

# ANOKA COUNTY

## NEWS Volume 2-2020



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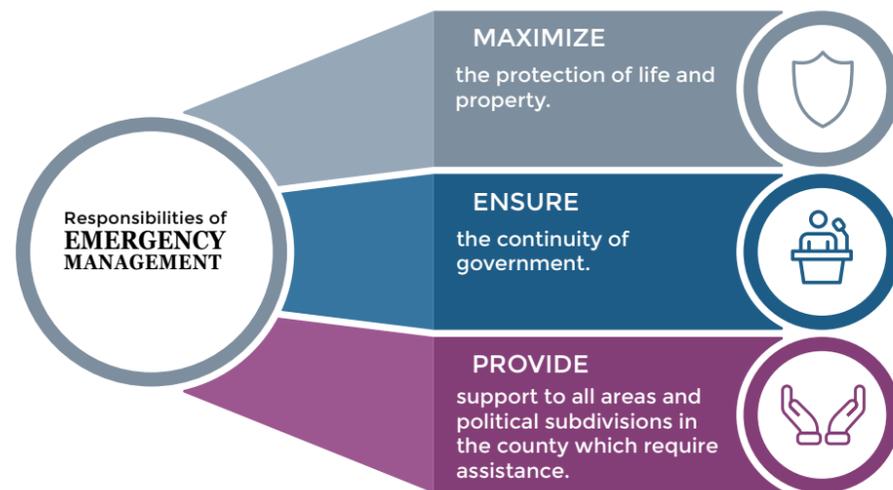
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# AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The mission of Anoka County Emergency Management is to promote safety and well-being of Anoka County citizens through coordination of the emergency management program with local, county, state and federal partners. This is done by maximizing the capability of the county in the areas of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.



The work of this department, which is oftentimes conducted behind the scenes, has come to the forefront in Anoka County since COVID-19 began to spread across the state several months ago. Terry Stoltzman, the director of Anoka County Emergency Management, has been a prominent figure at recent County Board meetings, providing the board with information about the virus impact in the county and the mitigation efforts.

Emergency Management works in-step with all Anoka County departments to ensure they have

the right information and resources to respond to emergencies, and that they're in compliance with local, state and federal regulations. This department administers an all-hazards-based, countywide program that coordinates and supports county departments, Anoka County cities, township jurisdictions and other partners in governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The authority to conduct emergency operations for this department comes from Minnesota State Statute Chapter 12, the same statute that has granted the state's governor peacetime emergency powers amid COVID-19. In Anoka County, Scott Schulte, the board chair, also has the same emergency powers through this statute.

Emergency Management is responsible for maintaining and modifying the county's emergency operations plan. This plan is needed to enable government to continue to function and execute emergency responsibilities to protect the public and the environment from effects of a myriad of hazards, which include outbreaks such as COVID-19, weather-related natural disasters, technological and man-made emergencies such as train wrecks, plane crashes, pipeline leaks and terrorism.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Anoka County Emergency Management has been part of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) with inter-county and nongovernmental stakeholders, such as the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross, so they can coordinate with surrounding counties, the state, and federal agencies, such as FEMA. Due to the highly infectious nature of the coronavirus, this EOC has been completely virtual to ensure safety while emergency management planning and operations are being conducted.

"Anoka County Emergency Management has been integral during this virus outbreak in ensuring the continuity of government, providing support to all areas in the county that need assistance, and protecting life in the county," said Scott Schulte, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners. "The amount of work our Emergency Management department and Public Health and Environmental Services are doing during this time is immense, and the training they provided to many county staff before COVID-19 has allowed Anoka County to quickly mobilize a response to this emergency. These departments have led the way in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in our communities."

## PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Anoka County Public Health and Environmental Services (PHES) serves the community as the authority on issues concerning the public's health in Anoka County.

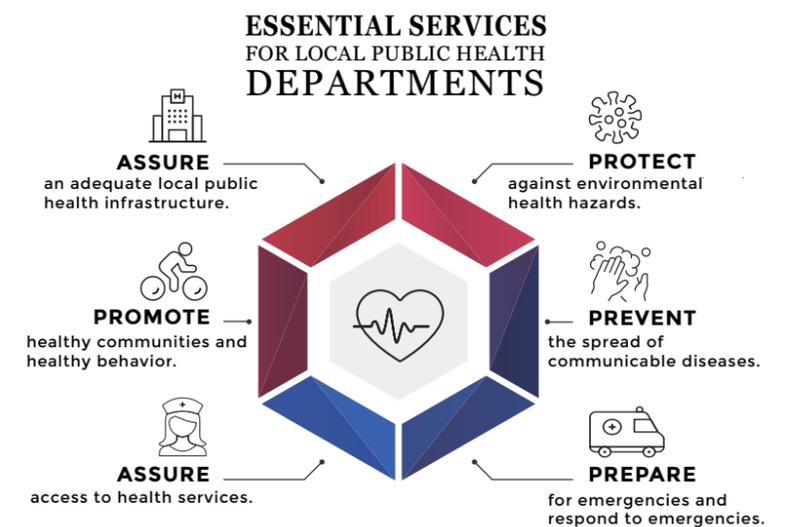
The department helps community members stay healthy through a wide variety of programs including Licensing and Inspections for certain types of businesses, Well-Water Testing, Recycling and Resource Solutions, WIC Supplemental Nutrition, Child and Teen Checkups, Family Home Visiting, Disease Prevention and Control, Health Education, Correctional Health, and Community Health Assessment and Planning. Many of these services and programs have moved to virtual settings due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines.

