



Scene in Rice County

The Rice County Feedlot Ordinance was recently updated. For information about the revised ordinance, visit the Planning & Zoning Department's web site at www.co.rice.mn.us/planning/

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How to Contact Your Rice County Officials

www.co.rice.mn.us

Dundas • Faribault
Lonsdale • Morristown
Nerstrand • Northfield
Warsaw • Webster

Annual Notice of Valuation Contains Useful Information for County Property Owners

The well-publicized bursting of the U.S. housing "bubble" will eventually affect the valuation of property in Rice County, notes County Assessor Paul Knutson, but few property owners will see significant changes this spring. That is because appraisals are based on sales completed six to 18 months ago.

Each spring the County Auditor's Office and the County Assessor's Office send every county property owner a letter containing two important documents: a "Statement of Property Taxes" for the **current** year and a "Notice of Valuation and Classification for Taxes" that will be payable the **following** year.

Many people focus on the tax document, which details payments that must be made on May 15 and October 15 (November 15 for agricultural property). It is important that property owners also study the valuation document, front and back. The values and the classification stated there will be used to calculate the taxes property owners will have to pay in 2009. If either of these factors needs to be reconsidered, the time to do it is now.

Knutson urges property owners to remember that the valuation attached to their property is not based on conditions today, but on what was paid for comparable properties sold between October 1, 2006, and September 31, 2007, as recorded in the County Recorder's Office.

The biggest change in valuations this year is no change, notes Knutson. "Most of this year's property valuations are close to last year's. That is a departure from the steady increases, even double-digit growth, of recent years."

Seeking an Adjustment

What can you do if you feel your property has not been valued as it should be?

Your best first move is always a call to the Assessor's Office, says Office Supervisor Becky Kotek. In many cases, an appraiser can visit your property and resolve any discrepancies. [Call 507-332-6100 (general), 645-9576 (toll-free from Northfield) or 744-5185 (toll-free

[See Property Tax Valuations, page 2](#)

April Law Enforcement Effort Aimed at Reducing Spring Fever Speeding

Speeding costs lives and money, warn Rice County law enforcement agencies. They will be underscoring that message by conducting enhanced speed patrols throughout April. The effort to slow down spring fever speeders is part of the Safe & Sober Enforcement and Education Campaign of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (OTS).

Speeding is the most commonly reported factor in fatal crashes. In 2004-2006, speed was a contributing factor in eight motor vehicle deaths in Rice County and 464 deaths statewide. More than twice as many speed-related fatal crashes occur on rural roads as on major urban roads.

Warm weather and clear roads increase speeding behavior, notes Sheriff Richard Cook. As the state heads into the summer driving season, the deadliest time on Minnesota roads, Cook reminds drivers that speeding doesn't save much travel time and greatly increases risk of a crash. Traveling at 55 mph versus 45 mph for a 10-mile journey, for instance, will save only two and one-half minutes of travel time.

In Rice County, a speeding ticket for driving 10 mph over the limit can range from \$117.00 to \$377.00. In Minnesota, speeding fines are doubled if a motorist is caught

[See Spring Fever Speeding, page 3](#)

On the Web

Working Together to Support Children

The Rice County Attorney's Office and the Child Support Unit of Rice County Social Services work together to establish paternity (legal fatherhood) and obtain financial support from noncustodial parents for their children.

The two offices collaborate to obtain court orders for support, locate noncustodial parents and collect support. Methods of collecting support include income withholding, interception of tax refunds, contempt of court charges, credit reporting and judgment docketing. Medical support enforcement and contribution toward uninsured expenses are also provided by obtaining and enforcing insurance coverage for children.

The goal is to have non-custodial parents provide support according to their abilities, rather than have the burden of support fall solely upon custodial parents and/or taxpayers. The majority of Rice County's child support/paternity cases involve custodial parents who are not receiving public financial or medical assistance.

All families needing help with establishment of paternity and/or collection of child support are eligible. Families who receive public assistance automatically receive these services, and support that is collected is used to offset the cost of public assistance provided. These services are also available to those who do not receive public assistance by completing an application and paying a small fee.

For more information, visit www.co.rice.mn.us/attorney/childsuff.php or call 507-332-6115 (from Faribault), 744-5185 (from Lonsdale) or 645-9576 (from Northfield).

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Property Tax Valuations in Rice County

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from Lonsdale) and asked to be connected to the Assessor's Office.] If you have further questions or concerns, the Notice of Valuation details your other appeals options.

