Welcome our New Addition!

Burleigh County Building/Planning/Zoning is pleased to announce the addition of Marvin Dahle as Code Enforcement Officer.

Marvin comes to Building/Planning/Zoning with many years of experience as a Building Inspector for the City of Bismarck. Marvin is a Licensed Master Plumber, Certified Building Inspector and has also dealt with many ordinance violations in the past. Marvin’s background also includes being a small business owner, which gives him an insight into the concerns of small businesses in Burleigh County.

Marvin increases the capacity of the Burleigh County Building/Planning/Zoning Department, to supply even faster service for inspecting septic systems, drain fields, drain tiles, gas lines and heating/cooling systems in our jurisdiction. The addition of Marvin, as a Master Plumber, also allows Burleigh County Building/Planning/Zoning to provide underground and aboveground plumbing inspections in Burleigh County per North Dakota State Plumbing Board regulations. A service previously provided by the State Plumbing Board.

Building Official Ray Ziegler states that the addition of Marv to our staff makes working with the Burleigh County Building Planning and Zoning Department even easier. We can now handle all types of inspections with the exception of electrical. Marvin will also be able to respond quicker to questions regarding codes and enforcing the codes throughout Burleigh County.

Please join us in welcoming Marvin Dahle to the staff of Burleigh County Building/Planning/Zoning. Marvin started his new position with us on June 23, 2014 and looks forward to assisting builders in Burleigh County with their inspection needs.
A new ordinance relating to:

Accumulation of Certain Items Prohibited.

No person shall cause, permit, keep, accumulate or allow the accumulation of any, junk, refuse, surplus, scrap, salvage or other similar items outside of a closed building in any zoned district. The items for which accumulations are prohibited under this section may include one or more of the following but are not limited to hazardous wastes, scrap metals, used or scrap lumber, household appliances, machinery, construction or demolition waste or salvage, abandoned or unlicensed vehicle(s), automotive or machinery parts, tires, used oil or solvents, garbage or rubbish of any kind, waste paper, used furniture or other household goods, barrels, rags, boxes, cardboard, or other similar items. The fact that an item or items has value or is operational shall not excuse conduct prohibited by this section.

This Ordinance shall provide for the vacation, removal, repair or demolition of any building or structure which is, or threatens to be, a public nuisance, dangerous to the health, sanitation, safety or general welfare of the people of the County of Burleigh, or which might tend to constitute a fire menace; and for the assessment of the cost of vacation, removal, repair or demolition thereof as a county lien or assessment against such premises, and to provide for the recovery of such costs in an action at law.

The intent of this new ordinance is to provide our department with the necessary language to take action on a property that is impacting the neighborhood in a negative way. A negative impact is generally determined by the potential of creating a condition that may become dangerous and have health and safety risks. It is not this department’s job to determine what looks beautiful or not, we do not have a checklist dealing with cosmetics. Our role here is to determine the health and safety exposers and to abate the situation. A prime example is abandoned or unlicensed vehicle(s), unlicensed helps us determine if it is abandoned but then is it truly a health hazard and to who? Are there neighbors close by being exposed to leaking fluids, infestation of mice, objectionable odors or attracting other animals that can carry diseases? Does this vehicle create a greater fire menace or obstruct fire and rescue efforts in the area, delaying response times or recovery efforts? This old vehicle may not look good, but if it’s in the middle of 10 acres and has zero impact on anyone, then this ordinance may not apply. Someone once told me that he would much rather look at a 1950 Chevy pickup up on blocks than a new 40ft. motorhome.

All complaints that are received in this office are looked at with an open mind. We respect the owners’ rights. We determine the impact on surrounding neighbors, we determine if it is a legitimate violation and we involve the powers that be (township officers, county commissioners, state’s attorney or the sheriff) to help bring the violation into compliance.
Every day we hear of more and more home builders and owners wondering about Geo-Thermal heating and cooling. In fact, several commercial buildings in Bismarck, ND are using geo-thermal heat to cut their heating and cooling costs. With the growing costs of fossil fuels, propane and natural gas, the inconsistency of solar and wind power, geo-thermal systems offer home owners an additional option when it comes to heating and cooling. Humans have been taking advantage of geothermal heat since the Paleolithic era, also known as the Stone Age, so maybe it is time to step back into the past.

