

# 2024 Annual Reports



Submitted By:  
Columbia County  
Departments



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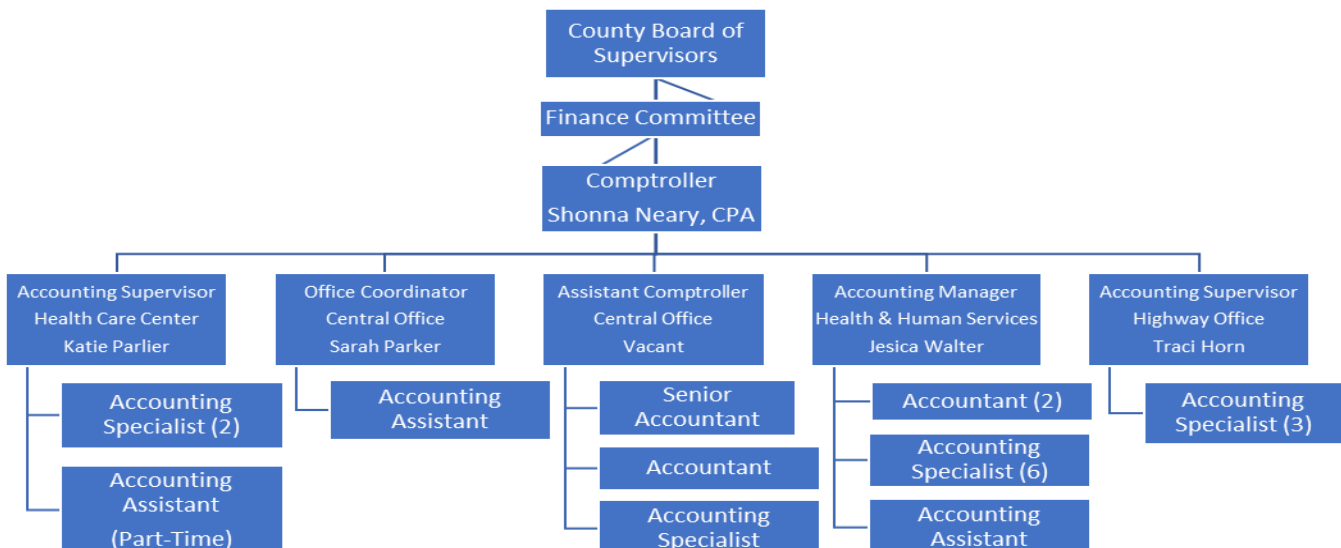
## Accounting Department

### Department Overview:

Under the direction of the Finance Committee, the Comptroller completes duties of County Auditor as defined in Chapter 59.47 of the Wis. Stats. The Accounting Department maintains the County's financial reporting system and all department subsystems in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and governmental accounting, auditing, and financial reporting guidelines. This department is directly responsible for all accounting related activities and the supervision of operations for the following departments: Columbia County Jail, Health & Human Services, Health Care Center and the Highway Department.

Major responsibilities include: development of accounting systems; debt management; preparation and execution of County budget under Finance Committee review; vendor relations, including processing and payment of all invoices; purchasing, including requests for proposals and securing bids; internal auditing; grant reporting and compliance; preparation of necessary county, state and federal fiscal reports; provide necessary communication to any person(s) regarding County fiscal matters; receipt and journal entry processing; maintenance of County fixed asset system; administration of the Southern Housing Region Program; provide training and assistance to all County departments regarding accounting or budgeting; allocate insurance to County departments and reconciliation of all County accounts; coordinate County independent audit and prepare the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR).

### Organizational Chart:



**Statistical Performance:**

**Housing Program**

	<b>Loans</b>
Housing Program	
Southern Housing Region	398
Columbia County	48
CDBG	49

**Transactions:**

<b>Transaction Type</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Receipts Processed	7,194	7,462
Journal Entries Posted	3,398	3,578
Bids Posted	52	54
Requisitions Issued	468	512
Voucher Payments Processed	10,376	10,562

**Financial Activity:**

<b>Fund/Account Name</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>*2024</b>
Total Revenues/Financing/Transfers In	\$101,171,514	\$138,801,173
Total Expenditures/Transfers Out	\$93,679,189	\$104,613,172
Total County Capital Assets, Including Infrastructure	\$309,071,477	\$311,809,079
Total County Debt	\$40,450,000	**\$60,200,000

\*County Books are not yet closed for 2024. Statistical information has been estimated.

\*2023 and 2024 activity includes COVID and ARPA revenues and expenditures. As a result, 2023 and 2024 totals are higher than normal.

\*\*This includes \$21,500,000 of refunded debt which was paid on 2/1/2025.

**Summary:**

The Accounting Department continued to be challenged with staff changes and vacancies throughout 2024. Current staff have taken on additional responsibilities and training opportunities to ensure compliance with all policies/regulations.

The Accounting Department was awarded GFOA’s Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the fourth year in a row (2020-2023). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting. The program was created to encourage and assist state and local governments to go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to prepare annual comprehensive financial reports that evidence transparency and full disclosure.

In 2024, Accounting completed the following projects/goals in addition to normal daily tasks:

- Completed updates to financial forecasts.
- Researched procurement policies for maintenance expenditures. In 2025, we will review potential changes for the procurement manual.
- Began cross-training staff on Highway operations.
- Completed final ARPA requests, commitments, and reporting.
- Reevaluated the Comprehensive Community Services MA billing.
- Completed testing of upgrades for financial systems.
- Implemented GASB101 – changes for accounting of compensated absences.
- Completed debt refunding and debt issuance.

In 2025, the Accounting Department established the following goals:

- Begin research on data analytics for Highway.
- Begin research on budget programs.
- Complete updates to bidding procedures.
- Evaluate asset disposal processes.
- Create online library of training resources.
- Continue to cross-train staff.

Presented by: Shonna Neary, CPA, Comptroller

Reviewed and approved by: Finance Committee, March 12, 2025





## **Child Support Agency**

### **Department Overview:**

The Child Support Agency is a division of the Corporation Counsel Office. Corporation Counsel Joseph Ruf, III, retired in April of 2024, and Assistant Corporation Counsel Jessica J. Hale was appointed interim Corporation Counsel. Attorney Hale was ultimately appointed as Corporation Counsel on May 15, 2024. Corporation Counsel Jessica J. Hale is the Agency's Department Head. Selina L. Hooker is the Administrator for the Agency. Attorney Gunnar Horstman is the Assistant Corporation Counsel who primarily handles the legal work for the department. Although the Corporation Counsel Office and Child Support Agency are not located in the same building, they work closely together contributing to the success and effectiveness of the County's child support program.

The child support enforcement program is referred to as the IV-D program. It was created by the passage of Title IV-D of the Social Security Act in 1975. All states and US territories are required to operate a child support enforcement program. The program functions through the cooperative efforts of federal, state and local government. The Child Support Agency assists families in becoming self-sufficient and financially independent and helping to ensure that children have the financial support of both of their parents. The Agency actively works on IV-D cases. The Agency also provides limited services on Non IV-D cases. Some of the IV-D services provided by the Agency include:

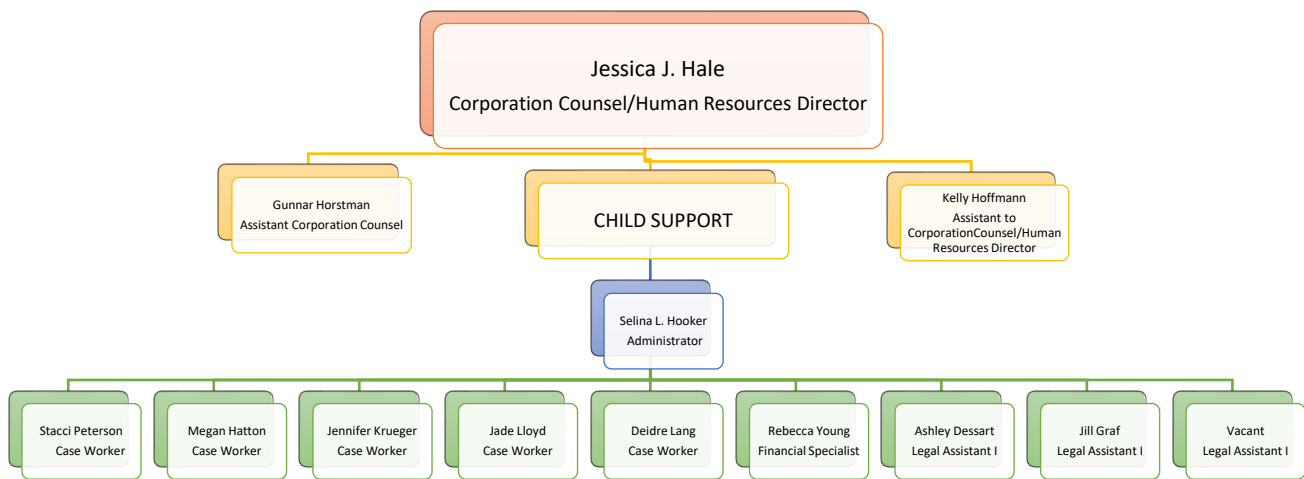
- Set and enforce child support and health insurance orders for separated parents through court actions such as Actions to Compel Support and Temporary Orders in pending divorce matters.
- Establish paternity and set and enforce orders for child support, health care coverage and birth cost recovery, when appropriate, on behalf of children whose parents were not married to each other at the time of the child's birth.
- In cases where the children are in out-of-home placement and have been referred to the Child Support Agency, establish paternity when appropriate, establish and enforce child support and health insurance orders.
- Initiate Intergovernmental actions when one of the parents is living out of state or in some instances when the noncustodial parent is living in another country and the United States or the State of Wisconsin has a reciprocal agreement with that country.

The Child Support Agency uses judicial and administrative processes to manage its caseload. In 2024, the Agency had Cooperative Agreements with the Clerk of Courts and

the Family Court Commissioner. Those Cooperative Agreements allow the County to receive direct reimbursement for costs incurred by those departments in the performance of their duties relating to child support matters.

The Agency’s principal funding is through Federal reimbursement of allowable administrative costs at the rate of 66%. The Agency also receives incentive funding based on its performance for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) from October 1 through September 30.

**Organizational Chart:**



**Statistical Performance:**

The Child Support Agency had a slight increase in its IV-D caseload that went from 2,350 cases to 2,370 from October 2023 to October 2024. Staff in the Agency continue to review files thoroughly and open and close cases as appropriate. Staff send out child support applications on Non IV-D cases to customers asking if they would like the Agency to enforce their child support order. If they complete the application and return it to the Agency, we can open a new IV-D case which boosts our IV-D case count.

Child support agencies receive performance incentives that are partially contingent upon meeting specific performance targets set by the State and Federal Government. The four (4) performance targets for the Federal Fiscal Year are as follows:

- Court Order Rate 80%
- Paternity Establishment Rate 90%
- Current Support Collection Rate 80%
- Arrears Collection Rate 80%

At the Director’s Dialogue in 2025, the State Bureau of Child Support will announce those agencies who have earned the 2024 Certificate of Excellence Award in meeting or exceeding Federal performance measures. At the end of the Federal Fiscal Year (September of 2024), the Agency once again met the performance criteria and will be receiving the 2024 Certificate of Excellence Award.

- Columbia County Court Order Rate 92.92%
- Columbia County Paternity Establishment Rate 109.97%
- Columbia County Current Support Collection Rate 84.65%
- Columbia County Arrears Collection Rate 85.51%

The Child Support Agency utilizes various judicial and administrative means to collect child support. These include sending income withholdings to employers, accepting cash payments, taking credit card payments, real and personal property liens, bank account seizures, license suspension, passport denial and State and Federal Tax refund intercepts.

<b>SUPPORT COLLECTIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR OCTOBER 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2024</b>	
<b>Current Support Due</b>	\$5,434,057.63
<b>Current Support Collected</b>	\$4,599,818.38
<b>Difference</b>	\$834,239.25

**Summary:**

The Child Support Agency continues to strive to provide great levels of service to our customers. The Child Support Agency continues to work extremely well as a team, and as such was again able to achieve the federal performance measures to retain all of our County funding.

Presented by: Jessica J. Hale, Corporation Counsel/Human Resources Director and Selina L. Hooker, Child Support Administrator

Reviewed and approved by: Judiciary Committee on March 11, 2025



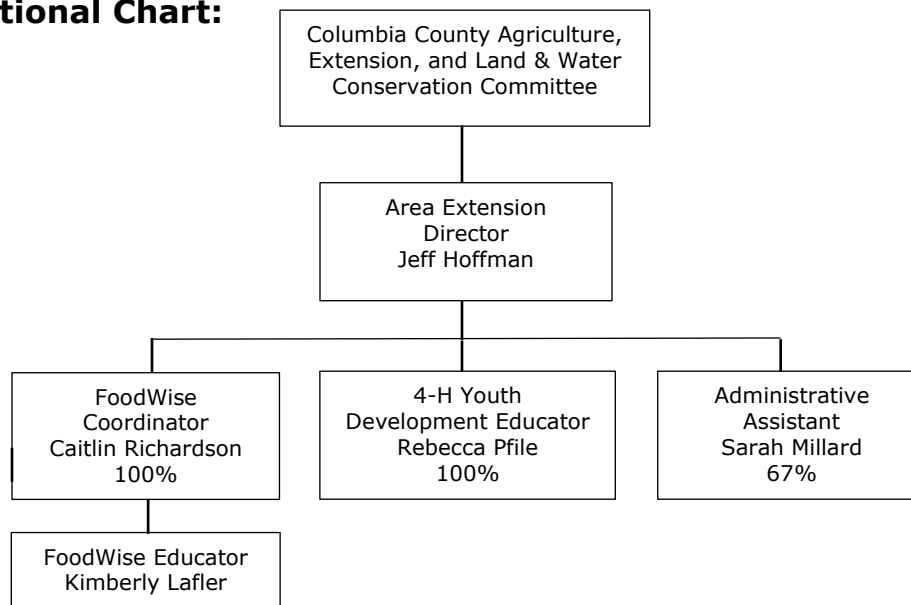


**Columbia County Extension**

**Department Overview:**

Columbia County Extension operates under the direction of the Agriculture, Extension, and Land & Water Conservation Committee with authority under Chapter 59.56 (3) of Wis. Statutes. Under the direction of an Area Extension Director, the office staff consists of two full-time educators, one part-time educator and one part-time support staff. Education in areas include: 4-H Positive Youth Development and FoodWise Nutrition Education.

**Organizational Chart:**



**Department Programs & Partners:**

- Pesticide Applicator Training
- FoodWise Nutrition Education
- 4-H Club Membership Program
- 4-H Special Projects
- AmeriCorps
- Columbia Healthcare Center
- Columbia County Fair
- Lodi Agriculture Fair
- MacKenzie Center
- Wisconsin DATCP
- Columbia County ADRC
- Portage Public Library
- Columbus Public Library

Pardeeville Public Library  
Cambria Public Library  
City of Portage  
Portage Presbyterian Church  
Renewal Unlimited – Head Start  
Northwoods, Inc.  
Portage School District  
Wisconsin Dells School District  
Upham Woods  
Camp Lakotah  
Boys & Girls Club – Portage  
National Night Out  
WI International Poultry Show  
UMOS (United Migrant Opportunity Services)  
Youth Development Programs – Dodge, Sauk & Marquette Counties  
Columbia County 4-H Leaders Association  
Regional Forestry Outreach Specialist  
Columbia County Master Gardener Volunteers

### **Statistical Performance:**

- 1) FoodWise Nutrition Education** - seeks to empower Columbia County (CC) residents with limited incomes to live healthier lifestyles. CC FoodWise taught 794 participants during the 47 program activities that were held at sites such as elementary schools, congregate meal sites, senior centers and subsidized housing.
- 2) StrongBodies Exercise Program** - Two 8-week sessions were offered in collaboration with the Columbia County FoodWise and the Columbia County ADRC. The free StrongBodies strength training exercise program is for middle-aged and older adults. A total of 23 participants took part in the program. Equipment required was provided with the assistance of FoodWise funding.
- 3) Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT)**– Columbia County farmers attended Pesticide Applicator Trainings in 2024 as required for certification by the Wisconsin Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). The training sessions provided 3.5 hours of training and then the farmers completed a 70-question exam in order to be certified to purchase and use restricted use chemicals on their farms. The in-person training at the Arlington Agricultural Research Station provided 39 farmers with information to safely handle, mix, and apply pesticides to protect their own health and the environment we live in. Columbia County farmers participated in the Zoom trainings and took the exam at the Columbia County Extension office. Columbia County Extension also proctored the exams of 21 farmers that came to the office who chose the self-study option.
- 4) Columbia County 4-H Youth Development Programs** provided educational opportunities in 2024 for the 271 youth who enrolled, with the support of 32 enrolled adult volunteers and numerous other adults who contributed their time and talent (e.g. parents/caregivers, fair board members, project specialists, etc.). Programming continued to be offered in-person and virtually. Youth participated in Cupcake Wars. A Planter Night with the Columbia County Master Gardeners was also held. 4-H clubs continued fully in-person meetings. 4-H clubs continued to foster a sense of belonging and worked hard to increase their club enrollment and retention numbers. Youth shared demonstrations about their projects and continued to learn by trying new project areas to find ones that ignite a spark of interest. Columbia County 4-H

collaborated with Sauk and Dodge County 4-H programs to offer a 3-night, 4-day summer camp experience at Camp Lakotah in Waushara County. Columbia County youth participated in the county fair, and other statewide educational travel experiences such as Space Camp in Huntsville, AL; Summer Academy at UW-Madison; Arts Camp at Upham Woods; Super Saturday in Sauk County; American Spirit traveling to East Coast States. Cloverbud day camp resumed for the youngest 4-H members and was held at the MacKenzie Center in the fall. Much of the programming was made possible through the partnership with the Columbia County 4-H Leaders Association. These individuals were devoted to providing quality youth programming and facilitating positive youth development in their clubs.

- 5) Cloverbud Activities** – Cloverbuds from Columbia and area counties enjoyed several educational opportunities tailored to their age and stage of learning. A Cloverbud virtual series was offered to participants through four-week hour long zoom sessions that provided them with a fun, educational experience. There were 70 Cloverbuds that participated in the Spring Spark Virtual series. A Falling Into 4-H series had 51 participants. A Cloverbud Day Camp was held at the MacKenzie Center that had 20 participants. All the activities were aimed to spark the youth's interest in 4-H and becoming a 4-H member.
- 6) The 4-H Weekly Update - Becky's Bulletin** - is the primary means of communication for the 4-H Youth Development program and was shared to 377 recipients. Families embraced this communication tool and got involved in many 4-H and youth educational events and activities. This electronic newsletter keeps youth and their families informed of breaking news and opportunities. Numerous adults and youth have expressed the usefulness of this weekly communication.
- 7) Each month an Exploring 4-H for New Families** newsletter was mailed to 75 newer families that enrolled in 4-H. The newsletter was two-sided with one side designed to give the adult family member more of an understanding of 4-H terms & ideas while the second side was geared to the youth member to explore how 4-H operates and how it fits their personal interests.
- 8) The 4-H AmeriCorps Member** brought 4-H educational opportunities to four new partnerships in Columbia County: UMOs, The Boys & Girls Club, Pardeeville Library and Cambria Library. The opportunities with these partnerships offered the 4-H experience to non-traditional 4-H participants. These new partnerships are expected to be long-lasting partnerships.
- 9) The Columbia County Fair and Lodi Agriculture Fair** were held in 2024--the Columbia County Fair during the last full week of July and the Lodi Agriculture Fair during the first week of July. Youth and adults alike exhibited their project work and county residents attended as in years prior to the pandemic. The objectives of the county fairs were met!

### **Summary:**

Columbia County Extension strives to improve the overall quality of life for Columbia County residents. Our purpose is to teach, learn, lead and serve by connecting Columbia County citizens with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities. Our educational programming includes the areas of 4-H Positive Youth Development and FoodWise Nutrition Education.

Presented by: Carrie Edgar, Interim AED  
Reviewed and Approved by: Agriculture, Extension, and Land & Water Conservation Committee  
Date: 2/3/2025



## Columbia County Library Board

### Department Overview:

Columbia County maintains a library service under the authority of Wisconsin Statute 43.57(3), to serve the residents of the County who do not live in municipalities that have established libraries or to improve the library services of the municipal libraries. The Columbia County Library Board (CCLB) is composed of one school district administrator (or designee), two County Board supervisors, and four at-large members from throughout the County.

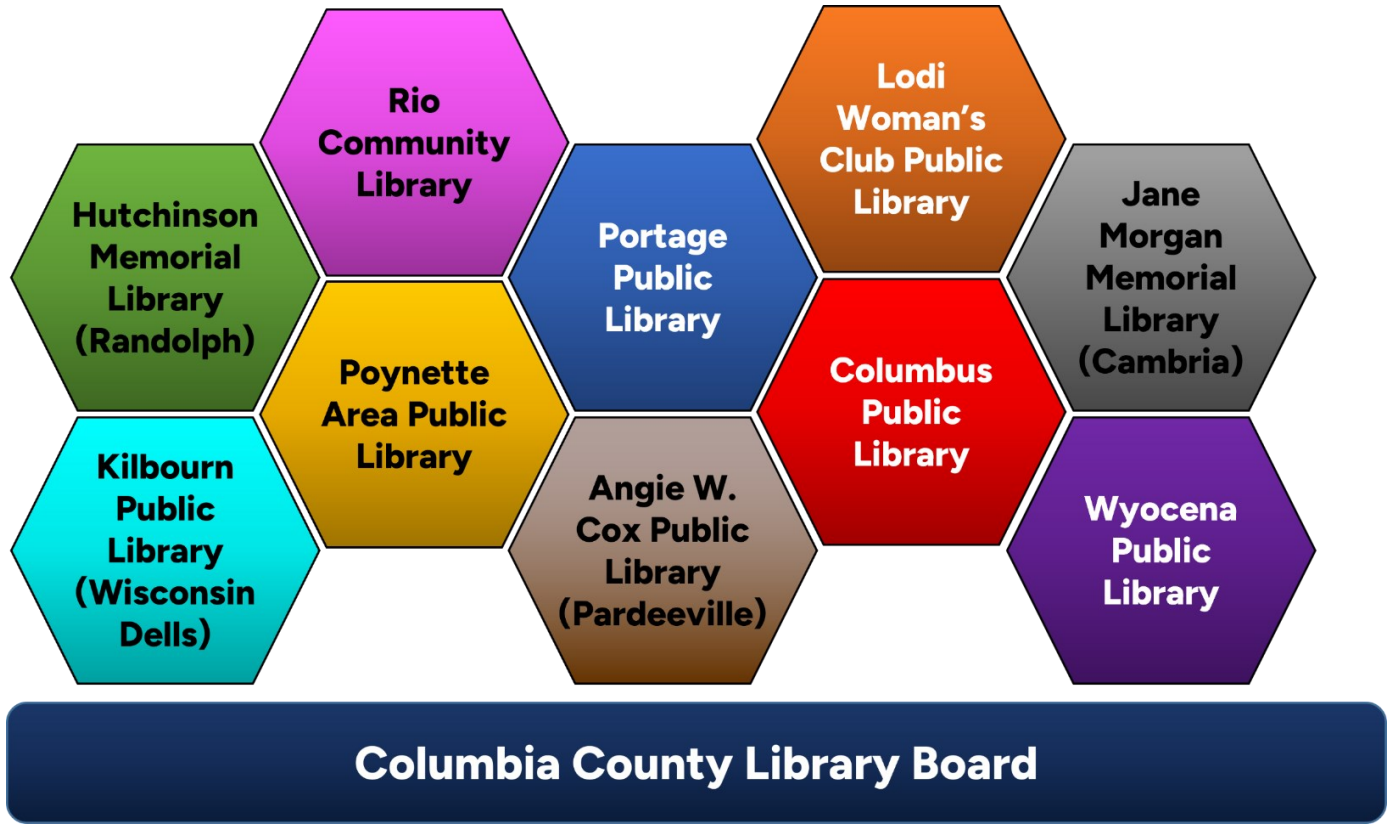
The CCLB tries to meet bimonthly at each of the County public libraries on a rotating basis. Library service to County residents, both rural and municipal, is provided by the libraries in Columbia County with assistance from County funds.

**Mission Statement:** The mission of the Columbia County Library Board is to advocate for public libraries and to ensure quality library service for all residents of Columbia County.

### 2024 Goals:

- I. Build partnerships and develop cooperative programs that support local community needs.** Public libraries are valued assets and are places that connect citizens to community resources and add to the quality of life in Columbia County communities.
- II. Provide high quality technology services and increase access to digital resources.** The CCLB acknowledges the importance of access to quality technology services and digital resources to Columbia County residents.
- III. Enhance information resources available at the County's public libraries and develop innovative ways to increase their use and reach new audiences.** At the heart of any library are the information resources and services it provides. The CCLB encourages additions to collections in all its libraries and the development of creative ways to enhance their use.
- IV. Continue to support/advocate for increased funding resources both public and private.** The Board acknowledges that the operational costs of libraries such as building collections, SCLS delivery services, library resource payments, et al, increase just as they do for any other program.
- V. Continue an ongoing planning process, which responds to the changing library service needs of County residents.**

**Organizational Chart:**



**County Funding of the Library Services Program**

Columbia County contributes funds to its ten libraries for services that these libraries provide to its "rural residents" (County residents who live in communities that do not have a local library). The amount paid to each library is based on usage:

<b>Columbia County Payments to its Own Libraries 2024</b>				<b>Total=\$641,176</b>
Cambria	\$40,857	Poynette		\$77,289
Columbus	\$95,584	Randolph		\$45,657
Lodi	\$89,314	Rio		\$61,765
Pardeeville	\$36,689	Wisconsin Dells		\$21,180
Portage	\$166,480	Wyocena		\$6,361

Columbia County must also pay the libraries in adjacent counties for their use by Columbia County rural residents:

<b>Payments to Libraries in Adjacent Counties 2024</b>		<b>Total=\$151,921</b>
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Columbia County provides base level funding to the County Resource Library for consultation services to other County libraries, administrative planning and meeting attendance, research and reporting, printing and support for the County Library Board for all County residents. In 2024, five thousand dollars was distributed equally among the ten libraries, used to offset delivery service fees, totaling \$46,160 (less than 11%).

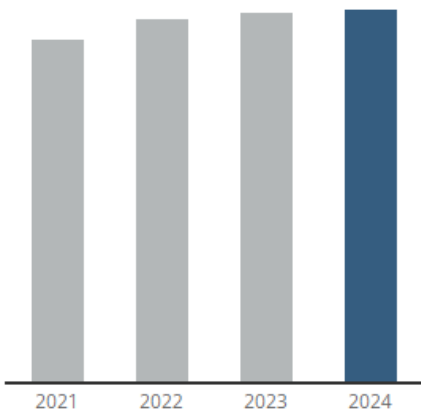
<b>Resource Library (Portage)</b>		<b>Total=\$9,000</b>
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**Statistical Performance:**

# Columbia County Libraries 2024 At-a-glance

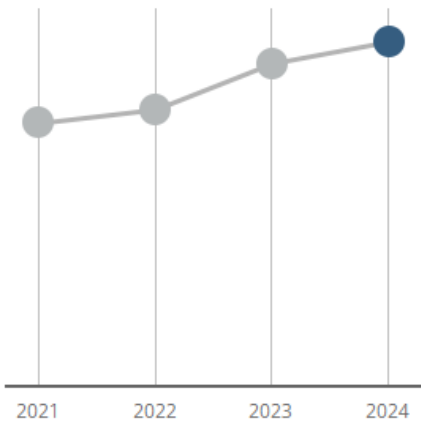
**Circulation - Physical**

**382,806**



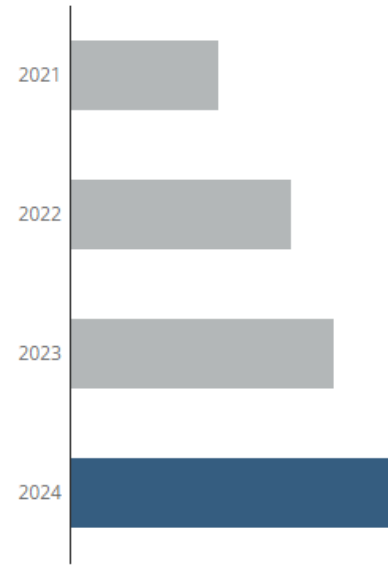
**Circulation - E-materials**

**105,911**



**Visits**

**328,880**



**Computer Use**

**28,911**

**Reference Transactions**

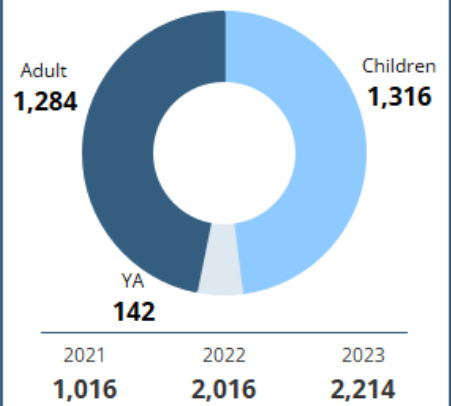
**46,812**

**WiFi Sessions**

**501,385**

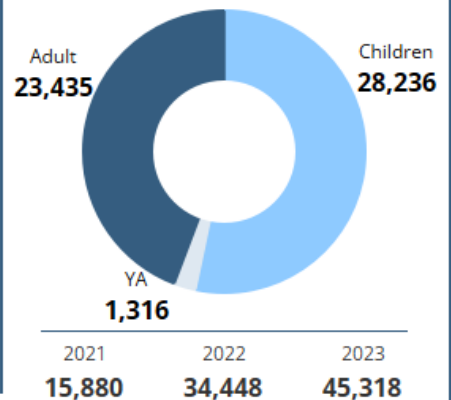
**Programs**

**2,742**

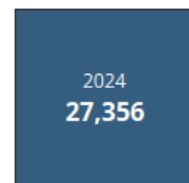
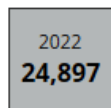
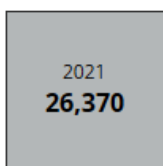


**Program Attendance**

**52,987**



**Registered Borrowers**



**Columbia County**  
W i s c o n s i n



## **Summary:**

The role of libraries is changing. Each library has a tale to tell. Each community is unique. While libraries continue to provide materials for all ages, interests and in a variety of formats, the function of libraries has expanded in services, purpose and intent.