Minnesota's Local Public Health Act lays out responsibilities for all local health departments in Minnesota (see right). Part of PHES's responsibility is to prepare for public health emergencies and prevent the spread of diseases. Staff from PHES and other departments at Anoka County regularly attend trainings and coordinate with community partners to ensure readiness in the event of a public health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to COVID-19 reaching Minnesota and nearby communities, PHES leadership activated its Department Operations Center March 6 to guide response efforts through a standard framework called the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS is utilized by Emergency Management organizations at the local, state, and national levels. Jonelle Hubbard, Director of Anoka County Public Health and Environmental Services, serves as incident commander for Anoka County's response to COVID-19.

Local public health departments play an important role in responding to infectious disease outbreaks like COVID-19. Staff provide many services to communities, partners, and residents. These include essential services like food or housing for individuals with COVID-19 who don't have access to these basic needs. A call center operated by PHES staff responds to community questions and concerns. Some staff work directly with facilities in the community, including congregate living settings, businesses, schools, and shelters to help ensure precautions are taken to limit the spread of

COVID-19. A field unit guides community testing, and a disaster behavioral health team provides immediate crisis intervention, resources, and referral for community



members and first responders experiencing stress related to COVID-19.

Leaders in PHES and other Anoka County departments meet often to share information, provide updates on response operations, review summary data of Anoka County's cases, and develop plans for upcoming response needs. Recently, PHES partnered with Anoka County Geographic Information Systems to summarize Anoka County's cases through a dashboard of COVID-19 statistics, which is available for public use by visiting the PHES COVID-19 website: [anokacounty.us/3850/2019-Novel-Coronavirus-Situation-Summary](http://anokacounty.us/3850/2019-Novel-Coronavirus-Situation-Summary)) and clicking on Anoka County COVID-19 Statistics.

For more information about PHES and the Anoka County COVID-19 Response, reach out to Anoka County Public Health and Environmental Services by phone (763-324-4200) or email ([public.health@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:public.health@co.anoka.mn.us)).

"Our PHES department has been providing information and services during this time that are essential for protecting public health," said District 2 Anoka County Commissioner Julie Braastad. "Their work evolves, seemingly on a daily basis, and their efforts to reduce the spread of this virus cannot be understated. We're thankful for their dedication and expertise."



## FACILITIES/VIRTUAL MEETING ROOM

### Anoka County Facilities Have Enhanced Safety Procedures

There's certainly less foot traffic at Anoka County facilities than there used to be, with much work now being done remotely to protect the public and county staff, but some employees and members of the public still need to enter county buildings to conduct business.

Anoka County has thoroughly prepared for this in-person business and has implemented several changes at its facilities to ensure business is being conducted as safely as possible amid COVID-19. Signage has been posted at all county facilities to remind people about the importance of hand washing and not touching their faces. In areas where hand washing is not present, hand sanitizers are available for the public and staff. Cloth masks have been encouraged if 6-foot social distancing cannot be practiced.

In terms of social distancing, the county has postponed large employee meetings and trainings, required appointments to meet with staff, reduced shared office equipment, limited the number of people in customer service areas, closed some break areas, and made sure chairs in all areas are spaced at least 6 feet apart.

Cleaning and sanitizing efforts have been stepped up, as well. The county has adopted rigorous CDC disinfecting procedures, which includes cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch areas — doorknobs, handles, light switches, etc. — at least three times a day and routinely cleaning and sanitizing all other areas. If a county employee becomes ill with COVID-19, their workplace is completely decontaminated.



"Anyone walking into any Anoka County building should know that our facilities are as safe as they can be during the pandemic," said District 1 Anoka County Commissioner Matt Look. "All of the changes that have been implemented are to protect the health of staff and the public."

### Room at Government Center Allows for Virtual Visits

Many people who have appointments with Anoka County have been able to connect with them via phone, email or virtual means from the comfort of their homes.

However, recognizing that this option isn't available for every person or every type of appointment, the county set up a virtual visit room on the first floor of the Anoka County Government Center. This room allows for safe face-to-face contact between clients and county staff, and the room is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Center lobby. When the meeting ends, the customer should exit the room immediately so it can be cleaned and sanitized before the next appointment. The room is available for appointments 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Anoka County's Social Services and Behavioral Health department was the first to pilot the virtual meeting room. They primarily utilized it for telemedicine assessments.

"Anoka County has developed several innovative means to connect with clients to ensure business is still being done, even if it can't be conducted by people sitting in the same room," said District 6 Anoka County Commissioner Jeff Reinert. "This virtual meeting room will hopefully fill a gap and allow more people to interact with county staff in a safe way."

Those who wish to use this space need to make an appointment, and on the day of their meeting they must check in with the lobby receptionist in the Government



## 9-1-1/ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

### Emergency Communications Continues to Respond to the Community



Anoka County Emergency Communications provides efficient and professional 911 dispatch services for all emergency and non-emergency calls in the county, and this service has continued and increased during the pandemic.

