

On behalf of the Sibley County Board of Commissioners and all of the Sibley County employees, we want to welcome you to the first edition of the Sibley Scene, the newsletter of the County. The newsletter will be published twice a year with a Fall/Winter edition and a Spring/Summer edition. The intention of the Sibley Scene is to provide County information and feature articles from different County departments within Sibley County that introduce you to your County services. We want to engage the citizens of Sibley County through communication of our programs and build the citizen/government relationship. You can also get information on County services through our website www.co.sibley.mn.us or follow us on Facebook @SibleyCountyMN!

I personally hope you find the Sibley Scene to be a useful tool to connect with Sibley County and its staff. I hope you use it to build on our mission of providing quality public service in a cost-effective manner through innovation, leadership, and cooperation.

John Gliszinski, Sibley County Administrator



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The Unvarnished Truth about Voting

Everyone can agree that this year's election looks very different. Here are the facts about why some things look different and the options to ensure that your vote counts.

Mail Balloting: Per Minnesota Statute, Sibley County's Township Boards and City Councils had to decide in May if they wanted to have mail-in voting or host a polling place. These are always options, but decisions were made this year based upon precinct sizes, cost, potential for voter safety, and having enough election judges. The following precincts are mail balloting for the 2020 General Election: Cities of Green Isle and New Auburn and Townships of Alfsborg, Arlington, Bismarck, Cornish, Faxon, Grafton, Green Isle, Henderson, Jessenland, Kelso, Moltke, New Auburn, Sibley, and Washington Lake. The traditional polling places for these precincts will not be open on Election Day. Registered voters in mail precincts were mailed their ballot on September 22nd from our office. If you did not receive your ballot, you can visit www.mnvotes.org to register to vote. If you register by October 13th, you will then receive your ballot in the mail. After the 13th, you can request an Absentee Ballot by visiting www.mnvotes.org, or contact our office for help in the process.

Absentee Voting: Voters not in a mail ballot precinct also have the option to vote early or via mail by absentee voting. Absentee voting begins 46 days before the election and runs through 5:00p.m. the day before the election. An application needs to be completed before you receive your ballot. This is available on the Secretary of State's or the County's website. We could also email or mail the application to you, or you can stop by the Auditor/Treasurer office. Once we verify your information we will send you your ballot along with the appropriate materials.

Direct Balloting: Maybe you don't want to vote by mail and prefer to place your ballot directly into the ballot box. All voters, including those in a mail ballot precinct, have this option, it just looks a little different than you are used to. By voting in-person at the Auditor-Treasurer Department from October 27th through **November 2nd** you are foregoing mail balloting or voting in person on election day, and participating in Direct Balloting. After completing a form, voters place their ballot directly in the ballot box in our lobby. Please note that statute does not allow us to offer this service on Election Day.

Returning Your Ballot: Ballots can be returned many ways: via mail, in the locked drop box on the west side of the courthouse, or in person during business hours. Just make sure you are aware of the deadlines for each of these. Want to check the status of your ballot? Head to www.mnvotes.org and click "Track Your Ballot" or call our office.

What Really Happens to Your Ballot: After we receive your ballot (via mail or in-person), we verify that the person has not already returned a ballot, that they filled out the proper information on their envelope, and we keep them in a secure location. Then, we follow the same process that we have done for every election since 2010. All envelopes for the same precinct are gathered. The tan ballot envelopes are separated from the signature envelopes. Then all of the tan envelopes are opened. Therefore, the anonymity of a voter is protected. The ballots are run through the tabulator machine, the same style as the polling places.

Important Dates

- October 13th, 5:00 p.m.:** Advance Registration Deadline
- October 27th – November 2nd, 2020, 5:00 p.m.:** Direct Balloting Period
- November 3rd, 6:00 a.m.-8:00 a.m.:** Open Additional Hours for In-Person or Agent Delivery Return of Ballots
- November 3rd, 3:00 p.m.:** In-Person or Agent Delivery Return of Ballots Deadline-Absentee Voters
- November 3rd, 8:00 p.m.:** In-Person or Agent Delivery Return of Ballots Deadline-Mail Ballot Precincts
- November 3rd:** Mailed Return of Ballots Postmark Deadline
- November 10th:** Mailed Return of Ballots Deadline to Receive Postmarked Ballots



Have questions about any of this information? Get the unvarnished truth by contacting me, your local elections official.

Marilee Peterson, Sibley County Auditor-Treasurer
400 Court Ave.
PO Box 51
Gaylord, MN 55334

Business hours:
8:00 – 4:30 Monday -Friday
10:00 – 3:00 Saturday, October 31st
8:00 – 5:00 Monday, November 2nd

Agriculture Production Extension Programing

Agriculture is a major industry in Sibley County with crops and livestock accounting for the largest percentage of on-farm incomes. Due to the significant impact agriculture has on the local community and economy, Sibley County and the University of Minnesota Extension work together in support of local Extension Education in Agricultural Production Systems.