If you own property in one of these townships – Forest Township, Webster Township, Erin Township, Cannon City Township, Northfield Township, Morristown Township, Shieldsville Township, Warsaw Township or Richland Township – you need to appeal in person or by letter to your Local Board of Appeal and Equalization, which holds a public meeting on appeals in April.

If you own Rice County property any place outside of these townships, you have a variety of options.

- You may attend one of the Local Boards of Appeal and Equalization and Alternative Meetings in Northfield, Lonsdale or Faribault, held every year in April, and meet one-on-one with the assessor.
- You may contact the Assessor's Office directly. If your questions are not resolved outright, your case will go next to the County Board of Appeal and Equalization, held in June, where you can make your arguments to the county commissioners in a public meeting. (This year's meeting is scheduled on June 17, 2008, 8:30 a.m., in the Commissioner's Room, Government Services Building, 320 N.W. Third Street, Faribault.)
- You may make your case directly to the County Board of Appeal and Equalization at its June 17 public meeting.
- Lastly, you may take your case to Minnesota Tax Court.

Appealing Arguments

While some people appeal to increase the property assessment (in preparation for selling it or in connection with divorce proceedings, for instance), most who appeal are looking for lower assessments. The County Assessor's web site (www.rice.minnesotaassessors.com/appeals.php) notes six simple, but effective actions that taxpayers can take in order to make a successful argument to reduce the estimated market value of their property:

1. Review the current assessment from the County Assessor's Office and look for obvious errors with regard to size, description or condition of the property in question.
2. Compare the estimated market value of the property in question with similar properties in the same neighborhood and look for discrepancies. Assessor records are public

information and are available at the County Assessor's Office or via Internet access through the assessor's web site.

3. Check recent sale prices of homes in the same neighborhood that are similar to the property in question. These prices are public information and can be obtained from a local realtor or via Internet access to the assessor's web site (see below).
4. Have an appraisal performed by a reputable certified appraiser. This can bring to light areas of differentiation.
5. List factors that could decrease the value of a property as of the assessment date. Factors that could lower a property's value are deteriorating condition, undesirable neighborhood influences like smells, air quality or heavy street traffic and declining market prices.
6. Be sure to take advantage of appropriate special programs such as homestead exemptions and "Green Acres" tax deferrals for certain agricultural property.

Comparing Apples and Apples

When you are examining property values, it is important to be sure you are comparing apples and apples.

The Rice County Assessor's Office maintains a record of every property in the county, including its size, location, physical characteristics and condition. This record is updated whenever new information becomes available – as a result of a door-to-door revaluation, when improvements are made to the property, or when the property owner requests a physical review.

Appraisers and interested others (realtors, other property owners, etc.) can access this information, which is public, online at www.rice.minnesotaassessors.com. The system allows inquirers to do everything from examining a specific property to selecting and making analytical comparisons of something as small as a neighborhood or as large as the entire county.

Are you interested in learning more about property taxes? Visit the web site at www.co.rice.mn.us/assessor. You'll find links there to two useful publications of the Association of Minnesota Counties, "Property Tax System," which explains who does what in the Minnesota Property Tax System, and "Why Property Taxes Vary from Year to Year."

Spring Fever Speeding Crackdown to Occur

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driving 20 mph or more over the limit, and drivers traveling at 100 mph or more are subject to a six-month license revocation.

The Safe & Sober Campaign is coordinated by OTS as a component of the state's Toward Zero Death (TZD) initiative. TZD is a multi-agency approach to address traffic issues regionally through enforcement, education,

engineering and emergency trauma care and response.

Local law enforcement agencies participating in the April crackdown include the police departments of Dundas, Faribault, Lonsdale, Morristown and Northfield and the Rice County Sheriff's Office.

REMEMBER: The posted speed is the speed limit.

Slow Down, Save Lives – and at Least 20¢ per Gallon on Gas

Speeding doesn't only kill, it guzzles gas. Slowing down may save your life – and significant money. Gas mileage decreases rapidly at speeds above 60 mph, according to www.fueleconomy.gov, a web site of

the U.S. Department of Energy. As a rule of thumb, it says, for every 5 mph you drive over 60 mph, you pay the equivalent of an additional 20¢ per gallon for gas.

Rice County Adopts Tax Abatement Policy

Rice County is committed to stimulating the local economy by attracting economic development that expands the tax base and creates high-quality jobs throughout the entire county. As part of that effort, on March 11 the Rice County Board of Commissioners adopted a Rice County Tax Abatement Policy. Tax abatement is an economic development tool regulated by the Minnesota State Statutes. It gives governmental entities the authority to abate (reduce) taxes to encourage private development projects, provided certain conditions are met.