## **Building**

All of our libraries, regardless of size are providing a safe location for our communities. Seniors, teens, adults and children seek out the library for:

- a fun location, filled with toys and games,
- a quiet reading area to pull out the newspaper and stay informed,
- join friends and neighbors in a common activity like crafting or exercise, or to catch up
- complete taxes, find a job, write a resume, research possible housing
- use a meeting room to discuss a work-related project or community fundraiser
- use the copier or the fax machine
- ask for assistance with a difficult computer or smartphone question
- use the restroom
- pick up a hold
- join a book club, or attend an author talk

## **Technology**

As security and routine tasks become more entwined with technology, the focus becomes one of need—to use a computer to access the Internet or utilize a printer to download a boarding pass for an upcoming flight or to print a return-mailing label for an unwanted online purchase. Apps can be confusing and unsafe. The relationship between technology and daily life has grown increasingly complicated, overwhelming, and intimidating. Libraries provide a vital link between technology and the pace of today's world.

## **Connection**

Community leaders and residents trust libraries to provide unfiltered, honest and clear information, regardless of the question or the concern. The expectation that libraries provide unbiased opinions for all patrons remains a primary focus for the public libraries in Columbia County. We are here to serve everyone. We are here to provide Summer Lunches for kids when school is out for the summer. We are here to offer reading challenges for teens, adults and children both summer and winter. We are here to provide warming and cooling centers for those without heat or air conditioning. We are open longer hours into the evening and on weekends to offer convenience for our community workers. We provide support for families dealing with dementia or homelessness, addiction and hopelessness. We are here for homeschooled families to provide curriculum-type materials and STEM (science-technology-engineering-mathematics) programming. We provide educational and entertaining options for families, adults, seniors, and children. We encourage and support volunteering.

Public libraries serve as the heart of a community, providing access to knowledge, resources, and a welcoming space for learning, connection and personal growth. They bridge social and economic gaps, offering free educational opportunities, technology access and cultural enrichment. Beyond books, libraries foster a sense of belonging, supporting individuals of all ages with programs, events, and services that strengthen the fabric of a community.

Debbie Bird, Columbia County Resource Librarian

Columbia County Library Board (CCLB) - approved at the March 7, 2025 meeting  
Troy Ryan, Chair; Amber Houslet, Erin Kutz, Liz Miller, Betty Reiter, Sue Salter

## Columbia Health Care Center

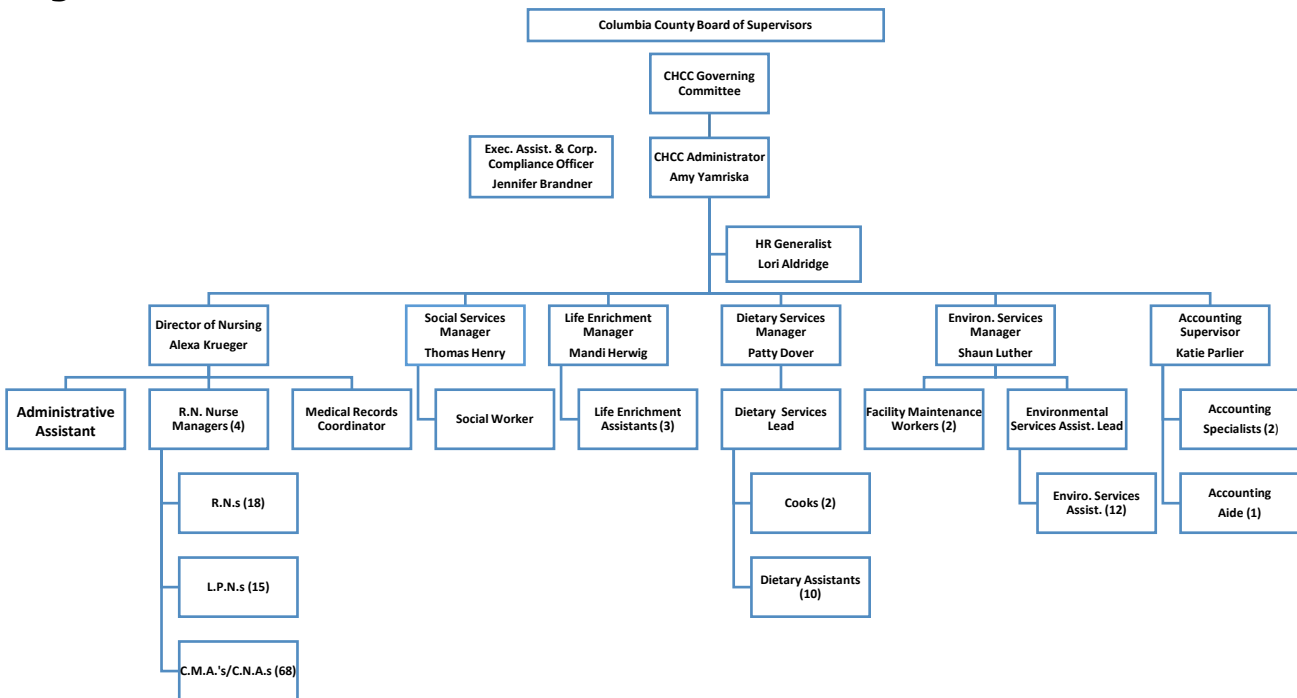
### Department Overview:

The Columbia Health Care Center is an 85-bed skilled nursing facility (SNF) located in Wycocena and licensed by the State of Wisconsin. This facility is governed by the Columbia Health Care Center Committee to ensure quality care within budgetary means and compliance with State and Federal Regulations.

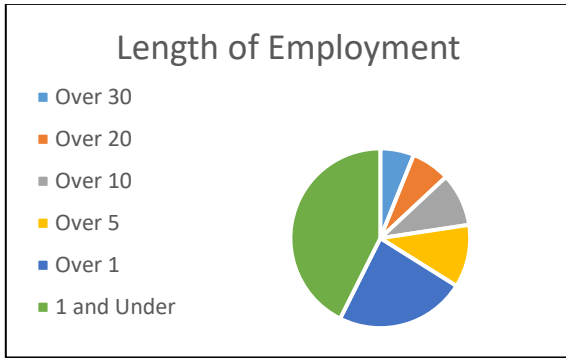
Columbia Health Care Center is dedicated to being a leader of providing high-quality care to Columbia County residents. We continue to strengthen our reputation by providing innovative resident centered post-acute and long-term care. Columbia Health Care Center offers the following services: 24-hour supervision by licensed nursing staff, dietary monitoring, occupational/physical/speech therapy, social service intervention, and recreational therapy. The facility has 23 beds designated for the care and behavioral programming of residents diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and dementia-related diseases.

Columbia Health Care Center’s primary funding sources are Medicare/Medicare Advantage, Medical Assistance/Family Care, Veterans Administration, and Private Pay.

### Organizational Chart:

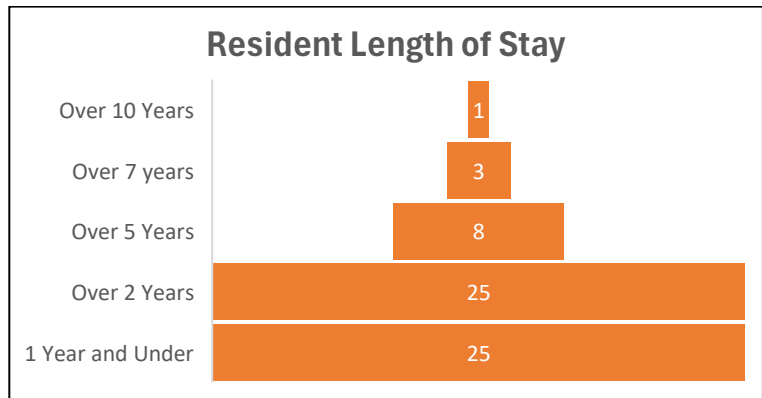


**Statistical Performance:**



The health care center had an employee retention rate of 97.22% in 2024. Forty three percent of the health care center’s employees have been employed less than one year. Fifty eight employees were hired in 2024. Three nursing assistant classes were held, and 20 students became Certified Nursing Assistants. November was the first month in eight years with no resignations/ terminations.

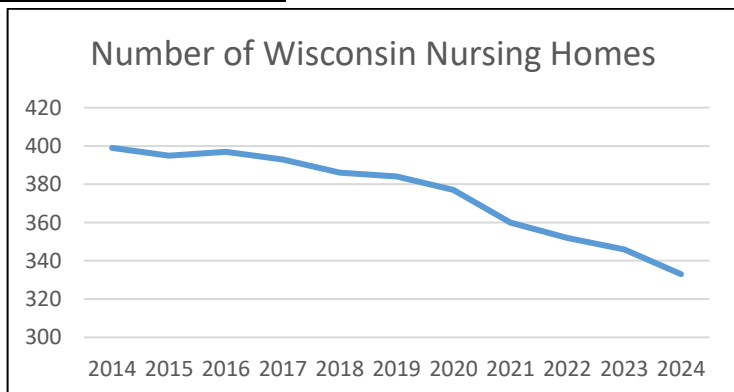
The health care center saw an increase in private pay and Veteran Administration admissions. Over 64% of health care center residents have resided at the facility for two years or less. Discharges continue to outpace admissions as residents return home or to assisted living facilities.



Resident Demographics - Dec. 2024			
	CHCC	State	National
Male	44.8%	40.9%	41.5%
Female	55.2%	59.1%	58.5%
25-54 years old	0.0%	3.7%	5.3%
55-64 years old	5.7%	8.9%	10.7%
65-74 years old	15.2%	20.9%	23.2%
75-84 years old	30.5%	31.8%	30.9%
85 + years old	48.6%	34.6%	29.6%
Psychiatric diagnosis	47.1%	57.1%	60.5%
Hospice	21.0%	10.8%	8.3%
Admitted from Community	7.6%	7.6%	8.0%
Admitted from Acute Hospital	89.5%	83.0%	80.3%

Columbia Health Care Center serves an older population compared to State and National averages for skilled nursing facilities. Four residents are greater than 100 years old and have lived at CHCC for over two years. The health care center has almost twice as many residents receiving hospice services than other nursing homes, filling a need in the County.

In the last 10 years the number of Wisconsin nursing homes has declined by 66 facilities. Thirty Wisconsin counties own 35 nursing homes with some counties operating more than one. Government homes make up 14% of Wisconsin nursing homes. County homes serve residents with extensive medical and behavioral care needs.



## Summary:

### 2024 Accomplishments and highlights:

- Columbia Health Care Center celebrated **166 years** of caring on December 30, 2024. Columbia County was one of the first counties to open a "County Home" to take care of those in need.
- The 165<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the health care center was celebrated, on June 19th, with an open house and vintage car show.
- Columbia Health Care Center decertified 10 beds in December, reducing the licensed skilled nursing home beds to 85.
- For the 21<sup>st</sup> year in a row Columbia Health Care Center utilized **ZERO** Columbia County tax levy dollars.
- The 2026 budget was submitted utilizing **ZERO** Columbia County tax levy dollars, for the 22nd year in a row.
- Columbia Health Care Center maintained a 5-Star rating on the Medicare.gov Care Compare website. Only the top 10% of skilled nursing facilities participating in Medicare and Medical Assistance, in each state, qualify for a five-star rating.
- Columbia Health Care Center had a deficiency-free health survey. Only 4 skilled nursing facilities in the Southern Division of Quality Assurance (DQA) region had deficiency-free surveys.
- Columbia Health Care Center's year-end operating expenses were \$271,412 under budget. Each department is committed to managing expenses and \$696,548 was returned to the Health Care Center's reserve fund.
- The 2024 average cost per patient day was \$375.96. The average Medical Assistance reimbursement to Columbia Health Care Center was \$330.32. Columbia Health Care Center lost an average of \$45.64 per Medical Assistance/Family Care patient day.
- The accounts receivable write off was \$5,207.49, which is .06% of total operating revenue.
- Dr. Bruce Kraus, Medical Director, retired after 42 years of service to the health care center. Dr. Paula Hardgrove, SSM, accepted the position of Medical Director effective April 1, 2024.
- Columbia Health Care Center's average occupancy was 65%. 6% of residents were Medicare/Medicare Advantage, 31% were private pay, 47% were Medical Assistance and Family Care, 4% were Medical Assistance Hospice/Insurance and 11% were VA contract.
- There were 22,682 in-house resident days. A total of 96 residents were admitted, 86% came from an acute care hospital. Ninety seven residents were discharged, 49% of discharged residents returned home or went to a less restrictive environment.
- Several employees celebrated milestones this year: two employees retired, seven employees celebrated over 30 years with Columbia Health Care Center and twelve staff had perfect attendance.
- The health care center held three nursing assistant classes and trained 23 nursing assistants; 15 were still employed at the end of the year.

- Only six worker compensation claims were filed for a total of \$6,593.86.
- The facility is working with International Manpower, Inc. to recruit foreign workers. Eight international caregivers were interviewed and offered jobs. The requests have been filed with the Department of Labor.
- The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) conducted a Payroll Based Journal (PBJ) audit and no issues were noted. PBJ data is posted on the Medicare.gov nursing home compare website.
- The health care center nursing department hosted multiple vaccination clinics to keep residents up to date with COVID, Influenza and RSV vaccinations.
- The CHCC Foundation Inc. sponsored four fundraisers raising \$5,249. The Foundation purchased two new i-Pads for resident use, five TVs for resident rooms, and an autumn blaze maple tree for the Willow Court shared patio.
- The Foundation completed a remodel of the Willow Court Family Room providing new flooring, paint, window treatments, furniture, and décor to create a warm, inviting space for our residents and their families.
- The Life Enrichment Department coordinated several community public relation events in 2024: annual Easter egg hunt, annual car show partnering with the Cruisin Car Club of Pardeeville, Safe Trick or Treating. The Life Enrichment Department also creates a bi-monthly newsletter, The Columbian, that is posted on Facebook and emailed to families and individuals requesting a copy.
- The Life Enrichment Department coordinated several intergenerational visits with the COMAN School of Portage, Pardeeville Community Schools, and Columbia County 4-H groups.
- The Life Enrichment Department kept Columbia Health Care Center's Facebook page active with posting special events, staff recognition, and job postings.
- A new Environmental Services Manager, Shaun Luther, was hired to replace Richard Nasett upon his retirement.
- The Environmental Services Department maintained 95,708 sq. ft., cleaning and disinfecting in accordance with state and federal regulations.

Facility goals for 2025 are: Continue the tradition of not utilizing county tax levy, maintain a 5-star rating on CMS's Care Compare website, and find creative ways to enhance CHCC's appeal as an employer in this highly competitive market.

Presented by: Amy E. Yamriska, Administrator

Reviewed and approved by: Health Care Center Committee on March 4, 2025



## Corporation Counsel

### Department Overview:

The Corporation Counsel is the County's attorney and serves as the managing attorney in the County's law office. The primary function of the Department is to provide advice, legal counsel and opinions to the County Board and its committees, elected officials, and related agencies. In addition to serving as the County's legal advisors, Department staff draft resolutions and ordinances and Department attorneys represent the County in all disputes including those with other counties and units of government. As the County's civil trial attorneys, the Corporation Counsel and Assistant Corporation Counsels research and draft legal pleadings, correspondence, briefs and other memoranda, and represent the County in motion hearings, court trials, civil jury trials, and administrative tribunals.

In addition to serving as the County's managing attorney, the Corporation Counsel is also the Department Head for the Child Support Agency, which has ten (10) employees. The 2024 Child Support Agency Annual Report will be presented separately.

The Assistant Corporation Counsels and Corporation Counsel regularly appear in court in all cases involving the County, most frequently in civil commitments, guardianships, protective placements, child support, paternity matters, and delinquent tax and debt collection cases.

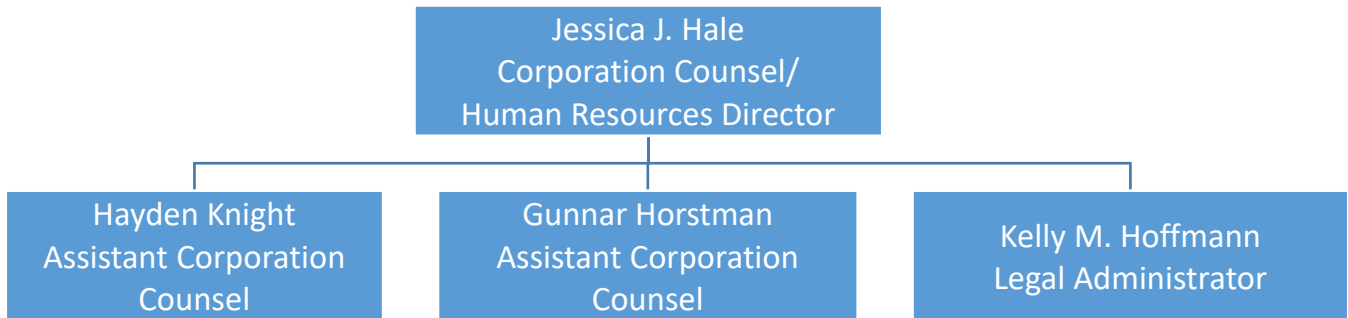
Assistant Corporation Counsel Hayden Knight is the trial counsel and primary legal advisor for county departments including Columbia Health Care Center, Health and Human Services, Land Information, Planning and Zoning, Land and Water Conservation, and UW-Extension.

Assistant Corporation Counsel Gunnar Horstman is the trial counsel and primary legal advisor for county departments including Clerk of Courts and Circuit Courts System, Child Support Agency, District Attorney, Facilities Management, Highway, Management Information Services, Medical Examiner, Sheriff's Office, and Solid Waste and Recycling.

Since October 2004, the Office of Corporation Counsel and Human Resources Department have operated as a combined department under a single department head - Corporation Counsel/Human Resources Director. With a total staff of four (4) full-time employees, the Corporation Counsel Office continues to provide high quality legal services to all County departments while rigorously controlling costs and without the need for outside counsel in most cases.



### Organizational Chart:



### Statistical Performance:

The Department continued to handle a large number of increasingly complex court cases in 2024, including child support matters that are detailed separately in the 2024 Child Support Agency Annual Report. In 2024, the Department represented the County in the following cases, other than child support matters consisting of:

<b>COMPARISON OF CASES</b>				
<b>TYPES OF CASES</b>		<b>2023</b>		<b>2024</b>
Small Claim Proceedings/Civil Proceedings		9		11
Planning & Zoning Ordinance Violations		0*		143
Health & Human Services Ordinance Violations		0		1
Settlement Agreement (Mental Commitments)		32		35
Change of Venue to Another County (Mental Commitments)		3		2
Involuntary Mental Commitments		6		12
Voluntary/Dismissed Mental Commitments		38		37
Extension Orders (Mental Commitments)		20		21
Return to More Restrictive (Mental Commitments)		6		10
Guardianship/Protective Placements		38		29
Protective Placement Reviews (Uncontested)		71		63
Miscellaneous Guardianship/Protective Placement Reviews (Contested)		19		23
Order for Special Administration (Medical Examiner's Office, Child Support)		3		3
<b>TOTAL CASES:</b>		<b>245</b>		<b>390</b>

\*Planning & Zoning Ordinance Violations, in particular Sanitary Ordinance Citations, were not pursued in 2023 due to staffing shortages and caseloads. These violations were recommenced for 2024.

Throughout 2024, there were also a number of complex cases for which the Corporation Counsel's Office does not maintain statistics for including minor guardianship cases, probate, bankruptcy, substantiation appeals, Board of Adjustment appeals, tax foreclosures, Chapter 980 placements, grievances, complaints, disallowances of claims, and several others.

The Department is also required to review all contracts, memorandums of understanding, and bids for the County. This includes all contracts and bids related to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and the submission of memoranda when necessary.

The Department is also required to review and respond to records requests throughout the County. Throughout 2024, the number of records requests has been steadily increasing.

Throughout 2024, Columbia County was involved in various types of litigation that required either direct representation by the Corporation Counsel and Assistant Corporation Counsels or substantial involvement and management of litigation handled by insurance defense counsel. When outside legal counsel is provided through the County’s liability insurance company, the Corporation Counsel works as a litigation manager to protect the County’s interests while controlling the costs of necessary legal services. Significant events in 2024 that affected many County departments required a significant amount of legal services from the Department, although no case filings were required. Similarly, the work of Departmental attorneys in the role of defense counsel is not reflected in 2024 case filing statistics.

The Department also handled a number of employment law matters that are listed separately in the 2024 Human Resources Office Annual Report. Based on the continuing budgetary challenges that all units of Wisconsin government will face in 2025, it is a virtual certainty that a significant amount of the Department’s focus and resources will continue to be dedicated to employment law matters during 2025.

The Department also conducted a significant amount of interviews that are listed separately in the 2024 Human Resources Office Annual Report.

While a number of collection cases were filed in 2024, improved account management and debt collection efforts by County departments reduced the need for legal action in many situations. The continued use of private debt collection agencies and aggressive collection techniques including tax refund intercepts also reduced the need to pursue many debt collection files through court cases. In 2024, the Department continued its practice of not pursuing cases where the filing and service fees would exceed the original amount owed.

A summary of the Department’s 2024 collections activity is as follows:

<b>COMPARISON OF COLLECTIONS</b>			
<b>TYPES OF CASES COLLECTED ON</b>		<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Human Services		\$5,087.00	\$0.00
Sheriff/Jail		\$13,292.87	\$1,873.72
Medical Examiner		\$3,930.20	\$0.00
Health Care Center		\$0.00	\$2,280.00
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT COLLECTED:</b>		<b>\$22,310.07</b>	<b>\$4,153.72</b>

**Summary:**

2024 Departmental operations continued at or near expected caseloads and within approved budget limits. Department staff can continue to meet the increasing need for legal services including policy development and improvement for the foreseeable future provided that current budget and staffing levels are maintained.

In 2025, the Department will continue to provide the County with high quality legal services in the most cost-effective manner possible. The combined Corporation Counsel and Human Resources Department makes it possible for internal staff to handle all litigation and other legal services related to labor relations in-house without reliance on outside legal counsel. Efficient management of increasing workload continues to be successfully accomplished with no increase in legal support staff and law office management staff. In 2025, the Department will continue to emphasize child support and other debt collections as well as continuing to prosecute the full spectrum of zoning and other ordinance violations.

The combined seven (7) member Corporation Counsel Office/Human Resources Department will continue to provide the highest quality professional legal services to all County departments in 2025. The Department's highly skilled and dedicated professional legal and HR staff make it possible for the combined department to provide an increased level of service to County departments at a controlled cost to county taxpayers.

Presented by: Jessica J. Hale, Corporation Counsel/Human Resources Director

Reviewed and Approved by Judiciary on March 11, 2025.



## County Clerk

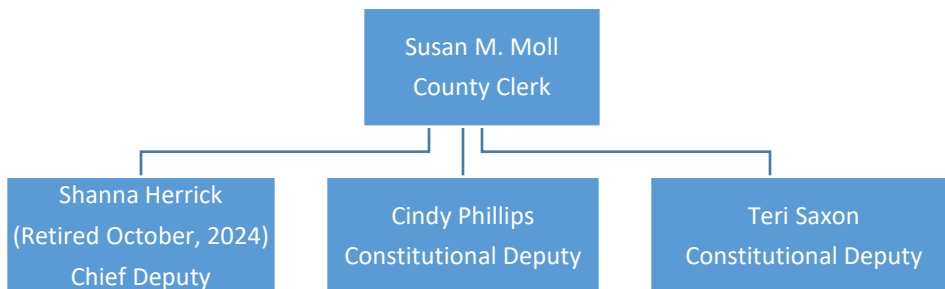
### Department Overview:

The County Clerk is an elected position, serving a 4 year term. The duties and responsibilities of the County Clerk and staff are governed by Section 59.23 of the Wisconsin Statutes, along with numerous additional cites throughout the Statutes. The Columbia County Clerk also serves as Administrative Coordinator and Clerk for the County Board. The duties of the Administrative Coordinator assure communication between the Board, its committees and County Department Heads. The governing committee for this office is the Executive Committee. County Clerk duties and responsibilities include:

- County Board - Coordinating and working cooperatively with the Columbia County Board of Supervisors. Publishing meeting notices and minutes of committee and board meetings, committee appointments, proceedings book, county directory, ordinances and resolutions.
- County Departments – Insurance contact for property and liability claims and renewal notification, coordinate bid opening for proposal requests, manage outgoing mail process, call accounting system and other quarterly billings, and meeting room scheduling.
- Municipalities - The most visible statutory responsibility of the office of the County Clerk is the administration of all elections held in Columbia County. This department is responsible for the programming of the election equipment, providing ballots and supplies to polling locations and canvassing election results. Maintaining the Statewide Voter Registration System and providing services to municipalities.
- Public - Services provided to the public include the issuance of marriage license applications, DNR hunting licenses and recreational vehicle renewals, DMV automobile license plates (including temporary plates) and renewal stickers. The County Clerk’s Office is the “information hub” for all public inquiries.

Additional statutory responsibilities include administering the dog license fund, wood cutting requests and issuance of maintenance checks for veterans’ graves.

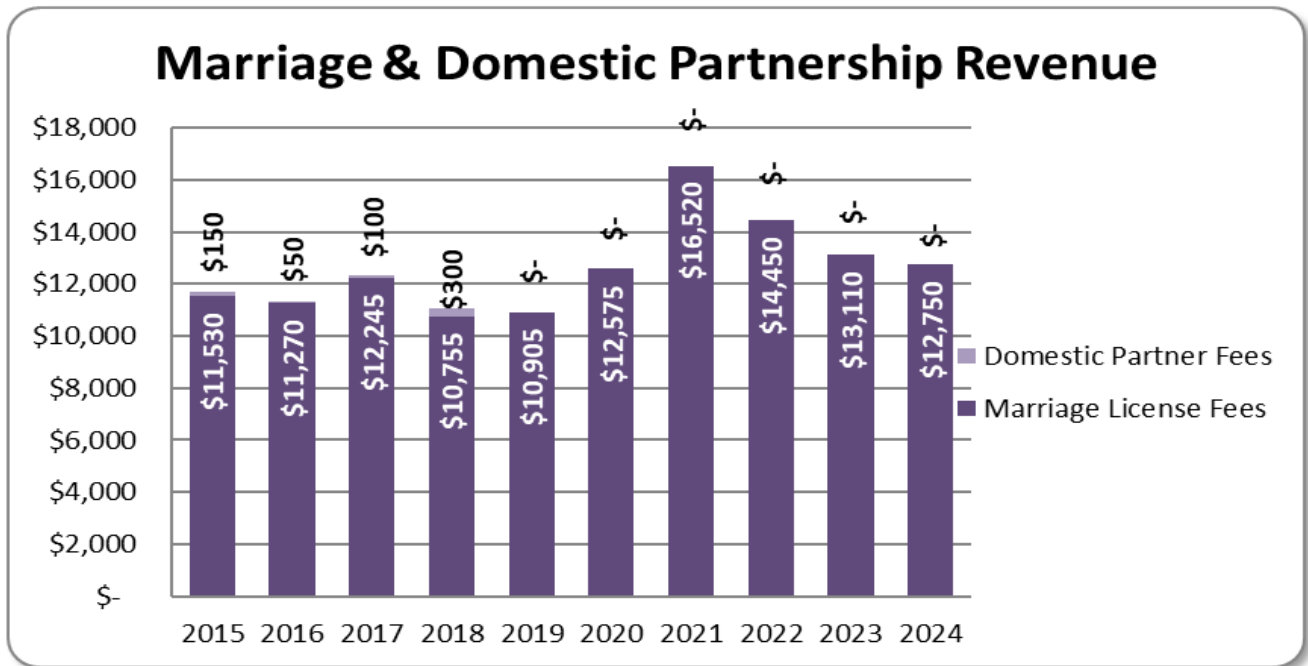
### Organizational Chart:



**Statistical Performance:**

This office issued a total of 311 marriage licenses in 2024, which is a decrease from 2023 when 321 applications were issued. Same-sex marriage applications became legal on October 6, 2014. The 2024 total includes 8 same-sex marriage applications, up 3 from 2023. There also was 1 Domestic Partnership termination. The County Clerk approved 8 waivers of the 3-day waiting period. There were 5 marriage applications that were reissued. The total revenue was able to exceed projections by \$1,290.00 for the year.

