dec. 5
2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Katha Dance Theatre: Dance, Music, Myth, and Legends (Online)

Sunday, Dec. 13
1 - 1:30 p.m.

**These programs will premiere on Facebook.com/anokacountylibrary and will be available for viewing for 7 days.*

LIBRARY

Book Lockers, Expanded Handling System New Library Features

The Anoka County Library system has continued to provide much-needed materials and services during the pandemic so customers can procure education and entertainment from the Library's collection.

However, due to safety precautions needed during the pandemic, getting library items to customers has been challenging. But soon there will be book lockers available for library visitors to check out items in a safe, no-contact way. The Board of Commissioners allocated CARES Act funding to purchase 256 book lockers that are in the process of being installed at Johnsville (54), St. Francis (74), Mississippi (34) and Northtown (94).

This will help remedy the library visitor limits that are needed to ensure proper social distancing. Due to COVID-19, capacity limits were set at all Anoka County libraries.

The total number of visitors allowed inside the St. Francis location at one time is 9, Johnsville can accommodate 36, Mississippi 25, and Northtown 80. The capacity limit has been reached many times at several of the libraries, forcing visitors to wait outside in a line. Providing book lockers for customers to pick up their book holds without having to come inside the library will reduce capacity issues, allow vulnerable patrons to avoid crowds/people in the building, and extend service hours when the buildings are closed.



Automated Handling System

Northtown Library in Blaine is Anoka County's central distribution and handling center for all eight library branches. The distribution center's current materials handling system requires staff to touch all the materials more than once, and it is difficult to socially distance with the present setup. The volume of materials that go through this system is substantial: In 2019, 1,594,432 items were processed.

By using CARES Act funds to expand the automated handling system, installing four sorting tables and 12 bins, there will be more efficient sorting and materials management, the need to run materials through the system twice while processing inter-library deliveries will be eliminated, and one staff member will be able to run the whole system. This reduces the amount of staff in the room and aids in social distancing.

"Our libraries provide the community important items and services, and the pandemic has certainly affected the functionality of libraries everywhere," said District 3 Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West. "However, our library staff have figured out innovative ways to help customers throughout the pandemic, and these new changes will open up even more opportunities for library visitors."

Visit anokacountylibrary.org for more information on upcoming events and programs.

PARKS CONTINUE TO PROVE ESSENTIAL DURING PANDEMIC

Each June since 2016, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Research team has surveyed 1,000 U.S. adults to better understand how people connect with parks. The results of these surveys are the basis for the annual Engagement with Parks Report. This report provides park professionals and advocates, policymakers and other key stakeholders with insights about the impact that parks and recreation facilities have on the lives of people throughout the country.

In 2020, NRPA conducted a shorter-than-typical engagement survey due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 study focused on a few key questions and how they relate to parks and COVID-19:

- How frequently do people visit parks, trails and recreation amenities?
- How has the pandemic affected park usage?
- Do adults in the United States see public parks as an essential government service?

Key findings of the 2020 Engagement with Parks Report include:

- 77 percent of survey respondents indicate that having a high-quality park, playground, public open space or trails is an important factor in deciding where they want to live.
- U.S. residents visit local park and recreation facilities more than twice a month on average. Three in five U.S. residents — more than 190 million people — visited a park, trail, public open space or other recreation facility at least once during the first three months of the pandemic (mid-March through mid-June 2020).
- 82 percent of U.S. adults agree that parks and recreation are essential.

Anoka County Parks agrees that parks are essential for healthy communities and essential for preserving our natural resources. During this time, guests continue to visit to their favorite parks, trails and open space areas, along with finding new locations, to remain physically active, decompress and reconnect with the outdoors during these challenging times.

CARES Act Assists Parks in Service Delivery During COVID-19

As visits to the Anoka County Parks stay at record levels, the Parks Department has been able to ensure services are provided to guests through assistance of the CARES Act. These initiatives have focused on core functions to daily operations, safety, health and communication.