How Emergency Communications is providing this service to the public has changed, however. Many Anoka County departments have been able to adhere to social distancing guidelines by allowing employees to work from home, but due to the equipment needed to provide emergency dispatch services, this wasn't a possibility for most Emergency Communications employees. Subsequently,

the work schedule has been adjusted to 12-hour shifts with four teams, and another location was opened to house some Emergency Communications employees — both these measures have aided in increasing social distancing.

Temperature checks have also become the norm at the Emergency Communications Center, and if employees feel sick, they are sent home.

Anoka County continues to hire and train new employees, which has helped with the increased call volume at the center. The county has also hired back former employees on a temporary basis to help in the short term.

"Our Emergency Communications Center is essential for maintaining public safety in our county and the surrounding area, and our employees in this department have steadfastly dedicated themselves to serving the public," said District 2 Anoka County Commissioner Julie Braastad. "Their workload has increased substantially due to COVID-19, but they've still be able to provide dispatch services and quell the fears of callers while letting them know help is on the way."

### Economic Assistance Providing Public with Resources

Anoka County Economic Assistance has a long list of programs under its purview. Some of those programs include child support, funeral funds, cash programs, housing assistance and medical programs.

In an average year, there are about 37,000 applications for assistance through Economic Assistance, and until the COVID-19 pandemic struck, much of this county department's work was conducted in person. The social distancing needed to slow the spread of the virus led to several changes in the department:

- 180 staff started working mostly remotely.
- Remote hearings were set up for child support.
- Virtual interviews were set up to determine eligibility for all programs.

"On a normal day, our Economic Assistance Department is very busy, and the number of people now seeking

assistance has increased because of the impacts of COVID-19," said District 3 Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West. "It's certainly a difficult time, but our staff is handling the volume of calls, emails and video contacts, and they've been able to help many people in the last few months."



Visit [anokacounty.us/193/Economic-Assistance](https://www.anokacounty.us/193/Economic-Assistance) for more information on programs and how to apply or call 763-422-7200.

## Sheriff's Office Modifies Operations During COVID-19

Amid COVID-19 and the Governor's executive orders, the Anoka County Sheriff's Office had to act quickly with modifications to its normal operating procedures.

On March 27, the Sheriff's Office closed its public lobbies. With that decision, business operations were modified in an effort to maintain effective service for the public in these unprecedented times. The Anoka County Sheriff's Office website has been continually updated to inform citizens about how to access needed services typically handled at the Sheriff's Office.

To better protect citizens and county deputies, the Sheriff's Office had to find new ways to accomplish its same mission. One such example is handling more reports with phone calls as opposed to an in-person response. Anoka County Emergency Communications (911) is also screening for health-related issues so deputies and first responders can determine the best course for response.

The jail division has implemented measures to help protect persons incarcerated and staff tasked with their care and supervision. A few of the ways that has been accomplished has been by working with the County Attorney's Office, Court Administration, local police departments, and others to reduce the overall jail population and increase inmate distancing efforts. The Sheriff's Office also temporarily suspended public fingerprinting services and on-site social visits with inmates; however, the capability to allow remote off-site video visitation calls has increased.

In the justice services division, due to the decrease in the jail population, there has been a reduction in needs for personnel in the court security and transport units. The Sheriff's Office has taken this opportunity to temporarily reassign personnel to other areas where needs exist. The Sheriff's Office is also active in community humanitarian efforts such as assisting with Meals on Wheels.

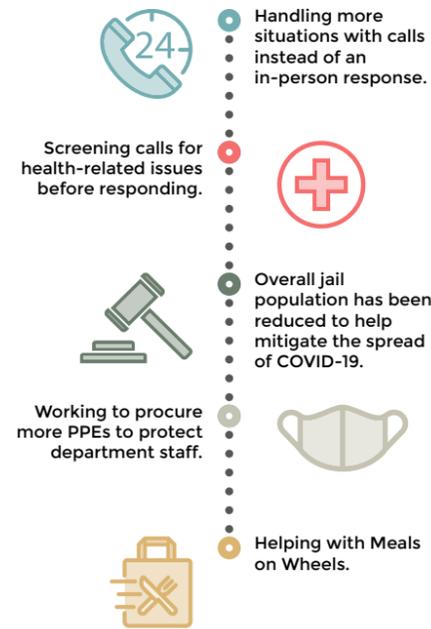
### Anoka County Attorney's Office: Service in the time of COVID-19



Due process laws cannot be disregarded, even during a pandemic. Defendants must get their day in court. Victims have a right to participate in the criminal justice process. Prosecutors and defense attorneys have a responsibility to present their cases and argue their positions. Parents need access to child support enforcement resources. And child protection and civil commitment efforts are as critical as ever.

As a provider of essential legal and public safety services, the Anoka County Attorney's Office has adapted to new

## SHERIFF'S OFFICE COVID-19 RESPONSE CHANGES



The Sheriff's Office continues to work closely with Anoka County Emergency Management, Anoka County Public Health, as well as other law enforcement, fire department, EMS, hospitals, and local community partners to navigate these difficult times. Along with its partners, the Sheriff's Office has been working collectively to locate and procure PPE's (personal protective equipment) for staff so they can continue to respond as safely as possible. The Sheriff's Office will also continue to monitor daily local, state, and national situational updates and modify its short-and long-term plans as new information becomes available.

and innovative ways to do its work during this time of social-distancing and pandemic uncertainty. There are many aspects of the office's work that were already being done on paper and electronically, but there are other elements that require personal interactions. Examples include court hearings, trials, interviews, crime-scene visits, and meetings with victims and witnesses.