Recent legislative changes were made to the marriage application process. Previously, couples who were Wisconsin residents needed to apply in the county in which they resided, and couples from out of state applied in the county in which the marriage was to take place. Columbia County previously benefited from out of state couples due to the number of wedding venues in the county (i.e. Dells Bells, Harvest Moon Pond). There was a 5-day waiting period and the marriage application was valid for 30 days. Effective on July 1, 2022, 2021 Wisconsin Act 84 became effective. This Act has made some changes to the marriage application process. Besides changing the waiting period to 3 days and the marriage application being valid for 60 days, couples can now apply in any county in Wisconsin, regardless of where they live or where the marriage ceremony takes place. This appears to have had a financial impact on the marriage revenue for Columbia County. For example, couples from Illinois, planning to get married at Dells Bells in Columbia County, could apply across the state line in Rock County instead of driving to Columbia County. Also, couples could apply at a county with lower marriage application fees, or that provides a remote application process (as Dane County currently does).



*Note: As of April 1, 2018, domestic partnership applications were no longer available (per Wisconsin Act 59). Effective on January 1, 2020, the marriage license fee increased from \$75.00 to \$85.00 (per Columbia County Ordinance 205-19). The County retains a portion of the fees. Currently, the County retains \$40.00 for every marriage license application processed; \$25.00 for every waiver; and \$20.00 for reissuance fees.*

The County Clerk's Office provides in-person customer service as a third-party vendor for DMV services, offering renewal stickers and temporary license plates for vehicles. In March of 2012, this office began offering vehicle title transfers and metal license plates to customers in addition to the DMV services already provided. Offering these services provides a revenue source to help offset the County Clerk budget. In 2024, this office processed 266 renewal stickers, 138 metal plates, 29 title transfers, and 2 temporary license plates. Compared to 2023 when this office processed 262 renewal stickers, 161 metal plates, 38 title transfers, and 5 temporary license plates. The total revenue exceeded projections by approximately \$568.35 for the year. The increase in revenue was due in part to an increase in fees the County Clerk's Office was able to retain. In October 2024, the renewal fee was increased from \$5.85 to \$10.10 per transaction; the title transfer fee and metal plate fee was increased from \$8.00 to \$19.00 per transaction.

This office provides in-person customer service as a third-party vendor for DNR services, to include licenses (i.e. hunting, fishing, etc.) and the renewal of recreational vehicles (i.e. snowmobiles, ATVs, boats). In 2024 there were 39 transactions processed, which was a decrease from 2023 when there were 47 transactions processed. In 2022 and 2021 there were 54 transactions processed each year. In 2020, there were 40 transactions processed, and in 2019 there were 79 transactions processed. The County Clerk's Office receives an agent fee 50 cents per transaction in addition to an agent commission based on the services provided. The total fees collected for DNR services, to include commission and transaction fees, was \$41.60, under half of the projected revenue of \$100 for 2024. DNR revenue continues to decrease as most services are now done through a full service DNR, online, or by mail. The Executive Committee, at the committee meeting held on June 15, 2023, approved continuing to offer the DNR sales service to the public.

### **General Duty Highlights**

This office handles all property and liability claims for the County. Two significant fires at the Solid Waste Facility in 2023 have greatly increased staff time as we continue processing extra/other expense invoices, filing claims with the insurance company, and continued communication between Accounting, Solid Waste and the insurance representatives coordinating requested information and follow up on reimbursement of the losses. Invoices for the Solid Waste facility rebuild project are also being processed through this office until insurance funds are expended.

The County Clerk's Office continues to have several bid openings per year because of various building maintenance or other department projects and several funding grants being offered. In 2024, there were twenty-seven (27) bids from various county departments. In 2023, there were thirty-two (32) bid openings. In 2022, there were thirty (30) bid openings, and in 2021, there were thirty-three (33) bid openings from various county departments, compared to eleven (11) bid openings in 2020, and nine (9) bid openings in 2019. In previous years, the average number of bids was approximately three (3) bids per year.

Staffing issues created some challenges in 2024. A new staff member was hired in January and began the training process. In mid-October, a staff member with over 26 years of service to the County Clerk's Office retired. This left the office short staffed through a very busy Presidential election season and completion of end of year tasks. Fortunately, updated procedure manuals and cross-trained staff helped keep the office running as efficiently as possible. It is anticipated the position will be filled in early 2025 and the County Clerk's Office will once again be fully staffed.



## **Elections & Election Equipment**

Forty-two (42) candidates filed paperwork for the 28 county supervisory districts. This office reviewed all the paperwork for accuracy and completeness to determine ballot status. Final election voting resulted in 7 new county supervisors. Staff arranged orientation training and updated everything necessary to seat the new supervisors. A comparison of results from previous elections: there were 12 new supervisors in 2022; 2020 and 2018 there were 5 new county supervisors each term, and in 2016 there were 3 new county supervisors.

The County Clerk's Office programmed and supported a total of four (4) elections in 2024. This included the Spring Primary in February, which included one (1) county supervisor contest and one (1) municipal referendum; the Presidential Preference and Spring Election in April, with 28% of eligible voters participating (for a comparison to a similar election in 2020, 39% of eligible voters participated); the Partisan Primary in August, with 29% of eligible voters participating (for comparison to a similar election in 2020, 19% of eligible voters participated); and the General Election in November, with 76% of eligible voters participating (for comparison to a similar election in 2020, 76% of eligible voters participated). By the County Clerk's staff programming the election equipment and providing support to polling locations, the County was able to save several thousand dollars in programming and contracted service fees previously paid to an outside vendor.

The Assembly and Senate Districts, that were created in 2022 following the redistricting process after the Census was conducted, were changed in 2024 and implemented for the 2024 election year. This required changes in the election coding software to reflect the correct contests on ballots for voters.

## **WisVote Statewide Voter Registration System**

Columbia County provided WisVote support to 27 municipalities in 2024. (WisVote was implemented in 2016, replacing the former voter registration system, known as the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS), which was activated in 2006.)

The County Clerk held two training sessions for municipalities relying on Columbia County for WisVote services. A total of 28 municipal or deputy clerks attended, representing 23 of the 27 relier municipalities. A training on the election equipment was also held for those who requested additional training.

## **Summary:**

As the roles and responsibilities of the County Clerk's Office keep changing, we will continue to review the duties performed by the staff and determine which tasks are necessary and prioritize these jobs with the obligations mandated by the state, additional burden generated by the WisVote Statewide Voter Registration System, and continued changes of the election process. It will be an ongoing test to balance the work with the limited resources available. However, with the support of the County Board of Supervisors and county departments, these challenges could be overcome as new practices are introduced and implemented.

Presented by: Susan M. Moll  
Reviewed and approved by: Executive Committee on March 13, 2025

## County Treasurer

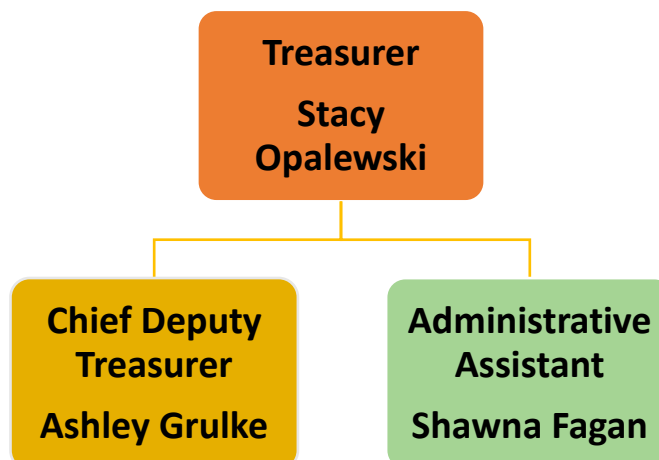
### Department Overview:

The County Treasurer is an elected position serving a 4-year term. The primary duties and responsibilities of the Treasurer are defined in Sec 59.25 of the Wis. Stats. The Columbia County Treasurer's Office operates under the direction of the Finance Committee of the County Board of Supervisors and in addition works closely with the Information Services & Property Committee.

The Treasurer is the custodian of money paid to the County. Upon proper authorization, the Treasurer disperses said money for debt payments, expenses incurred and the County's payroll. The Treasurer must maintain sufficient cash flow and evaluate opportunities for the short-term investment of funds. The Treasurer must also ensure sound management of public funds and maintain security while achieving maximum return.

With respect to property taxes, the County Treasurer provides services to clerks and treasurers of the taxation districts by compiling summary reports, tax rolls and preparing real estate and personal property tax bills on an annual basis. The Treasurer's Office also serves as a resource and liaison for these municipalities, the general public and other governmental units when dealing with tax roll matters, tax billing information and tax payment detail.

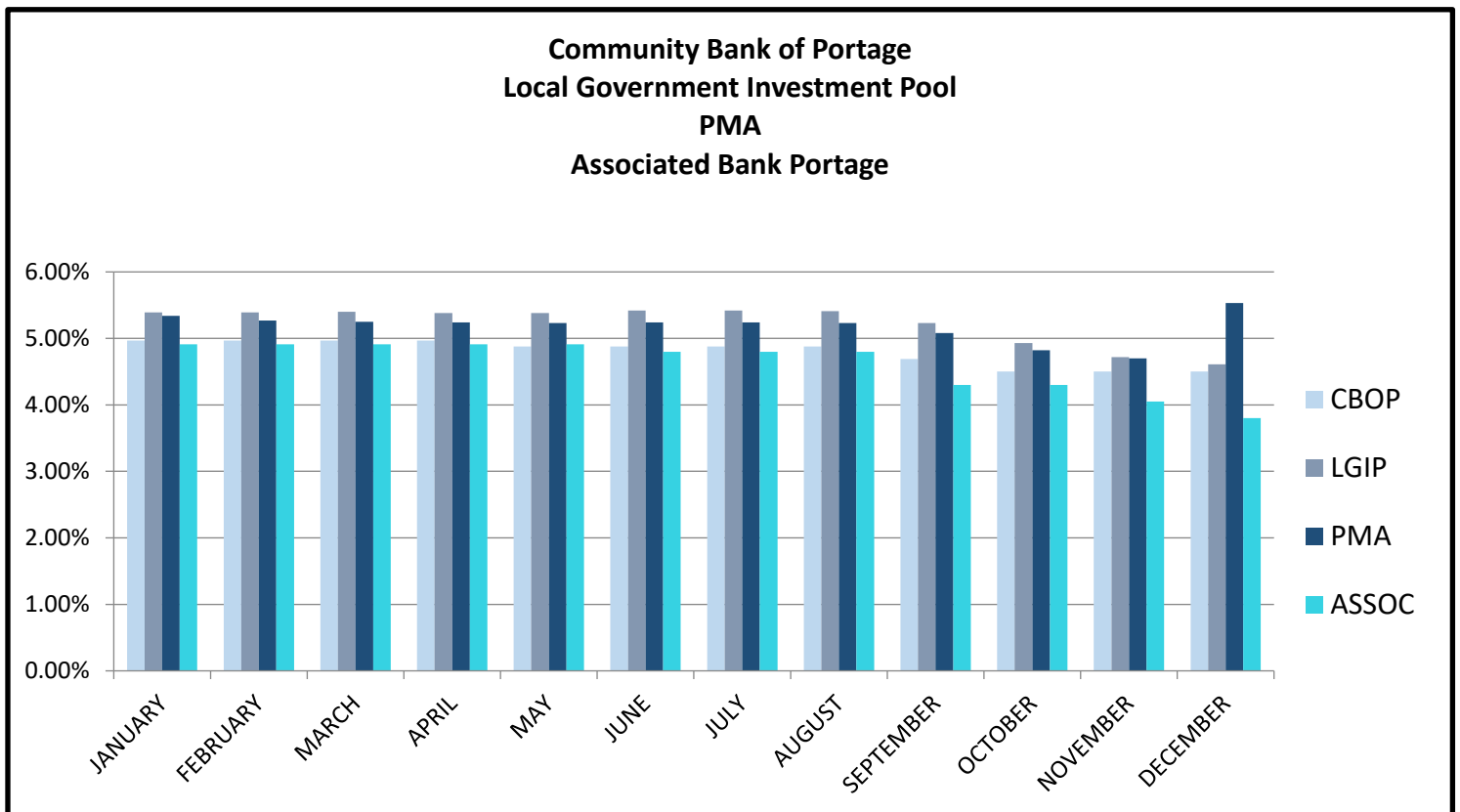
### Organizational Chart:



**Statistical Performance:**

Revenue	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Property Taxes Collected	19,752,762	18,790,263	19,043,485	19,633,290	20,117,720
Total Delinquent Taxes	1,233,800	989,600	852,240	929,330	988,059
Interest on Delinquent Taxes	256,370	283,400	250,650	216,617	233,056
Penalty on Delinquent Taxes	129,940	145,100	127,220	109,970	119,917
Interest on Investments	765,035	98,800	196,400	3,051,580	3,737,394
Returned Check Fees	200	300	500	300	348
In Rem Foreclosure Fees	12,425	10,525	9,970	8,065	7,265

The following graph shows the variations in interest rates of all 4 of our main accounts for liquid money for the year 2024.



## **Summary:**

### **Tax Foreclosures:**

On October 30th, 2024 the Treasurer and Corporation Counsel appeared in front of Circuit Court Judge Andrew Voigt for the Matter of the County's Foreclosure of Tax Liens for the Tax Year 2020. Columbia County was granted title to 4 parcels and 7 parcels requested a 60-day extension that all paid in full.

- 4-Small Remnants of Land

### **Sale of County Owned Property:**

The office did not hold any Sale of Properties in 2024. We will be having a County Land Sale in 2025 to get some parcels back on our tax roll. We will have around 27 parcels to sell in 2025.

### **Goals:**

- To sell at least 10 parcels of County Owned Property at a County Land Sale in 2025 and each year after that.
- Continue to work on updating the Investment Policy with the help of the Comptroller.
- Continue working on updating the Treasurer's Department Policy and Procedure manual.
- To continue with training of staff regarding internal controls with a strong emphasis on fraud detection and prevention.

Presented by: Stacy L Opalewski, County Treasurer

Reviewed and approved by: County Finance Committee, March 12, 2025



## Court Operations

### Department Overview:

The Wisconsin circuit courts are the state’s trial courts. Circuit courts have original jurisdiction in all civil and criminal matters, including probate, juvenile, and traffic matters, as well as civil and criminal jury trials.

The circuit courts are funded with a combination of state and county money. State funds are used to pay the salaries of the judges, official court reporters, and reserve judges.

By law, the counties are responsible for all other operating costs except those enumerated by statute. For those exceptions, which include costs of providing court appointed, guardian ad litem, court-appointed witnesses, interpreters, and jurors, the state provides assistance in the form of statutory formula grants.

### Organizational Chart:

#### Circuit Court Branches

##### Branch 1

**Judge Todd J. Hepler**

Kristin LaBarre, Court Reporter  
Jennifer Nawrot, Judicial Assistant

##### Branch 2

**Judge W. Andrew Voigt**

Marjorie Kurtz, Court Reporter  
Joni Busse, Judicial Assistant

##### Branch 3

**Judge Roger Klopp**

Nicole Wichmann, Court Reporter  
Melissa Bescup, Judicial Assistant

##### Court Commissioner

Andrea Von Hoff

##### Family Court Mediator

Stacy Macomber

##### Register in Probate/Juvenile Clerk

Kristin Lemanczyk, Register in Probate  
Dawn Lowery, Deputy appointed by RIP

##### Clerk of Court

**Julie Kayartz - Clerk of Circuit Court**

Katena Stilson - Chief Deputy appointed by Clerk of Court

##### Deputy Clerks

Terri Schmidt (retired July 2024)

April Whaley

Tammy Gorman

Rebecca Bolgrien

Heather Budka

Amy Elston

Crystal Saucedo

Brandy Langsdorf

Ashley Scalzitti

**Statistical Performance:**

**Comparison of Cases Filed:**

Type of Cases:	2022	2023	2024	Difference from Previous Year
Family	264	279	254	-25
Paternity	59	73	83	10
Civil	340	394	391	-3
Small Claims	778	928	1030	102
Inmate Petition	5	3	1	-2
Complex Forfeiture	2	3	0	-3
Transcript of Judgment	62	57	41	-16
Foreign Judgment	2	3	4	1
Construction Lien	3	8	3	-5
Other Lien	45	37	10	-27
Tax Warrant	159	180	176	-4
John Doe	2	7	10	3
Felony	730	717	804	87
Misdemeanor	516	558	572	14
Criminal Traffic	350	184	236	52
Civil Traffic	7848	8726	8546	-180
Juvenile Ordinance	20	42	19	-23
Forfeiture Ordinance	939	1220	1201	-19
Probate & Trust	144	143	151	8
Wills- no probate & safekeeping	184	199	199	0
Adult Guardianship	34	37	28	-9
Minor Guardianship - Ch. 54	1	1	1	0
Guardianship - Ch. 48	15	21	31	10
Conservatorship	1	0	0	0
Juvenile Delinquency	29	27	36	9
Juvenile JIPS/CHIPS	24	29	25	-4
Juvenile Injunction	2	2	1	-1
Termination of Parental Rights	8	11	8	-3
Adoption (2022-2023 all; 2024-adult)	9	21	4	-17
Juvenile Adoption (start 2024)	0	0	9	9
Mental Health	70	79	87	8
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>12124</b>	<b>13419</b>	<b>13961</b>	<b>-28</b>

**Jury Trial Summary:**

	2022	2023	2024
<b>Total number of jury trials for which a summons was mailed:</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Total number of jury trials completed:</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>

\*\*\* Every calendar year, 800-1,000 cases are scheduled for jury trial, some being scheduled solely specific dates but most case are stacked.



### Clerk of Court Revenue Collected:

	2022	2023	2024
State	\$ 1,897,392	\$ 1,966,089	\$ 2,216,755
County	\$ 664,307	\$ 681,706	\$ 730,245
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$ 2,561,699</b>	<b>\$ 2,647,795</b>	<b>\$ 2,947,000</b>

\*\*\* All revenue collected and disbursed is set by legislation/Wisconsin Statutes, Supreme Court Rules, or county ordinances. Revenue collected is split between Columbia County and the State of Wisconsin at various percentage rates depending on the type of revenue. Fee collected and solely retained by Columbia County are passport fees, payment plan fees, copy fees, attorney fees, etc. Any past-due accounts have whatever collection action(s) are available for the unpaid financial obligations attached to them, whether they are payment plans, suspension of licenses, tax intercepts, civil judgments, and/or collection agency actions.

### Register in Probate Revenue Collected:

	2022	2023	2024
State	\$ 89,482	\$ 74,483	\$ 59,501
County	\$ 46,769	\$ 39,637	\$ 31,518
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$ 136,251</b>	<b>\$ 114,120</b>	<b>\$ 91,019</b>

\*\*\* The probate inventory filing fee collected under Sec. 814.66 is split between the state (67%) and county (33%). All copy and certified fees are retained by the county.

### Payment for Circuit Court Costs:

	2022	2023	2024
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$ 323,677</b>	<b>\$ 335,732</b>	<b>\$ 335,457</b>

\*\*\* Pursuant to 758.19(5)(b), Columbia County also received court support payments from the State of Wisconsin in two installments, based on a statewide formula. Those payments are not specifically itemized in the Clerk of Court, Register in Probate, nor in the Court Operations budget, other than the interpreter portion of fees which are reflected in the Clerk of Court budget.

### Summary:

2024 brought a major change in staffing to the court system. In July, Terri Schmidt retired from the clerk of court's office after 30 years of experience. Terri had been the financial clerk. She handled the majority of the financial transactions and collections for the Clerk of Court including reconciling day and month end. With her retirement, Tammy Gorman has taken over the majority of the workload in addition to being the family clerk. The financials are a very complex system and continue to evolve as we transition to a new system in 2025.

In August, newly elected Judge Roger Klopp took the bench as judge for Branch 3 in addition to change in staff. Two former deputies in the Clerk of Court transition to judicial assistant and court reporter. For the remainder of 2024, the Clerk of Court experienced and worked through the retirement and training of new deputies.

In review for 2024, case filing stayed rather consistent with the number of filings. Court personnel and staff in our justice partner departments continued to work through scheduling and disposing of pending and current cases.

Collections of court cost, fines/forfeitures, court appointed attorney and guardian ad litem fees continues to be a major effort for court operations. Court appointed attorney and interpreter

billing continues to be a significant issue for the court. In July 2023, we collaborated with Department of Revenue (DOR) to participate with the State Debt Collection (SDC) program in the collection efforts of the outstanding debt owed of these costs and have significant increase in 2024.

Presented by: Julie Kayartz, Clerk of Courts for Court Operations

Reviewed and approved by: Reviewed and Approved by the Judiciary Committee on March 11, 2025



**District Attorney**

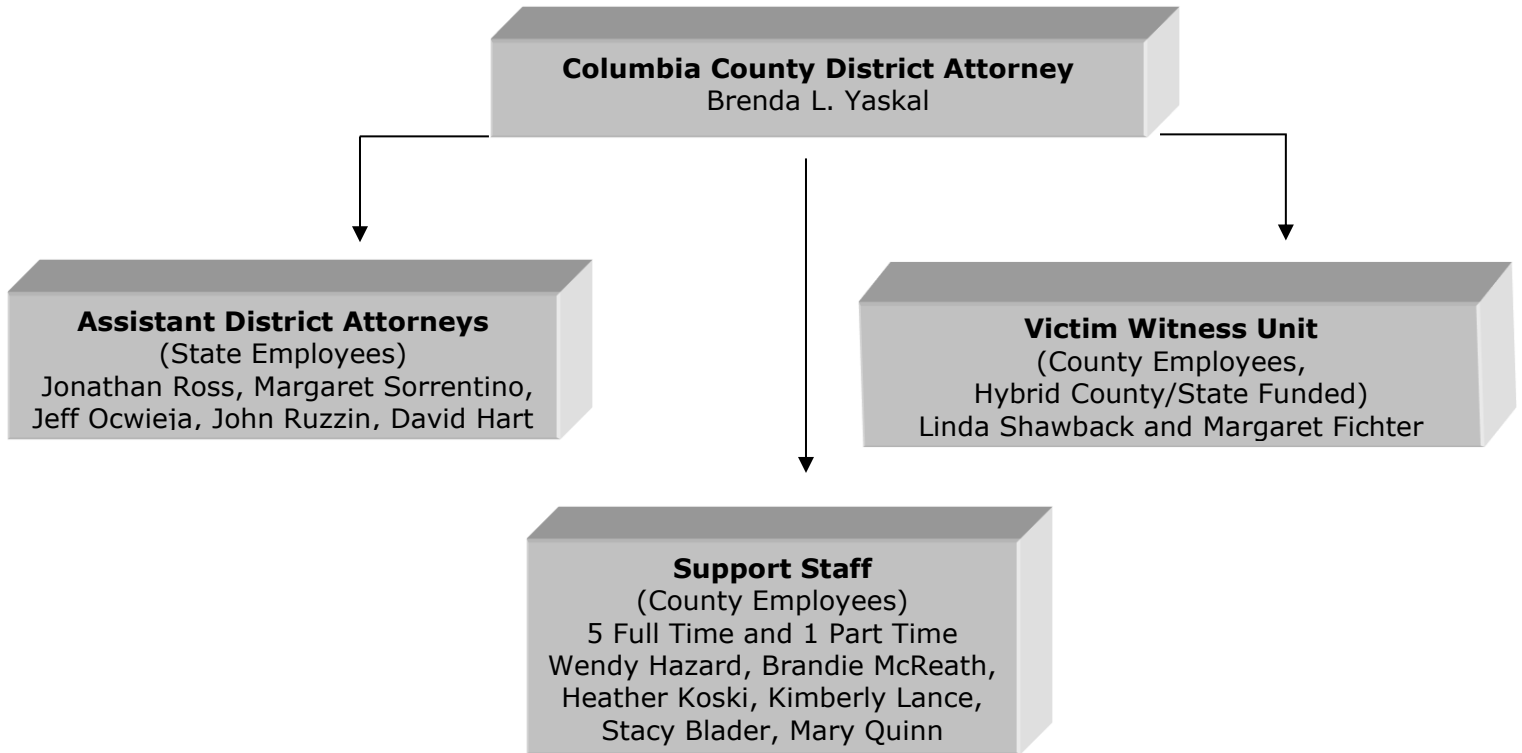
**Department Overview:**

The District Attorney shall prosecute all criminal actions; all state forfeiture actions; county traffic actions; and actions concerning violations of county ordinances which are in conformity with state criminal laws; participate in John Doe proceedings when requested by a grand jury, assist the grand jury; assist in welfare fraud matters; handle criminal appeals under the supervision and direction of the Attorney General; and handle various civil and special actions as directed by state statutes. Section 978.05(1)-(6), Wis. Stats.

In addition, the District Attorney is responsible for the administration of the District Attorney's Office and for supervision of the expenditures of the District Attorney's Office. Section 978.05(8), Wis. Stats.

The Victim/Witness Program, which in Columbia County is supervised by the District Attorney, provides a variety of services to victims and witnesses in criminal and juvenile delinquency matters as mandated by the State of Wisconsin Constitution and by state statutes. Victims of crimes must be notified of their rights and be given an explanation of the criminal justice/juvenile delinquency system. If a victim requests, s/he must be notified of all court proceedings as well as given the opportunity to confer with the prosecutor and to make a statement to the court. The responsibility for providing these notices to victims falls on the Victim/Witness Unit in addition to contacting and informing witnesses of their rights, coordinating meetings between victims/witnesses and prosecutors, advising victims about benefits available from the State Victim Compensation Program, and acting as a liaison between victims/witnesses, the courts and police agencies.

**Organizational Chart:**



**Statistical Performance:**

Actions Handled By The DA’s Office	2022	2023	2024
Felony	730	717	804
Misdemeanor	513	558	572
Criminal Traffic Cases	350	184	236
Civil Traffic and Ordinance Cases	8,755	9,988	9,621
Juvenile Delinquency Cases	32	29	24
Child in need of Protection/Services (CHIPS)	21	27	23
Extension of CHIPS Cases	11	16	18
<b>Total Legal Actions</b>	<b>10,415</b>	<b>11,519</b>	<b>11,298</b>
New Criminal Cases	1,596	1,459	1,612
DA Cases	3,200	3,477	3,662
John Doe Cases	2	7	10
Jury Trials	20	24	21

**Summary:**

2024 continued the trend of a record-high number of cases being referred to this office – we had 185 more cases come from law enforcement and Human Services and 3 more non-law enforcement cases in the form of John Doe referrals. This resulted in 87 more felony cases, 14 more misdemeanor cases, and 52 more criminal traffic cases being

charged and filed. The matrix provided by the State of Wisconsin assumes that each felony case takes 8.49 hours (vehicular homicide cases count for 80 hours per case) to prosecute, misdemeanor cases take 2.91 hours to prosecute, and criminal traffic take 2.91 hours to prosecute. Taking into account that we filed 4 vehicular homicide cases in 2024, the increase in the cases charged by this office equals an additional 1,216.73 hours of work for the District Attorney's Office for 2024 over 2023. And we did this with no increase in attorney positions and no increase in county positions (although the County did increase our two victim-witness coordinators from 37.5 hours per week to 40 hours per week beginning January 1, 2025).

We continue to tweak our procedures with electronic discovery to make the process the most efficient, both in staff time and cost, that it can be. The strain of too many jury trials continues to plague our attorneys and, unfortunately, this is a trend that will likely continue for at least another year or two.

Staffing levels continue to remain high, which is extremely positive and helpful as the workload increases. The County employees continue to be the backbone of our office, working behind the scenes to make sure that reports get processed, discovery gets distributed, and victims are taken care of. The State employees continue to work in the courtroom towards the goal of public safety while having too high a caseload and not enough hours in the day. All employees of the District Attorney's Office have a heartfelt dedication to public service, which comes through in the quality of their work and the time they commit to this office.

Presented by: Brenda L. Yaskal, District Attorney  
Reviewed and approved by: Judiciary Committee



## Emergency Management

### Department Overview:

The Emergency Management Office is under the jurisdiction of the Sheriff and reports to the Public Safety Committee. The staff is made up of one full-time director and one full-time deputy director/planner. The Emergency Management Office reports directly to the Sheriff.

The Emergency Management Office's primary responsibility is to coordinate the planning, training, exercising, response, and recovery from natural or manmade disasters. As well as training for Columbia County citizens and schools in Active Threat Preparedness. Collaborate closely with the Office of School Safety (DOJ), and the Wisconsin Schools Safety Coordinators Association.

The Emergency Management Office is required to comply with the SARA (Superfund Amendments Reauthorization Act) a/k/a EPCRA (Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act), a federal law. The result of this is that emergency response plans have been developed for 36 large facilities and one farm that currently use or store extremely hazardous chemicals throughout Columbia County. These facility plans are reviewed and updated as required. All plans are sent to the local fire department in which the facility is located, and the county-wide Portage Hazmat Team, Sheriff's Department and the Columbia County 911 Center.

