

County of Chisago

A Brief Look at Chisago County History

Chisago County, located just northeast of the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area in east central Minnesota, was established in 1851, seven years before Minnesota became a state. The county seat, first at Taylors Falls, moved to Chisago City in 1865 and to Center City in 1875.

Chisago, the name of our county, comes from the Chippewa Indian word, *Ki-Chi-Saga*, which means *Fair and Lovely Lakes*. Chisago County was organized September 1, 1851. This was before Minnesota was organized as a state, but our forefathers realized that something had to be done to cope with their problems. The first election was held October 14, 1851 with 23 votes cast. The first Board of County Commissioners were: Samuel Thompson, Y.F. Moreton and N.C.D. Taylor. The first meeting was held at the home of Samuel Thompson on January 5, 1852, and Taylors Falls was chosen as the County Seat. It was not called Court House, but the Seat of Justice of Chisago County.

Taylors Falls had been the seat since 1852, when the county (which then included parts of what are now Pine, Carlton, and Kanabec counties) was organized. By 1860 the county was reduced to its present borders. The Swedes and other immigrants in the central and western parts, who outnumbered the Yankees on the St. Croix River, wanted to move the center of government to a more conveniently located place. In an 1860 election, the voters chose Center City, but no move was made. The law under which the county had voted was challenged in the courts, and after two years of battling, found unconstitutional.

Subject to the approval of the voters in the 1863 election, the legislature provided for Chisago County's seat to move to Chisago City. The vote was again challenged, this time on charges of election fraud. After another two-year delay, the state Supreme Court ruled the results valid. The Court House was moved to Chisago City November of 1865 in what is now called Old Town, where it remained until 1875 when it was decided for a second time to move the seat to Center City. This time the move was made and has remained since.

The new Court House at Center City was to be built by John L. Bullard for a cost of \$5,023.70, and was

Established as a County	1851
County Seat: Taylors Falls	
Minnesota became a State	1858
Moved County Seat to Chisago City	1865
Moved County Seat to Center City	1875
Sesquicentennial "150 years old"	2001

accepted October 13, 1876. The old Court House in Old Town, Chisago City, was sold to Zion Lutheran Church in 1876 and used as a parsonage until they built their present parsonage next to the church. The wood-frame courthouse built at Center City in 1876 stood at the site of the new Government Center until 1990 when it was moved, eventually being sited on the grounds of the Almelund Threshing Bee.

Chisago County Government Center □ 313 North Main St □ Center City, MN 55012

Phone: 651/213-8830 ☐ Fax: 651/213-8876 Visit our Website at: www.chisagocounty.us

The St. Croix River, which forms the county's eastern boundary, brought the earliest settlers to the area. The Dakota and Ojibway were largely gone when the first white settlers appeared. Europeans arrived from the north as early as 1680. French fur traders following the same route southward from Lake Superior established trading posts along the river as far south as Taylors Falls in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the late 1880s the first sawmills were built along the St. Croix. The logging industry boomed into the twentieth century.

Among the first permanent settlers was a party of Swedes who traveled upriver from Illinois in 1851 and established a colony at Center City. This colony was made famous by Swedish writer Vilhelm Moberg in his novels the Emigrants; *Unto a Good Land* and *The Last Letter Home*.

Farming, begun in the 1850s, was a focus until the 1890s when vacationers discovered the county's bountiful lakes and rivers. Today it is the beauty of the Dalles of the St. Croix, its park system and abundant recreational areas that bring visitors to the county.

County Demographics: Total square miles of Chisago County is 451.66B-(land 421.02 sq, miles) and (water 30.64 sq, miles), according to the Geological Natural History Survey 1882–1885. The population of Chisago County increased steadily until 1920 when it began to decrease until 1960, after which there has been a steady growth. In the latter years of the 20th century the county continues to attract residents because of its natural beauty as well as its proximity to the Twin Cities. Downtown Minneapolis or St. Paul can be reached within 50 minutes to an hour from many parts of the county. The population rate of growth is averaging 4% per year with an estimated 54,332 residents in 2015.

Contributions from Lloyd Hackel; Center City Resident

History of County Government

The 87 counties in Minnesota are rapidly changing. Counties, in their infancy, were organized to be administrative agencies of the state. Today, in addition to serving as an administrative arm of the state, counties are now providing services to its citizens beyond the original scope of county government.

