

Minnesota Counties

A quarterly publication of the Association of Minnesota Counties.

Lac qui Parle County Commissioner Todd Patzer Elected AMC President for 2022

**WINTER
2022**

January
February
March

VOLUME 66, ISSUE 1



2022 AMC Executive Committee (from left to right): Past President Rich Sve (Lake), Second Vice President Neal Gaalswyk (Cass), President Todd Patzer (Lac qui Parle), First Vice President Mary Jo McGuire (Ramsey) and Secretary/Treasurer Larry Lindor (Pope).

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) is pleased to announce that Lac qui Parle County Commissioner Todd Patzer was elected to serve as association President in 2022 at the AMC Annual Conference in December.

Other 2022 AMC Officers elected include:

- AMC First Vice President: Mary Jo McGuire, Ramsey County
- AMC Second Vice President: Neal Gaalswyk, Cass County
- AMC Past President: Rich Sve, Lake County
- AMC Secretary/Treasurer: Larry Lindor, Pope County

As president of AMC, Patzer will preside over board of directors meetings, be the primary spokesperson for the association and represent AMC at both state and nationwide meetings. Patzer will work with the AMC Board of Directors, which includes county commissioners from all corners of the state. ■

Inaugural County/Tribal Relations Training

AMC and our partners from the Tribal Nations of Minnesota hosted the inaugural County/Tribal Relations Training on February 3 - 4, 2022, at Grand Casino Hinckley. Over 100 tribal and county leaders gathered to help to build trust and mutual respect between tribes and counties, ultimately building stronger relationships. The training provided an overview of federal policy and law related to Tribal Nations, consultation and partnership building between counties and Tribal Nations, and offered breakout sessions on some specific areas where counties and tribes work together. ■



Beltrami County Commissioner and AMC Tribal Relations Chair Tim Sumner welcomed attendees to the Tribal/County Relations Training.



The Tribal/County Relations Training closed with a panel of elected leaders from six of the Tribal Nations in Minnesota (from left to right): Chairman Robert Deschampe, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; Chairman Kevin DuPuis Sr., Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; Chief Executive Officer Melanie Benjamin, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe; Chairwoman Cathy Chavers, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa; Vice President Shelley Buck, Prairie Island Indian Community; President Robert Larsen, Lower Sioux Indian Community.

Non-Profit Org
US Postage
Paid
Twin Cities, MN
Permit #1146

Association of Minnesota Counties
125 Charles Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55103-2108

Happy New Year and Welcome to 2022!

At least I think that's what year it is now...

By Todd Patzer, Lac qui Parle County Commissioner and AMC President



If you are like me, it can be hard to remember when things have happened the last 22 months aside from the popular identifier of events as either “pre-COVID” or not. 2020 turned us on our heads in about a million ways, and 2021 was a blur of reactionary head spinning and political chaos. Hard as it may be to believe there was progress and success in the midst of all of that chaos. Lots of it!

So what does 2022 hold for us? Political division? New COVID variants? Economic uncertainty? A power struggle brought on by over hyped mid-term elections? Another season of Minnesota Viking mediocrity? The answer to all is nearly certainly yes. But there will be so much more than that. There will be success, victory, and joy as well. It is really just up to you how to prioritize the importance of events in your own life and the life of your families and communities. It all starts with you. You control how you react to the things that happen around you.

Politicians in Washington and St. Paul will fight and deal and maneuver and make decisions that have significant impact on our work and our lives. But they cannot control how you treat your fellow board members, your family, your staff, or your community unless you let them. Don't give them that power. They don't deserve it and they can't be trusted with it. No congress, or St. Paul legislative session will solve it, nor should they. It is human care, love, respect, admiration, and the humility to know that we don't understand experiences that were not our own that will light the path forward. A close and wise friend recently reminded me that times of chaos and strife are nothing new in this beautiful democracy. Civil war and social unrest and a variety of horrific events have ripped us to our core, and the American spirit rose above it. I believe it will win again, and again, and again. Don't ever give up!

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the annual conference in Bloomington in December. It was a great reminder of the bonds we share as part of our county family. As we continue to wrestle with the realities of the pandemic and learn to operate in a world where this new challenge will be present for the foreseeable future, we were reminded of the value of in-person interaction and conversation. I look forward to a year of getting to see as many of you as possible at various events throughout the year. At the same time, I understand that some are impacted greater than others because of risk factors that vary greatly across our membership. I respect the difficult decisions that we face in charting our individual paths in these times, and the ever-changing data we must use to make those decisions. There is nothing easy about it.

As we get set to usher in a new legislative session in St. Paul Julie and our team of AMAZING staff at AMC stand ready to advocate for our priority issues in St. Paul. Under Julie's leadership we have only cemented and enhanced our reputation as a reliable, professional, and expert organization uniting counties in our efforts not only to navigate legislative processes, but to help member counties deliver critical services to the people we serve. They need our help. Stay in touch with your legislators. Build relationships with them. E-mail them about issues important to your communities. Be ready to act if AMC calls on you to contact a key member. Our staff is supremely talented in this work. In fact, in all of my years of involvement at AMC I can confidently say the organization has never been stronger or more laden with talented people across the entire organization. That said, if you advocate along with them to your legislators the positive effects of that are increased exponentially.

It remains an absolute honor to represent you as your AMC President, and I look forward to a year of success and challenge and service. ■



2020-21 AMC President Rich Sve (Lake County) administers the oath of office to incoming AMC President Todd Patzer (Lac qui Parle County) at the AMC Annual Conference in December, 2021.



