

Minnesota Veterans Homes receive \$80,000 donation from Hutchinson VFW

St. Paul, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) was honored to receive a very generous donation of \$80,000 from the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Charles McLaughlin Post 906 in Hutchinson, MN. This donation was specifically directed to each individual State Veterans Home, which will receive \$10,000 per location.

Department of Minnesota VFW Commander Dale Hoogeveen, VFW Charitable Gambling Manager Doug Johnson, and Jerry Tews, Charles McLaughlin Post 906 member, presented the checks to MDVA senior leadership and the Veterans Homes' public affairs team members at the VFW Midwinter Conference on January 13.

Funding will be used at the five current State Veterans Homes in Minneapolis, Hastings, Luverne, Fergus Falls and Silver Bay to develop and deliver new Resident activities and enhance existing Resident programming. The three future Homes in Preston, Bemidji and Montevideo – scheduled to open in mid-2023 – will use this funding to purchase televisions for Residents' bedrooms, an expense that skilled nursing care Residents would traditionally cover.

Commander Hoogeveen shared that this donation was the result of an initiative voted upon and taken on solely by Post 906 with enthusiastic support from local VFW members and citizens in the immediate community and nearby cities and towns. "It was absolutely a collective, united effort. These people gave their time, their talents and their treasures to guarantee they could deliver a gift that would

be well-used by our Veterans," Hoogeveen said.

Tews, a member of Post 906 for the past 40 years, previously served as Post Commander and District Commander and is currently its Assistant Manager of Gambling. "Each year, we dedicate a large amount of resources to many community organizations doing important work, including first responders and schools. But Veterans' needs are always first and foremost for our contributions," he said. Colby Mickolich, current Commander of Post 906, says his members appreciate every opportunity for their charitable gambling to help groups who are dedicated to helping others. "We love when neighbors and community friends stop by to see what we're doing. It's an opportunity to teach a little about our mission and share our hope for what the future might hold when everyone works together," he said.

MDVA Commissioner Larry Herke noted the significant positive impact this contribution will have on Minnesota State Veterans Homes. "A donation of this magnitude will go a long way to help increase the quality of life for our Residents. Whether it means expanding Home services or providing unique or special Home products not currently included on our campuses, the end result will be an improved daily experience for Veterans."

MDVA extends its gratitude to the Department of Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars and Charles McLaughlin Post 906 in Hutchinson. Their partnership is essential in helping the State Veterans Homes provide the highest level of care to those who have served.

HomeHelpMN funds are still available

If you are behind on your mortgage or worried about foreclosure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, HomeHelpMN from Minnesota Housing may be able to help.

HomeHelpMN may be able to assist if you have past-due payments for:

- Mortgage
- Contract for deed
- Property taxes
- Homeowner Insurance
- Homeowner Association fees
- Manufactured home loan
- Lot rent
- Tribal land lease

What is the deadline to apply?

If you are behind on payments, you should apply as soon as possible.

Funds are limited, and you can check the availability of funds on the Applications Dashboard at www.homehelpmn.org. Applications received after available funds are reserved may be put on a waitlist.

What if I already received HomeHelpMN assistance?

If you already received HomeHelpMN assistance, you may be eligible for additional assistance if you experienced another COVID-19 related hardship.

You will need to submit a new application, and the total assistance of all applications cannot exceed \$50,000.

How do I apply?

To learn more or apply for assistance, visit the HomeHelpMN website at www.homehelpmn.org or call 800.388.3226.

Millions Needed to Repair County Buildings; Public Input Sought

Todd Ford,
Cook County Public Information Coordinator
www.co.cook.mn.us

January 27, 2023 - Cook County will host three open house sessions on Thursday, February 16, to gather public input on the prioritization of projects to address deferred maintenance of County buildings and to accommodate future space needs. The meetings will take place in the County Courthouse from 10:00 a.m. - noon, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., and 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. The work is being done as part of a process to update the County's Capital Improvement Plan, or CIP, for buildings.

Over the next five years, the County anticipates spending as much as \$13.4 million to upgrade building systems that are nearing or have exceeded their expected lifetimes. This would include mechanical systems like HVAC equipment, water heaters, and plumbing fixtures; interior finishes including floors, walls, and ceilings; and building envelope components like roofs, windows, doors, and exterior finishes. The CIP will also include plans for addressing a shortage of workspaces for deputies, garage bay space, and space for evidence processing and storage in the Law Enforcement Center. There will also be a plan to address a shortage of office space in the Courthouse. The cost of new projects is not included in the above cost estimate.

County Administrator James Joerke says that the main goals in updating the CIP are to increase the reliability of building systems and to reduce long-term operating costs. "The County has deferred building maintenance to the point that our maintenance staff is always working reactively and struggling to keep up with equipment failures. Too often we run equipment to the point of failure and pay a premium to replace it on short notice. By catching up on deferred maintenance and adopting regular equipment replacement

schedules, we can operate and maintain our buildings in a more predictable and cost-effective way that will benefit County taxpayers."

Given the extent of needed upgrades and repairs, the County expects to issue bonds to pay for the work. While interest rates have increased in recent months, the County enjoys a strong bond rating and would qualify for lower rates than a local government with more debt and a weaker cash position. The County has also been putting levy dollars into a capital improvement fund, which was around \$592,000 at the end of 2022. The amount that the County ultimately will need to finance depends on the final scope of the CIP and will be determined once the organization updates its financial management plan this spring.

Information management is another important component of the CIP process. The County is working to put systems and software in place to better maintain and access the service history of all its buildings. This will create greater situational awareness among the staff who are responsible for building maintenance and will enhance the continuity of operations when staff turnover occurs. The County's Management Information Systems (IT) Department is heavily involved in creating the information management infrastructure that will be used to develop and manage facilities-related data.

The County requests that those interested in attending the open house sessions RSVP to April Zimmer at 218-387-3602 or April.Zimmer@co.cook.mn.us. Questions about the CIP process can be directed to James Joerke at 218-387-3687 or James.Joerke@co.cook.mn.us.

WEATHER FORECAST

Warm January to be followed by cold February

By Northern News Now meteorologist Dave Anderson

When I was going to meteorology school thirty years ago, one of my mentors was Craig Sanders who was then chief meteorologist of National Weather Service Duluth. He's since retired, but still keeps his hand in the weather world. He compiled for us the stats of 2022. The departures from normal for the months break down like this: January -6.5, February -9.5, March -2.9, April -5.7, May +0.6, June +0.9, July -0.2, August 0.0, September +1.4, October +2.1, November +0.7 and December -3.1 degrees. That brings the annual average to 1.85 degrees below normal.

However, January's number have turned 2023 in the other direction. The first month of the new year was 9.1 degrees warmer than normal when this was written January 29! The long range forecast for February, though, indicates things will back down. The upcoming month may average 7 degrees colder than normal along with a shortfall of five fewer inches of snow than normal. Since February is one of our snowiest months, we may not notice the difference in the end.

The first to the seventh should be cold and snowy, the 8th to 12th could be dry but bitterly cold, the 13th to 20th may go back to cold and snowy, the 21st to 24th return to bitterly cold and dry, and we finish the month from the 25th to the 28th cold and dry.

The spring forecast is leaning towards a return to normal temperatures in March which may stay that way through April to be followed by a warm and rainy May.