

THE COMMUNICATOR

Editor - Dawn Mergen, Personnel Specialist

Volume 17, Issue 2 April, 2019

Grant County Employee Newsletter

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~In the Spotlight~ Property Lister

The position of Property Lister is dictated by WI State Statute 70.09. In general, we need to "prepare and maintain accurate ownership and description information for all parcels of real property in the county." This may seem simple, but the job of a Property Lister is actually quite complex and involves a plethora of duties. And if done smoothly and efficiently you don't know we actually exist. But we do exist and perform a number of tasks to ensure your property descriptions are kept accordingly and up-to-date.

It takes place on a daily basis with the recorded deeds we process. This entails reviewing the deeds to ensure accuracy – in legal description, grantor, grantee, etc. Based on the type of deed or intention, we transfer ownership, we file deeds for future searching by title companies, attorneys, landowners, etc., and we also divide property. If there is an issue with the recorded deed that would cause us to not be able to process it – for example, an incorrect legal description – that deed gets held and a letter is sent to the drafter of the document asking them to review it and correct accordingly. With every recorded deed that comes across our desks we need to know what to look for, what to review and have a great understanding and knowledge in legal descriptions. Along with processing deeds we must help members of the public – anyone that stops in or calls in with questions. Those people range from

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title companies, attorneys, realtors, banks, surveyors, landowners, assessors, prospective buyers, to a number of other individuals. Based on their questions we need to know how to do a thorough search of property records. This could result in us having to search back a good number of years to find an answer. And sometimes we find there is no answer. Our position requires us to be sensitive to the public needs, understanding, knowledgeable and thorough.

Among the regular day-to-day processes we also handle a number of important tasks throughout the year. It starts off in January with running the beginning year work rolls for all the

assessors for all the municipalities. In Grant County we have 52 municipalities with approximately 10 different assessors/assessing firms. There are multiple reports to run and balance to the end of year reports for each municipality. Then as the beginning year changes are received from the assessors, for both real estate and personal property, we have to process those changes, balance again, and generate new reports along with Notices of Assessment that go out to property owners for any and all changes in value. This begins the Open Book (OB) and Board of Review (BOR) process held in each municipality. Any changes that then occur at OB or BOR are sent to us and we again process those changes,



balance, and submit that information to the State. It's extremely important to have values correct because the State uses those figures in determining allocation and aid to the municipalities and other districts. The OB and BOR process takes place throughout the year. There really is no set time on opening and closing of that process – in fact all the processes may overlap one another. So our position also requires us to be able to multi-task. We may be at "closing" stages for 1 municipality but just beginning on another.



Later in the year we have to enter values for what are known as special assessments. These are municipality charges/ assessments for services performed/products provided – for example, garbage and recycling fees. Once again running report and balancing with the municipality to ensure all is accurate. This is also very important because what is listed for specials is transferred onto your tax bills.

Another item during this busy time is State Manufacturing. We get notified when the State has uploaded the values that they are placing on any real estate and personal property that is considered State Assessed property. Once all those values are

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entered for all impacted municipalities another report is ran and balancing completed. The municipalities are involved all along the way to ensure everyone agrees on the totals. It's imperative that balancing is accurate and everyone agrees because the assessed values and charges are part of what affects your overall tax bill.



Then it's tax time. But before you get that wonderful early Christmas present in the mail it takes a lot of calculating, patience, and stickler to details to ensure the tax bills go out accurately. This is a huge undertaking and not a process to take lightly. In fact, every process, every transfer, every duty and aspect of our job is not to be taken lightly. Any carelessness or inattention to detail could impact property owners, the municipality and the

County. The first step in getting the tax

bills out involves collecting figures from each municipality and the State. Depending on when that information becomes available determines when tax bills are completed. This is typically a 2-3 week period that is extremely hectic; this all while still maintaining day-to-day responsibilities, interacting with customers, public questions, etc. Calculating taxes involves first receiving values for State, County, municipal, tech and local school district levies; along with pulling reports that show aid amounts and credit limits. Ensuring accuracy in all of this is extremely important because, again, it will affect your tax bill. And remember this is all times 52 municipalities – 52 times the values, 52 times the reports, 52 times the processes.