In collaboration with the courts, the Attorney's Office has been able to participate in court hearings using remote camera access. The criminal division worked with the Public Defender's Office to review in-custody defendants for possible pretrial release where appropriate. The office's victim/witness services specialists have moved to virtual and phone meetings with victims, ensuring those crucial communications are still made. The civil division has adjusted its tax petition

deadlines and service procedures. And the office's technology team has worked tirelessly to provide new tools for the necessary electronic expansion of work.

As the Attorney's Office adjusts to the new normal of its work, the office is also navigating the new normal of its employee's home lives. Many of the Attorney's Office staff are parents or caregivers and are juggling many challenges at once. Despite the distance – many staff are working remotely – the Attorney's Office has found ways to connect with each other and provide support.

There have been challenges as the Attorney's Office tackles the restrictions and changes, but this time has also highlighted the office's best qualities: flexibility, adaptability, collaboration, communication, and dedication to seeking justice for those the Attorney's Office serves.

## CareerForce Offers Resources to Help Gain Employment

When the COVID-19 pandemic started to take a foothold in Minnesota during the early spring, the services of CareerForce in Blaine were impacted, and, similar to many other entities and businesses statewide, online offerings were dramatically increased.

One of those offerings was virtual hiring events. Many businesses had temporarily closed, but there were still plenty that were hiring, including grocery stores, health care organizations, pharmacies, banks and more.

CareerForce also launched virtual webinar workshops through WebEx, an online videoconferencing application. Some of these workshops focused on resume writing, so career seekers could learn about best practices to create resumes that meet position requirements. Other webinars taught participants how to approach job interviews with confidence and answer challenging job interview questions using frameworks to structure their thoughts and answers.

Another resource now featured through CareerForce is Jobs Clubs Online. This program offers a variety of webinar workshops to help employment seekers learn how to be successful in today's economy, get advice and develop new strategies. Past webinar topics have included "networking: the first 30 seconds" and "the job search over 40." Visit the CareerForce website, [careerforcemn.com](http://careerforcemn.com), or call 763-324-2300 for updated services and activities as they are continuing to expand weekly.

"CareerForce is providing area career seekers the information, resources and connections they need during this unprecedented time," said Scott Schulte, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners. "The services offered at CareerForce in Blaine and at other CareerForce locations across the state can put people on paths to finding employment."

### Virtual Services Offered Through CareerForce





## PROPERTY RECORDS & TAXATION/RECYCLING

### Property Records and Taxation Among First Departments to Reopen

Anoka County's Property Records and Taxation service counter, prior to the pandemic, fielded one of the highest volumes of in-person business of any department in the county.

Like all other county departments, it suspended face-to-face interactions with customers from mid-March until May 19, when it was one of the first departments to reopen public-facing services on a limited basis. To protect the public and county staff, several changes were made to service delivery upon the reopening.

Property Records and Taxation has expanded telework options for some staff, to allow for enough office space to ensure safety. It is also expanding online application programs such as the Disabled Veterans Exclusion and Green Acres, which provides property tax relief for owners of agricultural land.

People who have business with Property Records and Taxation are still strongly encouraged to use contactless services, if they can, such as paying property taxes online. Visit [anokacounty.us/1067/Property-Records-Taxation](http://anokacounty.us/1067/Property-Records-Taxation) to access services or call 763-323-5400.

"These changes have allowed Anoka County to again serve the public in a safe, in-person fashion for those looking to access the information and resources provided by Property Records and Taxation," said District 4 Anoka County Commissioner Mandy Meisner.



### Recycling & Resource Solutions Makes Modifications to Serve Public

Anoka County Recycling & Resource Solutions continues to provide high-quality services to residents and businesses as it modifies operating procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the office lobby is closed to the public, operations of the department have been maintained with limited staff working in the office and the remainder continuing to work remotely.

Many information resources such as the online recycling directory and disposal guide ([AnokaCounty.us/RecyclingDirectory](http://AnokaCounty.us/RecyclingDirectory)), as well as staff answering questions over the phone, provided valuable information to the public about recycling and disposal options during the stay-at-home order, when many people were cleaning out closets and garages.



## ELECTIONS

### Voters Have Multiple Options to Cast Ballots

Voters have several options to cast their ballot for the Aug. 11 primary election and the Nov. 3 general election:

#### By Mail

To request a ballot by mail, voters are encouraged to apply online at [MNVotes.org](http://MNVotes.org). Voters can also contact the Anoka County Elections office at 763-324-1300 to request a paper application. Ballots must be returned in time to arrive on or before Election Day to be counted.

#### Early In-Person

Vote in-person prior to Election Day at the Anoka County Government Center or in the city where you reside. Beginning seven days prior to Election Day, voters can use the "direct balloting" process where they insert their ballot directly into the ballot counter instead of sealing into absentee envelopes.