CARES Act-funded projects are currently being implemented to improve permanent and mobile signage within the park system to communicate public health and safety information, along with any closures, guidance or directions. The addition of various sanitization equipment has also allowed for facilities and restrooms to remain open for guest use while allowing department staff to clean and sanitize them quickly, safely and with greater frequency. Finally, credit-card-enabled pay stations are being added for guests to do contactless purchases for daily and annual vehicle permits, limiting face-to-face interactions while increasing convenience for park guests.

Anoka County Parks continues to strive to provide the best guest experience to all visitors. Through implementing these CARES Act projects, the Parks Department is well positioned to continue to provide high levels of service as adaptations and challenges are met now and into the future.




SKI ON



Learn how to Cross-Country Ski or Snowshoe!

Sign up at anokacountyparks.com.

Did you know Anoka County Parks offers introduction to snowshoeing and cross-country skiing programs as a private group lesson? Schedule your private lesson, **763-324-3446**.

VIRTUAL CLASSES



Tune into a virtual lunch with a naturalist programs, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Nov. 11 - Meet Wargo's Animals
Dec. 9 - Wildlife Tracking

Other virtual environmental education programs will be available all winter long!

SIGN UP TODAY • ANOKACOUNTYPARKS.COM • 763-324-3350



Funding Helps Anoka County Attorney's Office with Remote Needs

CARES-APPROVED MULTIMEDIA ROOM

Features:

- Mounted display screen
- Teleconferencing equipment
- Audio visual equipment
- Soundproofing



The Anoka County Attorney's Office was approved for about \$217,000 in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to buttress expenses related to COVID impacts on the office. The funds will be used to expand the office's technological capacity for remote hearings and to provide additional supplies for staff working remotely.

Because of the pandemic, most court proceedings are now being held remotely. There are limitations to the current technologies and equipment, so the County Attorney's Office will modify an existing conference room to facilitate the video conferencing needs of its staff. Up to \$175,000 of the approved funding will be used for this project.

The multimedia room, as it's being called, will be set up to handle remote court hearings, civil-commitment hearings, and case-related meetings. Specific items needed for the project include an integrated audio-visual system, a mounted display screen, teleconferencing equipment, and soundproofing to ensure confidentiality. This properly equipped conference room will give attorneys, legal assistants, and victim/witness staff the tools and space they need for remote court hearings and meetings with case parties outside of the Attorney's Office.

The remainder of the CARES Act funding allocated to the Attorney's Office – about \$42,000 – is being used to purchase equipment for staff who need to work remotely. This includes computer monitors, scanners, printers, headsets, and other items needed to fully complete work at home.

Jail Using Ultraviolet Light Technology to Keep Staff, Inmates Safe

The safety and security of both staff and inmates has always been the top priority at the Anoka County Sheriff's Office Jail facility.

One of the threats that is always a challenge is controlling the spread of infections due to various bacteria and viruses coming into the facility. While COVID-19 is one of the largest current biological threats, prior to the pandemic the main biological threat was the Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) bacteria. MRSA is contagious and resistant to several of the most common types of antibiotics.

Proper cleaning and sanitizing protocols have consistently been in place but were enhanced again when the COVID-19 pandemic started affecting Minnesota. However, even with the increase of procedures, such as disinfectant backpack spraying systems, the amount of time to apply, dry, and ventilate made cells or rooms unavailable for a long period of time. The Anoka County Jail typically cannot have many cells unavailable, as the steady inmate population requires their regular use.



When CARES Act funding became available, the Anoka County Jail was able to purchase a Skytron UVC Disinfection system. This system comes equipped with two emitters that can separately target and inactivate bacteria, viruses, and fungi in a room. UVC disinfection systems have been used with a high level of success in hospitals and water treatment plants to decrease biological threats, but this application is a new concept. The system has safety and tracking components that will turn off the system if someone enters the room and allow staff to electronically track the frequency and location of its use for proper reporting.