Along with the tax bills there are a number of reports to run, items from the Treasurer's office, and CDs to create that are boxed up for the municipalities to pick up. The municipalities send out those tax bills and use the reports we generate to complete reports they need to file with the State.

Even after taxes are completed our job is still not done. We have to complete processing all deeds recorded through Dec. 31st. This obviously takes us into January. Once those deeds, transfers, property splits, etc. are completed we must run end-of-the-year reports and balance everything yet again. And then we begin the whole process all over again.

The Property Lister's job is an everyday affair that can't really be detailed in a book. Sure, there are certain aspects that can be documented, but each day is never quite the same. That's why attention to detail, flexibility, patience, understanding and knowledge of descriptions and processes, and communication are important. And if we do all this properly and with ease you don't even know we're here taking care of you.



Mardi Gras at Orchard Manor

Tuesday, March 5th. Residents and staff enjoyed the Mardi Gras parade of floats and costumes through the halls with a final destination to the Activities room for best dressed winner announcement and festive refreshments. Kudos Activities Staff for a great celebration!

Anyone wishing to have a specific subject discussed in a future newsletter may contact Joyce Roling at 723-2045 or *iroling@co.grant.wi.gov.*

Retirement Recognition

February 10, 2019 through March 30, 2019

Cheryl Meier (Orchard Manor), 4 years (retired March 7)

Grant County wishes you a happy and healthy retirement! Reminder: Please contact the County Personnel Office at least two months before your retirement date so we can assist you with the process.



"Behind the Scenes of the Grant County Board"

Robert Keeney, Grant County Board Chair

There are seventeen members of the Grant County Board of Supervisors. County Board members provide the sounding board for the public on various programs and activities of Grant County government. Board members spend time listening

to the public, passing on concerns, and developing policy that will serve the public with services in an efficient, timely, and cost effective manner.

Many board members are elected as a committee chair which means they have an added level of interaction with department heads to see that issues and concerns are placed on committee agendas. The ensuing discussion and action taken then moves through the channels, possibly to County Board, for more action leading to implementation to solve problems or improve operations.



Board of Health Meeting, April 2018

Grant County has been busy coordinating the move to the new Community Services Building and the extension of a sewer line from Orchard Manor to the City of Lancaster. In addition, working through the construction challenges of the USH 61 - Madison Street to City Limits Street in the City. The major projects such as these are highlighted in local media and are well communicated. However, other duties of the board may go unrecognized, but that doesn't mean they are not important. There are plenty of other projects that are important to the overall operations of Grant County municipalities, businesses and general public.

The Grant County Board Chair is a full time position elected by the full board to preside over board meetings and act as spokesperson for the board on day to day operations. This includes providing leadership and coordination for the integration of county governmental functions including the county board, its committees and the departments. The board chair also reviews vouchers, complete surveys, maintains board structure, supports continuous improvement, and moves action to the appropriate level in the form of ordinances or resolutions, including the County Budget. Corporation Counsel is an important working reference used by the Chair on direction for some decisions which are taken up by the County.

In addition to these functions, the Grant County Board Chair serves as treasurer of Grant County Economic Development Corporation, is a member of the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, is a local elected official serving on the Southwest Wisconsin Counties Consortium for the (Continued on page 6)

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Workforce Development Board, a member of the Traffic Safety Committee, a member of Local Emergency Planning Committee, a representative to the Southwest Wisconsin CDBG Housing Region Committee, and a representative to the Wisconsin Counties Utility Tax Association.