#### On Election Day at your Polling Place

Polls are open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Find your polling place at [MNVotes.org](http://MNVotes.org).

Social distancing protocols and CDC guidelines will be adhered to for all in-person voting. For more information, visit [anokacounty.us/elections](http://anokacounty.us/elections).

### Election Judges Needed



Anoka County residents are needed to serve as election judges in 2020. Many election judges who routinely perform this service are older and fall in the higher-risk populations for the COVID-19 pandemic.

New judges are needed to step up and answer the call to support this foundational democratic process. Election judges must be eligible to vote in Minnesota and able to read, write and speak English. Students 16 and 17 years old can be election judge trainees. Election judges are paid for their service, and Minnesota law requires that employers provide them with time off from work without a reduction in pay to be an election judge.

- To work on Election Day (Aug. 11 and/or Nov. 3), contact your city clerk.
- To work as an election judge helping with the processing of absentee ballots at the county (beginning 14 days prior to Election Day), contact Anoka County Elections at 763-324-1300 or [elections@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:elections@co.anoka.mn.us).



All election judges will receive training, will be provided masks and will perform their work in an environment that follows social distancing protocols and CDC guidelines.

**CHANGES INCLUDE:**

- Two of four windows open, with plexiglass barriers, to maintain social distancing space.
- Social distancing markers placed on the floor in front of the counter.
- Customer ticket numbering system implemented, as needed.
- A public research area that's available by appointment only.
- Expanded appointments for marriage license applications.

**Property Tax Refund Assistance**

Due to the Stay Safe Order, all the scheduled face-to-face property tax refund assistance sites have been suspended. Instead, Anoka County will offer limited appointments by phone, beginning July 1, to help senior citizens and people with disabilities apply for their homeowners/renters Minnesota property tax refund. Volunteer tax preparers will answer property tax questions and assist you in filling out your forms, which can then be filed. For updates, visit: [anokacounty.us/725/Retired-Senior-Volunteer-Program](http://anokacounty.us/725/Retired-Senior-Volunteer-Program) or call 763-324-1480.

To file your M1PR online or to request the needed paper forms and booklets visit: [revenue.state.mn.us/filing-property-tax-refund](http://revenue.state.mn.us/filing-property-tax-refund). The MN Department of Revenue allows filing up to one year after the due date, therefore:

To receive your 2018 property tax refund, you must file the 2018 M1PR form by Aug. 15, 2020.

To receive your 2019 property tax refund, you must file the 2019 M1PR form by Aug. 15, 2021.

**WAYS TO VOTE IN ANOKA COUNTY**  
for primary and general elections

**AVAILABLE TO ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS**

**BY MAIL**  
APPLY ONLINE TODAY!

To receive your ballot by mail for the 2020 primary and/or general election visit: [mnvotes.org](http://mnvotes.org)

For questions or to request a paper application:  
phone: 763.324.1300  
email: [elections@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:elections@co.anoka.mn.us)  
web: [anokacounty.us/elections](http://anokacounty.us/elections)

County Begins Mailing Ballots:  
PRIMARY- June 26  
GENERAL- September 18

**AT THE ANOKA COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER or YOUR CITY**  
Starting 46 days before Election Day

**AT YOUR POLLING PLACE**  
Find your polling place: [pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/](http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/)

**ELECTION DAY**  
PRIMARY- August 11  
GENERAL- November 3

**REGISTER TO VOTE:**  
[mnvotes.org](http://mnvotes.org)



# THE POWER OF PARKS

The "Power of Parks" is undeniable. Anoka County Parks continually strives to provide access for all to enjoy a place to go for a walk, unwind and relax, get fresh air, and so much more. Recently, Parks has been busy creating new ways for learning and experiencing the outdoors to help people enjoy the parks both virtually and in-person. Experience the "Power of Parks" by discovering new places and spaces with the help of the following ideas.

Summertime is a great time of year to get outside and be active. Anoka County Parks and Trails are open throughout the system, providing a place to go for a walk or bike ride. New signs have been added to the gatehouses, making it easy to purchase an annual vehicle permit without contact. The signs have scannable QR codes that make this possible.

Another new resource called "Maps To Go" consists of park maps integrated into the Google Maps platform. Maps are provided for each county park, as well as regional trails. Access the maps on the virtual Parks page and enjoy adventures with a helpful tool.

The virtual parks webpage can help guide people in some of the new activities that have been developed. Scavenger hunts, coloring pages, and park information sheets can be found at [anokacounty.us/3863/Virtual-Parks](http://anokacounty.us/3863/Virtual-Parks). The scavenger hunts have been extremely

popular to engage the entire family during their time in the parks. The virtual Parks webpage also features e-learning packets and Facebook videos on environmental and wildlife learning. Check it out, virtually!

Stay connected to the Parks with the new webpage listing updates on amenities and facilities within Anoka County Parks.