One of the major benefits will be the ability for these two systems to separately clean spaces in a shorter amount of time, which will allow for cells to be put back into use more quickly. Efficiency is crucial and thanks to this system, it does not have to be at the expense of safety. Staff training started near the end of summer, with the intention that both systems would be in full operation by the end of October. The Anoka County Sheriff's Office is striving to keep all staff and inmates as healthy as possible during these challenging times.

Recycle Smart

Over the Holidays

763-324-3400

AnokaCounty.us/RecycleSmart



These are all common contaminants in your curbside cart and can cause major problems for recycling facilities. All are recycled at drop-off locations. Find one near you!

Public Health, Environment Award Recipients Recognized

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners recognized two individuals and two groups with Public Health and Environment Awards at the board's Oct. 13 meeting.



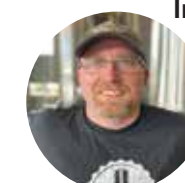
Connie Moore, director of the Blaine Alexandra House shelter, was the first recipient. Throughout her career, Moore has served as a member of numerous county, state and national initiatives that provide leadership in creating public policies and resources that address the needs of victims and offer workforce development options for low-income households. Recently, Moore served Anoka County through participation in the Joint Community Health Needs Assessment, which was co-facilitated by Anoka County Public Health and Environmental Services and Allina Health-Mercy Hospital.



Rachel Workin, environmental planner for the City of Fridley, received an award for her hard work to improve the environmental health and wellbeing of Fridley and its residents. She's worked to set carbon and energy reduction goals for the city, helped the city apply for environmental grants, and she has advocated for small changes that make a big difference. Under her watch, Fridley has achieved Step 2 status in the Greenstep Cities program, has become a certified USA Tree City, and a Pollinator-Friendly Community.



The Homeless Outreach Event Collaborative, composed of the Blaine Police Department, Heading Home Anoka Housing Collaborative, and Northtown Mall staff, was the first group recognized. Pictured, from left: Betty Notto, Johnna Krantz, Paula Mueller, Nate Hatanpa, Mike Sommer. Not pictured: Josh Kenner. On Dec. 19, 2019, the Homeless Outreach Event Collaborative, and several other police departments and community partners, hosted an event at Northtown Mall. Staff from multiple organizations came together to engage 35 individuals experiencing homelessness in the area and connected them with services. The police departments also worked with Anoka County on Jan. 22, 2020, for the 2020 Point in Time Count, the U.S. Housing and Urban Development's annual count of people experiencing homelessness. This second homeless outreach event resulted in 48 individuals engaged and aided by onsite staff.



Invictus Brewing Company and The Topsy Steer, Blaine businesses which occupy a shared space, received an award for the development of a robust recycling program. Through this program, which was made possible by an Anoka County grant, Invictus Brewing, owned by Previn Solberg (pictured) and The Topsy Steer, owned by Greg Austin (not pictured), are able to divert about 32,000 pounds of single-stream recycling and around 182,000 pounds of organics recycling each year with their new recycling program.

Select License Center Services Available by Appointment

Use of drop boxes is still highly encouraged

Services Available By:

The Anoka County License Centers reopened their doors to the public May 18, but walk-in traffic is currently not allowed, due to the social distancing requirements needed amid COVID-19.

Many services are available on an appointment basis, some are available by phone, and several are available via drop boxes (see right).

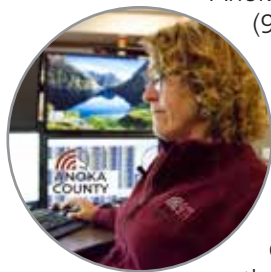
Drop boxes are located at the Blaine License Center, Coon Rapids License Center, Ramsey City Hall, Columbia Heights License Center, Anoka County Government Center and the Ham Lake License Center.