Currently, there are 114 facilities in Columbia County that are required to file tier two chemical reports depending on the chemical/s and amount of those chemicals that they retain on site. All chemical reports are reviewed annually to ensure required plans are created. Per county ordinance, the office invoices hazmat response costs associated with hazmat spill incidents to the responsible spiller.

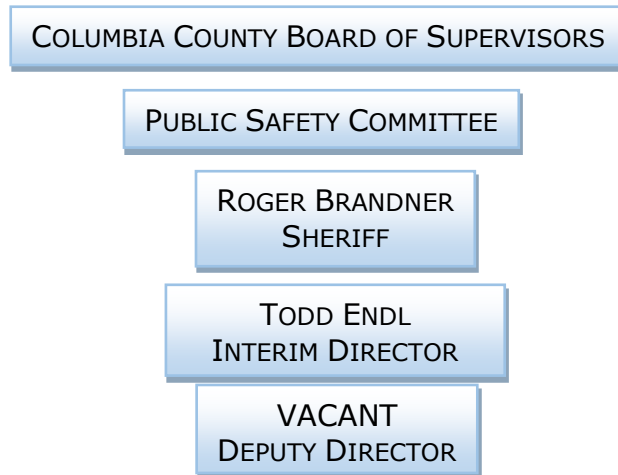
The Emergency Management Office also manages all the following: county-wide ID card system, programming of all ID cards to all Columbia County building doors, create/updates Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government Plans, and emergency response plans for the Columbia County Courthouse, Administration, Health & Human Services, Solid Waste, and Highway Department buildings. We create training exercises for first responder agencies, oversee the Project Lifesaver program, school access for the Sheriff's Office, and the Key Watch (key security system) program.

We responded to multiple significant emergencies to assist our emergency response agencies last year. Most common assistance in 2024 is coordinating Red Cross support for displaced residents as the result of fire(s). Significant responses: flooding assistance, two fatal MABAS calls in the County. One was on Christmas Eve day in the City of Portage.

River gauge modems (1) was replaced in 2024. We assisted the Sheriff’s Office with the Wisconsin Dells 9-1-1 dispatch consolidation, Public Safety Answering Point Grant of over \$600,000, and the GIS Grant for 9-1-1 mapping. Haz-Mat recertification and certification.

Upgrade for river gauges, tornado siren receivers, and Emergency Ops Center radio were completed in 2024.

**Organizational Chart:**



**Statistical Performance:**

<b>SARA/EPCRA ACTIVITY</b>	<b><u>2020</u></b>	<b><u>2021</u></b>	<b><u>2022</u></b>	<b><u>2023</u></b>	<b><u>2024</u></b>
<b>Facility Plan Updates:</b>	14	17	15	11	10
<b>Farm Plan Updates:</b>	2	2	2	1	0
<b>New Facility Plans:</b>	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Reporting Facilities:</b>	101	108	108	112	114

❖ Emergency Plan updates are required to be updated every three years unless major changes occur. New plans are written as required.

<b>GRANT ACTIVITY:</b>	<b><u>2020</u></b>	<b><u>2021</u></b>	<b><u>2022</u></b>	<b><u>2023</u></b>	<b><u>2024</u></b>
SARA (EPCRA)	\$25,752	\$23,394	\$23,390	\$19,744	\$18,747
EMA (EMPG)	\$37,227	\$47,780	\$47,020	\$68,907	\$42,967
HAZMAT (HMEP) Equip	\$7,335	\$7,530	\$7,530	\$7,235	\$7,524
HAZMAT (HMEP) Trng	\$10,800	\$0.00	\$1,600	\$2,022	\$10,111

**Grant Funding for TCPR-Dispatchers (\$10,000) and MDR-Cyber Security (\$30,000) were approved in 2024. Anticipate spending these funds in 2025.**

<b>OTHER ACTIVITY:</b>	<b><u>2020</u></b>	<b><u>2021</u></b>	<b><u>2022</u></b>	<b><u>2023</u></b>	<b><u>2024</u></b>
Wisconsin Disaster Fund	\$153,488	\$3,500	\$4,850	\$77,350	**

\*\*The Emergency Management Department navigated seven different heavy rain and wind events in 2024 that have yet to be resolved fully. The two largest events occurred in May and June 2024, where up to 21 different municipalities in addition to the County were impacted.

**Summary:**

**WEATHER INCIDENTS**

Ninth highest crest on record for the Wisconsin River at Portage, April, and June 2024. Flooding in the Blackhawk Development and low areas of County Highway V.

Record drought the remainder of 2024, after June.

**EVENTS**

Multiple Public Presentations, Press Releases, Public Outreach Events. National Night Out x2 (Lodi and Portage). Open house at the Columbia County Sheriff’s Department.

**EXERCISES/TRAINING/COMMUNITY OUTREACH/MEETINGS**

**EXERCISES**

In May we presented Active Threat to Place of Worship in Randolph. In August, September, and October we presented an Active Threat to Place of Worship in Portage. In August we presented a Workplace Violence Active Threat training. In June, we conducted a Threat Assessment for the Pardeeville School District. In November we conducted scenarios at the Columbia County Courthouse for approximately 40 staff members. Also, in November we conducted a Tabletop Exercise for the Columbia County Health Care Center. A Functional Exercise was then conducted in December as well. Throughout the year we attended a regional exercise at the Wisconsin Emergency Management Association Conference. In November we conducted a safety/security presentation for the Lodi school busing company. Approximately 45 staff members attended the training. This training will continue into 2025 to all the other schools in Columbia County. We concluded the year with taking the lead planning and executing a full-scale exercise in Columbus. Over 85 emergency responders attended and participated in the after-action review meeting which is crucial. Kudos to the Columbia County emergency responders and the Columbus and Fall River Fire Departments for making it a successful exercise. I along with the Portage Police Department visited every school in the Portage school district and presented Active Threat Preparedness training. Accomplish uniformity among all schools in the Portage School District.

**TRAINING**

In March, we attended the Governor’s Conference on Emergency Management. MABAS Conference, Wisconsin Basic Emergency Manager Certification, Active Threat Conference



Training. Wisconsin School Safety Coordinators Association Conference. ALERRT for Rescue Task Force Training Instructor. Tier 3 Instructors Course.

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Columbia County continues to provide an active outreach program which included: statewide tornado awareness week, winter, flood, heat, slow no wake orders, sandbag availability, well water test kits, clean-up kits, tornado/severe weather campaign, family assistance kits (re-unification process) to all schools, places of worship emergency planning and site evaluation, EPCRA (Emergency Planning Community Right-To-Know Act) awareness, Columbia Correctional Community Relations meetings, flooding and slow no wake order press releases. Project Life Saver hook-ups, 8 total to date.

### **NEW EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

Interviews were conducted in early 2024 where Todd Endl was hired to replace Robert Maier who resigned. Bob Koch resigned his position in mid-December. Todd Endl was assigned as the Interim Director to replace Bob Koch.

### **MEETINGS**

Public Safety Committee, Finance Committee, Budget Hearing, County Board; Department Head, Columbia County LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee), National Weather Service weather conference call/webinars, Emergency Management Southwest Regional meetings, Portage Emergency Planning Committee, Wisconsin Emergency Management/Emergency Police Services, Columbus/Fall River Emergency Planning Committee, Columbia County Police, Fire, and EMS Associations; Traffic Safety Commission, Courthouse Safety/Security Committee; Castle Rock, Kilbourn, Petenwell, and Prairie du Sac Dam Emergency Action Plan updates; Portage School District Safety Committee, CCI (Columbia Correctional Institute) emergency plan overview, EPCRA (Emergency Planning Community Right-to-Know Planning Webinar), SCWIHERC (South Central Wisconsin Healthcare Coalition), Wisconsin Emergency Management webinars, as well as many other miscellaneous and planning/briefing meetings that occurred during the year with the state and first responders, municipalities and surrounding counties.

Presented by: Todd Endl, Interim EM Director

Reviewed and approved by: Public Safety Committee, March 10, 2025

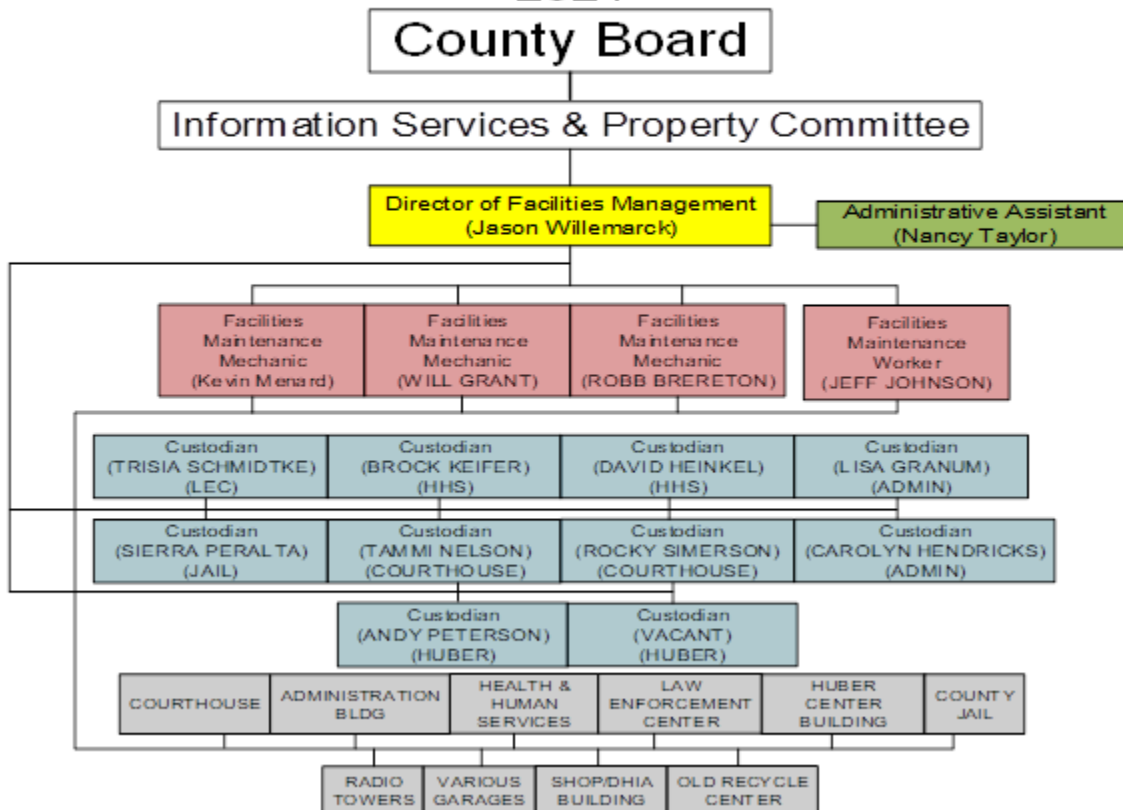
## Facilities Management Department

### Department Overview:

Facilities Management strives to maintain clean, safe, attractive, and functional facilities and grounds in a professional manner, as well as provides support services to other government departments, in support of the County’s strategic vision. Duties include maintaining County buildings and adjoining grounds in a clean and orderly condition; repair of utilities which include electric wiring and controls, heating, and ventilation systems; repair plumbing and repair of physical structures of the buildings. In addition to the above, the department must record monthly power, gas, and water expenses, maintain supplies for building and grounds use and inspect/collect fixed assets and maintain in storage areas. As well as oversee various outside contractors and maintain code compliance with NFPA, OSHA, EPA, ADA, and ANSI to name a few.

### Organizational Chart:

## Facilities Management Department 2024



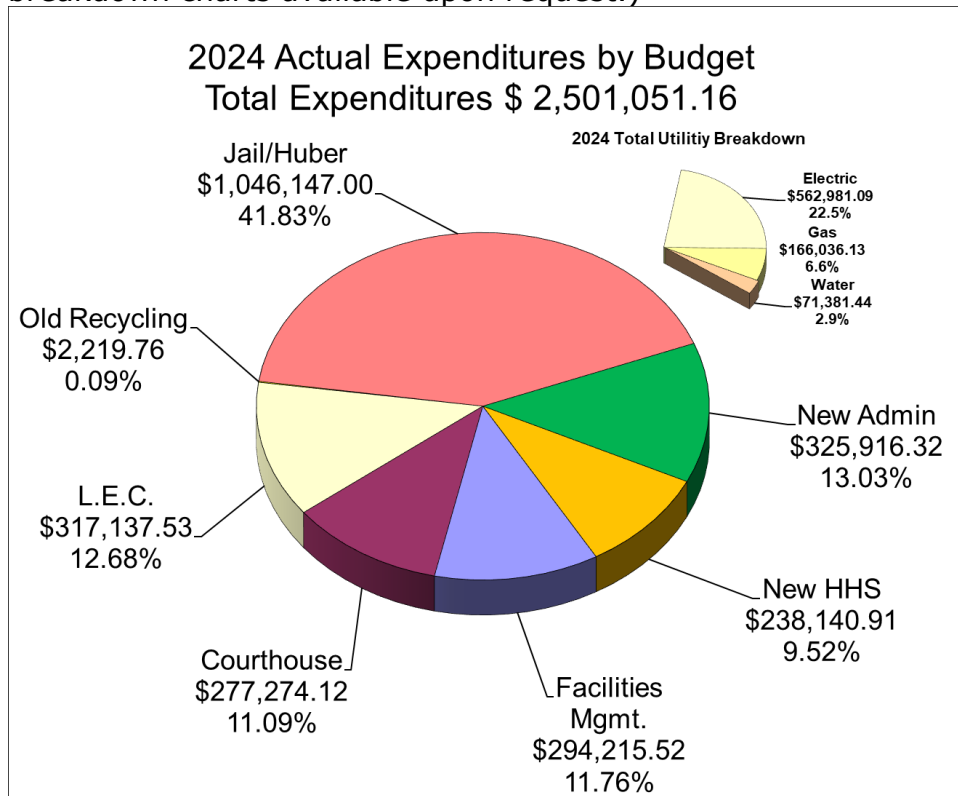
The following is a list of the buildings under the responsibility Facilities Management.

**Main Areas of Responsibility**

<b>Buildings</b>	<b>2024 SQ. FT.</b>
Courthouse	69,038
Law Enforcement Center	47,000
County Jail	52,059
Huber Center	76,000
Health & Human Services	46,060
Administration Building	69,070
DHIA/Shop	2,160
Maintenance Garage (Garage#2)	1,024
Storage Shed (Garage#1)	200
Sheriff's Garage (Garage#3)	4,800
Sheriff's Radio Towers	524
Old Recycling Center (Garages#4,5, & 6)	9,988
<b>Total</b>	<b>377,923</b>

**Statistical Performance:**

In 2024 expenditures came in approximately \$482,508 under the requested budget. This was due to Salaries and Fringe Benefits were under budget by \$131,016. Utilities as a total are under budget by \$199,071 due to \$67,440 in credits. Adjustments to systems, preventative maintenance all created reductions in usage. Snow removal was under budget by \$19,795 due to a lack of snow in early winter months. In the following charts you can see the percentage breakdown of the annual departmental expenditures, as well as the further breakdown of utilities since they make up 32% of the overall expenditures. (Total dollars per line item compared to the total budget and individual building budget breakdown charts available upon request.)



2024 works orders are up by 173 total work orders in comparison to 2023. The job function hours chart is only a high-level major area of comparison. The number of work orders per building have increased as we utilize the work order system more effectively to capture hours and other functions.

Below you will see a comparison of completed work orders, by building, covering the last four years.

**Completed Work Orders by Year**

<b>Buildings</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Administration Building	530	463	529	558
Courthouse	298	368	406	559
Health & Human Services	384	220	265	544
Huber Center	974	1018	1041	1032
Jail	1012	1012	1002	958
Law Enforcement Center	869	840	852	617
<b>Total</b>	<b>4067</b>	<b>3921</b>	<b>4095</b>	<b>4268</b>

In addition, by reviewing the work orders we can retrieve various statistical data. Below you can see a comparison of Work Orders over the last four years.

**Hours Worked Per Job Function**

<b>Job Function</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Changing Light Bulbs & Ballasts	241	446	173	174.5
Drain issues	39	84	53	52
Electrical and cabling projects	295	74	30	5.75
Equipment Preventative Maintenance	1040	1003	1018	1038
Escorting outside techs. and inspectors	236	328	299	342.75
Filling in for Other Employees(janitor)	6	302	541	1345.8
Floor Care	1400	408	185	89.25
Heating, Ventilation, & Air Conditioning Problems	596	581	505	519.75
In House Painting	42	7	33	3.25
In House Vehicle Maintenance	41	34	30	21.75
Inmate and Visitation phone repairs	31	48	30	4.75
Kitchen /Laundry Repairs	84	126	112	136.5
Lawn and Grounds Care	506	351	245	226.5
Maintaining Inventory & Restocking	76	172	80	51.75
Moving furniture, files, equipment, etc.	216	25	10	22.75
Plumbing Problems	331	436	375	289.5
Processing Recyclables	61	91	61	55
Radio Towers	326	303	300	261.75
Snow Removal	292	318	276	246
Unclogging toilets at the Jail	31	67	39	31.5

**Summary:**

In 2024 salaries and fringes had been under do to being short one custodian for the entire year and retirements. At the Courthouse we completed the Seal Coating and lining of the parking lots. At LEC (Law Enforcement Center)we replaced the UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply) for the Dispatch Center, replaced concrete entrance area, investigated Medical Examiner Body Cooler options for budgets, and replaced Bobcat skid steer. Jail and Huber we completed the POD # 2 painting, plumbing, and electrical project. Jail we installed a New Chiller Module # 3 due to heat exchanger failure. Installed hard water bypass piping for chiller. Replaced concrete sidewalk area in front of Jail, replaced Phase # 2 of Blacktop and relined. Huber, we replaced boiler pressure tanks, replaced AltoSham oven in kitchen, completed re-routing of all water service for the Huber kitchen, replace water booster pumps. Health and Human Services we installed Sound Masking in Economic Support and Heath Department, began building process for Mental Health Clinic build out. Administration we replaced the Tool cat.

Presented by: Jason Willemarck Director of Facilities Management Date: 3/5/2025

Reviewed and approved by: Information Services & Property Committee Date: 3/5/2025



**Health & Human Services**

**Department Overview:**

HHS administers over 100 programs to address human needs across the lifespan. All but a handful of these programs are mandated by Federal or State requirements. Examples:

- Prevention of illness and injury, and the promotion of public health.
- Prevention and protection of children, and the elderly, from abuse or neglect.
- Protection, education, and treatment related to youth justice.
- Administration of medical, food, and childcare assistance.
- Supports for people with mental health challenges, substance abuse, disabilities, and the elderly.

Mission: To promote and protect the health and safety of our community.

**Organizational Chart: Health & Human Services Board**

<b>Heather Gove, HHS Director</b>						
Administrative Compliance Officer						
<b>ACCT</b>	<b>ADRC</b>	<b>BHLTS</b>	<b>DCF</b>	<b>DES</b>	<b>DOH</b>	<b>DSS</b>
Accounting Manager	Director	Division Manager	Division Manager	Division Manager	Division Manager	Division Manager
10 FTE	13.2 FTE 25 p/t staff	17.8 FTE	17.86 FTE	10.5FTE	8.8 FTE	3.5 FTE

**Statistical Performance:**

ADRC: The mission of the ADRC is to provide older adults and people with physical or developmental/intellectual disabilities the resources needed to live with dignity and security and achieve maximum independence and quality of life. This is accomplished through our 11 distinct grant programs. ADRC Transportation provided 3,365 rides totaling 131,197 miles to critical medical appointments, life sustaining treatments, and other essential needs like home-delivered meals. Our senior nutrition program lost a tenured site manager with no applicants for four months, shuttering congregate dining in that area; however, there was never disruption to critical home-delivered meals delivery. We provided 32,456 meals across both nutrition service lines. The part-time Dementia Care Specialist continues to be the only dementia specialist with “boots on the ground” in our county despite a growing population of residents living with dementia. She served 51 caregivers through support groups and 14 people living with mild cognitive impairment through monthly Memory Cafes. In addition to providing education to multiple local

libraries through the Dementia 101 presentation, she was asked to present at the WI Association of Public Libraries state conference. We held a "Grandpa and Lucy" educational event in partnership with libraries throughout the county as well as reaching 100 participants through the third and last production with the Remember Project. ADRC staff served over 4,000 new customers in 2024 providing information and assistance with community resources. I&A saw a 5% increase serving those with options for public benefits. Our Disability Benefit Specialist was recognized for having one of the highest numbers of customers being awarded benefits on the initial application for Social Security Disability benefits. The Elder Benefit Specialist assisted 422 customers during the year's annual Medicare Open Enrollment period, in addition to doing 9 Medicare Minute presentations and quarterly Welcome to Medicare sessions. The Independent Living Supports Pilot, assisting those who do not yet qualify for Medicaid services but not able afford to pay privately for services that, was successful in filling and serving 100 residents. Adult Protective Services ended the year with 216 reports for adults/elders at-risk, 37 new guardianship referrals, and 72 annual protective placement order reviews

DCF: DCF received 1,761 calls to the access office in 2024 to report concerns for child abuse and neglect, law enforcement referrals for youth that committed crimes, truancy referrals, truancy intervention reports, and request for resources and services. This number is up 44 from 2023. There were 819 child protective services reports/child welfare reports and 219 youth justice reports. Of these reports, 229 of them noted concerns of alcohol or other drug use prior to contact being made. That is an increase of 31 from what was reported at access in 2023. Alcohol and other drug use by primary caregivers continues to be the most significant concern and the hardest to safety plan around leading to out of home placements related to neglect. These are seen in many forms like expectant mothers habitually using, caregivers' caregiving capacity being diminished due to impairment while the children are present leading to safety and basic needs not being met, young children having access to drugs and overdosing, caregivers condoning the use of drugs by their children and using with them, and caregivers selling/buying drugs with children present or having children conduct the transactions leading to charges for the youth. All of these scenarios can lead to additional risks of other forms of abuse as well as significant treatment needs. 26 children were removed this year (32 in placement at the end of the calendar year), which is down 13 from the previous year, still more than in 2020 and 2021. The needs of families continue to be high as do the placement costs. DCF is unable to cover the costs with the budget that is allotted. Financial stressors and availability of services like affordable housing, utilities costs, transportation, daycare, and AODA and mental health treatment affect reunification. The Wisconsin Department of Children & Families has allocated one-time Family First Funds to counties that requested them in order to meet any needs of the families from 7/1/24-9/30/25. Columbia County received \$16,036.85, which is being used for these items as well as other basic needs to ensure safety and successful outcomes. Columbia County reunited 20 children with their families and another 12 found permanence through guardianship with relatives.

DSS: The support staff are the backbone of HHS. This division has 4 FTE and in 2024 there were a total of 10,612 walk in visitors, an increase of 20% over 2023 and 113 records requests completed. Clients are entering HHS with more complex, questions and needs. We continue to see an increase in our lobby traffic. All Support staff work hard to meet the needs of visitors all the while continuing to perform daily clerical functions of State mandated data entry, client file maintenance, records releases, mail prep, maintenance of internal and external websites, social media accounts, BrightSign monitors in our waiting rooms, and creating and distributing communication products for the public

such as the Department's newsletter and Community Resource Guide. DSS was able to save on printing 855 copies of our newsletter by transitioning to electronic copies.

DES: The Division determines eligibility for BadgerCare, Medicaid, FoodShare, Caretaker Supplement, and Child Care assistance for the Capital Consortium, mandated under State Statute 49.78. DES investigates fraud and establishes overpayments. Workers are expected to meet performance measures established by State and Federal mandates, provide timely answers to client inquiries by processing online applications, mail in applications, semi-annual and annual reviews, answering inbound calls, researching wage discrepancies, complete investigative interviewing, accurately budgeting income, and recording notes in client files to achieve call quality and eligibility metrics to meet the IM performance standards. Staff caseloads continue to see a gradual increase with an average caseload of 673 per worker. Our fraud unit closed out 8 investigations and is actively investigating 58 open investigations

PH: Our Public Health Department took part in the state's 140 review, which occurs every five years to ensure compliance with the state statute requirements for a Level 2 health department. We successfully met all criteria during this review and were certified as a Level 2 health department for the next five years. Additionally, WIC underwent their review, held every two years, and passed with minimal corrective actions needed. In 2024, Public Health acquired a clinic van, which was utilized to extend our services within the community. We have received a lot of positive feedback from the work we were able to do with the van in 2024. We also continued with our day-to-day work and completed the following: followed up on 116 sexually transmitted infection cases and 306 confirmed communicable disease cases, provided 299 vaccines, completed 63 TB skin tests, gave out 21 well water test kits, trained 185 individuals on Narcan (gave out 291 boxes of Narcan), had 36 Prenatal Care Coordination (PNCC) referrals and 20 active PNCC clients, trained 111 people in QPR, followed up on 52 lead cases of children with elevated results, provided safe sleep education to 9 clients, preformed 60 car seat checks served 801 WIC participants, and participated in multiple events.

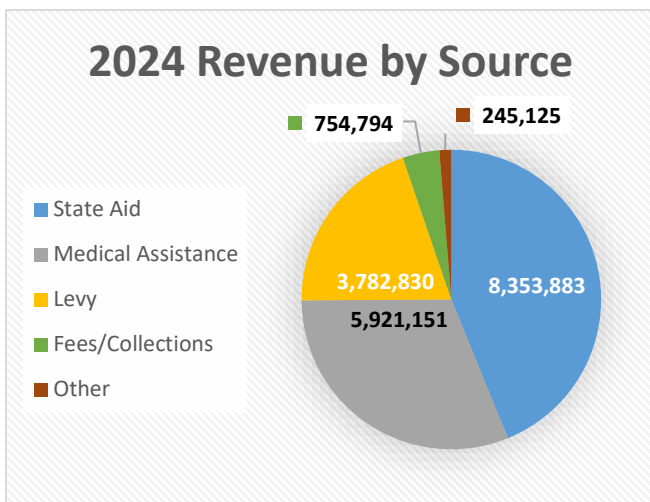
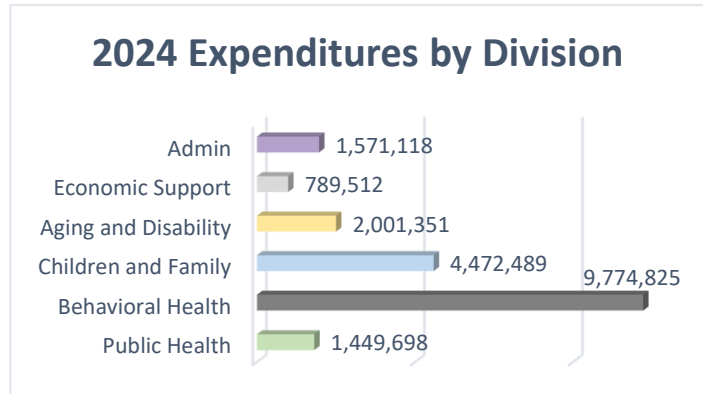
BHLTS: The Division provides services through the programs of Crisis, Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), MAT in the Jail, Comprehensive Community Services (CCS), Community Support Program (CSP), Children's Long Term Support (CLTS), Birth-3, Drug Court and OWI Court. The Division has struggled to manage the volume of need because of staff vacancies. Crisis handled 1,417 calls from Northwest Connections, 100+ crisis contacts (walk-in, law enforcement, calls), 87 Emergency Detentions, 44 reported voluntary hospitalizations, 31 reported detox admissions, and case management to 77 individuals involved with the courts. The MAT and MAT in the Jail programs are person-centered models developed to provide treatment to those using heroin, opioid prescription drugs, or stimulants; these programs provided services to 34 individuals. The CCS Program, which provides and arranges for psychosocial rehabilitation services for children and adults, served 293 individuals last year. CSP which provides intensive support programs for adults with chronic mental illness, supported 62 consumers. The CLTS Program helps support children with a long-term disability and their families. At the end of the year, there were 201 open cases, 225 children total served, and 91 on the waitlist. Another CLTS social worker had been approved for 2025 to assist with providing services to children on the waitlist. The Birth-3 Program had 71 cases open at year end, serving 184 total children developing plans for speech therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. Drug Court and OWI Court served 38 individuals, 68 referrals received for



eligibility/screened out, and 5 referrals pending for potential eligibility at the end of the year.

**Summary:**

2024 expenditures totaled \$20,058,993. Public Health had approximately \$524,000 of COVID-related expenditures; Behavioral Health had a placement for one child totaling \$436,000. Adult institutionalizations exceeded budget by \$471,950. Children and Family placements exceeded budget by \$1,151,550.



The majority of the funds Health and Human Services receives is from State Aid, providing funding for 44% of the department’s expenditures. Additional funding comes from Medical Assistance reimbursement (31%), fees and collections (4%), other minor sources of revenue (1%) and tax levy (20%).

Health and Human Services continues to adjust and adapt to meet the needs of the community. The trend continues to be complex, challenging situations with limited resources to meet the needs of the community. The work is challenging and while we have continued to see staff turnover, we have also retained staff that are dedicated and devoted to Columbia County. Dedicated and devoted in return equals working extremely hard to find natural supports, grants, Pilot programs, and continued relationships with community partners to serve our community at the highest capacity possible. It is not always possible to protect our community and its members with community resources, thus placements and institutionalizations become a necessary resource at a very high cost. These situations cannot be predicted though we do our best to predict dollar amounts in budget.