[anokacounty.us/3905/Covid-19-Anoka-County-Parks](http://anokacounty.us/3905/Covid-19-Anoka-County-Parks)

ANOKA COUNTY PARKS

RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK

JAN 21  
FEB 21  
MAR 21  
APR 21  
MAY 21  
JUN 21  
JUL 21  
AUG 21  
SEPT 21  
OCT 21  
NOV 21  
DEC 21

BUY YOUR ANNUAL VEHICLE PERMIT

[anokacounty.us/1887/Vehicle-Entry-Permit](http://anokacounty.us/1887/Vehicle-Entry-Permit)  
Anoka County News



# CHOMONIX GOLF COURSE IS OPEN

JOIN THE PLAYERS CLUB & GET 3 FREE ROUNDS OF GOLF!  
[WWW.CHOMONIX.COM/PLAYERS-CLUB](http://WWW.CHOMONIX.COM/PLAYERS-CLUB) // 763-324-3434

## ARE CLASSES BEING OFFERED?

**Yes!** The public can still stay connected to the Parks through virtual programming. Virtual Parks offer new ways to explore and learn from naturalists. The Programming Unit at Wargo Nature Center has adapted by delivering Facebook Live videos, weekly themed activities, e-learning programs, virtual programs, and digital field trip packets that can be downloaded.

### WEEKLY THEMES INCLUDE

- REPTILES 
- BIRDS 
- PREDATOR/PREY
- WEATHER
- TREE ID
- AND MORE! 

CALL WARGO NATURE CENTER FOR MORE INFORMATION 763-324-3350

VIRTUAL PARKS

[anokacounty.us/3863/Virtual-Parks](http://anokacounty.us/3863/Virtual-Parks)

## Economic Development Has Resources for Businesses

Businesses have questions and concerns right now about how to operate and survive during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anoka County Regional Economic Development has resources available to help.

To aid area employers in navigating the latest resources available, the Anoka County Regional Economic Development Authority (ACRED) teamed up with the county's Job Training Center to create a homepage of business resources to tackle COVID-19 impacts: [anokacountysuccess.org/covid-19-anoka-county-business-resources](https://anokacountysuccess.org/covid-19-anoka-county-business-resources). This site, which is continually updated, has information on unemployment insurance for employers, a section on federal and state financing, links to resources, and more. It also has county employee contact information for employers who have workforce-related questions, those looking to hire who want to participate in virtual hiring events and post jobs, and free business technical assistance through Anoka County's Open to Business advisor.

Jacqueline Hajder, Anoka County's economic development coordinator, has been working to provide businesses

## Transportation Division Utilizing Creative Means to Conduct Business

Anoka County's Transportation Division, like every division in the county, had to get creative about service delivery when the pandemic struck.

Thankfully, due to the nature of the work conducted by the departments in transportation, most operations have remained largely unaffected, other than having to implement new social distancing requirements for workers and increasing cleaning and disinfecting procedures on county-owned equipment.

However, some departments do see a higher volume of in-person business, and measures have been taken to lessen this traffic to ensure the safety of the public and county staff, while still providing robust services.

The Surveyor's Office, for example, used to field a fair amount walk-in traffic for its plat-checking services. Walk-in traffic has now ceased, and those who have business with the office must now make an appointment. Right-of-way acquisition meetings, performed by the Highway Department, used to be conducted indoors, but now

resources and advice in a way that emphasizes safety during the COVID-19 outbreak, by reducing face-to-face interaction. She's been hosting meetings with businesses, cities and other community stakeholders via online conferencing software. A virtual event recently hosted under the ACRED partnership was the Fiber Summit, which was a conference to educate community stakeholders about the importance of improving fiber in rural parts of the north metro, and how to accomplish those projects.



CONTACT

For business questions, email Jacqueline Hajder: [Jacqueline.Hajder@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:Jacqueline.Hajder@co.anoka.mn.us) or call 612-358-8925

much of that businesses is being done outside, where social distancing is easier. Contracts, invoices, letters, and other documentation that needed to be signed all used to be done inter-office, which required multiple people handling paper. This process will soon be replaced by an electronic signature software, which eliminates paper handling and also reduces processing time.

Transportation is also one of the many county divisions relying heavily on virtual meetings to conduct business. Not only is this a no-risk option, it's also a time saver. Trips into the downtown metro area and other places around the state for in-person meetings have been replaced by ones conducted online, which has improved efficiency.

"Our transportation division, which is so integral to the infrastructure of our county, is operating as smoothly as an organization can in the midst of a pandemic," said Scott Schulte, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners. "The changes instituted, in many cases, have actually led to more effective service."

## Information Technology is Essential for Operations

Without the Anoka County Information Technology Department, providing service in a remote fashion to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic would have been nearly impossible.

Information Technology is the backbone that allows the county to conduct its day-to-day operations, and it has been essential in supporting all county departments after most county employees transitioned to working from home.

Some of the work completed by the department to ensure continued service includes:

- Using existing infrastructure to allow for more than half of county employees to work from home.
- Ordering more laptops at the start of the outbreak in the U.S., which has led to more employees working remotely.
- Providing support for WebEx meetings, which allows county employees to interact and work together in a virtual environment.
- Providing support for applications that let county employees remote into servers they need to do their jobs.
- Researching options for digital signature applications, so contracts, public-facing forms and other important documents can be signed with no in-person contact.

Anoka County Information Technology is always researching ways to help its employees, and its finding solutions to make serving the public more seamless. It is currently exploring how to add more functionality to the county's public websites for email, chat and video support, and the department is doing more behind-the-scenes work to ensure functionality continues and improves for every county department.