Modern geo-thermal systems work similar to the usual heating and cooling systems installed in homes today, however, they start at a controlled average temperature of 50 degrees. They don’t “tap” into the steamy subterranean liquids and hot springs. Installers of geo-thermal units’ drill below the frost line where the temperature is an average 50 degrees Fahrenheit, install a pipe, fill it with liquid, then circulates the liquid back to the geothermal unit in the house. Similar to a tradition air unit, this liquid is used to heat or cool the air which is circulated through the house. Unlike a traditional heating and cooling unit, the starting point for a geothermal unit is an average of 50 degrees and is never affected by the outside ambient air. This lowers the amount of energy you need to heat or cool your home. Installation of a desuperheater, which uses excess heat to warm up water heaters, swimming pools etc. is an added benefit with no extra operating cost.

Geothermal systems are more expensive to install then a standard heating system, $4,000 - $11,000 more than a standard system (Maehlum, 2013), but they do offer benefits over the long term. An average home owner can save 30–70% on heating costs and 20-50% on cooling systems (Maehlum, 2013). According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) this translates into roughly $400 - $1,500 annual savings. Home owners can also apply for property tax incentives which can reduce your property taxes for five years after you install your system.

Another hidden but added feature of a geothermal system is the reliability of the system. Generally the warranty of the underground piping can be as high as 50 years, while the heat pump unit, which is the heart of the system, has an average warranty of 25 years. Because of the reliability of these systems, they seldom need repairs and have a high efficiency rating. Combining the high efficiency rating, reliability, tax incentives and monthly savings on heating and cooling costs, geothermal units generally meet the payback time (saved money = costs) within 5 to 7 years.

Installing a Geo-thermal unit might also get you a break on your property taxes. The North Dakota Century Code and Tax code offers incentives for homeowners who install geo-thermal heat. Homeowner might even be able to deduct 100% of the cost of the unit from their property taxes for up to five (5) years. For more information on this tax incentive you can contact the Burleigh County Tax Department at 701-222-6693 or the North Dakota Office of State Tax Commissioner at 701-328-7088.

Any decision regarding a new home construction requires additional research and comparisons of what will work for you. You can get more information at http://energy.gov and look at all different types of alternative energy sources to help you find one that will work for you.

Picture Courtesy of Ground Source Wisconsin
The wind always blows in North Dakota! You hear it every day and see it every day. It is even a common occurrence to see wind farms cutting across our state. In fact ND ranks 6th in the nation for the amount of wind energy we produce. (AWEA April 10, 2014) Small Wind Electric Systems offer homeowners the opportunity to harness this clean energy source.

Driving across Burleigh County you can see many reminders of how our ancestors used the wind to pump water from wells, especially in areas that were not near streams, creeks and rivers. The use of wind power to pump water was gradually faded out as more and more electrical generators were added and the country moved to fossil fuels to power wells. Now, however, wind power is a popular, clean and efficient source of electricity.

Using wind, created from the unequal heating of the Earth’s surface by the sun, wind turbines convert the kinetic energy in wind to produce clean electricity. Similar to using the wind to operate water pumps, wind turbines operate generators. These generators can be connected to a stand-alone power grid to provide the needed electricity for your home. The advancement in technology used in the creation of wind turbines and towers offer several different options for the homeowner. Most manufacturers can offer a variety of system packages that include all the parts you will need.

There are several advantages to using wind energy. Use of wind generated electricity can reduce your electrical cost by 50 to 90%. It is a renewable energy source and does not take a lot of space, so you still have use of your property. There are also tax incentives for installing a renewable energy source. By contacting Burleigh County Tax Equalization at 701-222-6693 or ND Office of State Tax Commissioner 701-328-708 you can find out about the options available.