Presented by: Heather Gove, HHS Director

Reviewed and approved by: Health & Human Services Board, March 5, 2025



## Highway and Transportation

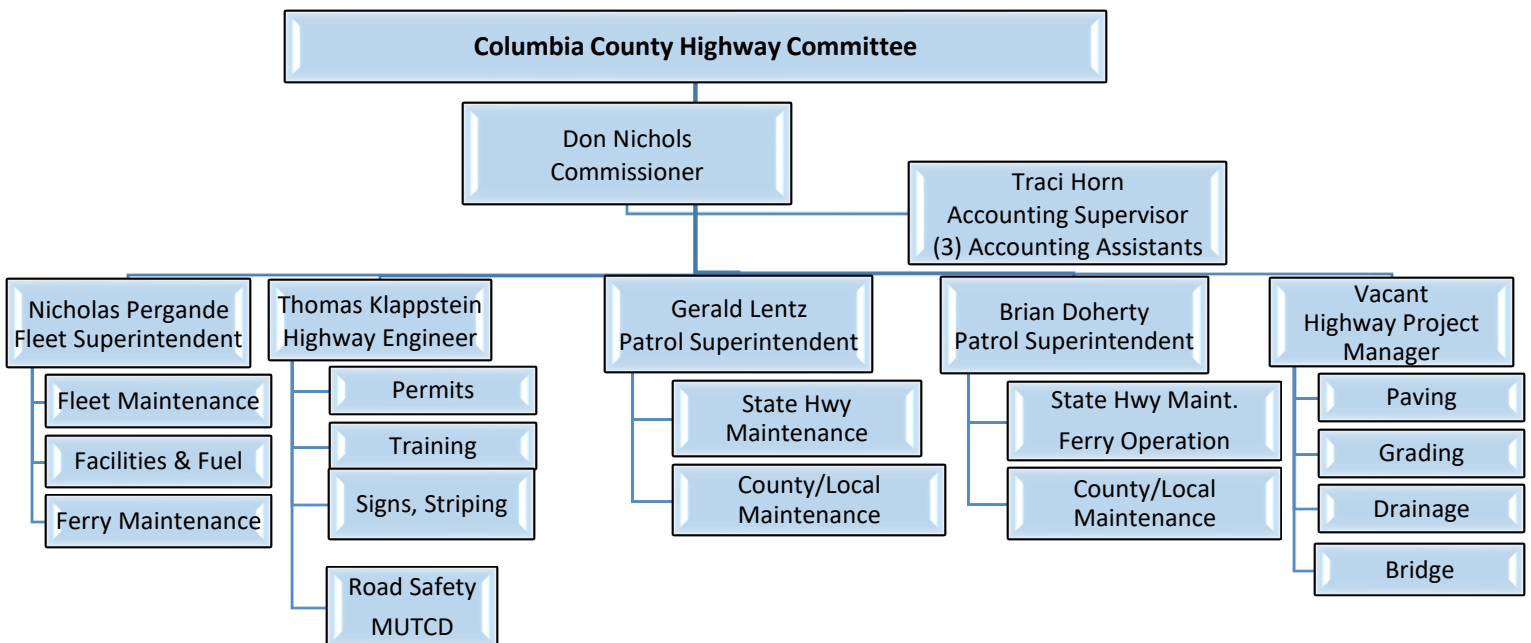
### Department Overview:

The Highway and Transportation Department’s primary functions are the construction and year-round maintenance of the County Trunk Highway (CTH) system in Columbia County, which consists of 356 centerline miles of roadway. Furthermore, by contract with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), we maintain 801 lane miles of State roads (significant portion of which are multi-lane Interstate and USH 151) and the operation of the Merrimac Ferry. In cooperation with the Towns, we maintain approximately 820 centerline miles of Town Roads on the local system. We operate and maintain County parks (Wyona, Governor’s Bend, Owen Park, Park Lake, Lake George, as well as roadside facilities).

Some of the work activities that we perform include the following:

- Snow and ice removal for 3,160 lane miles of roads
- Asphalt pavement resurfacing and sealcoat application
- Mowing and vegetation management of 10,400 acres of right-of-way
- Maintenance, monitoring, and repair of 70 State and 86 County/Local bridges
- Monitor and maintain over 3,500 culverts and associated drainage ways
- Apply pavement striping over 180 miles (2,580,000 linear feet @ 4” wide)
- Sign repair, new installation, and monitoring over 20,000 road signs
- Incident response, posting of detours, and traffic control
- Responded to 711 requests for service (down from 848 in 2023)

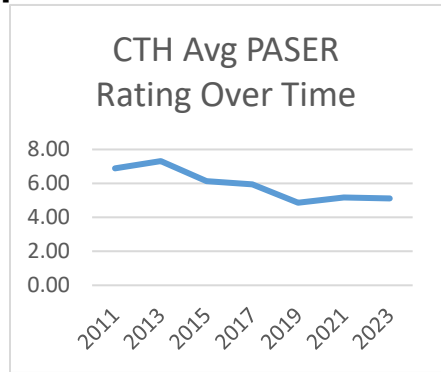
### Organizational Chart:



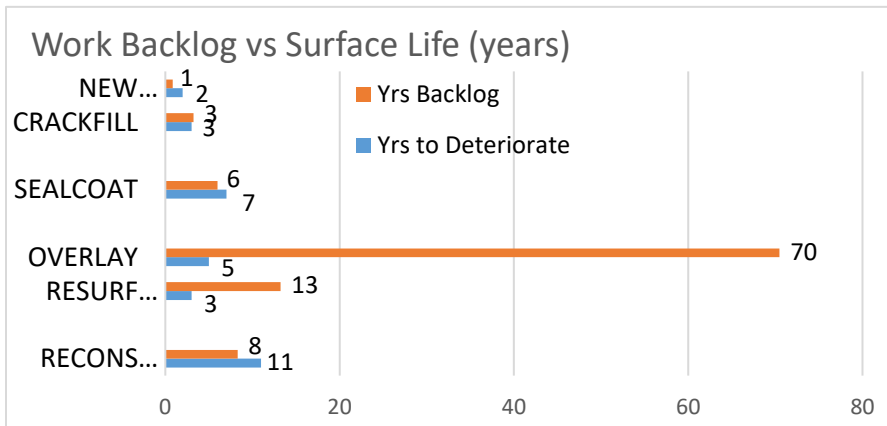
## Statistical Performance:

### Two-Year Summary of Road Maintenance and Repair

Inflationary pressures on commodity prices erodes our construction dollar value. Asphalt, oils, and gravel have increased 12%, 13%, and 22% respectively. Labor increases of 18%, equipment rate increases of 23%, and external contractor cost increases of 40% or more are making it difficult to sustain our traditional 8 miles of resurfacing per year. Under these conditions it will be difficult to prevent our roads from deteriorating faster than we can maintain them; even with the increased ARPA investment dollars (adding 2 to 3 miles of resurfacing per year through 2024). Comparing costs since 2019; Sealcoat has increased 32% (\$22,000 per mile), overlays 28% to about \$104,000 per mile, resurfacing and reconstruct up more than 40%. Resurface and reconstruct complicated by increased demands for environmental considerations (wetland, endangered species, historical, etc.). Generally, grant funding favors resurface or reconstruct level projects.



With these complications, the Department will continue to fall behind “industry accepted practice” with regards to number of miles repaired. We are struggling to keep up with road surface deterioration rates. Older pavements deteriorate past the point where



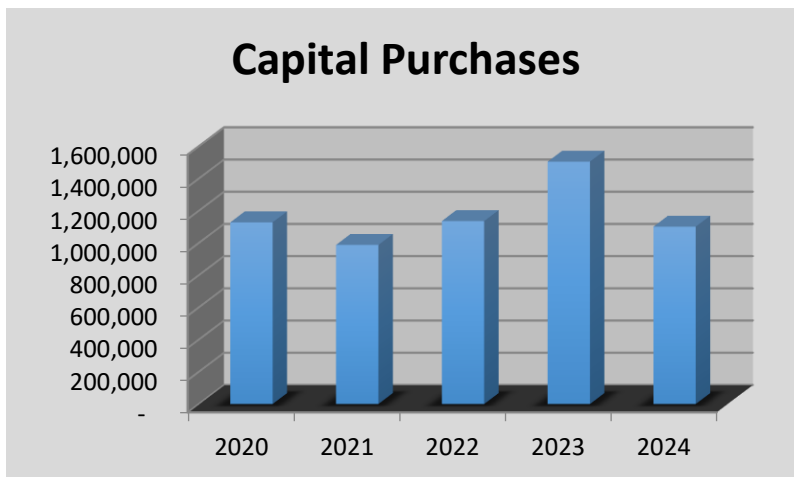
effective treatments can be implemented. Road surface conditions deteriorate to the next lower PASER level before we have the funds to be able to fix them (i.e., will take us 26 years to overlay our current backlog; but the backlog will have deteriorated to the level requiring resurface within 5 years).

The table below compares maintenance and construction expenses for 2023 and 2024\*. \*The financials for 2024 are not closed – the numbers reflected below are preliminary.

Department	2023	2024	Incr/Decr
CTH Maintenance	3,738,192	3,130,854	(607,338)
Road & Bridge Construction	3,961,258	1,997,790	(1,963,468)
Routine Maint on State Hwys	2,737,724	3,230,662	492,938
Snow & Ice Control on State Hwys	1,323,137	1,197,513	(125,624)
Road & Bridge on State Hwys	478,832	314,224	(164,608)
Town/Village/City Local Rd Maint	2,158,140	2,323,960	165,820
County Aid Construction	948,921	734,137	(214,784)
County Bridge Aid	12,469	222,928	210,459
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15,758,857</b>	<b>13,152,068</b>	<b>(2,206,605)</b>

## Capital Outlay Purchases

Sustainable investment has been the goal for the past several years within Highway. Setting depreciation equal to investment, results in an average investment of about \$1.2 million on the department's more than \$24 million of assets. Equipment turn-over and facility upkeep require steady investment into well performing trucks, equipment, and technology. Since 2019, plow truck replacement costs have risen between 22% for a single axle and 29% for a tandem, demanding an additional \$200,000 per year. In addition to the plow truck increase, skid steer cost has risen 29% and tractor replacement cost have increased 28%. The department has not made a major purchase to replace construction equipment since 2011. The Paver was purchased in 2011 and the newest Motor Grader in the fleet was purchased in 1994. This is further complicated by equipment rate logistics where current hourly rates are determined by a 6-year average of costs which is 2 years in arrears. That means, maintenance costs from 8 years ago are still considered within the revenue stream for the current year. Revenue lags expense and will continue to do so for quite some time (revenue rates have only increased 30% over same timeframe). The graph below illustrates the county's commitment to improving the Highway Department's equipment.

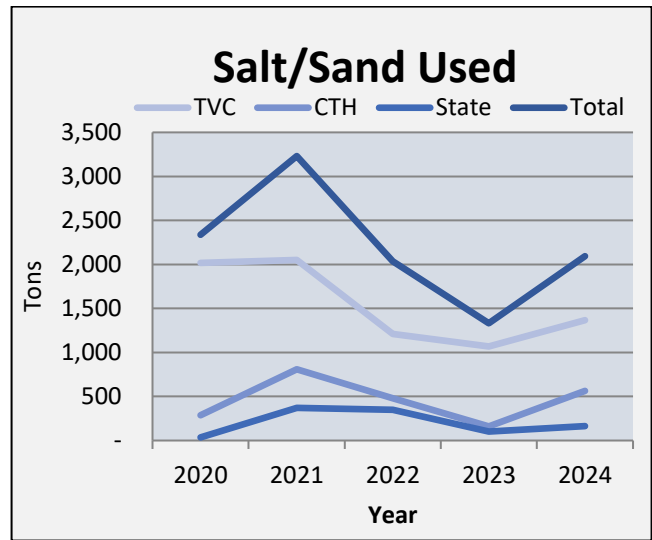
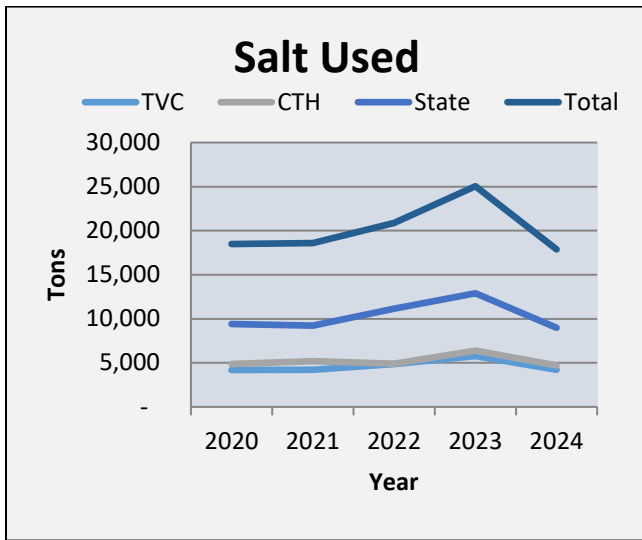


*\*County has generally budgeted a straight amount year to year for capital purchase. Carry overs occur from year to year due to the timing of equipment purchase and arrivals. Large trucks are currently taking about 20 months from order to delivery due to delays in supply chains.*

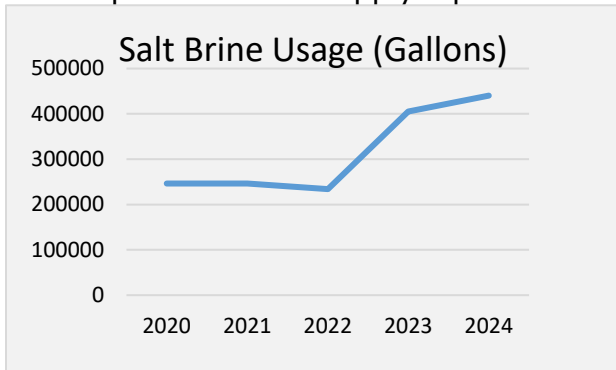
The Department is maintaining positive overall fleet outcome (revenue > expense) due to a variety of reasons; average unit hours are more than the averages for most other counties, multi-use implementations for trucks and equipment is beginning to yield results with a smaller fleet to maintain, switching to rental units for low-use and high capital cost equipment is helping cut demand for capital investment needs, and past investment in equipment is providing more reliable trucks and equipment.

## Snow and Ice Control Material Usage

Rock salt, sand/salt mix, and salt brine are the predominant materials that we use to break the bond that occurs between snow/ice and road surfaces. These materials lower the freezing temperature of water and adhere to the road surface which in turn ensure safe winter travelling throughout the County. We have storage capacity for approximately 58,000 tons of salt/sand material throughout the county. The majority capacity of storage is located at the five domes in Wyocena with other facilities located in Lodi, Portage, Cambria, Columbus, and on CTH CS/J near the interstate. Salt brine is gaining in usage due to the reduction of salt that it requires. Brine is now made in Wyocena and trucked to storage tanks at the other shops for use during winter activity. Anti-icing activity serves the entire County from Wyocena as well. The graphs below illustrate how much solid material has been spread on different road types over the past five years.



The Department does apply liquid salt brine on the State system and some locations of



County roads as well. Salt brine is applied as "anti-icing" and "pre-wet" applications. "Anti-icing" means the deployment of salt brine in advance of storm events as a preventative maneuver. Salt brine dries and adheres to the pavement (in wait for snow, sleet, or freezing rain to fall), reacts to the introduced moisture, lowers the freezing point, and returns the precipitation to liquid form where it can run-off thereby not creating slippery road conditions.

"Pre-wet" is a similar brine concentration that is added during rock salt deployment. Brine wets the salt prior to hitting the road which initiates an earlier dissolution of the rock salt and assists the salt to clump and adhere to the road/snow and reduce bounce and blow-off of the rock salt. Both methods assist the Department with reduction in the use of rock salt. In 2024, we deployed 440,299 gallons of brine, mostly on the State system.

## **Summary of Pavement and Sealcoating Work in 2024:**

We seal coated 10 miles of CTHs EF and K using 53,687 gallons of oil and 1,640 tons of chips. We resurfaced 12 miles of CTHs H, K, and U (H & K with ARPA funds), placing 41,390 tons of hot mix asphalt. For Villages and Towns, we seal coated approximately 25 miles of roads in 9 different jurisdictions using 108,960 gallons of oil and 3,315 tons of chips. About 8.8 miles of roads in 16 different cities, villages, and towns were paved using 10,115 tons of hot mix asphalt.

## **Synopsis/Overview of the 2024 Highway & Transportation Annual Report**

2024 expenses were down across the board for most activities of the Department. The use of ARPA funds for resurfacing CTH H and K and an above average winter contributed to the decrease. State maintenance workload increased from 2023 (increase \$492,938). Town maintenance workload increased about 7% or \$165,000. Heavy rains caused damage throughout the County, resulting in unexpected culvert replacements and ditch grading. The Department has steadily filled vacate positions in 2024; the Department currently has 2 open positions, compared to 14 at this time in 2023.

Within the WisDOT State Transportation Program, a new local bridge was completed on Kowald Rd in the Town of Scott. Design continued for bridges on CTH A, Inglehart Rd, and Sterk Rd at the Union Pacific railroad; road reconstruction for CTH P (Randolph to Cambria).

## **In 2025 the Department Plans to:**

Resurfacing CTHs A and J with budget dollars and LRIP funding. We will be conducting sealcoat on CTH U. 2025 is a bridge inspection year for 12-month bridges on the local systems (13+/-). In addition, the Department will be inspecting small bridge structures (6 ft < 20 ft), in 2025. In the STP program, we will continue design for the replacement of 3 obsolete bridges over the UP Railroad in the northeast section of the County (A, Inglehart, and Sterk). We will begin design on 3 bridges (CTH K, CTH VJ, and Hall Rd). We continue to take advantage of America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, working on CTHs K and A. BIL program funds and programming will continue for a project to reconstruct CTH P (Cambria – Randolph) for around \$4.5 million dollars (in design).

We will continue working towards – ***"Good, Safe Roads."***

Presented by: Don Nichols, Commissioner

Approved By: Highway Committee on March 6, 2025



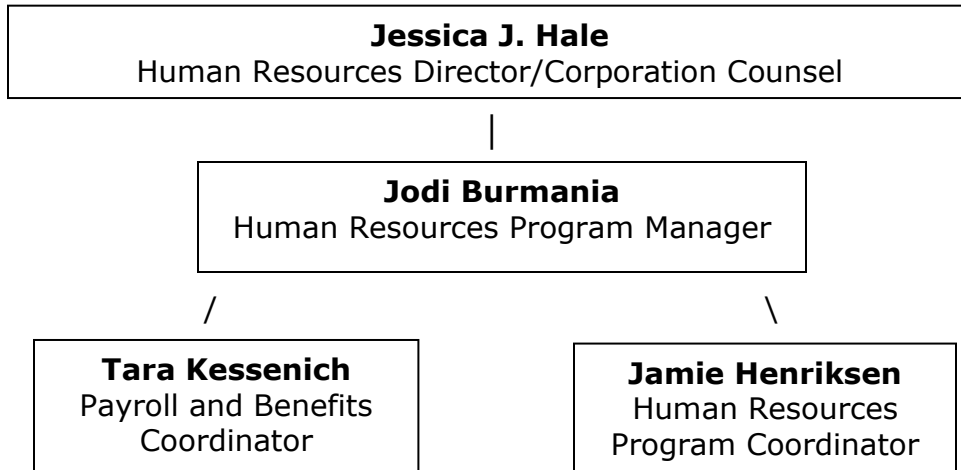
## Human Resources

### Department Overview:

Governed by the Human Resources Committee, the Human Resources Department (“HR”) is responsible for all aspects of employment including confirming that all approvals are received from Committees, recruitment, processing applications, contacting chosen applicants for testing and/or interviewing, providing interview assessment packets, conducting background and reference checks, scheduling physicals, drug screens, and fingerprinting when applicable, extending offers of employment and conducting new employee orientation. HR also calculates and processes employee retirements and resignations and administers the County Employee Assistance Program (EAP). HR oversees numerous Federal and State programs ranging from Family Medical Leave to Safety and Risk Management and including Workers Compensation and OSHA/WI Department of Safety and Professional Services Public Sector Reporting compliance. The HR Director serves as Chief Negotiator for collective bargaining with the Sheriff’s Sworn Unit. HR responds to employee and management inquiries regarding the interpretation of Columbia County Policies and Procedures and maintains County Board approved changes to the County Personnel Ordinance and resolutions relevant to the County’s General Employee Handbook and Personnel Manual for Management.

HR is responsible for processing payroll for County Board Supervisors, Committee members and County employees, ensuring the accuracy of tax and benefit deductions, reporting quarterly taxes to the IRS and vouchering all payments upon completion of bi-weekly payroll. HR manages enrollment and administration of all employee benefits including Health Insurance (medical, dental, vision and prescription), Life Insurance, WI Retirement, Deferred Compensation, Short Term Disability, Long Term Disability, Securian Accident and other voluntary optional participation selections. Additional functions include, allocating annual vacation, issuing probationary and annual employee evaluations with relevant information, monitoring step increases according to appropriate pay scales, monitoring personal holidays, direct deposit, processing W-2s, 1095-Cs, 1095-Bs and submitting documentation to initiate COBRA and retiree health insurance benefits.

**Organizational Chart:**



**Statistical Performance:**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Scheduled Interviews	385	341	353
Individuals processed through HR Office	201	232	202
Separated from County Service	206	203	184
Retirement	22	19	17
Family Medical Leave requests	154	103	93
Workers compensation claims	60 claims 102 days away from work 589 restricted or transfer days	56 claims 105 days away from work 297 restricted or transfer days	66 claims 128 days away from work 251 restricted or transfer days
Union contract settlement	Settlement with Sheriff's Sworn unit for 2023 - 2024 (2 year contract).	At the end of 2023, there was a wage re-opener for 2024 wages. There was a settlement for 2024 and 2025 wages.	Contract was not open for negotiations.
Health Insurance	We continued with Quartz for 2022. Our renewal came in at the 6% rate cap.	We continued with Quartz for 2023. Plan design changes were made to decrease our premiums.	We continued with Quartz for 2024. Our renewal came in at the 6% rate cap.



Safety	Annual OSHA log statistics and posting requirements completed.	Annual OSHA log statistics and posting requirements completed.	Annual OSHA log statistics and posting requirements completed.
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**Summary:**

We continued to struggle with recruitment in 2024. We tried advertising on a couple of new websites to see if we noticed an increase in our application pools, but the application pools continued to be low. Often there were only one (1) or two (2) qualified candidates to interview. We also struggled with successful background checks for potential candidates.

The HR Department worked with Department Heads and the HR Committee to update well over 100 County position descriptions to ensure the most accurate information was reviewed by McGrath Human Resources Group during the wage and compensation study. The Columbia County Board of Supervisors advised McGrath Human Resources Group to develop Salary Schedules based on the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of comparable markets. The HR Department worked with McGrath Human Resources Group for most of the year to ensure the implementation date of January 1, 2025, was met. This project required a lot of program and system changes. New wage tables, employee job description setup, payroll changes, and evaluation tracking are just a few programs and systems that were updated. MIS assisted the HR staff with report changes and the development of several new programs during this process. This project was a lot of additional work and very time-consuming.

HR staff worked with M3 to make sure our health insurance remained competitive. Service with Quartz continued to be working well, and we had a rate cap of not to exceed 6% for 2024, so M3 did not feel there was a need to go out to bid for our health insurance. Our medical loss ratio is over 100%, which means that Quartz is paying more out in claims than the County is paying them in premiums. HR staff will monitor this closely with M3 to try and come up with ideas and programs that might help reduce this rate. M3’s Wellness Department met with HR staff to let them know different programs they currently have that might be helpful. Superior Vision and Delta Dental continued to provide employee vision and dental benefits in 2024. The County continues to effectively self-fund employee dental benefits.

HR staff worked with M3 to establish a contract with Aflac for short-term disability, hospital indemnity, and critical illness benefits, for 2024. Some billing issues still exist, but overall, employees seem to be happy with the change.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) was renewed with Aspen Family Counseling to continue to provide services to County employees and their families.

2024 Workers Compensation claims increased. The days away from work increased, however, restricted or transfer days decreased. HR staff work closely with Aegis-Charles Taylor/County Mutual Worker’s Compensation program managers and County Department Heads in an effort to reduce Worker’s Compensation claims. Aegis-Charles Taylor works

with Guardian Managed Care Solutions to assign nurses to our worker's compensation cases. These nurses attend doctor's appointments with the employee and keep the County and Aegis-Charles Taylor updated on the claim.

To be eligible for Family Medical Leave, employees must work at least one thousand (1,000) hours in the preceding fifty-two (52) weeks and be employed for at least one (1) year. With newer staff, many of them do not qualify for Family Medical Leave, so they have had to request Leave of Absences. This has attributed to a decrease in Family Medical Leave, but an increase in our Leave of Absence requests. The requests, in general, have been more complicated than ever. This results in more time being spent to research proper responses to ensure we are in compliance with Federal and State guidelines.

We continue to train and cross train in order to efficiently support all County Employees and Department Heads for a full range of employee issues including recruitment, benefit and payroll management, professional development and retention, personnel issues, terminations, separations and retirements.

Presented by: Jessica J. Hale

Reviewed and approved by: Human Resources at the March 7, 2025, Committee meeting.

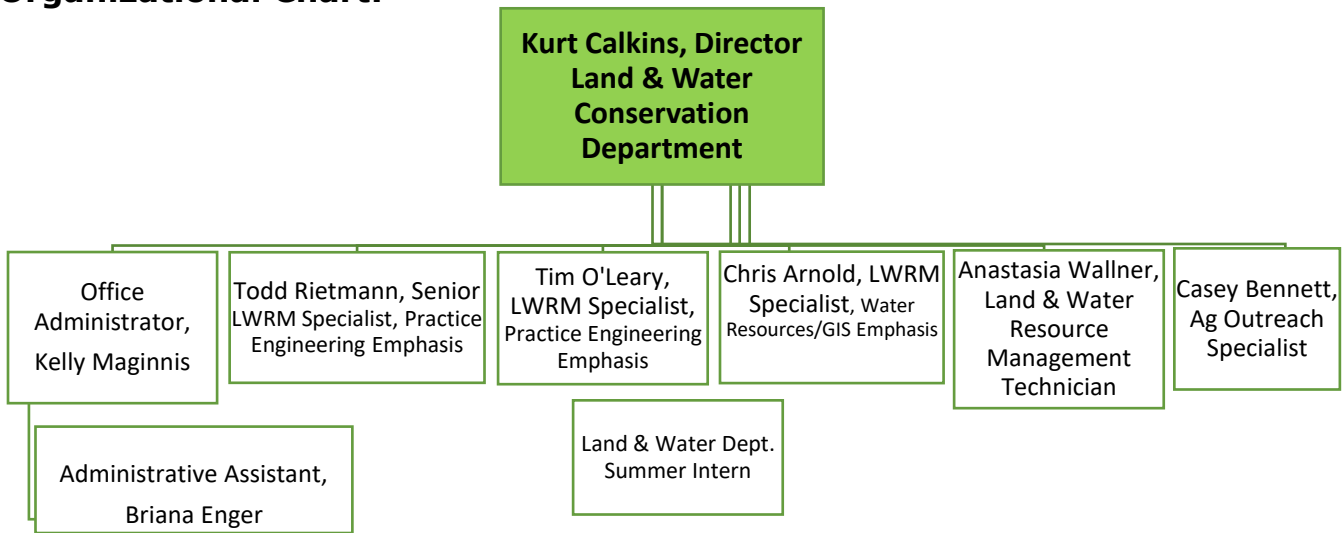


## Land and Water Conservation Department

### Department Overview:

“Protecting, Promoting and Enhancing the Natural Resources of Columbia County”  
 Mission: The conservation of land, water, and other natural resources through the implementation of conservation programs, ordinances and regulations, information, education and technical assistance to ensure responsible land use management and preserve the resources for the future. Including the use of enhanced agricultural outreach & educational programming to assist agriculture with a wide range of focus area needs.

### Organizational Chart:



#### A. Department Programs

Land Water Resource Management Program (LWRM) (SWRM); Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP); Farmland Preservation Program (FPP); Agricultural Performance Standards & Agricultural Waste Management Ordinance (Chapter 11); NR 151 Performance Standards/ DNR Targeted Runoff Management (TRM); NR 243 Notice of Discharge (NOD); Wildlife Damage and Abatement; Tree Sale Program; WPDES Adaptive Management/Nutrient Trading (City of Columbus/Yahara WINS); Snowmobile Trail Program; Oversight/Coordination & Management of Columbia County Parks Program; Groundwater Study/Flow Model Program & Drinking Water Educational Program; DNR Conservation Aid Grants Program; Nutrient Management Farmer Education (NMFE) Training Program; TSP for NRCS (Technical Service Provider); Surface Water Management Program (DNR Planning & Protection); Agricultural Outreach & Educational Programming; Youth Educational Programs and Contests.