Association of Minnesota Counties

125 Charles Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55103-2108
Main Line: 651-224-3344, Fax: 651-224-6540
www.mncounties.org

Board of Directors

OFFICERS

President Todd Patzer (Lac qui Parle)
First Vice President Mary Jo McGuire (Ramsey)
Second Vice President Neal Gaalswyk (Cass)
Secretary/Treasurer Larry Lindor (Pope)
Past President Rich Sve (Lake)

DIRECTORS

District I Anne Marcotte (Aitkin)
District II Tim Sumner (Beltrami)
District III Darryl Tveitbakk (Pennington)
District IV Bob Kopitzke (Stevens)
District V Felix Schmiesing (Sherburne)
District VI Roger Imdieke (Kandiyohi)
District VII Blair Nelson (Waseca)
District VIII Rick Anderson (Lyon)
District IX Brad Anderson (Goodhue)
District X Jeff Reinert (Anoka)
..... Gayle Degler (Carver)
..... Mike Slavik (Dakota)
..... Marion Greene (Hennepin)
..... Jim McDonough (Ramsey)
..... Barb Weckman Brekke (Scott)
..... Stan Karwoski (Washington)

POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Environment & Natural Resources Luke Johnson (Pipestone)
General Government Gene Metz (Nobles)
Health & Human Services Tarryl Clark (Stearns)
Public Safety Jack Swanson (Roseau)
Transportation & Infrastructure Gordy Wagner (Pope)

NACo REPRESENTATIVES

NACo Second Vice President Mary Jo McGuire (Ramsey)
NACo Past President Colleen Landkamer (Blue Earth)
NACo Delegate Toni Carter (Ramsey)
100% Membership State Bob Fox (Renville)
Top 12 Membership State Susan Morris (Isanti)

MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Business & Partner Development Scott Schulte (Anoka)
Education & Training Gary Hendrickx (Swift)
Research Mike Slavik (Dakota)

AMC Office Staff

ADMINISTRATION

Executive Director Julie Ring 651-789-4330
Accountant Sue Bowman 651-789-4338
Member Engagement Coordinator Ryan Erdmann 651-789-4345
Research Analyst Jill Suurmeyer 651-789-4357
Administrative Assistant Donna Haupt 651-789-4356

MEMBER SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

Deputy Director Laurie Klupacs 651-789-4329
Communications Coordinator/
Webmaster Becky Pizinger 651-789-4332
Member Services Assistant Suzanne LaPalm 651-789-4333

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Manager & General Government Matt Hilgart 651-789-4343
Environment & Natural Resources Brian Martinson 651-789-4322
Health & Human Services:
Public Health Kari Oldfield 651-789-4354
Human Services Matt Freeman 651-789-4340
Child Wellbeing Angie Thies 651-789-4321
Public Safety Carli Stark 651-789-4335
Transportation & Infrastructure Emily Murray 651-789-4339

AFFILIATE/CONTRACT SERVICES

Affiliate Project Manager Becky Accettura 651-789-4336
Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB)
Director Jeanna Fortney 651-789-4323
Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties
(MACCAC) Director Carli Stark 651-789-4335
Local Public Health Association (LPHA)
Director Kari Oldfield 651-789-4354
Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators
(MACSSA)
Director Matt Freeman 651-789-4340
Project Manager Catherine Engstrom 651-789-4359
Child Wellbeing Policy Lead Angie Thies 651-789-4321
Minnesota County IT Leadership Association
(MNCITLA) Director Vacant

To Subscribe: Send \$31.95 to the Association of Minnesota Counties with a note requesting a subscription to the newspaper. Delivery begins upon receipt of payment for a one-year subscription (four issues).

To Advertise: Companies interested in advertising in Minnesota Counties should e-mail pizinger@mncounties.org.

To Contribute: Story ideas, articles and photographs are welcome. Please e-mail pizinger@mncounties.org.

Preferred Business Partners

Helping Minnesota's Counties Do Business Better.



Visit www.mncounties.org/pbp

to learn more about how the products and services offered by these companies could help you serve your citizens and employees better!

ASSOCIATE PARTNERS

Abdo
Amazon Web Services
Baker Tilly
BKV Group
CenterPoint Energy
CliftonLarsonAllen LLP
Comcast
Contegritty Group, Inc.
Dispute Resolution Institute - Mitchell Hamline School of Law
Ehlers
Enterprise Fleet Management
Galliard Capital Management
Goff Public
Hiller Commercial Floors
Houston Engineering, Inc.
ICS Consulting
ISG
Klein McCarthy Architects
Knutson Construction
Kraus-Anderson
Minnesota Asphalt Pavement Association
Minnesota Counties Computer Cooperative (MnCCC)
Minnesota Service Cooperatives
National Insurance Services
PreferredOne
Purple Wave Auction
Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney, P.A.
REPAY
Revize Government Websites
The Garland Company, Inc.
Wold Architects and Engineers
WSB

PREMIER PARTNERS



Successful plans take partnership.

With 300+ field reps, proprietary tools and a tailored approach to education, we're a solid partner through every step of the retirement preparation process.

To find out more, call:

Levi Lathen

☎ 414-477-0269

💻 www.nrsforu.com

✉ lathenl@nationwide.com



Association of
Minnesota Counties

Nationwide, through its affiliated retirement plan service and product providers, has endorsement relationships with the National Association of Counties and the International Association of Fire Fighters-Financial Corporation. More information about the endorsement relationships may be found online at www.nrsforu.com. Nationwide, its agents and representatives, and its employees are prohibited by law and do not offer investment, legal or tax advice. Please consult with your tax or legal advisor before making any decisions about plan matters. Retirement Specialists are registered representatives of Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, member FINRA. Nationwide and the Nationwide N and Eagle are service marks of Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. © 2018 Nationwide

NRM-12873MN (01/18)

Updated Bridging Divides Digital Toolkit Now Available

By Steven Reuter, Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution, Minnesota Department of Administration

Evil is a strong word.

When I think of evil acts, people, or events, I think of moments in history that were so horrifying that descriptions like 'wrong,' 'bad,' or 'inappropriate' fail to convey the suffering and cruelty. 'Evil' is a word we use to convey these moments when the humanity of the evil-doer can't be found; when the good of the world has been overshadowed by the loss and pain of the victims. The word used to be used sparingly. Today, however, the word 'evil' has become an adjective for people who disagree with us. The polarization driving this change is seeping into local government, friendships and even families.

The truth is that very few people get up in the morning wondering, "How can I make the world a worse place today than it was yesterday?" Most people, most of the time, are doing what they believe is best. Of course, people do things that are not kind, ethical, or productive. However, they generally do so not out of malfeasance, but out of a misguided attempt to solve a problem, because they are having a bad day (or decade), because they are unaware of the negative consequences of their actions, because they feel hurt, powerless or afraid, or for some other reason that is NOT that they are a terrible person with horrible motives. Yet it is extremely common for people in conflict to decide that the other is up to no good.