Those who want to conduct License Center business in person can do so by signing up for an appointment at anokacounty.us/221/License-Passport-Centers. This online scheduling service allows for visitors to specify which location they'd like to visit and what type of service they need help with. Customers who want to conduct business in this manner are encouraged to be flexible with desired appointment times, as slots can fill quickly. Customers must be present before their appointment time starts, but they should not arrive more than 15 minutes prior to their appointment. Reminder: Face coverings are required in all buildings operated by Anoka County.

"Our License Centers provide an array of services to the public, and the combination of in-person, drop box and over-the-phone options allows License Center staff to quickly and accurately process documentation," said District 6 Anoka County Commissioner Jeff Reinert."

PHONE	DROP BOX/MAIL	APPOINTMENT
Tab Renewals	Tab Renewals	Standard DL/ID/ IP Renewal
Duplicate Stickers	Duplicate Stickers	Enhanced DL/ID/ IP
Duplicate Plates	Duplicate Plates	First Time ID/DL/ IP
	Add a Lien to a Vehicle Title	Commercial (CDL)
	Remove a Lien From a Vehicle Title	Duplicate/ Replacement DL/ ID/IP
	MN Title Transfers	MN Title Transfers
	Duplicate Titles	Duplicate Titles
	Foreign State Title Transfers	Foreign State Title Transfers
	New MN Registration	New MN Registration
	Disability Placard Applications	Disability Placard Applications
	Personalized Plate Applications	Personalized Plate Applications
	Special Plate Applications	Special Plate Applications
	DNR Ownership Transfers	DNR Ownership Transfers
	Non-Titled Trailer Transfers	Non-Titled Trailer Transfers
	Foreign Country Title Transfers	Foreign Country Title Transfers

Emergency Communications Expands Operations to Aid Social Distancing



Anoka County Emergency Communications (911 dispatch) is an essential function of Anoka County, and keeping employees in this department healthy is a high priority.

The current 911 dispatch center does not allow for 6-foot social distancing. To address this situation, the County Board allocated CARES Act funding to expand the facility. To increase the size of the operation, consoles will be set up in the department's training room, which allows for a fully-functioning dispatch center in this area, and adequate

social distancing space throughout both rooms of the center. The items purchased to make these new consoles a reality included voice loggers, phones, radio equipment, furniture and cabling. The new dispatch workstations should be complete by mid-November.

"Social distancing is essential throughout all Anoka County facilities right now, but it's especially needed in our dispatch center, as these employees currently cannot work remotely," said District 2 Anoka County Commissioner Julie Braastad. "This facility modification will allow our dispatchers to spread out, which should help mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19 in the center."

CareerForce and Job Training Center Expand Services

Pre-COVID-19, CareerForce in Blaine and the Job Training Center were providing weekly onsite hiring events that featured 30 to 50 employers from various sectors, apprenticeship labor events, and program-specific events, such as Cool Jobs for Youth.

These events ceased due to the social distancing protocols needed to ensure safety for the public and county staff. To continue to meet the needs of the public, CareerForce and the Job Training Center expanded its virtual programming, and CARES Act funding has resulted in two new programs to help career-seekers: an online platform through Easy Virtual Fair and an initiative to help motorists called Transportation Solutions.

The virtual platform, which will launch in mid-to-late November, will assist CareerForce and the Job Training Center in connecting employers with hiring needs to community members looking for employment, as in-person events are not taking place at this time. This system will provide enhanced connections in the county's workforce development area and will assist the Job Training Center, local chambers of commerce, partners and employers in connecting with those they serve. It will provide a path for career-seekers to submit resumes to employers, allow screening and interviewing for job openings and expand the reach of employment-related events. The system allows for fully customizable website landing pages before events, such as virtual job fairs. It also enables real-time interaction between agencies. The system is 100 percent mobile and accessible, which enhances access for all.