B. Department Services

Technical Assistance; Engineering Assistance; Conservation Information/Education; Land Records Automation/GIS; Financial Assistance/Grant Writing; Regulatory Activities; Project Planning; Ag Outreach Services; Ag Reporter/Snapshot Newsletters

**Statistical Performance:**

A. Land and Water Resource Management Program (LWRM)

2024 - \$225,032.98 cost sharing allocated/committed to 38 landowners, involving 9 different Best Management Practices. (2023-\$372,834); (2022-\$248,853) This competitive allocation is awarded based on a formula that includes several parameters focusing on utilization of funds and getting projects completed in a timely manner. Columbia County has consistently been awarded funding levels at the highest tiers. These DATCP source funds are directly used to implement Nonpoint Source (NPS) abatement efforts found in the County Land & Water Resource Management Plan.

B. DNR Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) & Notice of Discharge (NOD) Programs

These annual allocations of competitive grants are used to help fund conservation BMP's that will bring landowners and operators into compliance with State Agricultural Runoff Management Regulations (NR 151 & NR 243) & Chapter 11 Columbia County Code of Ordinances. There were no completed projects in 2024. We currently have 1 active grant award totaling \$225,000.00 (this was extended into 2025).

C. Ag Outreach Programming

This was the second full year for this position after transferring from UWEX to LWCD. Daily outreach interaction for 84 requests is detailed into 8 categories: Crops/Soils (35); Livestock (14); Agribusiness (17). No requests in Energy and Forestry. The most common requests for information were nutrient management (8 requests) and Soil Sampling/Testing (5 requests). We continue with using digital delivery for the quarterly Ag Reporter and SnapShot newsletters, due to increasing paper/postage costs. Educational programming was provided to the public for such topics: Weed Control in Crops; Farm Safety; Forward Contracts/Marketing; Market Outlooks; Cover Crops in Grain Rotations; Emergency Planning; Combine Maintenance; Soil Sampling and Interpretation for Cover Crops and Home Gardens; Grazing Field Days; Pollinators; and Ag Careers. This position also played an active role in NMFE Trainings, which were very well attended for 2024. This position also assisted with Producer Led Watershed events.

D. Youth Education Programs

Primary activities included successful environmental Poster/Speaking Contests, as well as education programs to local schools.

E. Tree Sales Program

There were 53,650 Trees/Shrubs sold in 2024; (2023-51,052; 2022-48,650). For supplies: 101 Fertilizer packs, 13,240 Tree Shelters, 5,525 Tree Stakes, 10 Tree mats, 11 Deer Repellent. We had an increase in trees and supplies for 2024 from past years, making it the most successful year to date. The program history (1981-2024) 1,610,534 trees sold = \$305,933.90 revenue. This program continues to be financially successful in addition to filling an obvious customer need for conservation.

- F. Chapter 11-Agricultural Performance Standards and Agricultural Waste Management  
 In 2024, 1 new structure permit, 2 abandonment; (2023-1 new structure permit, 1 abandonment.) Achieving and maintaining compliance with the provisions of this ordinance come from many sources. Cost sharing through various programs in combination with FPP tax credits accounts for a high percentage of the compliance work done through this ordinance. 327 (NMP-590) plans and checklists were submitted in 2024. 137 permits have been issued under this ordinance since 1987.
- G. Farmland Preservation Program
- \$1,012,625 in tax credits claimed by Columbia County landowners in 2024 for 2023 tax year.
  - 441 Landowners claimed credit, out of 780 eligible landowners, covering 100,443 acres (2023-505)
  - Certified & issued 780 certificates of compliance (COC) with unique # for tax credits for 130,021 acres. Completed spot checks on 348 participants.
  - Town of West Point Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) contracts approved and recorded with 14 landowners to date.
  - SEG Innovation Grant- For 2024, 17 landowners were provided \$12,230.00 in incentives designed to encourage participants in the Farmland Preservation program to actively review their Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) to discover potential improvement areas for their operations. Many of the NMP reviews led to discussions of potential soil health improvements practices and the implementation of the phosphorus reduction practice of cover crops. Then 4 landowners were provided \$3,000.00 worth of incentives to sign agreements with DATCP under the Agricultural Enterprise Area, which is an additional component of the Farmland Preservation Program available in the Town of West Point.
- H. Snowmobile Trail Program  
 2023-2024 Season – 272.8 miles of trail in Columbia County; Management of DNR Trail Aid Grant of \$87,780.00 local clubs for maintenance. Total paid in 2024 was \$86,101.50 (\$85,410.00-2022/2023). Annually the department works with the snowmobile association to apply for bridge upgrades as necessary. In 2024, we utilized 2 DNR grants to update 2 bridges using \$107,800.00. We currently are working on 1 active bridge grant, award funded for \$165,000.00
- I. Wildlife Damage Abatement Claims Program (WDACP)  
 2024 had 3 landowners who claimed \$21,243.85 in crop loss compensation. (In 2023-4 landowners/\$22,565.87). On average about 75 landowners per year are provided technical assistance through this program helping them deal with things such as deer/geese/bears/cranes.  
 -Received \$44,909.73 annual grant for 2024 to carry out WDACP in Columbia County.
- J. DNR Surface Water Grants  
 The previous grant for Lazy Lake APMP completed the final updated plant harvesting plan in 2024. We currently have a Healthy Lakes Grant for 2024-2025. One practice was installed in 2024.
- K. Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) (NRCS/FSA/DATCP)  
 As of 2024, there are 87 landowner contracts totaling 750.53 acres of buffers, and 1 perpetual easement of 11.3 acres, totaling 88 contracts with 761.83 acres.

L. Nutrient Management Farmer Education Grant (NMFE)

This 2024 DATCP Grant of \$14,950 is used to implement a training program that allows landowners to develop and maintain their own 590 Nutrient Management Plans (NMP). This year we used this grant to assist 26 landowners (21 in 2023) in completing plans/updates, covering 8,507 acres. (2023- 5,920 acres) The incentives paid to landowners totaled \$5,650. This has been a successful tool for helping landowners meet the 590 NMP requirements. The Ag Outreach specialist assists with the trainings and plan completion assistance. Columbia County has developed substantial adoption of NMP planning across our agricultural landscape. We have 193,520 acres documented under 327 NMP-590 plans. This represents 80% of all active agricultural lands.

M. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) (NRCS Partner Program)

Obligated 21 contracts totaling over \$1.06 million to install practices such as cover crops, brush management, pipeline, heavy use protection, watering facility, wildlife habitat planting, obstruction removal, CNMP's, FMP's, Tree/Shrub Establishment, Grassed Waterway, Critical Area Planting, Mulching, Grade Stabilization Structure.

N. Conservation Stewardship Program (NRCS Partner Program)

CSP has provided payments for having conservation measures in place, maintaining them, and installing new conservation practices. In 2024, 31 new contracts were signed for 9,459.10 acres. There are currently 137 active contracts in Columbia County covering 51,582.70 acres.

O. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) (NRCS Partner Program)

As of 2024, 75 easements totaling 7,720 acres of wetlands were restored in Columbia County and protected with perpetual easements, 65 are permanent.

P. Producer Led Watershed Council Grant:

The department was awarded a new grant from DATCP in 2024. The grant continued to support of the Lake Wisconsin Farmer Watershed Council, which will include cost share incentives to install conservation projects. This is a grass roots initiative done in cooperation with local farmers. We utilized \$36,524.88 in 2024 with 6 different field events at group members farms and 16 landowners receiving incentive payments for practices. The primary focus was group development, conservation and soil health education and cover crop installation financial assistance. A 5<sup>th</sup> grant was awarded for implementation in 2025 totaling \$26,000.00.

**Summary:**

This past year was very successful for the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department. We are proud of how we were able to continue to manage the workload associated with a wide range of natural resource-based programs. Our tree program sale continues to be a successful niche program. We assisted landowners with the installation of 3,125 acres of cover crops. This report details the major programming work the department does.

Presented by:

Kurt R. Calkins, Director

Reviewed and approved by:

Ag, Extension, Land and Water Conservation Committee  
March 3, 2025



## Land Information

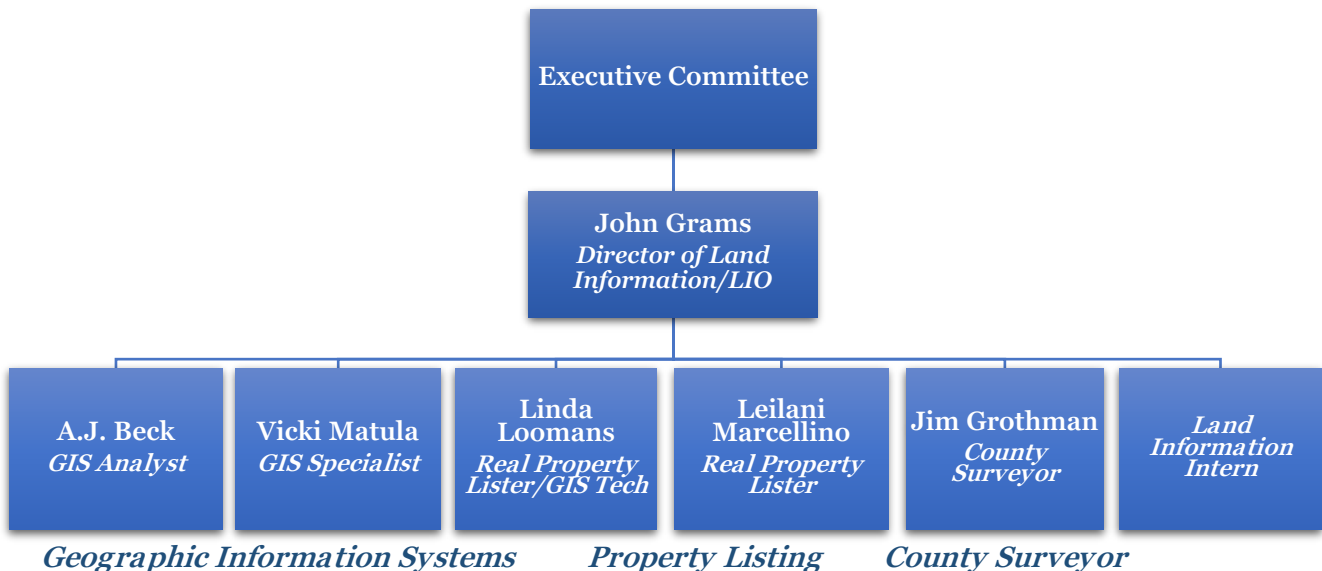
### Department Overview:

The Land Information Department (LID) is governed by WI Stats 59 wherein specific duties are set forth and funding sources are determined. Under direction of the Executive Committee and Land Information Council, the LID is responsible for the following functions:

- (1) Property Listing and Assessment Management as defined in WI Stats 70.09
- (2) Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- (3) Land Records Modernization, Land Information Officer duties WI Stats 59.72
- (4) Office of the County Surveyor as defined in WI Stats 59.74
- (5) Coordination and storage of property survey records

The LID is a central player in supporting all land records and mapping activities in Columbia County and is the coordinating office for land records. Current office staff includes five full-time employees and a summer intern. County Surveyor duties are contracted for a two-year period.

### Organizational Chart:



## Statistical Performance:

### Revenue

Description	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Land Information Misc.	527	437	88	1,493	454
Land Records Expendable Trust	71,992	72,488	84,656	129,782	121,824
Grant Dollars	37,088	71,000	86,000	26,000	84,648
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$109,607</b>	<b>\$143,925</b>	<b>\$170,744</b>	<b>\$157,275</b>	<b>\$206,926</b>

Land Records Expendable Trust revenue is generated from fees for recordings in the Register of Deeds as a participant in the WI Land Information Program (WLIP). Columbia County retains \$8 for each real estate recording. The trend in decreased revenue is likely due to increased mortgage interest rates resulting in historic low of documents recorded.

LID has taken advantage of other grant opportunities in the state to continue forward progress of the County's land records modernization. This includes DOA's NG911 GIS grant, to which the LID was awarded \$99,000 in fiscal year 2024. The LID will continue to pursue all suitable grant opportunities and seek new revenue outlets where appropriate.

### Tax Parcel & Land Records Maintenance

Recorded Documents Processed (Register of Deeds and County Surveyor's Documents)

Description	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Certified Surveys Recorded	125	127	133	131	131
Subdivisions Recorded	2	3	3	1	0
Condominiums Recorded	1	2	2	3	1
Transportation Project Recorded	6	17	6	3	9
Other Surveys Recorded	244	265	275	218	239
Other Documents processed (Deeds, Annexations, etc.)	3,096	3,099	3,158	3,557	3,286
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,474</b>	<b>3,513</b>	<b>3,577</b>	<b>4,195</b>	<b>3,666</b>

The Tax Parcel & Land Records Maintenance table above shows the enormity of department data maintenance activities. Typical activities include updating owners, mailing and site address, tax parcel description, PLSS location, acreage, assessments, and GIS update of location. Changes are from recorded documents or assessment code and value adjustments.

### Assessment Values Changes

Totals by Community Type

Description	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	
City	Land	330,529,000	302,129,900	302,129,900	273,148,025	273,609,200
	Bldgs	2,054,092,500	1,760,357,300	1,641,448,800	1,405,052,700	1,361,438,200
Town	Land	1,689,816,700	1,518,108,800	1,311,807,500	1,246,504,499	1,194,835,299
	Bldgs	3,229,482,468	2,681,945,968	2,221,053,815	2,028,301,900	1,953,173,700
Village	Land	171,146,100	154,186,100	151,298,900	145,307,400	141,972,600
	Bldgs	868,567,900	754,644,850	736,260,450	668,411,650	617,916,350
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,343,634,668</b>	<b>7,171,372,718</b>	<b>6,363,999,365</b>	<b>5,766,726,174</b>	<b>5,542,945,349</b>	



**Change by Community (2024 – 2020)**

Community	5 YR % Change	Rank Change
City of Columbus	46.17%	5
City of Lodi	34.08%	-9
City of Portage	48.50%	-2
City of Wisconsin Dells	51.00%	-8
Village of Arlington	37.19%	-10
Village of Cambria	73.82%	15
Village of Doylestown	2.81%	-6
Village of Fall River	28.66%	-12
Village of Friesland	31.46%	-7
Village of Pardeeville	3.47%	-2
Village of Poynette	54.88%	13
Village of Randolph	61.83%	-6
Village of Rio	41.71%	-12
Village of Wyocena	53.88%	-8

*-Communities reporting to have performed assessment revaluations: 2024- Town of Arlington, Town of Fountain Prairie, Town of Leeds, Town of Lewiston, Town of Newport, Town of Wyocena; 2023- Town of Fort Winnebago, Town of Lowville, Town of Pacific, Town of West Point; 2022 – City of Lodi, City of Wisconsin Dells, Village of Rio, Village of Wyocena, Town of Scott; 2021 – Town of Arlington, Town of Hampden, Village of Fall River*

The change in real property assessed value of all property classes between 2020 to 2024 for all community types was \$2,800,689,219 and represents a 50.53% increase in Columbia County. The Town of Lewiston reported the largest increase in real property assessed value of all property classes with \$129,276,200 during this timeframe which represents an increase of 96.30%. The Towns of Fountain Prairie, Leeds, and Newport also had large increases which may be in part due to revaluations.

**Summary:**

The LID continues to maintain and grow existing data and applications to support a robust land records information system for Columbia County. As the LID moves forward with the implementation/development of this enterprise system, it is important to improve access, integration with external systems, and eliminate data redundancies. The primary way to enhance access to LID information has been to utilize the internet. Our website, which is one of the County’s most used, had over 30,000 unique users in 2024.

In addition to the statistical performance reported in this report the LID performs many other tasks not easily evaluated using statistical measures such as complex GIS analysis work, including tax parcel mapping, monthly 911 data updates for location validation and

Community	5 YR% Change	Rank Change
Town of Arlington	43.65%	-11
Town of Caledonia	43.58%	-10
Town of Columbus	7.68%	-19
Town of Courtland	28.79%	-10
Town of Dekorra	77.52%	18
Town of Fort Winnebago	59.41%	-6
Town of Fountain Prairie	77.92%	21
Town of Hampden	29.17%	-7
Town of Leeds	71.34%	19
Town of Lewiston	96.30%	30
Town of Lodi	48.20%	-11
Town of Lowville	78.43%	-1
Town of Marcellon	3.69%	-2
Town of Newport	74.23%	28
Town of Otsego	11.44%	5
Town of Pacific	84.04%	-1
Town of Randolph	59.12%	21
Town of Scott	40.20%	-10
Town of Springvale	3.56%	-5
Town of West Point	66.08%	-6
Town of Wyocena	52.55%	6

call routing, and land records integration projects. Functions such as these require complex analysis of business processes, technical knowledge, and cooperative work to implement successfully and cost effectively.

Presented by: John Grams

Reviewed and approved by: Executive Committee on March 13, 2025



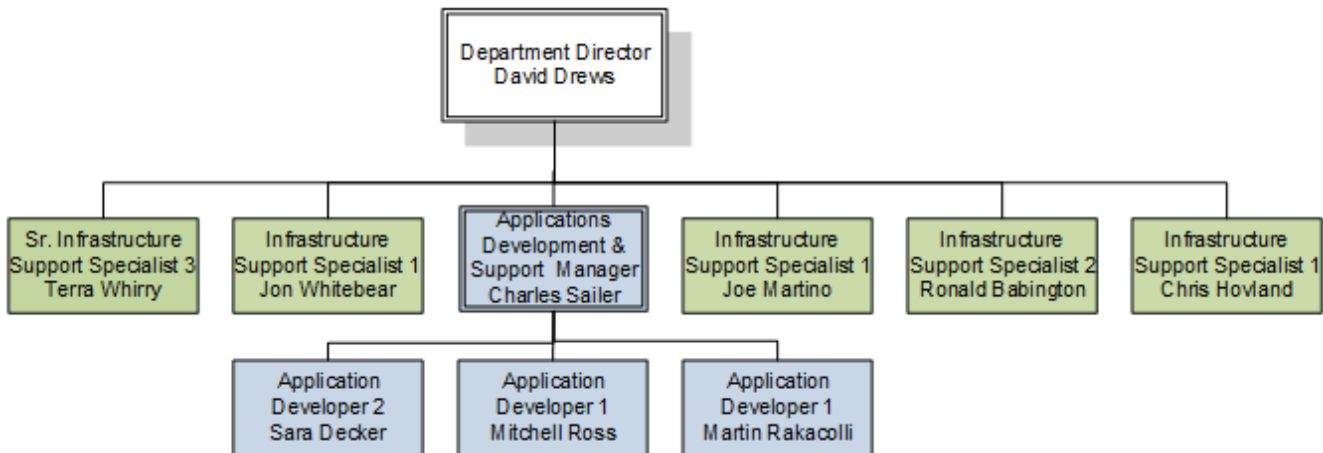
## Management Information Services

### Department Overview:

The MIS departmental functions are broadly divided into two major areas, Infrastructure Support, and Applications Development & Support.

- The Infrastructure Team’s principal responsibilities include installation, monitoring, and maintenance of core technology infrastructure. They install the operating systems and application software and ensure that the software is functioning correctly. This includes file servers, web servers, workstations, wiring, data switches, telephone, cloud services, and other technical systems.
- The Applications Support Team’s responsibilities revolve around developing, maintaining interfaces, and reports from core systems such as the county’s financial system JD Edwards. Additionally, the Applications Team is responsible for developing and maintaining the county’s website and integrating county information systems with numerous State and Federal systems. Each development effort requires a thorough review to ensure that the application meets the requested need and is operationally sustainable.

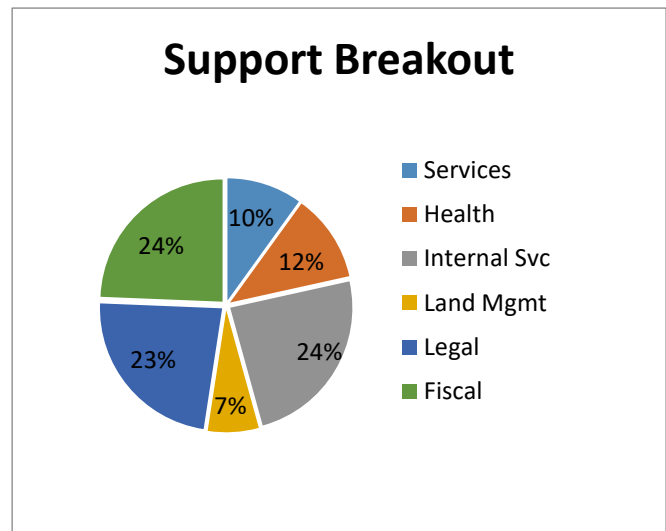
### Organizational Chart:



## Statistical Performance: Distribution of I.T. Support Resources

The support breakout chart illustrates how the county’s information technology support services are distributed across key areas of county operations. These I.T. services help streamline the county’s operations which ultimately benefit the county’s citizenry in the form of efficient services:

- Services support requirements in 2024 decreased slightly to 10% from 19% in 2023. This service area includes County Clerk, Highway, Solid Waste, UW Extension, and Emergency Management. Resources used by these departments were limited to upgrades from applications developed in-house to assist with data being updated from a single location.
- Health system support is comprised of all divisions within Health & Human Services, Medical Examiner, Veterans Service Office, and Health Care Center. Support in this area slightly decreased to 12% from 15% in 2023. With no major projects planned in 2024, this category had minimal changes in support compared to other areas.
- Internal Services within the county account for 24% which had no changes from 2023. These include Facilities Management, Human Resources/Corporation Counsel, and County Board support. New applications being developed for the Human Resources Department contributed to the higher-than-normal support time, along with an uncommon number of open records requests.
- In 2024 Land Management (Land Information, Register of Deeds, Planning & Zoning, and Land & Water Conservation) support accounted for 4% of MIS provided support services. With a small change from 2023, the Land Management category has high technical needs that share information with the public. Project planning and coordination with MIS is a key result of having limited future interactions with the department’s required software.
- Legal system support (Sheriff’s Office, Clerk of Courts, District Attorney, and Register in Probate) accounts for 23% of the total MIS support resources. This reflects a decrease of 2% from the support requirements of 2023. The technology requirements required by the legal system continue to grow. The Sheriff’s Office along with the Clerk of Courts continues to have several technical requirements that involve support staff assistance.
- Fiscal systems (Accounting Department and Treasurer’s Office) support accounted for 24% of the support requirements which had a significant increase from 9% in 2023. No major projects took place in 2024 with the County’s financial system causing the increase.



## I.T. Infrastructure

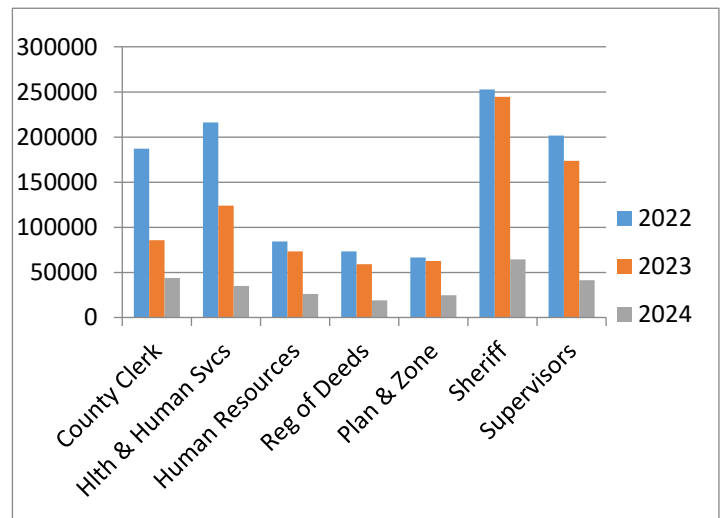
The County maintains an extensive IT infrastructure to process the large quantity of data used in the normal course of conducting county business operations. In 2024 the number of desktop PCs used decreased by 1 from 2023. There are no

	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>PCs</b>	237	235	229	228
<b>Laptops</b>	234	244	240	234
<b>Tablets</b>	60	55	46	48
<b>Security FOBs</b>	193	194	367	399
<b>Smartphones</b>	187	185	184	195

anticipated major changes expected to continue into 2025 as most departments have moved toward more mobile devices. This reflects an industry trend in which mobility is taking an increasingly important role in how individuals utilize technology and the ability to work remotely. Laptops allow end users the tools to collaborate with external users without additional equipment. County departments are starting to see the value in using a laptop for their main desktop which allows the flexibility to take their laptop with them anywhere and continue to be productive away from the office. This will decrease the overall cost as individuals will use one device as opposed to multiple devices. Over the last four years, the counts on PCs and tablets continue to show a decrease as more laptops are being utilized for all operations. Multifactor authentication (Security FOBs) continues to be a critical part of the County’s IT security plan to be used to facilitate secure remote connections to the County’s data network along with authenticating to Cloud Solutions. With the completion of acquiring Microsoft 365, the County implemented in 2023 that security FOBs are required for all users connecting to Microsoft 365 products. This reflects an increase in the number of security FOBs that have almost doubled in size. For County employees who have been assigned a smartphone, software security FOBs have been assigned to those individuals.

## Website Usage

Public use of the County’s website in 2024 generally reflected a decrease from the prior years. Even though the County website is the official source of County information, some County Departments are choosing other options for ways to share information with the public which will continue to decrease website activity. The Supervisors and Sheriff’s Office web pages had the most website visits in 2024. The Human Resources, Planning & Zoning, and Register of Deeds Departments showed comparable visits from 2024, but other sampled departments were either roughly the same or had a slight decrease in website hits.

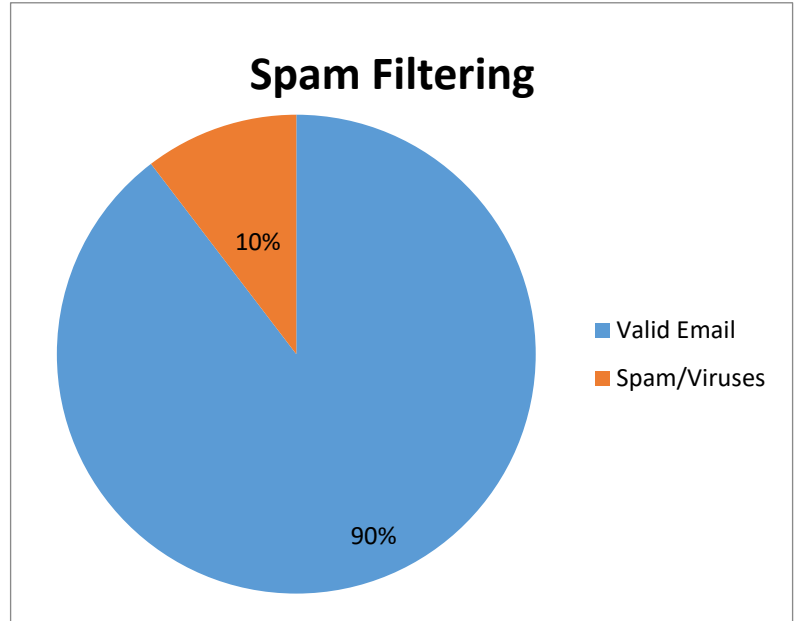


With information being shared through social media sites, the decrease will continue as a vast majority of citizens follow those sites to receive information.

## Email Traffic & Spam Filtering

During 2024 the County received just over 900,000 email messages of which 10%, were spam or virus related. This reflects a decrease in the amount of spam received by the County when compared to 2023. Improved security measures continue to be added in 2024 to the County's email system to not accept messages unable to meet new industry email standards. All messages are filtered using a layered antispam/antivirus approach. The first layer successfully filters the majority of the undesirable spam before the messages reach the County's email server. The second layer scrutinizes each message on the email server where it filters spam and quarantines potential computer viruses. The spam messages that do get through the filters, tend to be targeted toward specific individuals as a result of friends or colleagues who have had their email contacts compromised or signed up for a mailing service.

Total	904198
Valid Email	810332
Spam/Viruses	93866



### Summary:

MIS provides services in a variety of forms, from the more visible aspects of providing County employees with desktop computers or having a publicly available County website to the less visible aspects of maintaining financial software, troubleshooting issues, or keeping networks available and responsive. This less visible, behind-the-scenes, work comprises the majority of the work performed by I.T. Such work requires employees that not only possess technical skills but also deep institutional knowledge of the county's services.

Presented by: David Drews

Reviewed and approved by: Information Services & Property Committee; 3/5/2025



## Medical Examiner's Office

### Department Overview:

Mission Statement: Our mission is to serve the community, in conjunction with other agencies, in a time sensitive, respectful, and dedicated manner. We strive to complete thorough, professional, and timely investigations. We ensure those we serve that we are available for them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year as a way to offer solace in a time of grieving.

This office is the Chief Medicolegal Death Investigating agency for Columbia County. The Medical Examiner's Office is located within the Law Enforcement Center at 711 East Cook Street, Portage, Wisconsin. The primary duty of the Medical Examiner's Office is to investigate and certify, when appropriate, deaths as required by Wisconsin State Statutes 979.01 and 69.18.

Many deaths are investigated concurrently, yet independently, with law enforcement as required by statute. This office also works with the District Attorney's Office in those deaths involving possible criminality.

Aside from conducting death investigations, some ancillary duties of the Medical Examiner's Office include:

- Identifying and notifying next of kin.
- Inventorying and storing personal property.
- Inventorying and destroying prescription medicines.
- Providing court testimony.
- Coordinating tissue donations.
- Maintaining storage of various samples.
- Reporting data to appropriate state, federal, and local agencies.
- Fulfilling open record requests.
- Participating in continuing education.