Traditionally, counties performed state mandated duties, which included assessment of property, record keeping (i.e. property and vital statistics), maintenance of rural roads, administration of election and judicial functions, maintaining peace in rural areas, and poor relief. Today, counties are rapidly moving into other areas of government support, including social services, corrections, child protection, library services, hospitals and rest homes, public health services, planning and zoning, economic development, parks and recreation, water quality, and solid waste management.

County Board of Commissioners

County Boards are elected by district and serve a four year term. County Commissioners oversee county activities and work to ensure that citizen concerns are met, federal



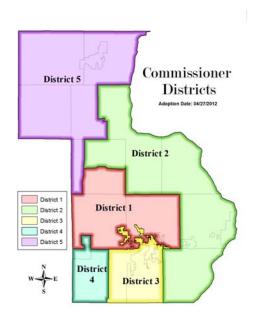
and state requirements are fulfilled, and county operations run smoothly. The number of commissioners on a county board is five. County Board of Commissioners meetings are held on the first & third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. with a Citizen's Forum held at 7:00 p.m.

All meetings are held at the Chisago County Government Center in the County Boardroom, Room 160A. Counties with a population of over 100,000 people may, by board resolution, increase the size of the county board from five to seven members. This has been done in six counties-Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Olmstead, Ramsey and St. Louisand helps recognize the population increase. County Commissioners spend a lot of time working with and representing people. They attend regular meetings of the county board as well as meetings of county board sub-committees and county-related boards and commissions. They represent county concerns before local, state and national boards and commissions, including school

As of January comprised of:	2018, the Chisago County Boa	rd of Commissio	oners is
District #1	Lora Walker P.O. Box 105, Stacy, MN 550 E-mail: Lora.Walker@chisago		w) 213-8831
District #2	Rick Greene (Vice Chair) 37655 Oriole Avenue, North E E-mail: <u>Rick.Greene@chisago</u>	Branch, MN 550	
District #3	George McMahon (Chair) 27720 Woodland Drive, Chisa E-mail: <u>George.McMahon@c</u>	go City, MN 5	5013
District #4	Ben Montzka P.O. Box 307, Wyoming, MN E-mail: <u>Ben.Montzka@chisag</u>		w) 213-8834
District #5	Mike Robinson P.O. Box 23, Rush City, MN 5 E-mail: <u>Mike.Robinson@chisa</u>		w) 213-8835

boards, city councils, township boards, and state and federal offices. County Commissioners also work with constituents and respond to constituent concerns.

The five-member County Board serves as the chief legislative and policy-making body of the county. Members are elected from geographic districts and serve staggered four-year terms. While no minimum education or prior experience is required to become a county commissioner individual backgrounds and personalities can enhance the effectiveness of county commissioners.



District #1: Lora Walker

Cities: Center City, North Branch – C Townships: Chisago Lake – N, Lent

District #2: Rick Greene, Vice Chair

Cities: North Branch - B, Shafer - A, Shafer - B, Taylors Falls

Townships: Amador, Franconia, Sunrise, Shafer

<u>District #3:</u> <u>George McMahon</u>, Chair

Cities: Chisago City, Lindstrom Townships: Chisago Lake – S

District #4: Ben Montzka

Cities: Stacy, Wyoming

District #5: Mike Robinson

Cities: Harris, North Branch – A, Rush City Townships: Fish Lake, Nessel, Rushseba

Professional County Management

Over the last thirty years, county boards across the state have recognized the need to expand into professional management for the county, mostly a result of increasing demands placed on counties for the delivery of services. Three forms of professional management currently exist in Minnesota statute: county administrator, county coordinator and county auditor-administrator. Chisago County has chosen the path of county administrator. Under the county administrator plan, the administrator is the head of the county for the management of the county affairs placed in the administrator's charge. If required by the county board, the administrator is the supervisor of all county institutions and agencies, and of non-elected department heads. The administrator also is responsible for preparation and execution of the county budget, including a long-range capital expenditure plan, and serves as the purchasing agent for the county. The county administrator serves at the pleasure of the county board.