The Chair has been instrumental over the past two years working with EPIC Construction during the erection of the new Community Services Building, coordinating efforts with the departments as they equip the building, working with the City of Lancaster on the sewer extension project and with the DOT on the USH 61 project. Board members are busy as well. Not only do they serve the public as a liaison to the Board and departments but also sit on Unified Community Services, Southwestern Wisconsin

Community Action Program, Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission, Grant County Economic Development Corporation, Southwest Library Board, and Hidden Valleys of Southwest Wisconsin. While the general public may not hear much about these organizations, they provide important services to the public and our economy to improve people's day to day life. Many county board members attend the Wisconsin Counties Association conference each fall to network with others in the state and take part in educational breakout sessions. We were fortunate to have County Board Supervisor, Gary Ranum, District 1, attend the Wisconsin County Supervisors White House Conference and White House Residence Tour in May 2018 to share thoughts and ideas of our operations to further the knowledge of the federal government in our needs in county government.



Gary Ranum County Board Supervisor



Board Supervisors; Mark Stead and Donald Splinter, WCA Convention 2018

Grant County is well connected with various visits to the State Capitol. A contingent of 3 -5 normally attend the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) Legislative Exchange in early February. This function has a number of speakers from the Governor to legislators to cabinet members along with WCA staff to update us on what is going on at the state level. The evening event at the exchange is devoted to a meet and greet style function where county officials can network and share ideas with the invited legislators and other state government agency guests. Wisconsin Counties Utilities Tax Association (WCUTA) meets quarterly on the square in Madison which also allows me the time to make visits to the Capitol to discuss issues.

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Another important WCA function held in Madison is the County Ambassador Program. This year County Board Supervisor Carol Beals, District 13, and I registered to be participants in 3 days of



Carol Beals County Board Supervisor

interaction with our legislators on important issues concerning the programs we provide to the public. The day starts with briefing from WCA staff on about 4 issues and then visits with our legislators. The visits with Senator Marklein and Representative Tranel, along with staff, include the sharing of issue papers and the sharing of Grant County local experiences in hopes of making positive changes. Current issues pertain to the state budget including mental health services, youth justice, children long term care, and income maintenance allocations. Past topics have included DOT allocations and NexGen 9-1-1 funding. County revenue sources are important points of discussion as we work to maintain service levels, improve the road system, and upgrade our dispatch to a digital format.

The list of topics for discussion in Grant County is endless; Water quality - solar and wind energy - Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line – overall governmental funding come to mind, but the list is ever changing. These important issues and concerns are the reason that I work hard to develop and maintain relationships with Representative Tranel, Senator Marklein, Assemblyman Kind, Senators Baldwin and Johnson, and their staff. The opportunity to have conversation and share ideas person to person is invaluable. I look forward to the continued discussions and welcome questions, ideas or input from anyone to be shared to improve our communities.



Board Chair Robert Keeney, IT Technician Deanna Steines, and Governor Scott Walker, Governors Visit 2016



Supreme Court Justice Shirley Abrahamson and Board Chair Robert Keeney, Supreme Court Visit to Grant County 2015

Dana's Desktop Dana C. Andrews, Grant County IT Technician

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Technology Assisted Living



Consumer Electronics Show (CES) is a large showcase for consumer technology held every January in Las Vegas. The latest phones, TV, computers, and advanced electronic concepts are put on display for media and the general public. This year's show had an additional component. Toyota Mobility Foundation displayed the five finalists for a \$4 million dollar prize to develop technology that will help people with lower limb paralysis to walk again. While there were

advanced wheel chairs and exoskeletons, the most eye-opening was a device that looked to be no more than a strap worn on the leg. Technically called a sleeve, it contains a very sophisticated computer, set of sensors, and nerve simulators. Here is the 'Flash Gordon' part; the computer predicts the user's walking motion and stimulates the correct muscles to tighten/relax, allowing the person to walk with their own limbs in a fairly normal gate. The importance of this, besides the aesthetics, is the leg is using its muscles in a natural way; preserving tone and function.