The good news is that new ideas are emerging on how to better handle and hopefully 'bridge' our growing divides. Core to these ideas is the need to recognize the humanity of those who disagree with us. We need to remove the word 'evil' from our description of opposing viewpoints and to recognize the intrinsic good in the vast majority of humanity. If we can stop ourselves from villainizing opposing views, we not only will feel better (research shows that hate is not good for our health) but will begin to build the foundation of mutual

understanding and trust that is the foundation of healthy communities. Not only that but we may find that this mutual understanding eventually leads us to recognize some tidbits of wisdom in opposing views and ultimately help us find a wise path forward together.

County governments are ideally positioned to model and to help their residents navigate this polarization in ways that enable their communities to take advantage of the opportunities and growth that are possible when divides are bridged. In a continuation of The State of Minnesota's Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution's partnership with AMC, we are bringing you some of the latest tools in a digital Bridging Divides Toolkit. This toolkit will enable you to lay a firm foundation for the bridges you have the opportunity to build every day.

The toolkit includes videos, podcasts, trainings, articles, opportunities to practice your bridging skills, and more. A few highlights include:

- **The Culture of Contempt Article** In this New York Times article, Former Executive Director of the American Enterprise Institute Arthur Brooks says the problem in America today is not incivility or intolerance. It's something far worse. It is a Culture of Contempt.
- **Bridging Differences Playbook** The Greater Good Science Center studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society. They have an entire program dedicated to bridging differences.
- **The Psychology Traits That Shape Your Political Beliefs:** An 8-minute TedX talk breaks down the link between our psychology and politics, showing how personality types largely fall into people who prioritize openness and flexibility (liberals) and those who prefer order and certainty (conservatives). Hear why both sets of traits are crucial to any society, and how differences are being dangerously exploited to divide us. ■

Check out the full Bridging Divides Digital Toolkit at: https://www.mncounties.org/meetings_and_education/bridging_divides_resources_for_counties.php



MPA

Master of Public Administration

- Course in St. Cloud, Plymouth, and online
- Perfect for full and part-time students
- Curriculum consists of management core and electives to fit student interests
- Faculty are full-time

UNLEASH LEADERSHIP



ST. CLOUD STATE
UNIVERSITY



MINNESOTA STATE
St. Cloud State University,
A member of Minnesota State

St. Cloud State University is committed to legal affirmative action, equal opportunity, access and diversity of its campus community. (<http://scsu.mn/scsuoea>)

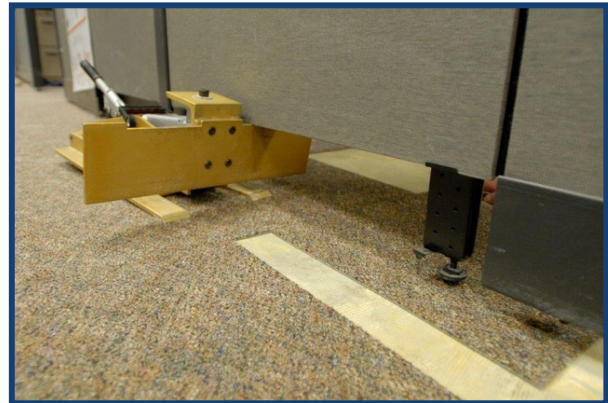
www.stcloudstate.edu/graduate/mpa/

New carpet. After hours. No furniture moving required.

Furniture lifting is a revolutionary system to enable the installation of flooring without removing furniture from your commercial space or you having to close your business. We use specialized equipment to replace your flooring quickly after hours without you having to lift a finger, let alone your desk.



We gently pry up the partitions to facilitate old carpet removal.



Mini-lift equipment is inserted under work stations, and we slide new carpet tile underneath.



The field carpet is installed.



Roll the new carpet to ensure adhesion, and we are done!

We are proud members and supporters of the Association of Minnesota Counties, State Engineers Guild, Minnesota Park and Recreation Association, Minnesota Library Association, Aging Services, Minnesota Association of School Maintenance Supervisors, Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota Association of School Business Officials, and Minnesota School Boards Association.



hillercarpet.com/commercial

2909 South Broadway
Rochester, MN 55904

888.724.1766

info@hillercarpet.com

AMC Annual Awards Presented at 2021 Annual Conference

2020-21 AMC President Rich Sve, Lake County, presented the following awards at the AMC annual conference December 7 in Bloomington.

County Achievement Awards

Five outstanding programs from counties across Minnesota were recognized with Association of Minnesota Counties' (AMC) 2021 'County Achievement Awards' for exhibiting excellence and innovation in their counties.

MARKIT - Marshall and Kittson Counties

During 1990, Kittson County along with neighboring Marshall County joined together to form the MARKIT Landfill Joint Powers Board with the initial intent of bringing the existing Anderson-Kittson Sanitary Landfill in operation since 1972 into compliance with existing solid waste regulations. Today, MARKIT accepts solid waste from Kittson and Marshall Counties as the owners of the facility and from the counties of Roseau, Lake of the Woods, Koochiching, Pennington and Red Lake on a contractual basis. MARKIT also contracts with Red Lake Indian Nation and parts of NE North Dakota. The draw to utilizing the facility by other counties is the 15-year contracts where the tonnage rate is held in place for the length of the contract. In the beginning of service, the daily tonnage was 20 tons it has grown to a daily solid waste volume of 205 tons/day based on a five-day work week.



Trails & Tales Summer Reading Program - Blue Earth County

"Trails & Tales," the Blue Earth County Library System's 2021 Summer Reading Program, successfully engaged local families in a wide variety of events and encouraged hundreds of children to keep reading and learning throughout the summer. The program consisted of three components—"Take-and-Make" project kits, reading goals, and programming—that offered safe opportunities for families to get active, involved, and excited about learning together. The BECLS also worked with local businesses and organizations to acquire fun incentives for participants, including tickets to baseball games and the local children's museum, as well as opportunities for free meals, books, games, and other activities.



Evening Reporting Center (ERC) - Pine County

When asked, "how do kids change?" the answer is "spend time with them." Pine County truly digs deeper with kids through their Evening Reporting Center (ERC) and that is why their data is showing positive impacts. Pine County's Evening Reporting Center (ERC) is one of only a few such programs that exist in Minnesota counties (Hennepin County has two such programs). The ERC's ability to work both in-person and virtually with kids in Pine County has helped with transportation barriers. Pine County and Pine County Probation understand the significance of keeping children in the community versus placing out of home. The county's hope is that at the conclusion of the grant in December 2022, the data will show the importance of justice reinvestment and current Out-of-Home Placement dollars can be re-allocated to continue to fund the work of the ERC.