Our office is also committed to our community and doing what we can to ensure each resident and visitor has the opportunity to live a long and healthy life. Our office currently participates in:

### Child Death Review Team

Established in 2011, the Child Death Review Team is a multi-disciplinary group focused on evaluating the deaths of children in Columbia County, from birth through age 26. The team tracks these cases to gather crucial data related to community intervention and education, contributing to the enhancement of child safety. The findings are also submitted to a state database managed by the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention.

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### **Suicide Review Team**

Starting in 2024, the Suicide Review Team has been alternating monthly with the Child Death Review Team. The Suicide Review Team aims to evaluate and provide suggestions to Columbia County in the hopes of reducing suicide rates. These suggestions are done in collaboration with Prevent Suicide Columbia County and are distributed to various organizations with the community.

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### **Prevent Suicide Columbia County**

Prevent Suicide Columbia County works to reduce suicide through awareness, education, collaboration, and improving access to mental health care. The Columbia County Medical Examiner's Office has joined efforts with this organization to better support families in grief after a suicide. Through the initiative, survivors of suicide have received care packages, with contributions from the Medical Examiner's Office, Columbia County Health and Human Services, Prevent Suicide Columbia County, and the Columbia County Association for Home and Community Education.

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### **Prevent Suicide Wisconsin Steering Committee**

Serving as a member of the Prevent Suicide Wisconsin Steering Committee Membership Roster since 2023. The Medical Examiner's Office partners with 21 other organizations and departments across the State to share suicide prevention strategies for implementation on a statewide level.

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### **Overdose Fatality Review Team & Opioid Task Force**

Formed in 2019 in response to the statewide opioid epidemic, this task force is dedicated to evaluating, educating, and reducing opioid use and overdose fatalities in Columbia County. The initiative aims to address the public health crisis through coordinated efforts to combat the rising number of opioid-related deaths.

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### **Versiti Donation Facilitation**

Since November 2021, the Columbia County Medical Examiner's Office has partnered with Versiti Organ, Tissue, and Eye Donation to facilitate tissue and eye donations in the county morgue. This collaboration not only increases the Medical Examiner's revenue but also provides a centralized location for tissue and eye donation, helping to enhance organ and tissue donation efforts in the region.

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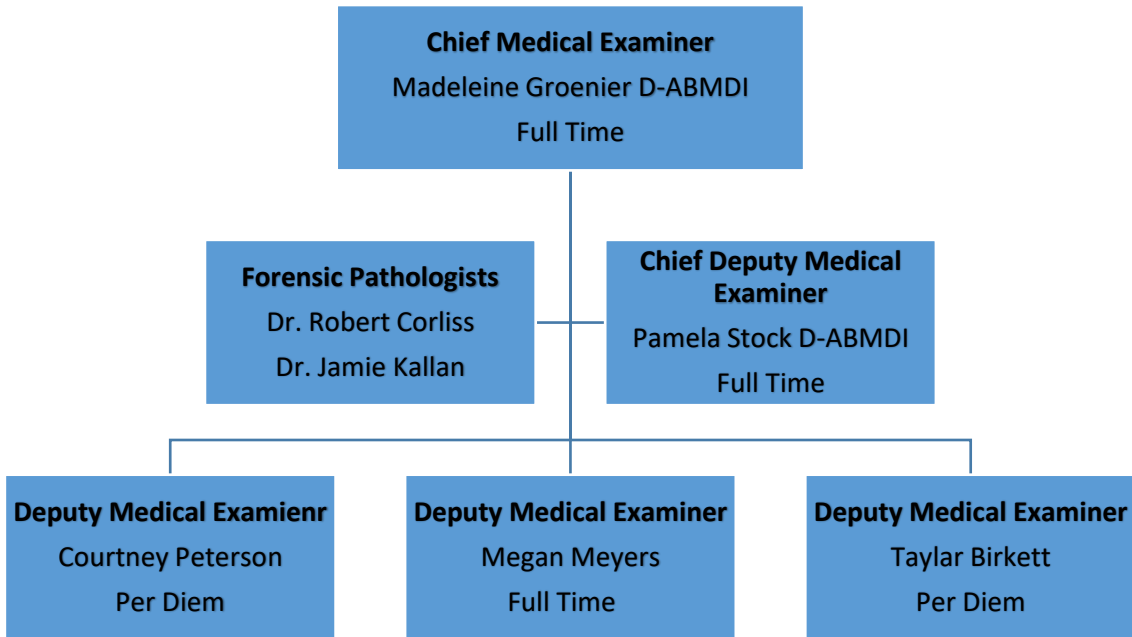
### **The Beat Goes On: Veterinary Health Center – University of Missouri**

The University of Missouri's Veterinary Health Center has been recycling donated pacemakers to help maintain the rhythm of life for canine patients. When pacemakers are removed from deceased patients, they are sent for reimplantation in animals. While research is ongoing regarding the reimplantation of pacemakers in humans, it has already been successfully achieved in pets. The Columbia County Medical Examiner's Office collaborates with local funeral homes to donate retired pacemakers to the Veterinary Health Center for this purpose.

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**Organizational Chart:**



**Statistical Performance:**

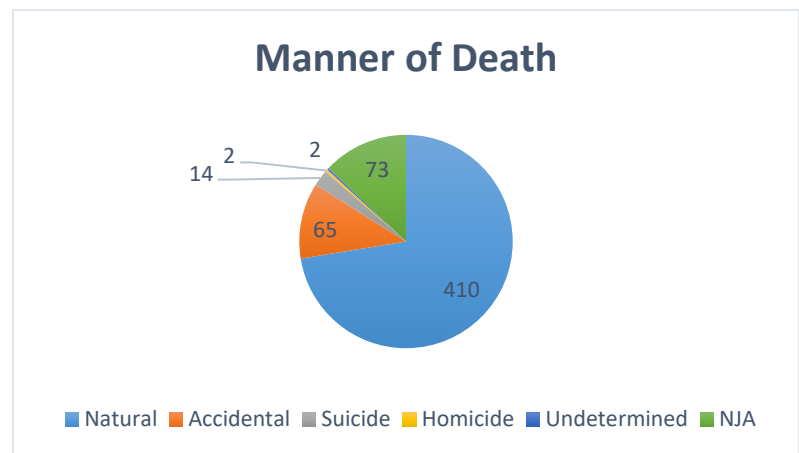
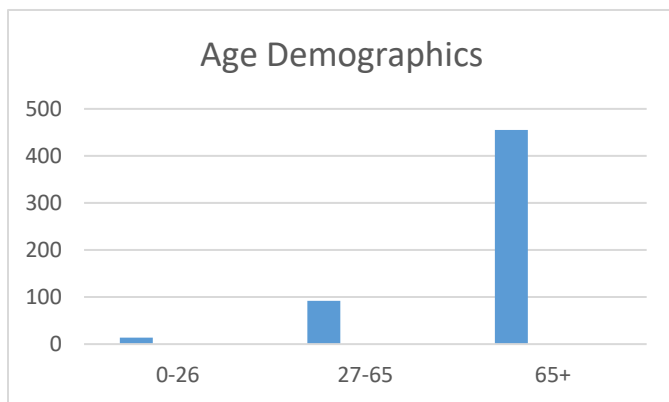
<b>REVENUE SUMMARY</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
DEATH CERTIFICATES	\$40, 206.60	\$36,337.50	\$34,562.40	\$34,202.30
CREMATION PERMITS	\$79,372.80	\$72,349.20	\$63,667.10	\$65,857.90
REMOVAL FEES	\$17,540.20	\$11,562.00	\$13,266.00	\$14,026.50
MORGUE FEES	\$55,800.00	\$46,400.00	\$32,612.60	\$7,331.70
RECORDS REQUEST	\$245.00	\$360.00	\$1347.00	\$834.50
DISINTERMENT PERMITS	\$0.00	\$239.80	\$0.00	\$114.50
	<b>\$193,164.60</b>	<b>\$166,888.50</b>	<b>\$145,455.10</b>	<b>\$154,324.10</b>

<b>CASE OVERVIEW</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
TOTAL CASES	566	603	546	584
DEATH CERTIFIED	487	516	496	462
CREMATIONS	384	364	355	363
AUTOPSIES	17	16	25	32
VERSITI DONATIONS	112	104	72	5
OTHER DONATIONS	10	6	7	8

MANNER OF DEATH	# OF CASES
NATURAL	410
ACCIDENTAL	65
SUICIDE	14
HOMICIDE	2
UNDETERMINED	2
NJA (no jurisdiction assumed)	73

INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATORS	# OF CASES
M. GROENIER	136
P. STOCK	148
C. PETERSON	114
M. MEYERS	166
T. BIRKETT	63

AGE DEMOGRAPHICS	0-26	27-65	65+
2024	14	92	455



**Summary:**

In 2024, the Columbia County Medical Examiner’s Office saw an overall increase in caseload. The services provided as a result of this contributed to an increase in revenue, supplemented by the increasing frequency of tissue donations at this facility. This office has increased its community involvement in preventative initiatives targeted towards fatal overdoses and suicides. This department enhanced the grief support and resources that are provided to loved ones at the time of death and beyond.

The investigators within this office attended several conferences and trainings to maintain knowledge of current and effective investigative techniques. Many practices have been implemented to ensure objective, accurate, and thorough investigations are being conducted.

It has been rewarding to continuously improve upon how we serve the citizens of Columbia County and those affected by the deaths that occur within this community.

Presented by: Pamela Stock, D-ABMDI, Chief Medical Examiner of Columbia County

Reviewed and approved by: Public Safety Committee: 03/10/2025

## Planning & Zoning Department

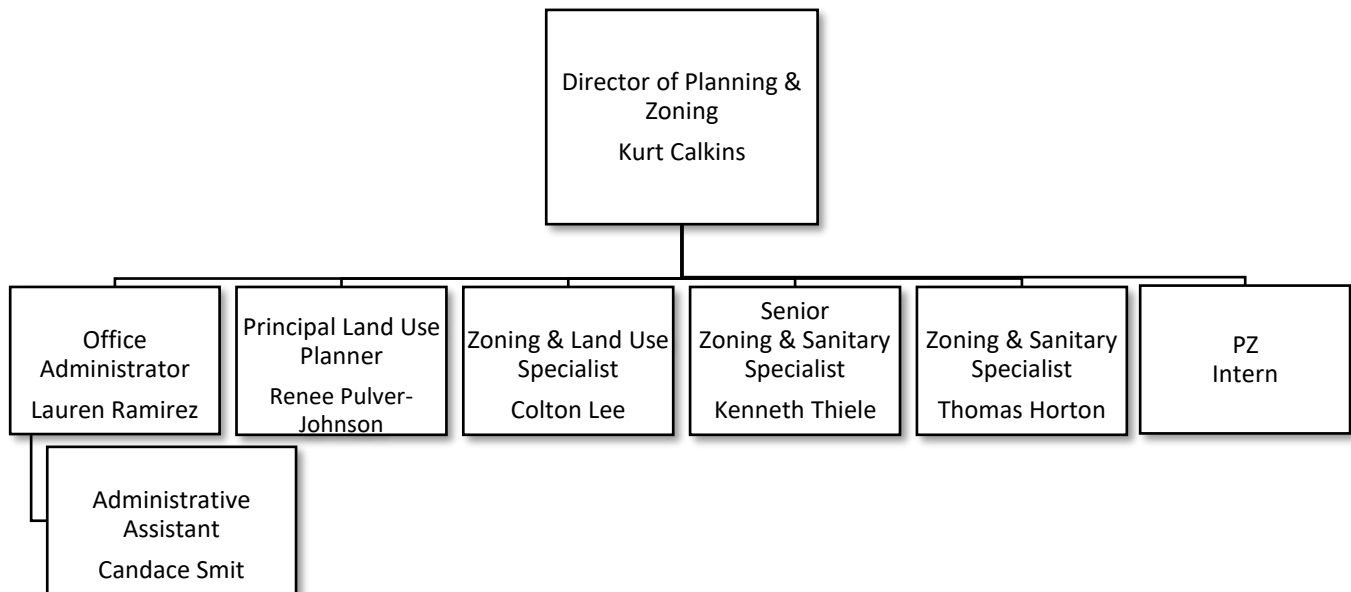
### Department Overview:

Mission: To promote the public health, safety and general welfare with well planned development & responsible stewardship of the land through equitable administration of ordinances, regulations and planning practices.

The Department utilizes a wide range of resources and partners to guide and permit land use activities that work toward the implementation of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan & the Certified Farmland Preservation Plan.

Chapter 12 Subchapters 100-600 Code of Ordinance resources are available to accomplish our goals, they include: Zoning, Land Division & Subdivision, Private Sewage Systems, Floodplain Zoning, Shoreland-Wetland Protection & Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation.

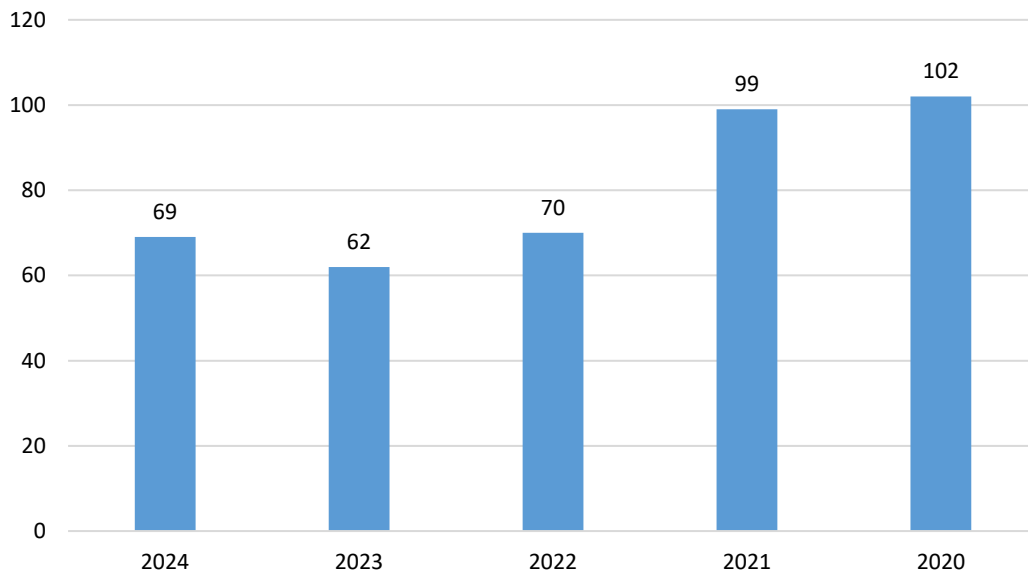
### Organizational Chart:



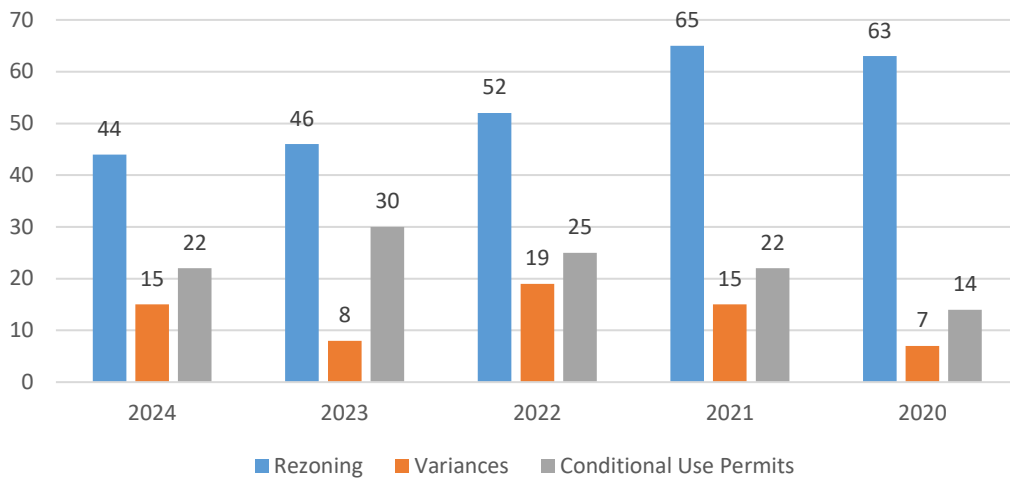
## Statistical Performance:

Town	Zoning Permits					Sanitary Permits				
	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Arlington	13	12	9	9	8	7	4	2	3	6
Caledonia	49	39	36	42	35	15	11	11	17	10
Columbus	15	10	11	9	13	1	2	8	5	4
Courtland	0	2	0	2	0	1	1	3	1	3
Dekorra	48	56	57	59	61	21	32	24	23	21
Fort Winnebago	10	14	13	23	13	3	2	4	10	8
Fountain Prairie	17	14	24	18	14	12	7	10	9	5
Hampden	10	10	12	9	11	3	0	4	6	10
Leeds	8	8	10	12	18	2	7	4	8	6
Lewiston	30	27	14	17	11	11	9	9	7	12
Lodi	48	45	34	52	51	9	5	4	11	5
Lowville	11	16	20	15	16	9	6	7	9	9
Marcellon	17	21	11	25	37	6	5	5	7	13
Newport	10	5	8	3	12	8	4	9	4	8
Otsego	13	11	8	7	10	4	4	4	2	4
Pacific	36	32	25	31	36	16	15	12	21	20
Randolph	2	0	0	0	0	3	8	7	2	4
Scott	0	3	0	0	0	11	6	7	7	9
Springvale	11	10	18	9	9	3	3	5	2	3
West Point	45	61	60	29	44	15	23	17	15	20
Wyocena	31	41	26	34	36	14	20	8	28	20
Cities & Villages	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	6	8
Total	424	437	396	396	435	176	175	167	203	208

### New Dwelling Permits



## Rezoning, Variances, Conditional Use Permits



## Compliance & Enforcement

Number of Complaints Received in 2024: **77**

Type of Complaints	
Land Use/Other Zoning	41
Building Without Permits	19
Tourist Rooming House	4
POWTS (non-maintenance)	4
Junk	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>

60 of 77 complaints were reviewed (79.92%)  
 17 of 77 have not yet been reviewed (22.08%)

### Reviewed Complaints (60) Breakdown

38 of 60 reviewed complaints were confirmed to be a violation (63.33%)  
 22 of 60 reviewed complaints were cleared of any violation (36.67%)

### Violations (38) Breakdown

1 of 38 violations turned into a citation (2.63%)\*  
 17 of 38 violations were resolved (44.74%)  
 20 of 38 violations are in process (52.63%)

\*Note: Citations are not the first or best solution to violations. As the goal is compliance, the most effective road to compliance success is outreach, education, and assistance. The citation process does not ensure compliance and is used only as a final motivator for that goal. The process alone to issue citations takes additional time and financial resources from not only Planning & Zoning Department, but also Corporation Counsel, and Circuit Courts, and oftentimes still does not result in compliance.

POWTS Maintenance is not a part of the above information.

## Summary:

The year 2024 continued to see lots of activity related to building and development. The demand for services throughout the entire departments service areas remains high. The staff worked diligently to react to the high demand. The entire staff did a great job managing this demand.

A quick review of the statistical side of the report shows that workload associated with zoning permits remained well above the 5-year average. In 2024, we processed 14 fewer zoning permits than we did in 2023. Sanitary permits remained close to the 5-year average up slightly from 2023. New dwelling permits were below the 5-year average, with a slight upward trend. The number of public hearing items related to rezones were slightly below the 5-year average. Conditional Use Permits (CUP) are at the 5-year average. We are seeing a steady number of Tourist Rooming House CUP requests, as well as general use requests that need a CUP. The zoning ordinance does require CUP's for many uses within the different districts. These trends tend to follow a few factors including the current economic situation. The department tries to evaluate these trends each year as part of our revenue predictions at budget time. Revenue projections were met and/or exceeded in 2024.

The work associated with bringing properties into compliance with documented violations is an ongoing responsibility for the department. Complaints are reviewed and status is determined. If a Violation is found, those violations are brought into compliance through a range of options. The goal of the department is to bring properties into compliance through less formal solution-based options, if possible. This is the case most of the time. In some instances, the department, after exhausting more solution-based options, will need to use citations and courts to achieve compliance. The compliance and enforcement section of this report show some of the statistics. In 2024, the department received a total of 77 complaints regarding alleged violations. Of those 77 complaints, department staff have completed status reviews on 60 of those 77 complaints. We determined that 63.33% of the 60 complaints had violations. To date 44.74% of those violations have been resolved and brought into compliance. The department takes compliance and enforcement seriously and follows up on all alleged complaints. In 2024, we gained compliance on a lot of different properties for a lot of different reasons. We continue to use a pragmatic approach to how we handle the wide range of compliance related issues we come across. We are thankful for the high level of engagement and assistance we get from Columbia County Corporation Counsel.

In June of 2024, Ordinance NO. 36-24 was approved by the County Board. Ordinance NO. 36-24 made amendments to Chapter 12-Subchapter 100-Columbia County Zoning Ordinance. These amendments were specifically adopted to guide processes directly related to the development of Small and Large Solar Energy Generating Facilities.

We were able to recruit and fill 2 vacant positions in our department. We now have 2 staff that hold POWTS Inspector & Certified Soil Tester licenses.

Presented by: Kurt R. Calkins, Director

Reviewed and approved by: Planning & Zoning Committee March 4, 2025



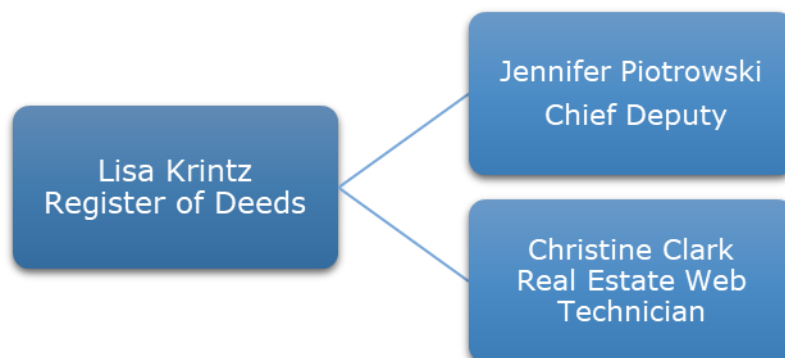
## Register of Deeds

### Department Overview:

The Register of Deeds Office provides safe archival storage and access to public records as well as implements statutory changes, system modernization, program and procedural evaluation, and staff development to assure a high level of timely service for our citizens and customers. The Register of Deeds Office provides the official county repository for real estate and vital records, and is responsible for the following duties:

- Review, record, file, scan, eRecord and maintain all documents authorized by law to be recorded as outlined in Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 59.43. Document examples include deeds, land contracts, mortgages, UCC Filings, Subdivision Plats, Condominium Plats, Certified Survey Maps, Lis Pendens, Annexations, Resolutions and Miscellaneous Files.
- Review and file all marriages submitted and review all deaths occurring in the county per Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 69.
- Prepare documents for indexing, imaging and eRecording using quality control procedures.
- Safely keep and return to the proper party, instruments which have been recorded.
- Make and deliver to any person on demand and upon payment of proper fees, certified and uncertified copies of official office records.
- File, index and maintain military discharges per Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 45.
- Record articles of incorporation, firm names and UCC fixture filings.
- File federal tax liens per Wisconsin Statutes 779.97.

### Organizational Chart:



## Statistical Performance:

Revenues & Expenses	2021	2022	2023	2024
Real Estate Transfer Fee Revenue	303,078	234,255	222,019	251,700
Real Estate Document Revenue	229,450	158,785	136,815	135,510
Vital Record Revenue	28,796	27,539	27,777	25,487
Copy Revenue	47,013	41,606	38,678	49,202
Redaction Fee Revenue				
Online Real Estate Revenue	101,652	91,121	74,626	76,410
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$709,989</b>	<b>\$553,306</b>	<b>\$499,915</b>	<b>\$538,309</b>
Less Expenditures	299,515	307,002	315,274	324,690
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$410,474</b>	<b>\$246,304</b>	<b>\$184,641</b>	<b>\$213,619</b>

Vital Record Statistics	2021	2022	2023	2024
Recorded Birth Certificates	836	827	770	746
Recorded Death Certificates	724	685	746	506
Recorded Marriage Certificates	529	526	469	481
Recorded Military Discharges	18	10	3	0

Online Services	2021	2022	2023	2024
Laredo Subscriptions	26	31	30	29
Tapestry Searches	9237	7462	6299	5439
Electronic Document Recording %	69%	62%	66%	69%

As indicated in the above chart, recorded real estate documents and real estate document revenue numbers continue to be on the lower end compared to past years due to the slowed real estate market. However, in 2024 there was an increase in real estate transfer fee revenue, copy fee revenue and online real estate revenue. This increase is likely partially due to the lower interest rates at the end of summer and through fall. Supply and demand continue to be an issue throughout Wisconsin as the majority of current homeowners either don't have a mortgage or have an interest rate of 4% or less.

There was a significant drop in the number of searches performed using **Tapestry** in 2023 that continued through 2024. **Tapestry** is a web-based search service which allows users secure, remote access to real estate documents recorded in our office. There has been an increase in title searches being done in our office which has contributed to the increase in copy revenue.

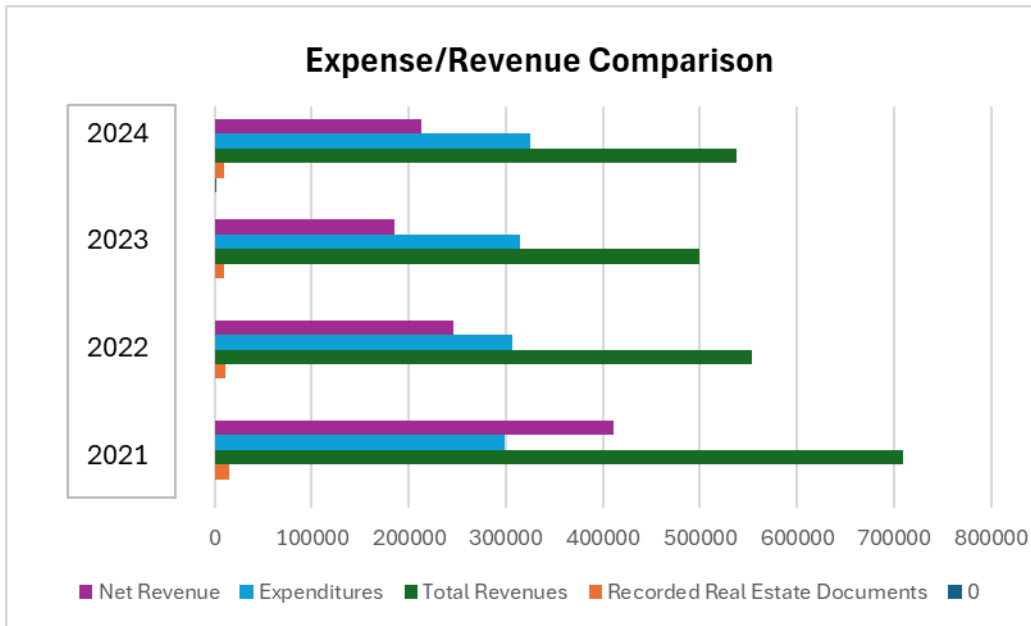
**Laredo** is a subscription-based search service which allows users secure, remote access to real estate documents recorded in our office. Despite the decline in real estate recordings and closure of some title companies, we have been able to maintain 29 **Laredo** subscribers.

**Electronic Recording** is the process of filing and recording documents with the Register of Deeds Office via the internet. Customers pay a third-party vendor to submit documents to the Register of Deeds Office. The number of documents being "eRecorded" has remained consistent at 69%. Our software vendor, Fidlar, will be launching a program



that will allow title companies and attorney offices to eRecord documents to us directly from Fidar’s software. This will present the Register of Deeds Office another opportunity for revenue in the future as we may add a small fee to each document recorded through our software vendor.

**Summary:**



Though statewide real estate recordings the last two years have been hitting record lows, the Real Estate Transfer Fee Revenue in Columbia County has been high. 2024 saw the second highest revenue for Columbia County real estate transfer fees in the last decade. This is attributed to million-dollar sale prices on multiple homes and businesses throughout the county in 2024.

With real estate theft on the rise across the country, the Register of Deeds Office began including a Property Fraud Alert information sheet with county tax mailings. In 2024, the Register of Deeds Office had a record 559 registrations for Property Fraud Alert. Property Fraud Alert is a free online subscription service provided to the property owners of Columbia County that notifies residents each time a document is recorded in the Register of Deeds Office with their name on it.

With the passing of Wisconsin Act 235, the Judicial Privacy Shielding Law, the Register of Deeds Office has been working with its vendors and state counterparts to ensure that the Office has the resources it needs to comply with the law come April 1, 2025 when it takes effect. Fidar, our real estate recording vendor, has created Citadel for us to properly shield all documents pertaining to Judicial Officers and their family members, once a request has been received. The Register of Deeds staff have dedicated many hours to attending regular virtual and in-person meetings to better understand and prepare for the implementation of Act 235.

The Register of Deeds Office is vital to commerce in Columbia County and continues to be a source of revenue, regularly exceeding revenue goals from the year before. By the end of 2024 the real estate market seemed to stabilize some, which will hopefully continue into 2025 and increase our recorded real estate document numbers along with our real estate document revenue.