In this partnership, research-based, unbiased agricultural information is available to the public that reflects the needs of producers throughout the county. Additionally, programming and technical assistance in the areas of agriculture, horticulture, natural resources, and Extension Master Gardener Program are available to county residents. Extension has embraced a number of different and engaging platforms to reach audiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and while in-person activities remain limited, many others can be found online and in print.

Extension programming is driven by the needs of the community. Feel free to reach out to local Extension staff at 507-237-4100 or email mnext-sibley@umn.edu. If you have ideas for future programming or partnership opportunities. We are always looking to improve and better serve the community.



4-H Grows True Leaders

In 4-H, youth build the skills they need for a lifetime. They learn and lead with the support of caring adults. This learning model teaches them life skills such as: problem solving, decision making, coping, communicating and teamwork. 4-H activities are open to youth in kindergarten through one year past high school. You can get involved by joining a local 4-H club in Sibley County. In Sibley County we have eight different clubs who meet monthly. You can enroll online at <https://extension.umn.edu/4-h/join-4-h> or contact our office for more information regarding our local 4-H program at 507-237-4100.

Funding Available for Residents with Past Due Shelter or Utility Expenses Funding is available under the Coronavirus Relief Fund which was established by the CARES Act.

Applications are now being accepted through November 16, 2020 for COVID-19 related shelter or utility emergencies. These emergencies could include past due rent or mortgage expenses, evictions, foreclosures, past due utility expenses or disconnections. Applications can be completed by applying for Emergency Assistance at the Sibley County Service Center located at 111 8th Street, Gaylord or online at www.applymn.dhs.mn.gov For questions related to this funding please call (507) 237-4000.

We all deal with recycling and solid waste materials on a daily basis at home and work, and sometimes ask the usual questions of what is recyclable or is it trash? Where can I take this material for disposal or to be recycled. Or, how about hazardous waste, farm chemicals, ag bag plastics, light bulbs, batteries, needles or expired medications? For answers to these questions and more contact Al Christensen at the Tri County Solid Waste Office at 507-381-9196 or visit us at www.tricountyrecycling.org for your recycling and disposal needs.

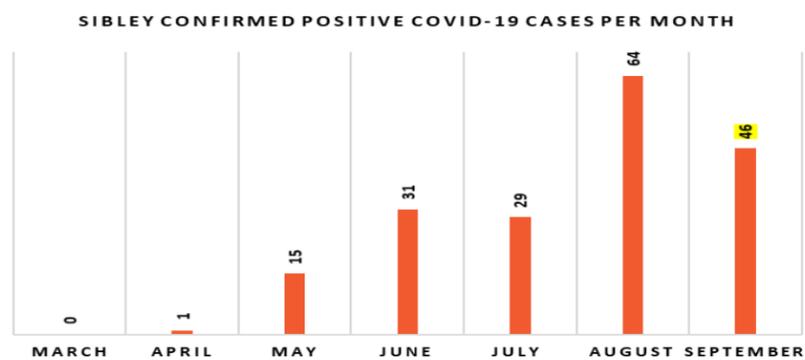


Sibley County Situation for COVID-19

Total Sibley County Cases 186	Estimated Sibley County Cases in Isolation 26
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9/23/2020 Data from MEDSS (Minnesota Electronic Disease Surveillance System)

13.98% of Sibley County COVID-19 cases are in isolation. Isolation is defined as 10 days from the testing date whether or not you have symptoms of COVID-19. We are currently working with our Geographic Information System (GIS) Coordinator to create a COVID-19 Dashboard. The Dashboard will provide at-a-glance views of COVID-19 data specific to Sibley County. Some views will feature our cases broken down by zip code, township, city, school district, and commissioner district. Keep your eyes peeled as we hope to have it published on our website in early October.



Roll Up Your Sleeve – This Season a Flu Vaccine Is More Important Than Ever!

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought huge public health challenges. The flu vaccination is being strongly encouraged from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Minnesota Department of Health, and Local Public Health. It's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both spread this fall and winter. This means getting a flu vaccine this season is more important than ever to reduce the risk of flu for yourself, your family, and your community. It can also reduce the burden of flu illness on the health care system and save medical resources to care for people with COVID-19. September and October are great times to get vaccinated. If you don't get vaccinated during that time, you can still get vaccinated November through January. The more people vaccinated, the more people protected. To learn more, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/ or www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/flu/index.html

From the Sibley County Attorney's Office

Even though we are in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Sibley County Attorney's Office continues to be busy. The Courts are open, but there are some changes in how hearings are handled - in person hearings are increasing, but many hearings are held by Zoom (video conferencing) or telephone.