<u>Transportation</u>

Counties play a significant role in managing Minnesota's road system. Over 45,000 miles of roads are the responsibility of counties. In addition, more than 19,000 bridges lie on these roads and are maintained by counties. Of the total road travel in Minnesota,

24 percent is on county roads and County State Aid Highways. Counties are responsible for county roads and County State Aid Highways (CSAH). The main difference between the two systems is the manner in which maintenance and improvements are funded. The CSAH system is largely funded by state funds while county road maintenance is funded through property tax revenue. Under state law, the board of county commissioners determines overall policies, designation of routes and the road construction program in each county. In addition, each county is required to have a county highway engineer who must be a registered highway or civil engineer. There are 15,054 miles of county roads in Minnesota. The county road mileage varies from county to county, with St. Louis County having the largest system at 1,606 miles and Chisago County having 326 miles of roads: 291 miles are paved, 35 miles are gravel, and 55 bridges. One of the ongoing concerns with bridges is funding for bridge replacement and improvement. Approximately 20 percent of all bridges in the state are either structurally or functionally deficient. Twenty-nine employees provide road maintenance, engineering and support services through our County Highway Department, a division of Public Works. Two County Surveyors are also based in Public Works. Seven additional employees provide the administrative/support services at Public Works.

CHISAGO - ISANTI COUNTY



<u>Transit</u>

In the past, county involvement in public transportation was primarily a human service activity. More recently, counties have begun to provide funding to local transit systems. This was to assist in the creation of a transit system that would be

available to the general public and not just to the elderly, handicapped and poor. Chisago County jointly operates with Isanti County the Heartland Express Transit System, which offers both fixed routes between and within the counties as well as a "dial-a-ride" service. The sole purpose is to offer a low-cost, efficient mode of public transportation for all county residents. Who can use it? EVERYONE! Residents who need a rideBto work, to a medical or dental appointment, to run errands, go shopping, to do volunteer work, to pre-school, summer school, vacation bible school, lunch with friends, beauty or barber, or just to visit! There is no reason to stay home! Children, who need transportation to local events or community activities when their parents are at work or otherwise unable to transport them, may ride the bus. Heartland Express is available to all residents, regardless of age, income, race, sex and/or national origin.

Social Services

Social Services provide programs, which serve people with special needs or conditions. Eligibility for these programs is based on need, not income level. Social Services in Minnesota include programs for the mentally ill, developmentally disabled and mentally impaired, the abused and neglected and their families, the elderly, the chemically dependent, and children (including day care programs).

The delivery and funding of social services in Minnesota is done through a "state-supervised, countyadministered" system. Federal, state and local dollars are used to fund the various programs established by state and federal law or by county discretion. The state is responsible for the distribution of federal and state funds, standard setting and monitoring, technical assistance and some training. The county is responsible for the planning, administration and delivery of social services in Minnesota. Planning must involve the community at large. Administrative options are provided to counties in state law. Delivery of services can be done directly or indirectly through contracted services. Fifty-one employees provide a full range of Social Services Programs as required and mandated. Twenty-nine employees assist qualifying citizens to achieve the goal of self-sufficiency through our Income Maintenance Division.

Public Health
County government public health functions include assessment of community needs, planning and policy development of programs to meet those needs, and other functions to assure that individuals, families and communities receive quality and cost-effective health services.

The core functions of county public health involve promotion of healthy behaviors, reaching out to link high-risk, disadvantaged persons to needed services and monitoring the health status of individuals and the entire population. Protection of the public's health includes protection of the environment, work places, housing, food and water, prevention of epidemics and response to disasters. Through the mobilization of community action for health, county government works to assure the quality, accessibility and accountability of health services to ensure the public's health. Fourteen employees provide efficient, caring public health services to our residents.

Correctional Services in Minnesota (Probation)

Correctional Services fall into two categories: 1) services related to the supervision and rehabilitation of adult and juvenile offenders and 2) services related to the confinement of convicted offenders or persons awaiting court appearances. These services can be broadly divided into community services and institutional services. This division of correctional services is found at the state and the county level. Unlike many other states, Minnesota relies heavily on counties to provide and/or fund a wide range of correctional services. Eleven employees funded in part by the state, offer probation services to county clients.

Public Defense Services & Court Administration Activities

Minnesota has one general jurisdiction court, the District Court. Pursuant to Minnesota Statue Chapter 485, the Chisago County Court Administrator's Office is responsible for all record keeping for the court, fine collection, case flow management and jury management for all the District Court cases with the County. These cases include juvenile, civil, family, probate, criminal, as well as conciliation court cases. Chisago County has three full-time chambered judges. The county is part of the 10th Judicial District consisting of eight counties and forty-five judges.

Any of these judges has the authority to hear cases in Chisago County. The seven additional counties which make up the 10th Judicial District are as follows: Pine, Isanti, Kanabec, Anoka, Sherburne, Washington and Wright.