"In early March, it became apparent the county would have to make a shift and have the majority of its employees work from home for an undetermined amount of time, said District 5 Anoka County Commissioner Mike Gamache. "Information Technology put in a huge amount of work to make this happen, and their work is ongoing. It's amazing what they've been able to do in such a short amount of time."

## License Centers Offering Drop Boxes, Safe In-Person Experience

With seven locations around the county and a high volume of customers every day of the week, the Anoka County License and Passport Centers have been substantially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In-person services were suspended during the stay-at-home order, but processing of documents like tab renewals, DNR registration renewals and title transfers have continued because of the addition of drop boxes at four license center locations, Ramsey City Hall, the Anoka County Government Center and the Blaine Human Service Center. For more information on the drop boxes, visit [anokacounty.us/3897/Drop-Box-Services](https://anokacounty.us/3897/Drop-Box-Services).

When in-person services resumed, changes were implemented to protect the public and county staff. Those changes included adding plexiglass at all license center locations to create a barrier between staff and the public, requiring appointments to keep crowding to a minimum, and adding social distancing markers on the floors at all county license centers.

## Remote Technology Usage by County Employees

February: 9,183  
March: 30,503  
April: 42,052



February: 40  
March: 835  
April: 2,335

"Our license and passport centers had to dramatically shift how they do business, but they've been up to the challenge," said District 3 Anoka County Commissioner Robyn West. "The drop boxes have been very effective for the processing of a variety of documentation, and the new setup of our centers has increased safety amid the pandemic."

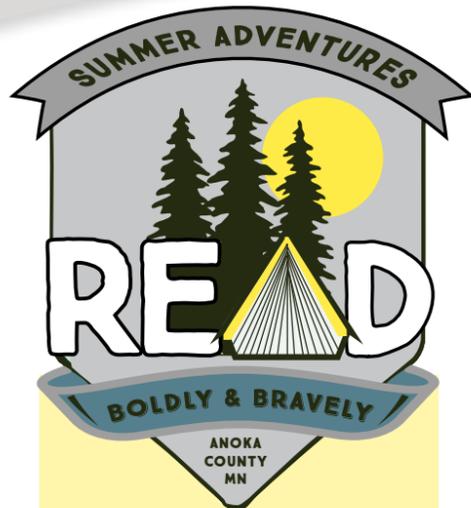


### Real ID Deadline Extended

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is extending the REAL ID full enforcement deadline to

Oct. 1, 2021. Previously, it was Oct. 1, 2020. For more information on REAL ID, visit [realid.dps.mn.gov](https://realid.dps.mn.gov).

Visit [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) for more information on upcoming programs



## FEATURED EVENTS

### 2020 SUMMER ADVENTURES

NOW TO AUG. 15

### NEW THIS SUMMER REGISTER ONLINE

Complete challenges and track your adventures online.

Download the mobile app

Beanstack Tracker on your device or visit

[anokacounty.beanstack.org](http://anokacounty.beanstack.org).

Earn digital badges for:

- Hours of reading
- Writing book reviews
- Completing activities

### KIDS EARN A FREE BOOK WITH 20 BADGES

Book prizes can be picked up once the library reopens to the public.

## Innovations at your library

Anoka County Library connects the community to ideas, information, and inspiration through its collection of nearly 400,000 items, hundreds of digital tools and databases, classes and workshops, one-on-one help from librarians, and internet and computer access. The library continually adapts to the changing needs of the community. During this challenging time of COVID-19, service delivery looks different, but the Library is still providing education and entertainment for all ages through its collection, programs, and librarians.

## LIBRARY COLLECTION

- The library is always accessible 24/7 online. Check out eBooks, audiobooks, and eMagazines through cloudLibrary, RB Digital, and eBooks Minnesota. Stream movies and documentaries through Kanopy. Research and learn about topics that interest you with access to hundreds of databases. Take online language classes through Transparent Language, build skills in design, technology, leadership, and business with Lynda, and learn from top artists with Creativebug. Homework help and college test prep, including live online tutoring sessions in English and Spanish, is available through Brainfuse Help Now. In response to the pandemic, additional online resources have been added to support families with virtual learning, and more resources have been put toward eBooks.
- While the buildings were closed to the public until June 24, the Library developed curbside pickup service to provide patrons with the books, movies, games, music, and other items they love from the library. This contactless service allowed people to place holds on items online, and then appointments were made online or via phone for a pickup time when the items became available. From April 1 to May 31, a total of 43,766 items were distributed through curbside service.
- Library card expiration dates were extended and an online card application process was implemented to ensure everyone had access to the library during the closure. For county residents who don't have a library card, visit [tinyurl.com/ACLcards](http://tinyurl.com/ACLcards) to fill out an application for immediate access to online resources. A permanent card will be mailed to you that will give you access to check out physical materials. From March 17 to May 31, a total of 830 library cards were issued through the online application process.
- WiFi is available in the parking lots of all Anoka County libraries.

## LIBRARY STAFF

- Staff are available via phone, email, and chat to assist patrons with their information needs, including reading recommendations and accessing county resources. From March 17 to May 31, librarians completed 5,527 reference interactions related to tax information, completing the census, finding reliable information about COVID-19, and utilizing county resources.