(2019, February). Digital Engineering, Finalists Compete to Enable Mobility (pg 44).

Technological Neatness

Since CES was mentioned: Another notable product at the show was coffee table sized furniture that includes a hidden rising 65" TV screen (the screens roll up inside when lowered). This is the same technology as the folding phones now coming out (what? you haven't heard of phones that unfold to be tablets?) Personally, I am going to wait until this is ceiling mountable and pulls down like the old projector screens (they are also \$8000.00, so that wait may be very long). These devices have full speaker systems and are voice controllable (use your voice to tune in The Voice).

A New Teenage Allowance

Forget Bitcoins; the hot new item is the Amazon Coin. Well, sort of. They are prepaid tokens that cost less the larger a bundle you buy. However, these are not usable except at the Amazon App Store (and even then, they cannot be used for things like books). They are supported on Android, advanced BlackBerry devices, and Kindle Fire. Besides buying them,



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they can be earned with certain purchases at Amazon. While the use case is limited, these should work fine for parents establishing limits on game purchases (I got a dime if all my chores were done at the end of the week...). For more information, log into Amazon and search Amazon Coins.

Thirty Years of Surfing

Happy 'Over the Hill' Birthday to the World Wide Web (www). Although there is some controversy about this date, the man who 'thought up' and developed the WWW accepts March 12th, 1989 as its birthday. Truthfully, this is the date that Tim Berners-Lee first proposed the idea of linking and sharing information over the internet (the internet itself was 'born' 1 January 1983. It was a military brat). While Tim's original proposal was not approved, he was allowed to continue working on it as a side-project. In November 1990 he wrote the technical



Happy birthday to the World Wide Web ... news.sky.com

specifications needed and this proposal was accepted. Probably the most important date is May 17, 1991 which is when the first web server was physically connected to the internet.

Note that WWW and Internet are two different things. The internet is a method of routing commands and messages over electronic wiring. It uses something called the TCP/IP stack to act like a post office for online communication.

History:

DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Project Agency) had been running an interconnected network called ARPANET since 1969 but as they started adding universities and businesses they realized the custom build connections (NCP - Network Control Protocol) being used was too difficult to modify/ maintain. Two gentlemen named Vint Cerf and Robert Kahn proposed a new method for data transmission that would be more universal. DARPA chose the TCP/IP stack and on 1 Jan 1983 they turned off all the other protocols. Side note; Vint Cerf is currently the vice-president of Google. *For clarification, TCP/IP allows network devices to connect to each other while things like "The World Wide Web" provide the human readable interfaces. Wired or wireless, you are using the internet to get to the web servers but you have to use WWW (a browser) to see the output of those connections.*

How Americans Feel About Robots



Several recent surveys have been conducted to assess Americans' feeling about the ongoing development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (the magic behind robot vacuums, drones, and Alexa/Siri/Cortana/ Google Assistant). According to the website The Verge.com, "Artificial intelligence is likely to be the defining technology of the century, affecting everything from war to jobs to health care." (Jan.

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10, 2019, https://www.theverge.com/2019/1/10/18176645/ai-robot-survey-america-public-opinion-future-of-humanity-institute).

Some of the results were:

- 54% surveyed believes there will be a human-smart computer by 2028.
- 82% of the respondents thought SkyNet was possible (I made that up. Actually they answered that 'Artificial Intelligence (AI) must be carefully managed and regulated')



- 57% of those who were college graduates thought AI is a great idea while only 27% of high school grads felt the same.
- 22% felt AI was overall a bad idea while 21% thought it will be great. (12% think it will be the ruin of man); which means about 50% of us are just not sure about this one way or the other. This feeling was reiterated when asked about who American's trust to build AI machines. Military and University developers were trusted the most while Facebook was trusted the least. Yet only 41% of those replying thought anybody was trustworthy.