2020 Census and Voter Engagement - Ramsey County

Ramsey County conducted a comprehensive community engagement strategy for the 2020 Census and the 2020 Presidential Election that focused on historically undercounted and underrepresented communities. This strategy included (1) the Census and Voter Engagement Grant initiative, (2) establishing a Complete Count Committee (CCC) in partnership with the City of Saint Paul, and (3) a sustained focus on community meetings, focus groups, and projects to share accurate, timely census and elections information. Their efforts made a difference. Census self-response rates jumped from 75.6% in 2010 to 79.1% in 2020. In the 2020 Election, Ramsey County voters achieved a 77.4% turnout, the highest-ever for a presidential election. The county forged valuable relationships with key community partners, whom the county has continued to work with on other important initiatives.



Windows Down, Sleeves Up: A Collaborative County Approach to Mass Vaccination - Carlton County

In July 2020, prior to a COVID-19 vaccine being authorized, multiple Carlton County Departments (Public Health & Human Services, GIS, Land Department, Sheriff's Office, Transportation Department, County Coordinator, Maintenance Department) came together to plan and operationalize one the first drive-thru vaccination clinics in Minnesota. This collaboration was innovative and increased efficiency for administering vaccines in Carlton County in the following ways: Carlton County GIS created a system utilizing an Esri application (Survey123) to track real time vaccines administered and expedited the process of registration using technology instead of paper, handwritten forms. The drive thru model allowed Carlton County to administer on average 100 vaccines per hour, faster than a walk thru clinic. This model allowed for better use of resources for PPE; especially when supply chain shortages were interrupted. Overall, Carlton County would not have been able to vaccinate residents as quickly without the collaboration from all of the different Department Staff. Each Department played a different role in operationalizing the clinic from setup of cones and signage, to administering vaccine. This partnership has changed the way Carlton County does mass vaccination and will be used as a model/plan for future mass dispensing responsibilities. ■



Schulte Receives AMC President's Award

Anoka County Commissioner Scott Schulte received the 2021 Association of Minnesota Counties' (AMC) President's Award for years of dedicated service and exemplary leadership in county government. 2020-21 AMC President Rich Sve (Lake County Commissioner) selected Schulte to receive this honor.



The prestigious President's Award is presented to an individual who has a deep history of public service to their community and to their county. As a lifelong Rotarian first elected to the Anoka County board in 2012, Schulte has served as board chair for the past 2 ½ years. A current member of the AMC Board of Directors and an AMC past president, Schulte believes that a good county commissioner is versatile, passionate, and can make decisions that benefit the most citizens possible. ■

County Conservation Awards

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) County Conservation Awards were presented by 2021 AMC President and Lake County Commissioner Rich Sve and BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke.

Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership of Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Pine, and Washington Counties

Since 2017, fifteen government partners in Anoka, Chisago, Isanti, Pine, and Washington Counties have worked together to develop and implement a comprehensive watershed management plan for the Lower St. Croix Watershed. The partnership forges a relationship between counties inside and outside the metropolitan area and encourages a spirit of collaboration that encompasses more than just water quality metrics. Partners believe that the St. Croix River, groundwater, lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands, and upland habitat in the Lower St. Croix watershed sustain healthy ecosystems, recreation, public health, tourism, agriculture, the economy, and quality of life in our communities.



Crow Wing County's Community Partnership with the Highway Department

From 2014-2021, the Crow Wing County (CWC) Highway Department partnered with the Cities of Crosslake and Manhattan Beach, Big Pine Lake Association, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, citizen groups, and Soil and Water Conservation



District to implement stormwater runoff mitigation projects along County State Aid Highway 66 and rock riffles structures. The partnership leveraged over \$ 2.26 million in grant funds, reduced over 46 pounds of phosphorus to Big Trout and Island Loon Lakes, and expanded fish migration to 15 lakes and additional 12 stream miles. ■

Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers

Economic Development Award

Elevate Business Academy, an initiative of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC), elevates businesses for success through education and mentorship. Our guiding objective is to create economic opportunity for all, because we believe in a thriving community fueled by confident and equipped business owners. The EDC has supported 14 students that represent new or growing Kandiyohi County businesses through Elevate, and will continue to support local entrepreneurs by providing these classes twice a year in English, Spanish, and Somali. For more information, visit www.elevatebusinessacademy.com. ■



Outstanding Service Awards

Individuals from Anoka, Pine, Ramsey and Renville Counties received Association of Minnesota Counties' (AMC) 2021 'Outstanding Service Awards' for exhibiting excellence, innovation and dedication to their work in county government.

Cindy Cesare - Anoka County Human Services Division Manager

Cindy Cesare was recognized for her leadership, continued drive for excellence and her dedication to the mission of serving residents in a respectful, innovative, and fiscally responsible manner. Cindy started her career with Anoka County in 1992 and is now the Human Services Division Manager. Over these past 30 years Cindy has worked in various roles and in each role, she has consistently been willing to take on added responsibilities. Her ability to work with staff and understand their work and the day-to-day challenges they face is rare in a leader. Cindy works hard, is dedicated, and stands her ground on the tough issues. She is analytical, knowledgeable, compassionate and is a team player.



Steve Hallan - Pine County Commissioner

A life of service defines Steve Hallan. He served in the Minnesota Army National Guard, worked in the local public school system and a 14-district consortium in the technical field, served on countless local boards, volunteered, and has an impressive fifteen years as a Pine County Commissioner. He has served as Board Chair six times and Vice Chair two times. While working and serving as commissioner, Steve has been involved in many volunteer endeavors. Steve has sat on thirteen Pine County boards and committees and an impressive 23 outside boards and committees. His commitment to Pine County and its citizens is evident in everything he does.



Kathy Hedin - Ramsey County Deputy Manager

Kathy Hedin has 20 years of progressive leadership experience in local government. Kathy oversees the county's largest service team comprised of six departments, 2300 employees and nearly 40% of the county's budget. Kathy served as the Public Health Director for Ramsey County and continues to be a key leader in the county's continuing COVID-19 pandemic response. Her many years of public service and leadership experience include public health administration, pandemic response leadership, disease prevention, violence prevention, adolescent health, racial and health equity, and environmental health. No photo available.