The County Attorney's office provides legal advice and representation to the County Board and all county departments regarding matters in which the County has an interest, or in relation to official obligations of the County Board or officers. The office also prosecutes all statutory violations occurring within the borders of the County, including felony, gross misdemeanor, misdemeanor, and petty misdemeanor offenses.

Institutional Services

In Minnesota seventy-nine county jails are operated by individual counties. Jails are classified by the State Department of Corrections into one of several categories based on the length of incarceration permitted, e.g. 72-hour hold, 90-day lockup or jail. In Minnesota, a person may be sentenced to no more than one-year in a jail. In most counties,

including Chisago, jails are operated as a function of the County Sheriff's Department.

Chisago County operates a 67-bed jail, which is located near the Government Center. The county also provides dispatch services, housed at the Emergency Communications Center, for the Sheriff, all police departments and fire departments in the county and local ambulance service. Twenty-three employees work in the jail and fifteen employees work at the dispatch center.

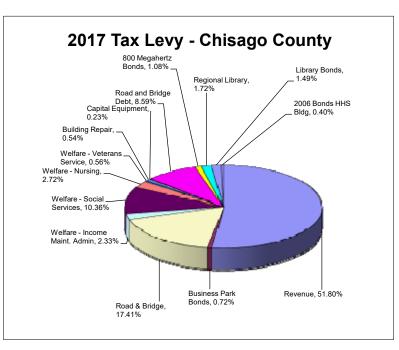
Thirty-two employees patrol throughout our county on land and in the water. They work closely with Court Administration and the County Attorney's office on a daily basis. Five investigators handle all felonies. The Sheriff's Department is involved with the D.A.R.E. program and Neighborhood WATCH. A District Office is also located in Harris.

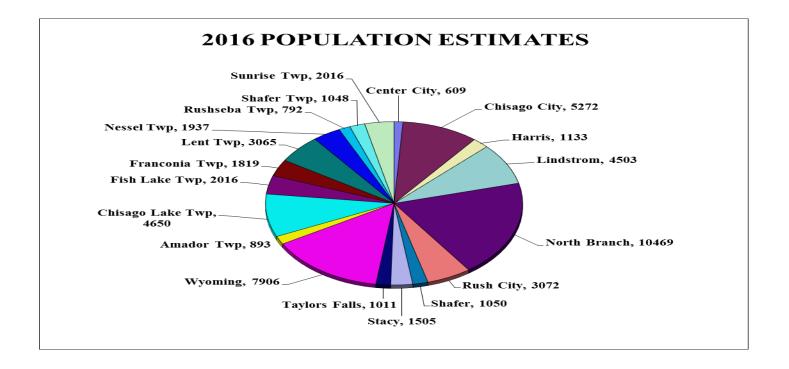
County Assessor

The Assessor's office estimates land and building value for tax purposes; classifies property according to its use; and follows Department of Revenue interpretations of Tax Court decisions.

County Auditor-Treasurer

The Auditor-Treasurer's office processes payables and receivables for the County offices; is responsible for the collection and distribution of current and delinquent year real estate taxes; as well as mobile home taxes; and tax forfeited property for public sale. They are also responsible for maintaining the voter registration files for the County. They handle investments, address corrections to the tax system, and the mailing function for the County offices.





Emergency Management

Emergency Management provides management and direction for the county's emergency response planning, coordinating, training and policies.

Land Use Management

Land use regulation is often referred to as planning, zoning and building. While the zoning ordnance addresses most land use activities, the scope of county land use regulations includes a range of programs to address environmental concerns. These programs and ordinances include shoreland, floodplain, wild and scenic rivers, water management, grading/filling, and wetlands. Chisago County operates its office of Environmental Services to administer the above, and covers solid waste/recycling, pharmaceutical disposal, exotic animals, and coordinates the Board of Adjustment and Planning Commission. All building, septic, and demolition permits and related inspections are handled through this office. Employees provide education and information for the myriad of services offered in this department.

MICS

The Management of Information and Communications Systems is an internal County Department that is responsible for planning, development, operation, and support of all information and communications systems in the County Government. This includes 2-way radios, telephones, mainframe, PC, WAN and LAN computer systems.

Parks and Trails

Various parks are located throughout the county with maintenance and upkeep provided through the Chisago County Parks Department. Two employees work full-time year round, with eight employees working on a seasonal basis. If you are interested in supporting park and trail development in Chisago County, information is available on the www.ccbiketrail.org site.



© <u>Checkerboard Park</u> – The 79 acre park is located four miles east of North Branch just off Highway 95 and Keystone (CR 67). Activities available: swimming, picnicking, hiking, volleyball, horseshoes, playground and an off leash dog park.



