



BECKER COUNTY

Commissioner

2016 State of Becker County

I want to start by thanking the employees of Becker County. They are often underappreciated and only hear from us when there is a complaint. The staff work very hard and, at times, have to endure difficult situations related to their work. Thank you, we appreciate your hard work.

I want to welcome our new Dept. heads. Tammy Merkins was appointed to County Attorney, Stacie White - IT Director, and Denise Warren - Human Services Director.

The Sheriff's Office received donations from residents and businesses to start the K-9 program. They also received a drone that was donated by West Central Initiative. In addition, the Sheriff started the TRIAD program which is a partnership between Law enforcement, seniors, and community groups that promotes senior safety.

The Highway Department delivered a \$5.5M construction program which included \$1.7M funded by the transportation Sales Tax, or SMART Tax. We recently held our 5 year road plan and SMART tax plan.

Highway Maintenance activities included over 50 miles of sealcoating, 50 miles of aggregate surfacing, 58 miles of aggregate shouldering, 90 miles of crack sealing and 230 miles of lane striping.

The board has negotiated the turn-back of State Trunk Highway 225 to the County for an amount of \$9.5M. We will use those funds to make improvements to the road over the next few years.

The Human Service Dept. continues to see high numbers. They have completed space renovations for increased staff which was made possible by the Governor's Task Force/Child Protection Allocation funding.

The Environmental Service Department has constructed a new solid waste transfer station and truck scale. We have been awarded a \$250,000 grant for recycling totes and will construct a new recycle facility in 2017.

We continue to have timber auctions which generated over \$385,000 of revenue. With that income we plant and manage the forests. In 2017 we will have a timber inventory survey that will be used to develop a new timber management plan.

Our Assessor's/IT Department changed the CAMA assessment system to our new Vanguard system. There were a lot of hurdles that our employees had to jump and they made the transition successfully.

We had another clean audit from the State as we were being sued by the State Auditor. Becker County is one of 50 counties that wanted the opportunity to use a private audit firm. This opportunity was granted by the Legislation but contested by the State Auditor. We won the lawsuit, but anticipate an appeal.

We have chosen the site for the new jail and today we will sign an agreement with an architect. We will continue working with the city on our infrastructure needs for the construction site. The county and city are also moving forward with the Airport expansion and improvements.

We have applied for numerous grants including a \$3.2 million grant from Greater MN Regional Parks and Trail Commission in partnership with Detroit Lakes.

In closing I would like thank our County Administrator, Jack Ingstad, my fellow Commissioners, county employees, Becker County residents and especially my family.

Barry Nelson
Board Chair