Lisa Herges - Renville County Administrator

Lisa Herges, with her 16 years of experience and dedication to county government, went to work in Mille Lacs County to find deficiencies. Her philosophy is to be there for all employees to succeed to make the county run smoother. She has the ability to view all government as all connected. Lisa will always give her honest open opinion. She is professional and will advise but always remains neutral. She is willing to take on more duties to do whatever it takes to get the job done. ■



New MCIT Executive Director Hired



MCIT completed its search for a new executive director. **Gerd W. Clabaugh** assumed the leadership position in early January, succeeding Robyn Sykes who retired after 22 years.

Clabaugh is only the third executive director in the 43-year history of MCIT. He has more than 30 years of experience in organizational and financial administration, management, strategic improvement and oversight of governmental health care agencies.

Clabaugh's most recent experience was director of the Iowa Department of Public Health. Appointed by two governors, he served in that role from 2014 to 2020 and was responsible for directing the state's public health agency with an annual budget of \$250 million and more than 425 employees.

He also served on the Johnston, Iowa, city council for 12 years, chaired the board of directors of the regional solid waste agency in the greater Des Moines area and managed Iowa's state public employees' health benefits and workers' compensation programs. Clabaugh is also a frequent instructor and lecturer on public health issues.

According to MCIT Board Chair Felix Schmiesing, "MCIT is fortunate to have someone of Gerd's professional experience and expertise join the organization. He has a reputation as a transformative leader who is well-equipped to take MCIT into the future."

Clabaugh says, "I am excited about the opportunity to work with the MCIT Board and staff to continue the strong tradition of services to Minnesota, as well as make improvements and to meet the needs of our stakeholders in our fast-changing landscape." ■

Annual Meeting Brings Members Together

Board Chair Felix Schmiesing called the 2021 annual MCIT membership meeting to order Dec. 6 at the Doubletree Hotel in Bloomington. The meeting was held in conjunction with the AMC annual conference with member representatives attending from across the state. Schmiesing welcomed attendees, commenting on the positive energy that is generated when members come together.

Financial Report

MCIT Finance Manager Cheri Donovan reported that MCIT once again received an unmodified opinion from the independent audit firm of Eide Bailly LLP for the 2020 audit. Notable elements from the financial statement include:

- Member contributions of \$38.6 million represents a \$4 million increase from 2019, which was influenced by an aggregate increase in property/casualty rates and an overall increase in the exposure base of members.
- 2020 revenues were \$50.7 million, while expenses for the year totaled \$32.9 million.
- Net investment activities were \$11.8 million, which is an increase of \$1.4 million from 2019.
- Claims paid and changes in reserves increased by \$5.2 million to \$19.1 million in 2020. The increase was a result of payments related to law enforcement claims and a larger positive adjustment required at the conclusion of the actuary's year-end analysis.
- Reinsurance premiums paid in the amount of \$6.7 million compared to \$4.8 million in 2019. The increase is a result of separate specialty property reinsurance coverage secured for waste-to-energy members.
- A dividend of \$10 million was returned to members.
- MCIT ended 2020 with a fund balance of \$92.8 million.

Donovan also reported on the unaudited finances of MCIT as of Sept. 30, 2021, specifically:

- Member contributions of \$30.3 million are \$1.9 million more than at that time in 2020. The difference is again attributable to aggregate rate increases in the property/casualty division and an increase in member's exposure base.
- Net investment activities total \$2.9 million, which is comparable to earnings at the same time in 2020 of \$3.5 million.
- Total paid claims of \$13.9 million is \$4.6 million less than at Sept. 30, 2020. Several factors account for the difference, most notably the continued delay in processing law enforcement claims because of the court system shut down necessitated by COVID-19.
- Total revenues are \$28.8 million, and total expenses are \$36.3 million.
- A dividend of \$12 million was declared earlier in 2021 and distributed to members in November.



Winona, Lac qui Parle, Todd Counties Recognized with 2021 MCIT Annual Awards

MCIT Board Chair Felix Schmiesing announced the recipients of MCIT's annual awards during the Trust's 2021 Annual Membership Meeting on December 6. Every year MCIT recognizes three counties that excel at preventing and mitigating losses.

The **2021 County of the Year** award recipient is **Winona County**. This award honors the county that has set the standard of excellence in risk management and loss control for the year. Winona County's leaders proved to be strong in their efforts to educate staff on mitigating exposures and providing superior assistance when claims arose.

Lac qui Parle County earned the award for **Outstanding Performance in the Workers' Compensation Division**. The award acknowledges the county's efforts in reducing work-related injuries, demonstrated by the consistent improvement of its experience modification factor. The award for **Outstanding Performance in the Property/Casualty Division** went to **Todd County**. This award recognizes the efforts of the county to implement effective loss control and risk management practices that better protect member property and citizens from financial loss.

Criteria used to identify recipients include performance in risk management and loss control efforts, responsiveness to program initiatives, and property/casualty claims and workers' compensation claims administration. ■

Year in Review

Chair Schmiesing commented on the work of the Trust during 2021. The last of MCIT's staff returned to the office in April. Staff continued to adapt to delivering services virtually and when possible in person. Although MCIT continued to provide remote risk management and loss control services, in-person training sessions resumed in the fall with "Managing the Human Resource" and "How to Conduct an Employee Investigation"—both filled to capacity.

MCIT has several initiatives underway with the goal of "bending the curve" on losses that may impact the future cost of reinsurance. Claims arising out of law enforcement; particularly jail operations, continue to affect MCIT's finances. MCIT is working closely with county sheriffs and jail administration on strategies to reduce claim frequency and severity. Increased emphasis on cyber-security is being stressed with members as well.

Concluding his remarks, Schmiesing confirmed that MCIT's financial position is strong. MCIT remains fully funded because of consistent rating and reserving practices coupled with diligent oversight and management of MCIT's investment program.

But key to MCIT's success is member loyalty. He thanked the members for their continued commitment to safety, controlling losses and participation in their program, MCIT.

Incumbents Returned to Office

Pursuant to the MCIT Bylaws, the election of board members was conducted during the 2021 annual membership meeting Dec. 6. This year two seats were up for election.