Regardless of our feelings, current planned budget commitments for future AI development total almost \$3 billion dollars. Companies reporting significant investments to this technology include IBM, DARPA, Xiaomi, Alphabet (parent company of Google), Apple, and Facebook.

Charitable Giving

Did you know that if you put the word 'smile' before Amazon.com a portion of your online purchase will go to a charity of your choice? The first time you visit the website (smile.amazon.com) you will be asked to choose a charity. There are options to pick charities not in their list as well. After that, you just do your

normal Amazon shopping and checkout. There is no additional cost to you nor are prices any different than the regular Amazon site. The percentage taken of the sale is small but it adds up. I support *Doctors Without Borders* and according to the latest statement a total of \$2,099,343.76 has been generated for that organization. Overall, AmazonSmile has given a total of \$124,651,081.04 to all their charities. Note that this will only work if you shop at smile.amazon.com. If you use plain amazon.com nothing

will be contributed even if you have a charity selected.

Your total orders	66 orders Learn more ~
Every little bit counts	
When millions of supporters shop at smile.amazon.com, chari	table donations quickly add up.
You have generated	\$20.45 as of March 24, 2019
Your current charity Doctors Without Borders has received	\$2,099,343.76 as of February 2019
All charities have received	\$124,651,081.04 as of February 2019



Steve Braun Director of Emergency Management

Wisconsin's Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week

Did you know that Grant County has had more tornado events than any other Wisconsin County except for Dane? We sustained two small tornadoes in 2018, including an EF-0 tornado in Georgetown that was caught on video. Luckily the 2018 tornadoes were short lived and caused minimal damage.

Governor Tony Evers has declared April 8-12 as Wisconsin's Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week. The Statewide

Tornado Drills will take place on Thursday, April 11. The afternoon drill will have a mock tornado watch issued at 1:00pm and a tornado warning at 1:45pm. The evening drill will have a warning issued at 6:45pm. All municipal tornado sirens in Grant County will be sounded for both drills. The drill provides a great opportunity to practice severe weather emergency procedures.





Joyce Roling Personnel Director

Continuous Improvement..... Over Coffee

Now that the county's LEAN culture is part of our day to day operations, we move on to *Continuous Improvement*. We've completed many successful LEAN projects within the last few years; big and small. Although the projects are complete, the processes are still living. Things change and we need to change with them. Continue to review processes for improvement and update them as necessary. The department s will continue to report continuous improvement (LEAN) activities at their monthly meetings.

The county will be meeting 4 to 6 times per year in the County Board Room at 8:15 a.m. to discuss Continuous Improvement (LEAN). Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 30th. All is invited to attend. The meetings do not last over one hour. We will be discussing training for new employees, and 55 (Sort, Set in order, Scrub, Standardize, and Sustain), It's Spring Cleaning time! Have you 5 S'd lately?

Join us Over Coffee and a light breakfast.

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Grant

Welcome to our Team!

New Employees - February 12, 2019 through March 30, 2019

Trevor Junk ~ February 19 ~ Highway Kalyn Baird ~ February 25 ~ Health Brenna Wheeler ~ March 6 ~ Orchard Manor Whitney Churchill ~ March 7 ~ Orchard Manor Gracie Klein ~ March 7 ~ Orchard Manor Brittany Murphy ~ March 7 ~ Orchard Manor Katrina Yonker-Kafar ~ March 7 ~ Orchard Manor Haizen Birchman ~ March 20 ~ Orchard Manor Courtney Ernst ~ March 20 ~ Orchard Manor

Service Anniversaries

April, 2019 through June, 2019 (5 year increments)

Brenda Cullen (Health), 30 years on June 2 Jamie Scholl (Highway), 25 years on June 13

Terry Hodgson (Highway), 20 years on April 12Eric Ellis (Sheriff's Office), 20 years on May 17Paul Schauer (Orchard Manor), 20 years on June 22