Transportation Solutions is a partnership between Anoka County and the Anoka County Community Action program that helps qualifying residents affected by COVID-19 with car repairs, insurance or vehicle registration. Grants of up to \$2,000 are available, and they do not need to be paid back. No car repair estimates are needed. Anoka County residents who meet the low income guidelines, have been impacted by COVID-19, and have a valid Minnesota Driver's License are eligible. This program is open until Dec. 1, 2020, or until funding is depleted.

Additional resource temporarily granted for career-seekers

Through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, workers and career-seekers have temporary access to Coursera, another resource to expand their skills to gain employment. Those who sign up are granted free access to the leading online learning platform which offers more than 3,800 courses from 200 top universities and businesses around the world, including more than 60 courses from the University of Minnesota. Some courses include responsive website development and design, construction engineering and management, and language learning programs for Spanish, Chinese, Korean and more. Minnesotans interested in using Coursera must register before Dec. 31, 2020; they will have access to the platform through March 2021. Users of this platform must be enrolled in courses by Feb. 28, 2021.

For more information

on these programs, visit:



anokacounty.us/1064/Job-Training-Center

COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program



CALL 211

Toll Free: 1-800-543-7709

TEXT "MNRENT" or

"MNHOME" to 898-211

VISIT 211unitedway.org

Technology Upgrades

Allow County Staff to Better Serve Public Remotely

When the majority of Anoka County's employees started working remotely in the spring to aid with social distancing efforts needed during the pandemic, data processing speed and efficiency sometimes became an issue.

At times, the bandwidth needed for some employees to do their jobs from home was not adequate for service delivery, or for so many employees to remotely access Anoka County's systems.

To help remedy these issues, the board approved two CARES Act purchases in the information technology category. The first was new routers that provide for increased bandwidth on the county's network. Prior to this purchase, the county's IT department had to implement multiple workarounds over the last several months to help manage available bandwidth.



The second purchase was a hardware/software combination called a virtualized desktop infrastructure (VDI). This purchase allows for greater flexibility in where, and how, Anoka County provides services to its citizens. In the VDI environment, county servers are segmented into "virtual workstations" that up to 800 county staff access remotely from their devices. Because the processing of county data and applications is less dependent on employees' devices, there is a broader toolset of options available to employees, so they can more easily do their work and serve Anoka County citizens. Additionally, this is another technology that may help mitigate bandwidth issues experienced by county employees when they are working remotely, and it ensures greater security of county data.

"At the start of the pandemic in our state, we, like just about everyone else, sent the majority of our employees home to work remotely, for their safety and the safety of the public," said District 4 Anoka County Commissioner Mandy Meisner. "They've done a great job working remotely, but there have been some technology challenges, especially when it comes to internet speed and connectivity. The purchase of these routers and the introduction of more virtualized technologies should greatly enhance our staff's ability to work remotely and serve Anoka County citizens."

Funding Allocated for Election Costs

COVID-19 significantly altered the planning, preparations, and execution of the 2020 State Primary and General Elections in Anoka County and across the country.

elections. Anoka County also purchased new equipment to process returned absentee ballots. This included two envelope openers and the DS-450 central count machine — a second high-speed ballot scanner that significantly reduced the time needed to count absentee ballots.

Elections will be using two different "pots" of CARES Act funding to offset these increased operating expenses due to COVID-19. A total of \$272,782.08 was allocated through the Office of the Secretary of State to help counties and cities cover their costs to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19, domestically or internationally, for the 2020 federal election cycle. A formula was devised by the Secretary of State to share costs between the counties and municipalities. Of the total grant, \$182,066.65 was awarded to Anoka County municipalities, of which \$90,715.43 was used by Anoka County. Additional funding from the larger Anoka County CARES Act grant will be used to offset the remaining increased elections costs incurred by the county.