Representing the Nominating Committee, board member Kirk Peysar, Aitkin County auditor, outlined the process to call for candidates. He reported that a call was issued Oct. 4 to all individuals eligible to serve on the MCIT Board. At the close of the Nov. 10 deadline, only the incumbents expressed interest in the positions. Peysar placed each incumbent into nomination.



Yellow Medicine County Commissioner Ron Antony was unanimously re-elected to the board for a four-year term, expiring Dec. 31, 2025. Commissioner Antony was first elected to the MCIT Board in December 2017. He has served as the vice-chair since January 2021 and has been a member of the Claims, Governance and Personnel committees.



Becker County Commissioner Ben Grimsley was appointed to the MCIT Board in February 2021 to fill the unexpired term of former Polk County Commissioner Don Diedrich. The term expires Dec. 31, 2022. Commissioner Grimsley was unanimously elected to complete this term. ■

Meeting Remotely Under Open Meeting Law

Members often have questions regarding remote participation in meetings subject to the Minnesota Open Meeting Law, such as a county board of commissioners meeting.

There are two sections of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law that allow local government board members to be counted as part of the quorum and participate remotely in meetings. The first, Minnesota Statutes, Section 13D.02 can be used for any meeting that would be covered by the Open Meeting Law.

The second, Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.021 is limited to circumstances when an in-person meeting or a meeting conducted under Section 13D.02 is not practical or prudent because of a health pandemic or an emergency declared under Chapter 12.

Each statute has different requirements. Failure to comply with the requirements of the particular statute under which the board is meeting may mean that the remote board member is unable to be counted as part of the quorum nor participate in all proceedings.

Section 13D.02: Other Entity Meetings by Interactive Technology

Section 13D.02 allows a local government board member to be considered present at the meeting for purposes of determining a quorum and participating in all proceedings from a remote location via interactive technology when certain statutory conditions are met.

“Interactive technology” means a device, software program or other application that allows individuals in different physical locations to see and hear one another (Minn. Stat. § 13D.001, subd. 2).

The statutory conditions for meeting via interactive technology include all of the following:

- All members of the body participating in the meeting, wherever their physical location, can hear and see one another and can hear and see all discussion and testimony presented at any location at which at least one member is present.
- Members of the public present at the regular meeting location of the body can hear and see all discussion and testimony and all votes of all members of the body.
- At least one member of the body is physically present at the regular meeting location.
- All votes are conducted by roll call so each member’s vote on each issue can be identified and recorded.
- Each location at which a member of the body is present is open and accessible to the public.

There are two exceptions to the requirement that the board member’s remote location be open and accessible to the public. The first applies to board members who are serving in the military and are at a required drill, deployed or on active duty.

The second exception is when a board member has been advised by a health care professional against being in a public place for personal or family medical reasons during

a state of emergency declared under Minnesota Statutes, Section 12.31 or within 60 days of it ending.

These limited exceptions to the open and accessible requirement can be used by a board member no more than three times in a calendar year.

Entities must give notice of the regular meeting location and any locations at which board members will be participating via interactive technology, unless the remote location is closed to the public under the limited exceptions. The timing and method of providing the notice must be as described in Minnesota Statutes, Section 13D.04 (which describes notice provisions for regular, special and emergency meetings).

Generally for most regular and special meetings, this means that the notice must be posted on the principal bulletin board (or on the door of its usual meeting room if there is no principal bulletin board) and mailed or otherwise delivered to each person who has filed a written request for special meeting notices at least three days before the date of the meeting.¹

To the extent practical, the government entity shall allow a person to monitor the meeting electronically from a remote location.

The minutes for a meeting conducted under Section 13D.02 must reflect the names of any members appearing by interactive technology and state the reason or reasons for the appearance by interactive technology.

Section 13D.021: Meetings During a Pandemic or Chapter 12 Emergency

Section 13D.021 permits meeting by either telephone or interactive technology when the presiding officer, chief legal counsel or chief administrative officer for the governing body determines that an in-person meeting or a meeting conducted under Section 13D.02 is not practical or prudent because of a health pandemic or an emergency declared under Chapter 12.

Whether an in-person meeting or a meeting conducted under Section 13D.02 is not practical or prudent because of the COVID-19 health pandemic may depend on the particular circumstances of the governing body. The determination may take local public health conditions into account, as well as state and federal guidance.

As a best practice, the reasoning for this determination should be placed on the record at the beginning of the meeting or done by resolution. The board could also place this reasoning in its meeting notice.

Governing boards do want to take caution that Section 13D.021 is not inadvertently being used to avoid the more stringent requirements of Section 13D.02. For example, the Minnesota Department of Administration has opined that when a quorum of board members was able to gather in person at the regular meeting location, this contradicted the prior determination that an in-person meeting or a meeting under Section 13D.02 was not practical or prudent.²

In addition to the determination that an in-person meeting under Section 13D.02 is not practical or prudent, all of the following conditions must also be met:

- All members of the body participating in the meeting, wherever their physical location, can hear one another

and can hear all discussion and testimony.

- Members of the public present at the regular meeting location of the body can hear all discussion and testimony and all votes of the members of the body, unless attendance at the regular meeting location is not feasible due to the health pandemic or emergency declaration.
- At least one member of the body, chief legal counsel or chief administrative officer is physically present at the regular meeting location, unless unfeasible due to the health pandemic or emergency declaration.
- All votes are conducted by roll call, so each member’s vote on each issue can be identified and recorded.

To the extent practical, the government entity shall allow a person to monitor the meeting electronically from a remote location.

Notice must be provided of the regular meeting location, the fact that some board members may be participating by telephone or interactive technology and the ability for the public to monitor the meeting electronically. The timing and method of providing the notice must be as described in Minnesota Statutes, Section 13D.04, as described above.

When all required conditions are met, remotely attending board members will be considered present at the meeting for purposes of determining a quorum and participating in all proceedings from a remote location via telephone or interactive technology.

If attendance at the regular meeting location is not feasible due to the health pandemic or emergency declaration and the public body’s practice is to offer a public comment period at in-person meetings, members of the public shall be permitted to comment from a remote location during the public comment period of the meeting to the extent practical.

Further Information

Members continuing to hold meetings with remote participation are encouraged to review the conditions and requirements of the statutory section under which they are meeting.