Scott Pagenkopf (Highway), 15 years on April 5 Keith Edge (Highway), 15 years on May 3

Lecia Lenz (ADRC), 10 years on April 3 Jeremy Harty (Sheriff's Office), 10 years on June 21

Taylor Hale (Orchard Manor), 5 years on April 21 Karen Walls (Sheriff's Office), 5 years on May 11 Eric Irish (Highway), 5 years on June 9 Jason Kieler (Highway), 5 years on June 9 Hillery Pink (Orchard Manor), 5 years on June 19

Aflac

Grant County's benefit eligible employees may participate in Aflac. This coverage helps you pay for medical related out-of-pocket costs.

Policy changes/enrollments are effective July 1st and January 1st.

Michelle Nodorft (608-778-8057) from Aflac will be in Lancaster to meet with employees that would like to learn about the coverage types, have questions, or want to make changes.

Visit dates have been planned as follows.

June 17, 2019

11 a.m. Group Presentation at the County Board Room; must contact Personnel Office if plan to attend 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Administration building (Conference Room 266) 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at Orchard Manor (Conference Room 104)

November 7, 2019

Location schedule to be determined

Deferred Compensation Retirement Contributions

Grant County partners with Wisconsin Deferred Compensation program and Nationwide deferred compensation program, to provide an additional avenue of saving for your retirement other than WRS. All benefit eligible employees have the option to save through pre-tax or after-tax payroll deduction.

Representatives from both programs will be in Lancaster to meet with employees that would like to learn about deferred compensation, have questions, or want to make changes to their accounts.

Visit dates have been planned as follows.

April 11, 2019

Nationwide Retirement Solutions; Kerryl Johnson (608)825-2516

11 a.m. Group Presentation at the County Board Room; must contact Personnel Office if plan to attend
11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Administration building (Conference Room 266)
1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at Orchard Manor (Conference Room 104)
2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Law Enforcement building, 1000 N. Adams St., Lancaster

April 17, 2019

Wisconsin Deferred Compensation; Stephanie Rautio (608)241-6604 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Administration building (Conference Room 201)

1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at Orchard Manor (Conference Room 104) 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Law Enforcement building, 1000 N. Adams St., Lancaster

September 19, 2019

Location schedule to be determined





Joyce Roling, Grant County Personnel Director

Each newsletter will contain a review of a policy from the employee handbook. Although employees have access to the handbook at all times, it is not something that is reviewed often. These reviews will act as a reminder.

Travel/Expense Reimbursement

These are a few highlights of the Travel/Expense Reimbursement Policy, with proposed language to be acted on April 16, to include reasonable tip of no more than 20% and requiring itemized receipts. To see the policy in its entirety, please go to the county website <u>www.co.grant.wi.gov</u> and click on Employee HR Documents.

- ✓ It is the policy of Grant County to provide, pay or reimburse employees for business related expenses according to the standard below.
- ✓ Employees must receive prior department head approval for travel and expense reimbursements.
- ✓ Mileage rate matches the IRS rate (currently .58/mile)
- ✓ <u>Meals.</u> Employees required to travel on County Business may be reimbursed for the cost of out-of-County meals, including a reasonable tip of no more than 20%, during their travel, not to exceed the following levels (or rate established by the County Board):

Breakfast.....up to \$7.50 per receiptLunch....up to \$10.00 per receiptSupper....up to \$20.00 per receiptBanquets....per receipt

- ✓ Lodging. Reasonable expenses per receipt.
- ✓ <u>Other employment expenses.</u> Authorized conferences, seminars or other business, such as registration, tolls, telephone or parking fees.
- ✓ <u>Reimbursement.</u> Employees are required to submit documentation of actual expenses, <u>with itemized receipts</u>, and prepare an Expense report for supervisory approval and signature. Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable.

Note: You can view our Employee Handbook in its entirety on the Grant County Website. www.co.grant.wi.gov, Employee HR Documents.