Presented by: Christine Clark, Register of Deeds

Reviewed and approved by: Executive Committee on March 13, 2025



## Sheriff's Office

### Department Overview:

The duties of the Sheriff are set forth by statute, the Constitution, and case law. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer in the county and serves in a unique position as it is elected and the answers directly to the people of the county. Certain immemorial, principal, and important duties of the Sheriff at common law that are peculiar to the Office of Sheriff and that characterize and distinguish the office are constitutionally protected from legislative interference. The Sheriff will maintain the County Jail, investigate deaths and crimes within Columbia County, attend upon the courts, enforce all state laws and county and local ordinances, serve and execute civil process to include serving subpoenas, summons, complaints, and other court-related documents. Sheriffs shall maintain order, keep and preserve peace in their respective counties, and quiet and suppress all affrays, routs, riots, unlawful assemblies, and insurrections.

The Sheriff's Office has 128 employees spread out through nine different divisions. Most employees work varying hours and days as they cover nights, weekends, and holidays. The Sheriff's Office is a 24/7 operation and many of our staff must be available for call-outs.

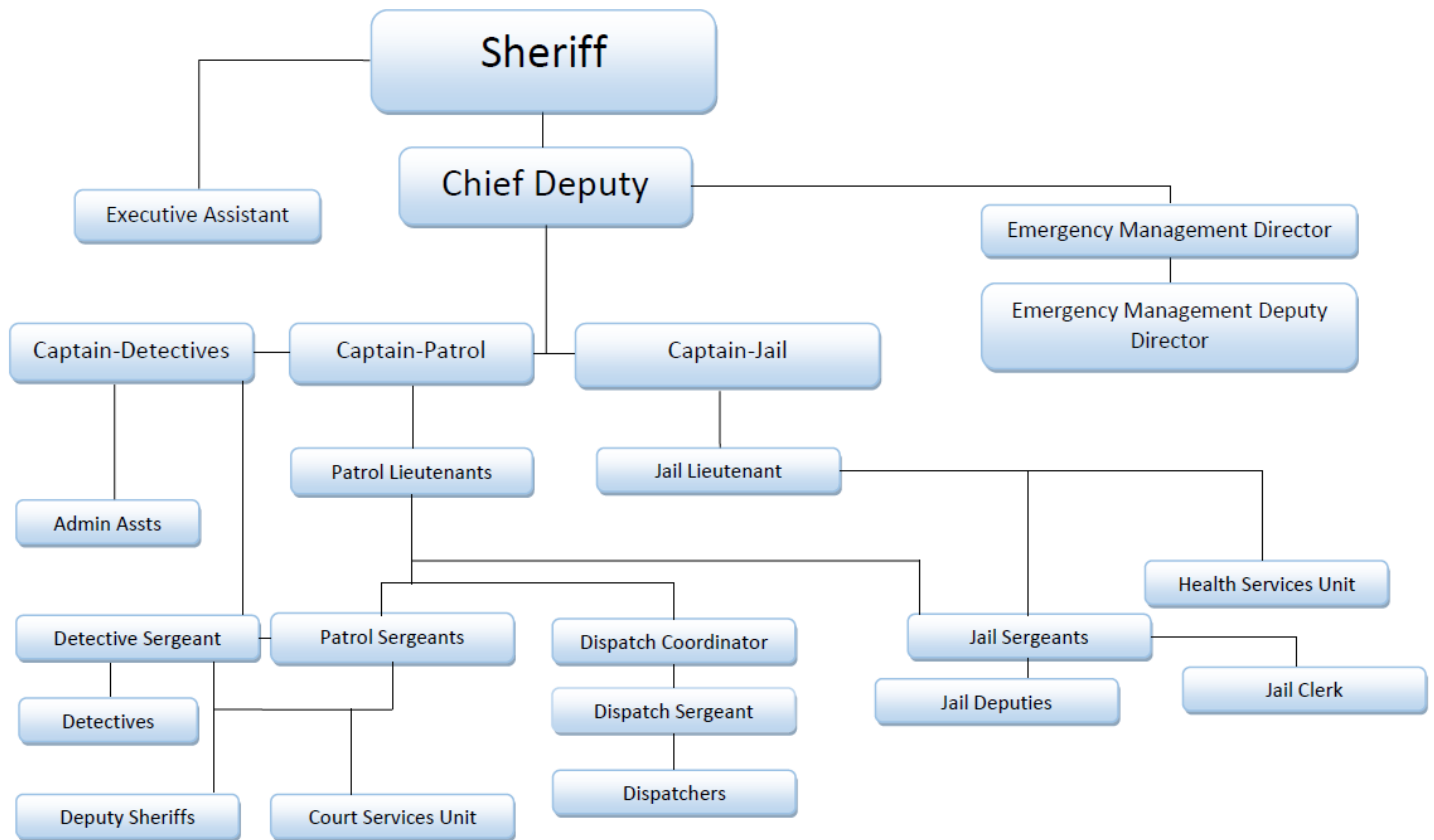
The Columbia County Jail is charged with the responsibility of accepting and housing persons sentenced to the jail by the court system. Persons are also held in the county jail after being arrested by warrant or non-warrant arrests, pending court appearances, and violators of probation. Columbia County holds county inmates, inmates from federal and state institutions, and other county inmates as requested. There are 40 jail deputies/supervisors that operate and run the Jail and Huber Center on a 24/7 basis. One clerical position serves the needs of the jail staff, inmates, and greets the public from the booking office. The Sheriff's Office also employs two full-time certified Registered Nurses to provide medical care to all inmates.

There are 32 full-time sworn road deputies, patrol sergeants, and patrol lieutenants who provide 24/7 patrols of the entire county. The Dispatch Center is the central dispatch for all of Columbia County Emergency Services, local municipal police departments, and 911 calls. There are 18 dispatchers and two supervisors who keep the lines of communication open on a 24/7 basis. We have six administrative assistants who process, type, and organize all paperwork, reports, citations, civil process, and open records requests for the entire department.

The Court Services Unit contains 13 part-time deputies, one full-time deputy, and a patrol sergeant. These deputies provide security to the courthouse and administration building as well as transport inmates to and from court and between secure facilities.

The Detective Division has seven detectives/supervisor that investigate all the criminal matters and crimes that occur in this county. They work with many local, state, and federal partners to investigate these crimes. The detectives also operate and oversee the county's drug unit and undercover operations.

## Organizational Chart:



## Statistical Performance:

### Sheriff Administration – Civil Process

2020 - \$31,817 The Sheriff's Office processes civil papers for Columbia County Offices,  
 2021 - \$43,281 other county agencies, attorneys, as well as the general public. The  
 2022 - \$47,718 Sheriff's Office received \$50,272 in revenue for civil process service and  
 2023 - \$47,142 executing writs.  
 2024 - \$50,272

### Sheriff Administration – Motor Vehicle Accidents and Fatal Totals

2020 - 11 The Sheriff's Office investigated 740 accidents in 2024 and of those, 254 were  
 2021 - 10 car vs. deer crashes. There were eight traffic accidents with 12 fatalities within  
 2022 - 10 the county in 2024. We received a total of \$30 in the sale of reports and  
 2023 - 6 accident photos.  
 2024 - 12

### Sheriff's Administration – Citations and Warnings Issued

2020 - 6,286 The Sheriff's Office issues criminal, non-criminal, and traffic citations as well  
 2021 - 6,737 as written warnings for traffic and equipment violations. Numbers fluctuate  
 2022 - 6,824 based on calls for service and current staffing levels. In 2024, there were  
 2023 - 7,450 11,915 traffic stops. From those, deputies issued 6,735 citations. In  
 2024 - 6,735 addition to those, 2,446 written warnings and equipment violations were  
 issued. Deputies also arrested 494 drivers for impaired driving.

### **Sheriff Administration – Drug Unit**

2020 - 283  
2021 - 137  
2022 - 53  
2023 - 17  
2024 - 20

The drug unit investigators worked 20 felony drug investigative incidents in 2024. We received approximately 119 Crime Stoppers drug tips and 23 search warrants. To assist with this growing epidemic and better educate the community and youth, two drug awareness presentations, and 37 K9 demonstrations were conducted. Drug money seized totaled \$45,127 for the year. Our K9 Units conducted 785 free air sniffs of vehicles with 342 positive indications, nine tracks for citizens, six building searches, and seized 126.90 grams of cocaine, 2.20 grams of heroin, 176.97 grams of fentanyl, 179.34 grams and 35 CCs of methamphetamines and 3,794.81 grams of THC.

### **Sheriff's Administration – Traffic, Ordinance and Jail Assessment**

2020 - \$302,866  
2021 - \$422,938  
2022 - \$487,886  
2023 - \$483,427  
2024 - \$538,083

These figures include both the county retained portion of traffic fines and ordinances and the \$10 jail assessment received on every citation. About 25% of those figures are amounts received on criminal matters as there is no easy way of separating those figures on the reports available to Columbia County. These statistics reflect actual fines and forfeitures collected during 2024 and previous years. Collections reflect the impact of the economy (lower, slower payments) and are not as effective.

### **Communications Center – Total Calls for Service**

2020 - 102,962  
2021 - 92,393  
2022 - 91,566  
2023 - 88,315  
2024 - 93,078

The Sheriff's Communications Center created 93,078 calls for service for all police, fire, EMS, and our Sheriff's Office. Calls for service for the Sheriff's Office's alone were 40,580 for 2024. There were 17,732 - 911 calls and an additional 55,157 phone calls into the Dispatch Center.

### **County Jail – Huber Law Board Revenue**

2020 - \$55,421  
2021 - \$72,978  
2022 - \$142,591  
2023 - \$152,925  
2024 - \$94,083

Inmates sentenced with Huber privileges at the Columbia County Jail are charged a weekly fee. This fee is charged only to those inmates that are actively working or performing child/elderly care and if granted by their judgments. Those going to school or not working are not charged the weekly fee of \$125. Total revenue for eligible inmates on the Electronic Monitoring Program was \$6,408.

### **County Jail – Boarding Out-of-County Prisoners Revenue**

2020 - \$200,652  
2021 - \$388,414  
2022 - \$334,035  
2023 - \$167,592  
2024 - \$114,382

The Sheriff's Office charges a range of \$25-\$100/day for out-of-county inmates and \$50/day for Extended Supervision Sanction Inmates.

### **County Jail – US Marshal Revenue**

2020 - \$207,205  
2021 - \$12,586  
2022 - \$0  
2023 - 234,207  
2024 - \$583,242

The Sheriff's Office charges \$95/day to hold Federal prisoners. The County Jail sought and held additional inmates for revenue in 2024.

## **County Jail – Average Daily Population**

2020 – 135	The population of the County Jail consists of male and female secure and Huber inmates, secure Federal inmates, and inmates on probation and parole holds. Inmates with behavior issues are not allowed in the program. One of the many positive attributes of ERP is it provides participants an incentive to maintain a higher standard of behavior and respect towards jail staff, provides a cost-savings on inmate meals, and also provides other county departments assistance. This allows certain inmates out to work.
2021 – 104	
2022 – 132	
2023 – 130	
2024 – 132	

### **Summary:**

The Sheriff's Office faced another challenging year with recruitment, retention, and overall staffing. Every division worked short-staffed for a good portion of 2024, but ended 2024 full-staffed in patrol and jail. Our dedicated employees worked overtime at amounts never seen before. The Sheriff's Office continues to be plagued with finding good and qualified candidates especially for our dispatch division. Despite the improvements made to wages, the Sheriff's Office still sees shortages of qualified candidates. With many new staff in all divisions, it has been a huge strain on our training and supervisory efforts. The background process, hiring, and training new staff are expensive. From the 44 background investigations that were conducted, the Sheriff's Office hired 29 new staff in 2024.

The county continues to see relatively low overall crime rates. Exceptions to this are criminal damage to property, battery, weapons violations, impaired driving, child sex assaults, and eluding cases where they were historically higher. Our staff did an amazing job keeping our community safer and doing more with less. Our staff are very dedicated and continue to put their lives in danger every day and notably, four employees earned life-saving awards for helping save lives.

In addition to their investigative duties, the Detective Division is also tasked with background investigations for prospective employees. Hiring good candidates is a priority, but it does take time away from other investigations and duties. The detectives continued working more internet crimes against children cases as we have partnered with ICAC task forces. The Patrol Division continues to have a strong proactive presence throughout the county which has a direct correlation of greater visibility, quicker response times, reduction in criminal activity, and more availability for calls for service. Driving behavior complaints like inattentive and reckless driving continue to be our main call for traffic enforcement. From a noticeable uptick in non-compliance and serious reckless driving seems to have resulted in 70 eluding calls in 2024. The Jail Division continues to be challenged with inmate drug addiction and has implemented a number of peer support and addiction programs for the inmates. The jail continues to increase our federal inmate population which has drastically increased our jail revenue.

Due to increased jail revenue and consistently being short-staffed in all divisions, the Sheriff's Office is anticipating coming in under budget. This money goes directly back into the general fund for the county. The successful implementation of license plate readers continues to provide deputies and detectives extra evidence and tracking capabilities which helps to solve many crimes and are a great tool in keeping our community safer.

Presented by: Sheriff's Administration  
Reviewed and approved by: Public Safety Committee on March 10, 2025.



## **Solid Waste**

### **Department Overview:**

The Solid Waste Department is a valuable resource for the residents of Columbia County. In addition to general refuse, construction and demolition material and recycling, the facility also accepts and recycles appliances, electronics, furniture, fluorescent bulbs, used oil, tires and agricultural plastic.

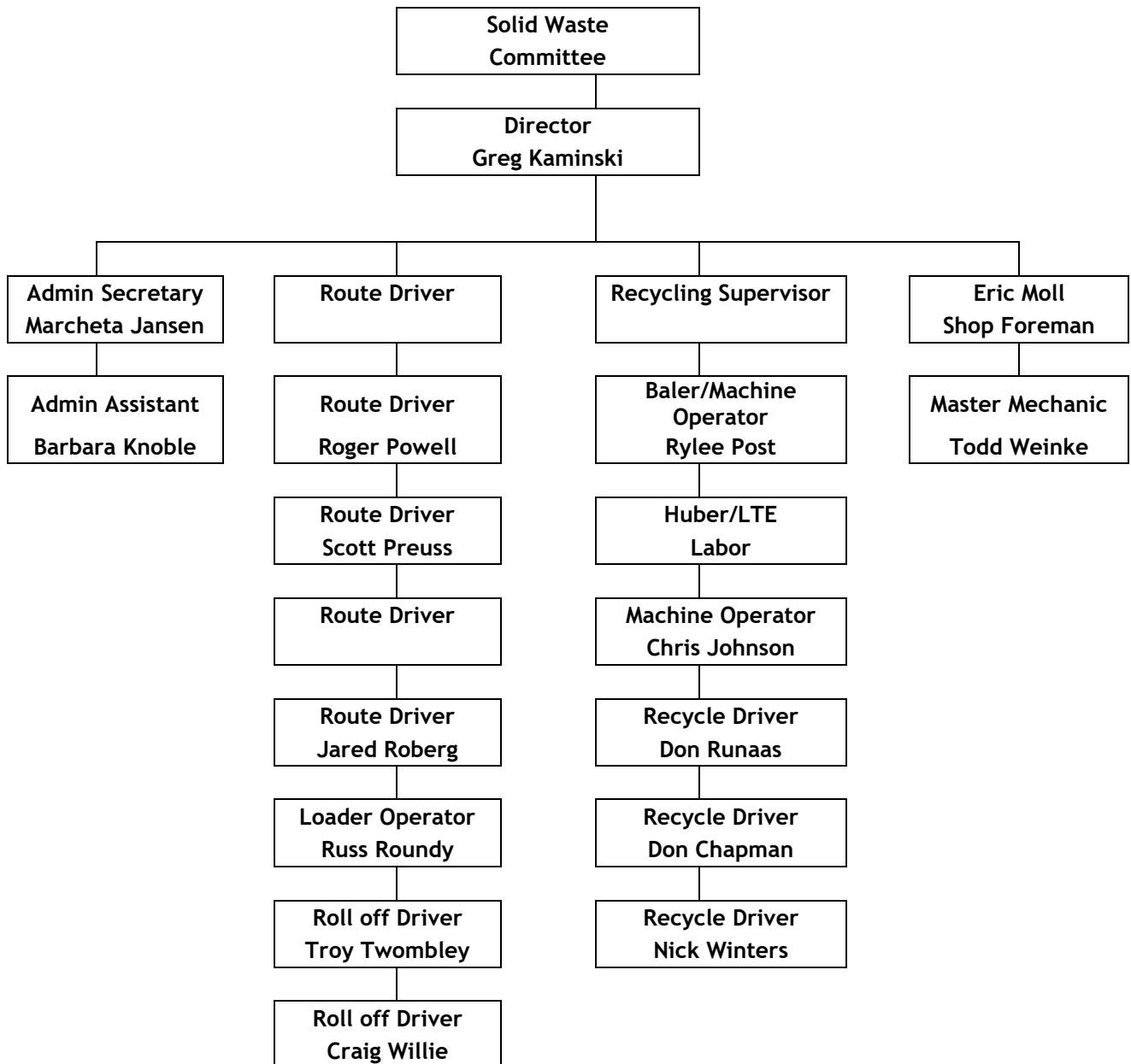
The Solid Waste Department provides curbside collection of garbage and recycling to 7 municipalities throughout the County. The department utilizes automated side load trucks for collection wherever possible to improve efficiency and reduce costs. The department also offers commercial containers for businesses as well as large roll off containers for construction jobs and home remodeling projects.

The Solid Waste Department is the Recycling Responsible Unit or Responsible Unit by contract for 20 Towns, 10 Villages and 3 Cities. The County staff collects the recyclables from 24 drop-off sites located throughout the County and delivers them to our recycling facility for processing.

The Solid Waste department was devastated by two fires in May 2023. These fires destroyed the waste transfer station, the recycling building and all the waste processing equipment as well the two material storage buildings. A temporary manual processing line was set up in the old recycling building to allow the department to continue to process recycling from the County's collection routes and drop off sites. Recycling material is brought into the facility as a mixed single stream and is sorted into individual commodities such as paper, cardboard, tin, aluminum, and plastics to achieve the greatest possible revenue.

A fabric structure has been installed to allow the County to continue to operate the transfer station. In 2024, the County Board approved rebuilding the transfer station and recycling facility with construction to begin in April 2025. Solid waste brought into the facility is loaded into compactor trailers and transported to Glacier Ridge Landfill in Horicon. Construction and demolition waste are also accepted and transported to the landfill. The volume of material brought into the transfer station was again strong in 2024 with more than 39,000 tons brought into the facility.

**Organizational Chart:**





## Statistical Performance:

	2024	2023	2022	2021
Recycling Revenue	\$529,577	\$935,585	\$1,381,646	\$1,391,068
State Aid Recycling	\$138,294	\$138,143	\$138,219	\$138,637
Municipal Contracts	\$1,141,631	\$1,374,498	\$885,584	\$869,265
Garbage	\$1,361,909	\$1,258,644	\$1,205,798	\$1,162,940
Demolition	\$970,465	\$881,263	\$773,038	\$751,032
Sofa/Loveseat /Chair	\$13,060	\$15,722	\$17,461	\$17,450
Appliances	\$28,250	\$33,416	\$25,910	\$24,590
Televisions	\$47,295	\$43,955	\$45,540	\$58,132
Mattress/Box Spring	\$9,250	\$12,860	\$12,682	\$11,643.00
Toilets				\$907
Container Rental	\$602,015	\$576,396	\$490,993	\$476,613
Florescent Bulbs	\$4,953	\$8,120	\$11,093	\$13,765
Tires	\$86,914	\$62,544	\$60,298	\$55,095
Brush /Pallets	\$12,382	\$10,907	\$12,392	\$17,838
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$4,945,995</b>	<b>\$5,308,098</b>	<b>\$5,060,950</b>	<b>\$4,990,014</b>

Revenue was down 6% due to recycling but garbage and demolition were again up more than 8%

## Recycling

	2024 Tonnage	2024 Revenue	2023 Tonnage	2023 Revenue	2022 Tonnage	2022 Revenue
Newspaper	323.11	\$28,758.40	1,440.82	\$53,374.57	1,893.43	\$151,573.80
Cardboard	1,578.43	\$204,611.95	3,086.11	\$195,161.90	3,877.48	\$546,584.80
Mixed Glass	0.00	0.00	375.62	0.00	1,352.00	0.00
Tin Cans	56.38	\$8,642.10	187.97	\$34,183.32	208.16	\$34,345.15
Aluminum	71.05	\$98,196.40	89.50	\$99,032.40	116.65	\$200,182.80
Single Stream	0.00	\$51,944.54	0.00	\$258,614.25	0.00	\$26,844.56
PET #1 Plastic	147.32	\$35,953.60	358.55	\$96,172.45	416.61	\$191,654.55
HDPE #2 Natural	37.41	\$29,614.80	107.20	\$133,103.20	117.86	\$114,929.50
HDPE #2 Color	33.87	\$9,341.00	58.45	\$16,379.70	88.89	\$33,843.10
Mixed Plastic	17.47	1,9221.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Metal	306.23	\$47,277.35	301.59	\$49,564.40	382.72	\$58,955.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,580.09</b>	<b>\$521,743.49</b>	<b>5,995.53</b>	<b>\$935,584.52</b>	<b>8,246.18</b>	<b>\$1,381,645.96</b>

Recycling revenue and tonnage were down significantly in 2024 due to manual sorting. Material that could not be sorted was shipped to other recycling facilities.

## **Summary:**

Despite the fires, the Solid Waste Department continued to see significant growth in 2024. Revenue from garbage, construction and demolition and container rentals achieved record levels.

Recycling volume and revenue were down significantly due to the impact from the fires in 2023. We are currently using a combination of Huber, LTE and temporary labor to operate a temporary manual recycling line. We are also renting a baler which allows us to continue to process recycling from our collection routes and the Town drop off sites. Residual garbage in the recycling stream continues to be an issue although we have seen some improvement. We have updated our recycling guide and are continuing to look for ways to educate the public on proper recycling.

Transfer station volume and revenue increased more than 8% in 2024. A compactor was installed in July 2024 which increased the weight of the loads hauled to the landfill and reduced the number of loads resulting in significant cost savings. A temporary fabric structure was installed and attached to the pre-existing transfer station walls to allow continued operations during the rebuild. All the buildings and equipment damaged by the fires have been removed and design of the new buildings has been completed. Construction is scheduled to begin in April 2025.

Truck maintenance continues to be an issue with major repairs on older vehicles and equipment. Delivery of new trucks is two years or longer. Supply chain issues in getting some truck parts and tires also impacted the department. We will continue to upgrade our truck fleet and continue to focus on preventative maintenance to reduce truck and equipment costs.

Demand for commercial and roll off containers for construction continues to be strong. We will continue to look for other opportunities to add to our residential and commercial customer base.

Presented by: Greg Kaminski

Reviewed and approved by: Solid Waste Committee

March 5, 2025

**Veterans Service Office**

**Department Overview:**

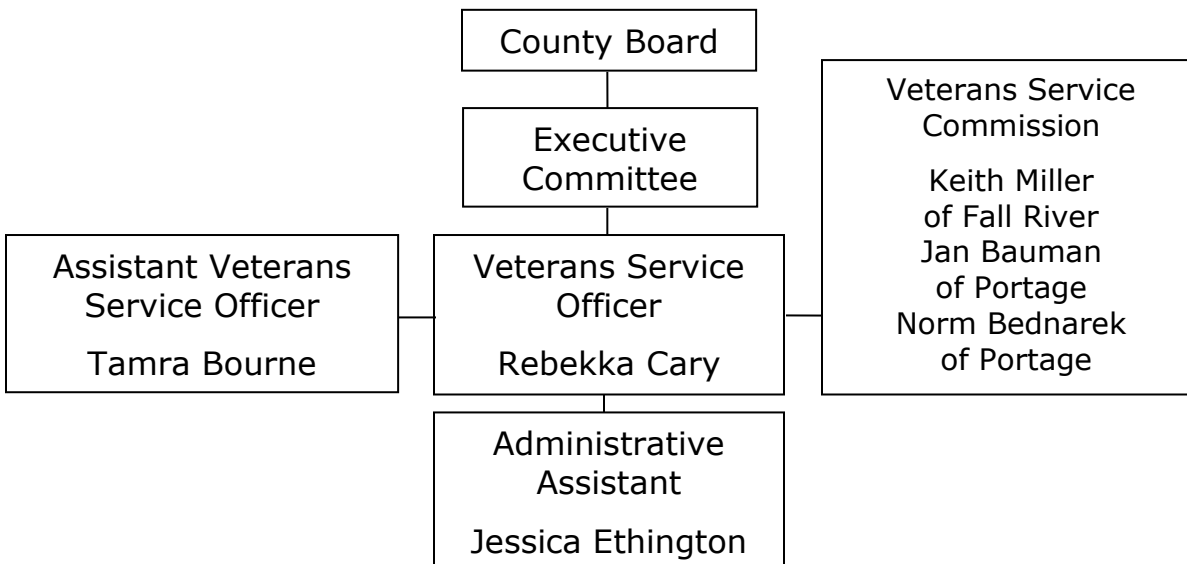
Chapter 45.80 of the Wis. Statutes provides for each county to have a County Veterans Service Officer and establishes the duties of the Veterans Service Office.

All Columbia County resident veterans and dependents may receive assistance through veteran services provided. This office provides information on veterans’ service-connected disability compensation, nonservice-connected disability pension, vocational training, educational programs, home loan guaranties, life insurance, hospital and domiciliary care, healthcare, combat veteran readjustment counseling, long-term care/veterans’ home residency, funeral/burial benefits, employment/job-search counseling, and death benefits to surviving dependents. Approximately 3,951 veterans have been identified as residents of Columbia County.

Chapter 45.81 of the Wis. Statutes provides for each county to have a County Veterans Service Commission consisting of three residents of the County who are veterans appointed for staggered three-year terms by the County Board Chairperson.

The Commission administers the Columbia County Veterans Relief Fund which provides short-term, temporary financial assistance to all resident veterans and their dependents. The Commission investigates claims for financial aid, determines eligibility, and authorizes financial assistance for applicant veterans and dependents. The Commission may delegate administrative duties to the County Veterans Service Officer, who serves as its Executive Secretary.

**Organizational Chart:**



**Statistical Performance:**

<b>Veteran Population in Columbia County</b>		
2022	2023	2024
3,951	3,894	3,806

<b>Veterans Using VA Healthcare</b>		
2022	2023	2024
1,498	1,474	1,495

<b>Federal DVA Expenditures in Columbia County</b>			
VA Service	Expenditures		
	2022	2023	2024
Compensation & Pension	\$20,606,000	\$25,875,000	\$27,209,000
Education & Voc. Rehab	\$1,304,000	\$1,206,000	\$1,635,000
Insurance and Indemnities	\$146,000	\$139,000	\$137,000
Medical Care	\$23,416,00	\$25,406,000	\$25,281,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$45,472,000</b>	<b>\$52,093,000</b>	<b>\$54,263,000</b>

<b>State DVA Expenditures in Columbia County</b>			
WI DVA Service	Expenditures		
	2022	2023	2024
Retraining Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subsistence Aid Grant	\$0	\$0	\$0
Healthcare Aid Grant	\$0	\$0	\$0
Education Grant	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

<b>Veterans Service Commission Financial Assistance Grants</b>		
2022	2023	2024
\$3,551.00	\$5,553.84	\$5,281.26

<b>State Benefit Applications</b>			
Type	2022	2023	2024
Healthcare Grant	4	0	0
Subsistence Grant	1	0	0
GI Bill	26	32	30
Property Tax Credit	45	56	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>76</b>

<b>Federal Benefit Applications</b>			
Type	2022	2023	2024
Disability Compensation	288	318	243
Pension	15	9	6
Medical	81	82	112
Higher Level Review	27	28	31
Appeals to BVA	13	16	14
Supplemental Claims	88	115	92
Life Insurance	1	0	0
Burial Allowance	16	41	31
Survivors Pension / DIC	19	25	22
Discharge Correction	2	5	4
Marker applications	112	116	91
Request for Military Records	58	76	94
Other	74	92	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>814</b>

<b>Employee Activity</b>			
Activity	2022	2023	2024
Email	374	445	427
Phone	1,505	1,638	1,353
Fax	179	244	211
Outgoing Mail	116	170	92
Incoming Mail	11	28	29
Completed Forms	1,614	1,882	1,515
Office Visits	729	899	817
Home Visits	38	25	21
Outreach	28	61	24
Other	1,138	1,244	1,109
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,732</b>	<b>6,636</b>	<b>4,489</b>

**Summary:**

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) regulations continue to change and improve access to and benefits for many veterans and their dependents. The CVSO personnel attend trainings throughout the year to ensure they are aware of all changes in VA regulations. Rebekka attended the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers of Wisconsin conferences in Green Bay and Keshena and the Certified Veterans Advocate course in conjunction with the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers conference in Denver.

We remain committed to outreach events and letting the public know we are here to assist them. The office continues to be productive and beneficial to the veterans and the family members of veterans of Columbia County.

Presented by: Rebekka Cary, Columbia County Veterans Service Officer  
Reviewed and approved by: Executive Committee – March 13, 2025