## LIBRARY PROGRAMS

- Programs such as story times, performances, and hands-on learning opportunities are favorites among library visitors. Due to the pandemic, classes and programs are now being offered in a virtual format with a mixture of live classes, Facebook events, and prerecorded programs. Tune into the Library's Facebook page for live family story time Monday-Friday at 10:15 a.m. Story times will also be playing periodically on QCTV throughout the summer. Check out the online event calendar at [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) for programs for all ages including STEM, arts and crafts, and cooking classes.
- While in-person contact is still limited, the Library is offering programs that can be done with safe social distancing practices such as story walks and stroller story times.
- Summer Adventures, the library's summer reading program, can be completed online for the first time this year. Adults can participate now, too!

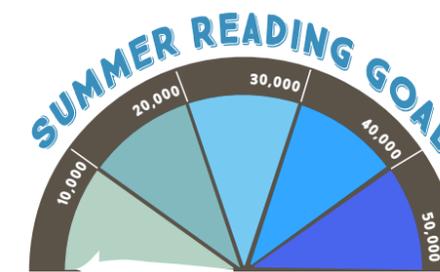
## VIRTUAL LIBRARY

### Virtual Family Story time

Weekdays, 10:15 a.m. Visit the Library's Facebook page at [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) for live storytimes. #ACLAtHome tag on social media.

### Virtual Programs

Visit the Library's online event calendar at [anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org) for fun and educational programs.



TOTAL HOURS READ

50,000 Hours

Adults and Youth: Track your reading this summer!

Help the Library Reach its summer reading goal! If every person in Anoka County reads for just 10 minutes this summer, the Library will exceed its goal.

This year, all ages (including adults) can contribute and track their reading time online. Download the Beanstack Tracker mobile app.

## SCREEN-FREE ACTIVITIES

### Gear up for fun and discovery

Place a hold on any of these items from the Library's collection:

**PARK PACKS:** Everything you need for outdoor exploration and nature discovery - includes a free parking pass to Anoka County Parks.



### DISCOVER KITS:

Learn a new hobby like birdwatching, knitting, the ukulele, and more.



### TABLE TOP GAMES:

Your camping trip just got better with board games and strategy games for teens and adults.



### CAKE PANS:

Specialty themed bakeware collection - Why buy a cake pan when you can borrow it for free?



Anoka County  
2100 3rd Ave.  
Anoka MN 55303-5024

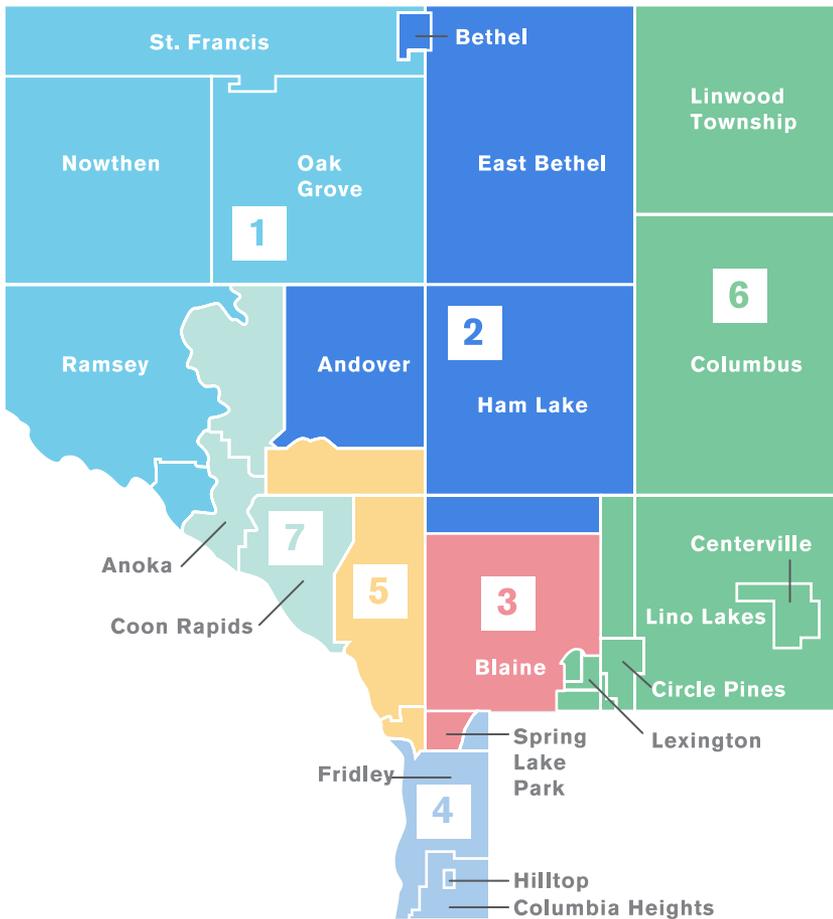
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ANOKA COUNTY



Visit our website!

## ANOKA COUNTY LEADERSHIP

763-324-4700



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](http://anokacounty.us). "Anoka County News" is produced by Anoka County Communications, Erik Thorson, Director, 763-324-4612 [publicinfo@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:publicinfo@co.anoka.mn.us) • [anokacounty.us/newsletter](http://anokacounty.us/newsletter)  
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