A substantial number of voters cast an absentee ballot by mail, resulting in increased printing and postage costs. Preparations were also made to ensure a safe voting experience for

election judges and voters who chose to still cast their ballot in person, including plexiglass shields, hand sanitizer, disinfectant, and social distancing markers. The largest expense was for additional temporary staff and election judges needed to process the deluge of absentee ballot applications and ballots for the primary and general

Ramsey Gateway Only State Project to Receive INFRA Grant

Procuring funding for needed U.S. Highway 10 projects in Anoka County has been an complex process that has involved stakeholders at the federal, state and local levels.

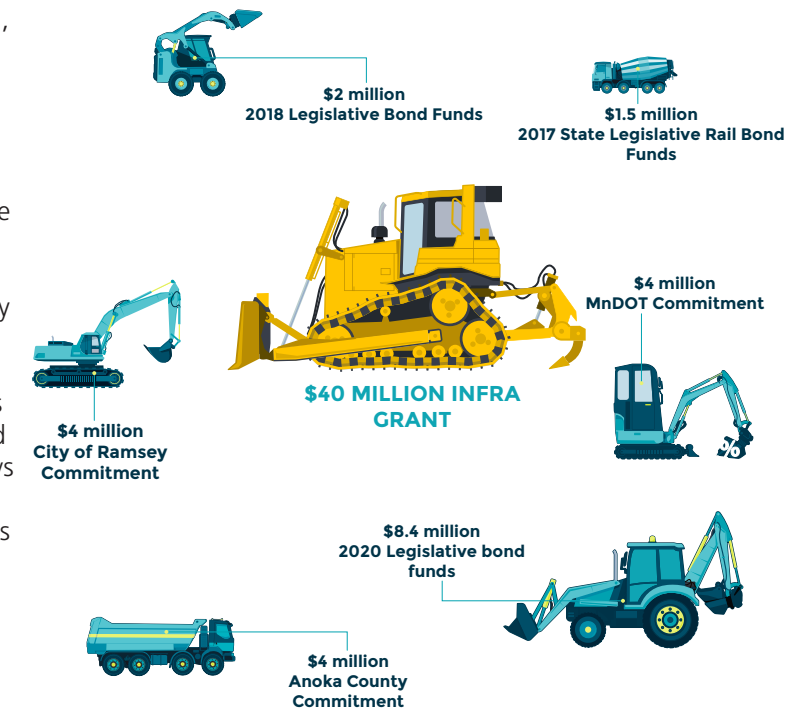
In June, planned improvements to this corridor got a big boost when Anoka County was awarded \$40 million in Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant funding. This federal program set aside \$906 million for infrastructure improvements across the country. A total of 20 projects in 20 states were selected, with the Ramsey Gateway in Anoka County being tapped as Minnesota's project.

The Ramsey Gateway project includes improvements at the Ramsey Boulevard and Sunfish Lake Boulevard at-grade signalized intersections along U.S. Highways 10/169 in the City of Ramsey. The improvements include the addition of grade-separated interchanges (bridges over U.S. Highways 10/169) and grade separations for the adjacent at-grade BNSF Railroad crossings at each intersection. The current Ramsey Gateway project cost estimate is \$138 million.

This construction will greatly improve this corridor, which routinely sees significant congestion and crash issues. There are over 60,000 cars a day that pass through this area, and 1-plus-mile backups during morning and evening rush hours are common. The crash rate is also about two times higher than comparable corridors. The proposed schedule for the Ramsey Gateway indicates project development (engineering, environmental documentation, and right-of-way acquisition) will occur from the end of this year until 2023. Construction is planned for 2024 to 2025.

"Congressman Tom Emmer and USDOT Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao played a pivotal role in helping secure the \$40 million grant for this project," said District 1 Anoka County Commissioner Matt Look. "Anoka County is grateful for all of the hard work and support of Emmer and Chao, along with the Minnesota State Legislature and local leadership. Due to the partnership of all these invested stakeholders, long-needed improvements along U.S. Highways 10/169 in Anoka County will come to fruition in the next several years."