The Rice County Tax Abatement Policy establishes minimum requirements and a uniform set of standards and procedures that will be used when considering and evaluating requests for tax abatement. The tax abatement policy and application can be found at the Rice County web site (www.co.rice.mn.us/forms.php?id=457 and www.co.rice.mn.us/forms.php?id=458). Copies may also be obtained by contacting the Rice County Economic Development Department at 507-332-6126.

Meeting Videos Available

The Rice County Board of Commissioners meetings are now available as QuickTime videos on the county web site. Visit www.co.rice.mn.us/videos.php to see the list of available videos. Then click directly on the chosen date and you can watch the entire meeting through your web browser.

These videos are also available on iTunes for viewing on your computer or iPod. At the iTunes Store, type Rice County into the search box and a list of available podcasts will appear. Choose an individual meeting or subscribe to the podcast and automatically download new videos as they become available.

County Profile



Mary Ann Viskocil Child Support Officer

Mary Ann Viskocil has been serving the citizens of Rice County since 1972 – more than three decades – first as a member of the clerical staffs of the county court and county corrections offices, then as a legal secretary in the county attorney's office, and now, since 1996, as a child support officer.

Child support officers are responsible for the establishment and enforcement of court orders. These include the determination of paternity, child support, medical support, childcare, reimbursement of public assistance funds expended, enforcement of income withholding, contempt, judgments, interstate orders, monitoring payments and genetic testing.

What does she like best about her work? She says it's the many opportunities she has experienced and the variety of people she has met and worked with.

Viskocil is a lifelong resident of Faribault and a graduate of Faribault High School and Inver Hills Community College, where she earned a paralegal degree. She and her husband Larry are the parents of two daughters and a son and the grandparents of 10. Her husband, who is retired, enjoys fishing and hunting. Viskocil's hobbies include babysitting, sewing, reading and traveling.



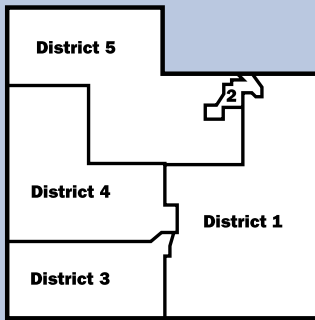
WANTED: Families for Children

Invest in a Child Become a Foster Parent

Explore the world of foster care, adoption or kinship care of children through a training series filled with activities and learning opportunities, February 12–May 27, 2008.

Contact Cheryl Marek or Ruth Smith at Rice County Social Services, 507-332-6115 or www.co.rice.mn.us

Contacts



Rice County Board of Commissioners (as of January 1, 2007)

District 1

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District 2

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District 4

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District 5

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507-744-4500
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www.co.rice.mn.us

Phone Numbers

General Information 507-332-6100

Toll-Free Numbers (do not dial "1" or area code)
From Northfield 645-9576
From Lonsdale 744-5185

Rice County Standing Meetings

Board of Commissioners

Meets the first and third Tuesdays of each month as a Committee of the Whole/Work Session, 8:30 a.m., Commissioners' Room, Rice County Government Services Building.

Meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month as a Regular Board, 8:30 a.m., Commissioners' Room, Rice County Government Services Building.

Planning Commission

Meets the first and third Thursdays of the month, 7:30 p.m., Commissioners' Room, Rice County Government Services Building.

Board of Adjustment

Meets the second and fourth Mondays of the month; 7:00 p.m., Commissioners' Room, Rice County Government Services Building.

Community Corrections Advisory Board

Meets the third Thursday of even-numbered months (February, April, June, August, October, December), 3:30 p.m., Rice County Government Services Building.

Community Health Services

Citizens' Advisory Committee

Meets the fourth Wednesday every other month (January, March, May, July, September, November), 6:30-8:00 p.m.; call 507-332-6111 for location.

Emergency Medical Services Provider Council

Meets quarterly, 7:00-9:00 p.m.; call 507-332-6119 for meeting date and location.

Mental Health Advisory Council

Meets the fourth Wednesday of the month, 12:00 p.m. (noon), Friendship House, located at 212-B Central Avenue, Faribault.

Rice County Departments

Administrator Gary Weiers
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Assessor Paul Knutson
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Auditor/Treasurer Fran Windschitl
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Community Corrections Director James Haas
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Court Administrator Robert Langer
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Public Health & CHS Director Mary Ho
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Recorder Marsha DeGroot
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Sheriff Richard Cook
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Social Services Director Mark Shaw
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Solid Waste Director Michael Cook
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Veterans' Services Officer Amy Lindsay
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