If you are looking into an alternative energy source for your home, wind energy might be an option. It is important however to do your research. The Department of Energy at http://energy.gov/ is a good place to start. This website offers information and printable brochures regarding all areas of wind energy. Links are also available which direct you to sites that offer planning information, cost analysis and tax credits available by state.

Once you decide that a small wind generator is for you, there are several other factors to think about. You need at least an acre of land to fit a wind turbine tower with its guide wires. Also you will need to check if you are allowed to erect a tower at the height that is needed in your area. Some covenants and ordinances have height restrictions for residential areas. Another consideration is the noise factor. New technological developments have greatly lower the noise produced from wind turbines, however, there is a slight noise. Most small wind turbine manufactures have taken this issue into account when they are engineering systems for personal use.
Touring Burleigh County Swedish Style!

The May issue of the Burleigh County BPZ Bulletin sent out a request for interesting spot within Burleigh County. The Three Crowns Swedish-American Association answered my request. June 24, I was invited to take a bus tour with this group through Burleigh County. Even though I was not of Swedish decent, which I was assured was ok with them, we headed out.

We headed out in an 18 passenger bus North toward Double Ditch Indian Village. This is an area where the Swedish Ancestors cut timber for houses and fuel. Painted Woods nearby was also the postal stop for the area. We then headed east towards Wilton ND where our first stop of the day was at the Mission Evangelical Free Church.

The Mission Evangelical Free Church traces its roots back to a group of Swedish immigrants who settled east of Wilton in the late 1800's. The first church was built in 1898 just five miles from Wilton. Pastor Russ displayed the first membership book and bible used in this church. Also present in the church is an original pew used in the second church which was built in 1915.

We also stopped at the Sunne Lutheran Church which was founded in 1893 and is still active today. Pastor Paul Schauer welcomed us to his church and gave us a slide show tour of the Sunne, Sweden. Pastor Paul also made us lefse and fruit soup!

Before we left Wilton we also drove by the Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Church which was built in the early 1900’s. This church is a cruciform building with three steeples each bearing the Greek schismatic cross, symbolic of the Trinity.

We left Wilton and continued on to Regan with it’s large grain facilities and old houses dating back to the towns beginning. We stopped and toured one of these beautiful homes, which still had the original wood work and fixtures. Also of note was the Regan City Jail! One night spent in there would be enough!

After touring Regan we continued on our journey with our guide pointing out homesteads and points of interest. Our final stop of the day was at “The Rocks”. “The Rocks” are just what they are named. They are a stack of rock dropped by the receding glacier. The view from “The Rocks” was breathtaking. You could see most of Burleigh County!

My Swedish Ancestors tour of Burleigh County was interesting and informative. I want to thank the Ladies and Gentlemen from the Three Crowns Swedish-American Association for inviting me. A special thank you goes out to Doris Landerholm, who was my seat mate; she made the trip even more special!
September 22 is the autumnal equinox which means the dreaded North Dakota winter is just around the corner. It is however a day to remind homeowners to start getting their homes and property ready for the North Dakota winters. This might seem like an unimportant thing, because we all stock up on filters for our furnace, get our HVAC checked out and our furnace cleaned. But how about that foundation?

Mice and rodents love to crawl into small cracks and crevices and enjoy the nice warmth of your home. Foundations cracks are a super highway for mice. Just a few steps can close down that super highway:

1. Rake away all debris and edible vegetation from your foundation.
2. Seal up entry points to keep mice from crawling under your home.
3. Tuckpoint or seal foundation cracks
4. Inspect sill plates for dry rot or pest infestation.
5. Replace dry rot areas and repaint.

Mice can slip through a space as small as a dime. Once inside, they can crawl and inhabit all areas of your home. So take the time to look over your foundation this fall.