Dennis Frandsen Park - The 117 acre park is located on the north shore of West Rush Lake, south of County Road 2. Activities available: fishing, picnicking and disc golf. The park is most popular for its excellent bank fishing and spectacular views.

© <u>Fish Lake Park</u> – 152 acres located on Fish Lake. 1–1/2 miles west of Harris exit 152, head west on Stark Rd, then south on Elmcrest Ave. Activities available: swimming, picnicking, fishing, hiking, volleyball, softball, horseshoes and playground. Winter activities include ice fishing and cross-county skiing.



© <u>Ki-Chi-Saga Park</u> – The 98 acre park is located south of Lindstrom off of County Rd. 25 and Glader Blvd. Activities available: softball complex, picnic shelter, volleyball, playground, horseshoes, nature hiking, tours of Karl Oscar House and winter ski trails.

© <u>Kost Dam Park</u> – The 29 acre park is located between North Branch and the Lakes Area off County Rd. 14 & 15. This park is most popular for picnicking, fishing and socializing.



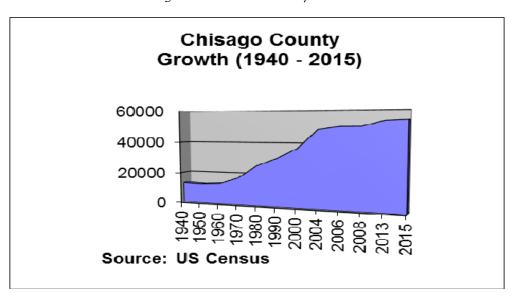
- © Sunrise Prairie Regional Trail The 15 mile trail is now paved from North Branch through Stacy and Wyoming and on down to the southern county line. The trail follows the original Burlington Northern Railroad line constructed in 1867-1870. The trail passes through areas of hardwood forest, deep marsh wetlands and the Sunrise River.
- © <u>Swedish Immigrant Regional Trail</u> A 20 mile, multi-use trail being developed to celebrate Swedish Immigrant History. When completed will connect Wyoming to Taylors Falls via Chisago City, Lindstrom, Center City and Shafer, utilizing an abandoned railway corridor that parallels Highway 8.

County Recorder

Handles abstract and torrens land records for the County (deeds, mortgages, liens, etc.) includes maintaining plat records; birth and death records, marriage licenses and notary commissions.

Veterans Services

Veterans Services (housed with Health & Human Services) provides benefits counseling, assistance to county veterans and their families on federal and state veterans programs and transportation to Veterans Hospitals in St Paul and St Cloud.



Extension Service

Chisago County is part of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, which is an educational outreach arm of the University of Minnesota. The mission is as follows: "To involve people in improving the quality of life and enhancing the economy and the environment through education, applied research, and the resources of the University of Minnesota." Chisago County is part of the PICKM Cluster (Pine, Isanti, Chisago, Kanabec, Mille Lacs). Extension Educators in these five counties share their individually-developed expertise across the cluster. There are a number of volunteer opportunities: 4-H Program, Master Gardeners, Nutrition Programs, Water Quality and Woodlands. The Chisago County Extension Service has also piloted a new program entitled: "Master Internet Volunteer." The Program trained nearly 50 people to extend knowledge and outreach regarding the use and application of the Internet.

The following Mission Statement of Chisago County was adopted October 16, 1996 as a statement of positive values and purpose; it is to guide this body, the county's elected officials, department heads and employees in their daily purposes as representatives of local government:

"Chisago County was created by the State of Minnesota to serve, to protect, and to enhance the quality of life for those we serve. We perform our duties and obligations in an ethical, democratic, and respectful manner."

Most county officials and services are headquartered in the Government Center located at 313 North Main Street in Center City. These include the offices of the Board of County Commissioners, Administrator, Assessor, Attorney, Auditor-Treasurer, Court Administration, Court Security, Environmental Services/Zoning, Probation Recorder and Veterans Services.

Facilities headquartered elsewhere in the county are the Emergency Communications Center, Emergency Management, Extension Office, Heartland Express, Household Hazardous Waste Facility, Parks Department, Public Health, Public Works/Highway Department and Sheriff's Office. Their addresses are as follows:

Emergency Communications Center (ECC) is located at 15140 Per Road in Center City.

Emergency Management is housed in the Public Safety Center located at 15230 Per Road in Center City.

Extension Service is located with Soil & Water at 38814 – 3rd Avenue in North Branch.