The Minnesota Department of Administration, Data Practices Office, has a wealth of resources on its website. Staff are available to answer Open Meeting Law questions, as well as questions about the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

MCIT has a variety of resources about the Open Meeting Law on its website and the risk management staff is available to provide general risk management information about this law. Members should consult with their own legal counsel regarding how the statutes apply to a specific situation. ■

¹ Minn. Stat. § 13D.04, subd. 1 states that if a public body decides to hold a regular meeting at a time or place different than in its schedule of regular meetings, it shall give the same notice of the meeting as that is provided in this section for a special meeting.

² See Minnesota Department of Administration Advisory Opinion 21-003.

2022 Reinsurance Renewals See Steep Increases

The MCIT Board of Directors was presented with 2022 renewal quotes for property and liability reinsurance at its Nov. 12 meeting. For the past several years, reinsurance carriers have scrutinized their renewals with a particular focus on exposures presented by public entity operations. Anxiety about these risks along with MCIT’s loss experience results in the Trust paying more for reinsurance in 2022.

Property Reinsurance

With renewal increases of 14 percent and 15 percent in 2020 and 2021 respectively, MCIT’s reinsurance broker, Guy Carpenter, aggressively marketed MCIT to the property reinsurance market. More than 48 reinsurers worldwide were approached. Only Travelers had the capacity and appetite to cover MCIT’s entire \$200 million property coverage limit.

According to Janna Hepper of Guy Carpenter, the Travelers’ quote reflects a 27.5 percent premium increase over 2021. This increase is partially a reflection of the ever increasing value of members’ existing buildings and new construction. MCIT’s total insured value now exceeds \$6.8 billion, a 12 percent increase over the 2021 values.

Also affecting the cost of coverage is the continued concern with exposures associated with solid waste operations. MCIT’s claim history includes several fire

damage claims arising from handling and storage of solid waste. Reinsurers such as Travelers also take into consideration their global loss experience.

Looking for options, the board discussed the merits of a layered approach to coverage that would involve several reinsurance carriers sharing the cost of a loss. According to Hepper, market indications suggest the cost of this structure would be significantly more expensive than the Travelers’ quote.

MCIT will renew its property reinsurance with Travelers at a cost of \$2.7 million with no change in existing terms and conditions of coverage. MCIT will continue to retain \$1 million of each covered loss.

Liability Reinsurance

MCIT joined County Reinsurance Limited (CRL) in 2021. The 2022 renewal marks the second year of MCIT’s three-year membership commitment to participate in CRL’s liability reinsurance program. As a “pool for pools,” CRL has a deep understanding of liability issues and exposures that are common to most of their public entity members.

The 2022 CRL premium reflects a 43.4 percent increase over 2021, driven exclusively by developing claims arising from law enforcement. Jail operations, excessive force and patrolling exposures dominate MCIT’s reportable claims, which according to CRL, is a national trend experienced by its membership.

MCIT continues to develop and deliver programs to assist members with managing law enforcement exposures.

The cost of MCIT’s continued membership in CRL’s liability reinsurance program in 2022 is \$1.87 million. MCIT will continue to retain the first \$750,000 of a covered loss.

Skyrocketing costs and insurers’ decisions not to write certain exposures in the late 1970s gave birth to pools in the United States. Pools have weathered a variety of difficulties over the years, which can be attributed to the resilience and loyalty of its membership.

Workers’ Compensation

Unlike property and liability, Minnesota law requires all insurers and self-insurers to purchase workers’ compensation reinsurance from the Workers’ Compensation Reinsurance Association.

Factors influencing the cost of coverage include MCIT’s experience modification factor, which is derived from the claims experience of members, and the total payroll of all members. MCIT’s retention for 2022 remains at \$500,000 per claim.

Although this year’s reinsurance increases are disheartening, it is important to acknowledge the value of being a member of MCIT. MCIT continues to be a financially sound, fully funded public entity pool dedicated to serving Minnesota counties and their associated entities. ■

Babies: Ringing in the New Year



By Melanie Ault, DDA Human Resources, Inc.

A baby with a sash rings in the new year, and in 2022 it rings in new pregnancy and breastfeeding protections for nursing mothers in the workplace. Since 1998, state law at Minnesota Statutes, Section 181.939, has required employers to implement certain protections for nursing mothers. Those protections are growing.

Counties support families and children, and that includes pregnant and breastfeeding employees as they returned to the county’s workplace. Support strengthened when the Minnesota legislature improved protection and anti-retaliation benefits for employees who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Supporting pregnancy and breastfeeding is not new, but there are some significant changes. We can divide them into pregnancy accommodations and nursing accommodations.

Pregnancy Accommodations

Continuing: While employers might want to get in the spirit of things and be supportive, they should not be paternalistic. Employers should not try to require an employee to accept an accommodation or to take leave. Rather, an employee may request – and the employer must provide – more frequent restroom, food, and water breaks, provide special seating or seating adjustments, and implement 20-pound lifting limits. No special medical note is needed for these accommodations.

Additional reasonable accommodations can also be included where appropriate, such as being temporarily transferred to a less demanding or less strenuous position. The employer and employee are to engage in the interactive process regarding the employee’s request for a reasonable accommodation.

New: More employees will be supported and protected because more employers are clearly subject to the statutory requirements. An employer’s threshold number of employees dropped from 21 employees at any one or more sites, to 15 or more employees no matter where they work.

Employees no longer must have been employed for at least 12 months for at least half time; employees at covered employers are now eligible on Day 1 of their employment.

Nursing Accommodations

Continuing: To enable nursing and lactating employees to continue their breastfeeding goals when returning to work, all employers have long been required to make a reasonable effort to provide a private room (that is not a bathroom or a toilet stall) that is free from intrusion (is shielded from view, lockable) to nurse or pump. The room should be close to the employee’s work area and have electrical outlet access. Many employers voluntarily provide additional amenities, like a rocker or glider chair, softer lighting from a lamp, appropriate artwork, a sink, a mini-refrigerator, and a table and chair.

In addition to providing an area, employers have been required to provide reasonable break time to an employee to express milk for her infant child. Break times to express milk each day must, if possible, run concurrently with the break times that are already provided to the employee. An employer is not required to permit the break time if it “unduly disrupts” the employer’s operations.