INFRA GRANT AND OTHER HWY 10 FUNDING SOURCES



Mass Notification System Will Enhance Emergency Messaging

Currently, there is no way to notify large amounts of individuals all at the same time in Anoka County about public health or other types of emergencies.

cell phones, pagers, computers, and other devices. This software will integrate into Anoka County's current alert and warning system.

However, that will soon be changing because of the county's purchase of mass notification software called HipLink with CARES Act funds.

HipLink allows for fast notification of large areas of potential outbreaks and other pertinent information from Anoka County Public Health or Emergency Management. It will be particularly useful for notifications related to COVID-19 outbreaks, testing, and vaccine opportunities.

This software program will allow Anoka County to send first responder alerts, citizen mass notification, and other emergency messaging under a single umbrella to the widest possible range of devices: smartphones,

"HipLink will provide a big boost to our emergency notification abilities in Anoka County," said District 2 Anoka County Commissioner Julie Braastad. "It will be a great asset for now, and into the future as we continue to inform the public about the ever-evolving COVID-19 situation and other emergencies."



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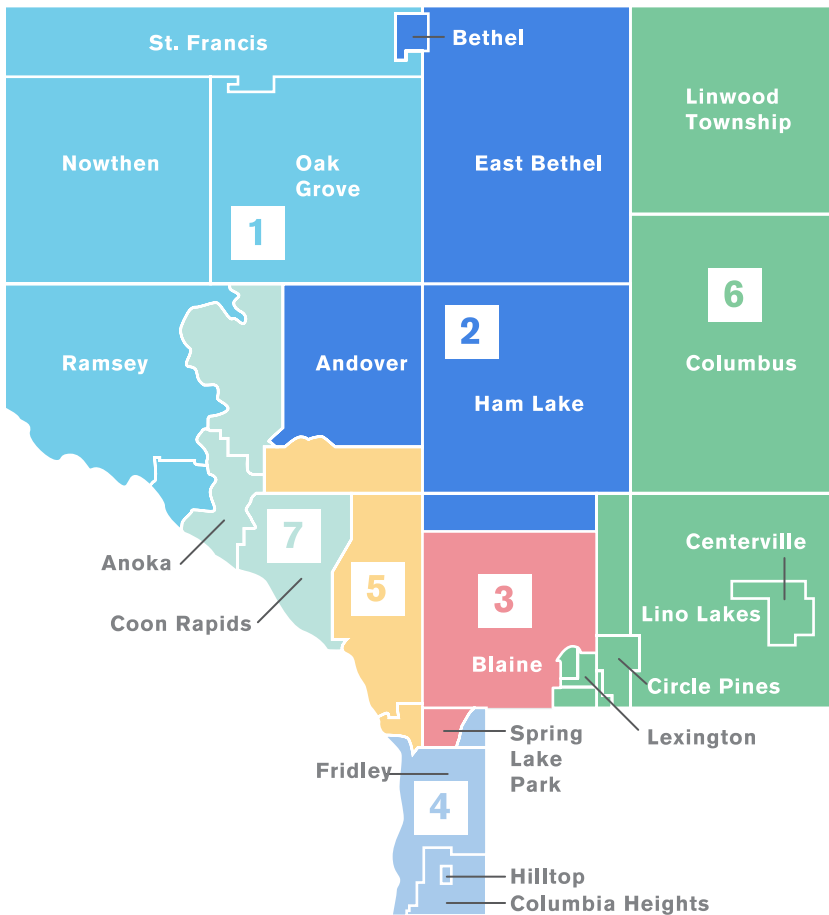
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County board meetings are generally held the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 9:30 a.m. in Room 705 of the Anoka County Government Center in Anoka. Watch board meetings live at anokacounty.us. "Anoka County News" is produced by Anoka County Communications, Erik Thorson, Director, 763-324-4612 publicinfo@co.anoka.mn.us • anokacounty.us/newsletter

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