<u>Heartland Express (Chisago – Isanti)</u> is headquartered at the Heartland Express Transit Center, $245 - 2^{nd}$ Avenue SE in Cambridge. There is also a garage in North Branch.

Household Hazardous Waste Facility is located at 39649 Grand Avenue in North Branch.

<u>Jail</u> is located at 111 North Main Street in Center City.

<u>Parks Department</u> is located with the Chisago County HRA-EDA at 38883 – 7th Avenue in North Branch. <u>Public Health/Health & Human Services Building</u> is located at 6133 – 402nd Street in North Branch.

<u>Public Works/Highway Department</u> is located on County 9 at 31325 Oasis Road in Center City. There is also a Highway Maintenance building in Almelund and Harris.

<u>Sheriff's Office</u> is housed in the new Public Safety Center located at 15230 Per Road in Center City. They also have a district office located in Harris.

City Offices

Center City <u>www.centercitymn.us</u>	651/257-5284
P.O. Box 245, 300 N. Center Avenue, Center City, MN 55012	
Chisago Citywww.ci.chisago.mn.us	651/257-4162
P.O. Box 611, 10625 Railroad Avenue, Chisago City, MN 55013	
Harris <u>www.harrismn.com</u>	651/674-7546
P.O. Box 111, 43970 Ginger Avenue, Harris, MN 55032	
Lindstromwww.cityoflindstrom.us	651/257-0620
13292 Sylvan Avenue, Lindstrom, MN 55045	
North Branch <u>www.ci.north-branch.mn.us</u>	651/674-8113
P.O. Box 910, 6408 Elm Street, North Branch, MN 55056	
Rush City <u>www.rushcitymn.us</u>	320/358-4743
P.O. Box 556, 325 S. Eliot, Rush City, MN 55069	
Shafer <u>www.shafermn.com</u>	651/257-4726
17656 303 rd Street, Shafer, MN 55074	
Stacy www.stacymn.org	651/462-4486
30955 Forest Blvd, Stacy, MN 55079	
Taylors Falls <u>www.ci.taylors-falls.mn.us</u>	651/465-5133
637 First Street, Taylors Falls, MN 55084	
Wyomingwww.wyomingmn.org	651/462-0575
P.O. Box 188, 26855 Forest Blvd, Wyoming, MN 55092	
Township Offices	
Township Offices Amador www.amadortownship.com	651/583 ₋ 3108
Amadorwww.amadortownship.com	651/583-3108
Amador	
Amador	
Amador	651/257-6906
Amador	

COUNTY DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

Administrator
651/213-8830, fax: 651/213-8876, <u>Bruce.Messelt@chisagocounty.us</u>
Assessor
651/213-8550, fax: 651/213-8551, <u>John.Keefe@chisagocounty.us</u>
Attorney
651/213-8400, fax: 651/213-8401, <u>Janet.Reiter@chisagocounty.us</u>
Auditor-Treasurer
651/213-8500, fax: 651/213-8510, <u>Dennis.Freed@chisagocounty.us</u>
Court Administrator
651/213-8650, fax: 651/213-8651, <u>Kathleen.Karnowski@courts.state.mn.us</u>
Emergency Management & Homeland Security DirectorScott Sellman
651/775-9973 or 651/213-6313, fax: 651-213-6330, <u>Scott.Sellman@chisagocounty.us</u>
Environmental Services Director
651/213-8370, fax: 651/213-8385, <u>Kurt.Schneider@chisagocounty.us</u>
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651/277-0151, fax: 651/277-0145
Health & Human Services DirectorNancy Dahlin
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651/213-5790, fax: 651/243-5116, <u>Courtney.Whited@chisagocounty.us</u>
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651/213-8830, fax: 651/213-8876, <u>Renee.Kirchner@chisagocounty.us</u>
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Public Health – Community Health Services AdministratorCourtney Wehrenberg
,
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I .
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Recorder Janet Converse
651/213-8580, fax: 651/213-8581, <u>Janet.Converse@chisagocounty.us</u>
SheriffBrandon Thyen
651/213-4100, fax: 651/213-0865, <u>Brandon.Thyen@chisagocounty.us</u>
Veterans Services OfficerBryan Brown
651/213-5600, fax: 651/213-5685, <u>Bryan.Brown@chisagocounty.us</u>

For Employment Opportunities call our Job Line at: 651/213-8860 or – Check out our Website at: www.chisagocounty.us

The Government Center is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.