Our advice if you have a court hearing coming up: 1) Contact Sibley County Court Administration a week before the hearing (507-237-4051); 2) Keep in contact with your attorney; and 3) If you do not have an attorney, contact the prosecutor about a possible settlement.

The Sibley County Attorney's Office handles all felony criminal matters and most gross misdemeanor criminal matters county wide, including misdemeanor criminal matters that happen out in the county, but not in the seven cities. We also contract to do city prosecution for the Cities of Arlington and Green Isle.

If you have questions, contact us at 507-237-4144.

Sibley County Sheriff's Office update:

In March 2018, the Sibley County Sheriff's Office began investigating Welfare Fraud cases for Sibley County Public Health and Human Services (SCPHHS). Each case may be civilly or criminally resolved. Typically, Welfare Fraud referrals are received from SCPHHS staff, other law enforcement agencies, various law enforcement reports, and the general public filing reports. Public Assistance programs include SNAP (food), medical, cash, housing, and child care assistance programs.



From January 2019 to December 2019, the Sibley County Sheriff's Office received approximately 53 total cases for further investigation. From the 53 cases, approximately \$117,124.00 were cited as overpayments and approximately \$20,477.00 was saved on a monthly basis. Two of the larger criminal cases filed in 2019 include an \$11,841.00 medical assistance case and a \$21,360.00 medical assistance case.

In 2020, the Sibley County Sheriff's Office has received approximately 32 total cases for further investigation. From the 32 cases, approximately \$51,204.00 has been cited as overpayments and approximately \$8,200.00 has been saved on a monthly basis. The largest criminal case in 2020, was for wrongfully obtained medical assistance funds in the amount of \$39,437. Also, in 2020, Sibley County became part of the Minnesota Department of Human Services Fraud Prevention Investigation program. This makes Sibley County eligible to receive an annual grant of \$30,000 to help fund our full-time fraud investigator.

If you have any information of welfare fraud, you can report it to the Sibley County Sheriff's Office at 1-888-880-4567. You may remain anonymous.

Public Works 2021 Construction Update

Public Works is engaged with planning our 2021 construction projects for next year and we are anticipating a busy year for the highway staff. The 2021 construction season will consist of the following projects: seal coating 28 miles of roads, resurfacing 7 miles of road, widening 3 miles of road, and reconstructing bridge 72529. Please give us a call if you have any concerns about a county road or next years planned projects.

Please visit the Sibley County Public Works website at www.co.sibley.mn.us for the latest information about projects.



SEAL COAT PROJECTS:

- CSAH 13 – From CSAH 8 to TH 5.
- CSAH 15 – From McLeod County Line to CSAH 9
- CSAH 17 – From CSAH 34 to TH 5
- CSAH 17 – From CSAH 8 to TH 19
- CSAH 21 – From TH 22 to 13th St. E.
- CSAH 27 – From CSAH 12 to CR 119
- CR 57 – From TH 19 to ½ mile N. of TH 19

RESURFACING PROJECTS:

- CSAH 8 – From CSAH 17 to TH 169.
- CSAH 20 – From Nicollet County Line to CSAH 8.

ROAD WIDENING PROJECT:

- CSAH 8 – From State Highway 22 to CSAH 13

BRIDGE 72529 REPLACEMENT:

- On CSAH 8 – 1.5 miles E. of State Highway 22 over CD 54.

Sentencing to Sewice is a work crew program run jointly by Sibley County and the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

Participants work on community improvement projects for public and non-profit organizations. Participants are adults who are either court-ordered from their home, or who volunteer to come out of jail to help the community. They have non-violent crimes, and are closely supervised. There are also juvenile crews that operate on separate days.

Randy Schumacher from the DOC has been the crew leader since 1993. "It's wonderful to see the pride these participants feel in helping the community," he said. "The DOC's mission is to transform lives for a safer Minnesota, and I believe this joint-program is succeeding in that goal. It's a meaningful partnership between our agencies, and it's a program we can all feel good about."

Sentencing to Service offers a way for people to repair some of the harm from their crimes, feel connected to their communities, and to learn new skills that will help them find gainful employment.

In 2019, the crews worked a total of 4,557 hours doing a variety of projects from painting the entire inside of the Sibley County Jail, to assisting with many areas of the major courthouse renovation, to maintaining the county parks.



A One Stop Shop for Minnesota Seniors

A single phone call to the Senior LinkAge Line can help locate particular services near you or what type of services might be helpful to you. They can research options and automatically transfer you to a service provider in your area. They can conduct in-depth assessments within your home or community. Senior LinkAge can also provide forms and enrollment assistance for public and private services.