Returning to work can be a difficult transition after giving birth. The state surveyed and discovered that nursing mothers who returned to work experienced some common difficulties, for example, not feeling comfortable or safe in asking their employer for what they needed, not being able to take or schedule breaks at a time they needed to do so, not having adequate accommodations or a space to pump or nurse, or having to stay late to make up for additional break time used. The legislature considered that feedback and amended the law to alleviate many of those issues.

New: An employee now clearly has the right to extend or take multiple breaks each day and may do so for the 12 months following the birth of the child. The employee’s compensation cannot be reduced for the time taken to express milk. The state has defined “compensation” to include wages as well as use of accrued leave – neither are to be reduced.

Not reducing the nursing mother’s compensation for time spent expressing milk means these break times are compensable. Do not require the employee to use accrued leave for these break times, and do not require the employee to stay late to “make up for” time spent expressing milk. Employers are not, however, required to turn unpaid break times that are already provided (like an unpaid lunch period) into a paid break time simply because the employee utilizes the time to express milk.

Make sure you stay current with the new requirements. ■

Find helpful materials on leave benefits and other compliance topics in our Knowledge Base at www.amcddahrsupport.com.



We take a personal interest in the work being done around us. And at the end of the day, we're

Real People offering Real Solutions.

- Civil/Municipal Planning & Engineering
- Water & Wastewater Engineering
- Transportation Planning & Engineering
- Structural Services
- Aviation Services
- Planning & Urban Design
- Water Resources Engineering
- Environmental Planning & Permitting
- Construction Administration & Inspection
- Land Surveying
- Geographic Information Systems
- Project Funding Support
- Project Communication



Learn more about our real solutions!



BOLTON & MENK
Real People. Real Solutions.

Bolton-Menk.com

MACO 2022 Legislative Priorities

By Troy Olsen, MACO Lobbyist, and MACO Legislative Committee Members: Michael Stalberger, Blue Earth County; Julie Hanson, Scott County; Amber Bougie, Hennepin County; Betti Kamolz, Brown County; and Debby Erickson, Crow Wing County

Legislating and influencing the legislature from a distance will again be a major challenge this year due to COVID restrictions. However, MACO will continue to be an active participant in the legislative process during the 2022 Legislative Session. The legislative team has been working with MACO members for several months on setting priorities for the 2022 Legislative Session. While being mindful of the limitations of legislating during this pandemic, here are some issues that will receive MACO's attention:

- Change the mandate for publishing full sample ballots and election notices. Counties can reduce costs and voter confusion by modernizing how counties communicate election and ballot information.
- Appropriate funds or establish a grant program for clean-up and maintenance expenses counties are required to pay regarding abandoned tax-forfeited "orphan" sites. Counties currently must use local property tax dollars to clean up sites impacted by pollution, hazardous substances, dilapidated structures, or petroleum tanks which oftentimes results in unplanned budget issues.
- Ensure continued Department of Revenue and county cooperation when attempting to improve the administration of the property tax system. The property tax system is complex; before proposing or implementing administrative or statutory changes, the counties' experience and knowledge should be considered.
- Allow early voting throughout the state up to 14 days prior to Election Day using the model of the current in-person seven-day absentee process. Voters are increasing their use of absentee voting prior to Election Day, and this change simplifies the process and reduces county costs while still ensuring the integrity of the election.
- Support increased fees for transactions to cover all costs for the services now being performed at the deputy registrar offices. Deputy registrars provide a valuable local service for customers throughout the state and fair compensation is needed to continue to provide these services.
- Reduce the time period for municipal holds and the DNR classification process for tax-forfeited lands. Limiting the time for municipal holds of forfeited land

and setting a maximum time for the DNR to respond to classification and sale lists will speed up returning tax-forfeited property to the tax rolls or to public uses.

- Support modernization by requiring electronic submissions of well certifications through the Department of Health. Electronic submission of well certificates by the Department of Health is cost-effective and will lead to efficiencies in operations for counties, the state, and submitters.
- Eliminate felon name-change possibility through the marriage process. Allowing a name change through the marriage process requires applicants to complete additional work and may result in a potentially unauthorized change, and there are other avenues in current law for a name to be changed outside the marriage process.
- Allow local deputy registrar offices to offer expanded services to customers such as local online purchases, by-mail transactions, or kiosk services. Deputy registrars want to provide the best customer service possible by meeting customers' needs and expanded services, such as kiosks, have been used effectively in other states.

County Recorders have been working on producing a "housekeeping" bill that will eliminate outdated statutes and bring other statutes up to modern accepted practices.

MACO has also been working toward a solution to the new Truth-in-Taxation requirements that will provide meaningful and transparent information to taxpayers with as much administrative ease as possible.

MACO supports efforts that simplify, modernize, and make more efficient the operation and administration of county government services. MACO members are committed to providing effective services related to property tax administration, elections, licenses/registrations, vital records, and recording and look for any opportunity to work towards this objective. Our members and membership represent many of the administrative sides of county government as subject matter experts and enjoy a healthy relationship with legislators. Several of our legislative priorities also overlap with the work of AMC's Legislative Platform as well as other affiliate organizations, and our associations will continue to collaborate on those efforts. We look forward to working with AMC and other groups at the Legislature to further these important items. ■



PreferredOne®

BEST DECISION WE'VE EVER MADE.

We hear this from counties all the time. **PreferredOne does a great job with our employee health benefits.** PreferredOne impresses clients everyday with excellent fundamentals and affordable rates.

Whether you're one of the largest counties in the state of Minnesota or the smallest, we understand your health care challenges. Plus, we reach further to develop solutions that harness the power of new technologies and data analytics while focusing on value and customer satisfaction.

It's time to give PreferredOne another look. Contact your broker or PreferredOne at 763.847.4007 for details.

PreferredOne.com

Introducing the **NEW CAT® 140 MOTOR GRADER**



Proven Controls and Performance

Forty-five years of Cat's steering wheel and lever experience deliver controls you know you can count on.

Up to 20% Lower Maintenance Costs

Extended fluid/filter intervals, easy ground-level access, and a proven powertrain with All-Wheel Drive option.

Up to 40% Material Savings with Cat Grade Technology

Improved grade quality and a wide range of tech options to match your work.

LEARN MORE:
www.zieglercat.com

ZIEGLER **CAT**