

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



OUR MISSION IS

Engaging our diverse communities to responsibly provide quality opportunities and services that matter.

Welcome Message from Chair Lisa Heddens

On behalf of Supervisors Murken and Faisal and Story County's Elected Officials and Staff, I am pleased to present the 2020 Annual Report. I'd like to welcome Latifah Faisal as a new Supervisor and thank Lauris Olson for her years of service to Story County.



Supervisor Lisa Heddens

2020 is certainly a year to remember. The COVID-19 pandemic and the derecho presented several challenges, but through collaboration and communication, we were able to continue to provide services with minimal disruptions.

The new StoryComm public safety communication system is nearly complete and operational. The final report on our housing study will be available in early 2021, and we are currently participating in a broadband study to further identify gaps in service throughout the county and options to provide connectivity to the areas with or without reliable service.

We continue to make progress on our strategic plans by prioritizing needs and goals. We've been able to increase funding to ASSET (social service agencies), public safety, land and conservation efforts, economic development, and address the repair and maintenance needs of our roads and bridges all while maintaining a balanced budget.

Thank you to all the Story County Elected Officials and Staff for your support and dedication and your continuing efforts of "Engaging our diverse communities to responsibly provide quality opportunities and services that matter".

Lisa Heddens Chair, Story County Board of Supervisors

Changes with the Board of Supervisors



Former Supervisor Lauris Olson

Thank you to Lauris Olson for your service on the Board of Supervisors over the past four years. Joining the Board is Latifah Faisal who was elected in November 2020.

At the January 2021 Board organizational meeting, Lisa Heddens was elected Chair and Latifah Faisal Vice Chair. The Board also made appointments to serve on various boards and commissions.

Latifah Faisal joins the Board of Supervisors with over 15 years of experience in Story County government. Latifah created and coordinated the Fines Recovery and Driver's License Reinstatement Programs for the County Attorney's office and was a driving force behind the new arrest diversion program, "Alternatives".

She is a Story County native, mother of two, ISU alumna and active community volunteer.



Latifah Faisal



For more information on the Cyclones Care Campaign, please visit

<https://www.care.iastate.edu/>

STAY CONNECTED!



Sign up for **Notify Me** at www.storycountyiowa.gov

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Story County's COVID-19 Response and Guidelines



Hand sanitizer and mask stations in building entrances

Story County offices are open, however, to protect the health and safety of Story County employees and the public, some hours may be limited to appointment only. Please call ahead or check our website at www.storycountyiowa.gov for the most current information.

Over the past few months, Story County initiated mitigation strategies and precautions to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 within Story County government operations to protect our employees and Story County citizens. These strategies include daily sanitizing throughout all our buildings with electrostatic ionizing sprayers to protect customers and employees; placing hand-sanitizer stations and mask receptacles throughout facilities; implementing practices such as using specialized appointment software and staggering staff; changing operations by teleworking, as feasible; providing public access to meetings via virtual formats; and the installing Plexiglas barriers and signage throughout our facilities.



Plexiglass barriers installed, allowing for social distancing



For more information, please visit Story County's website at www.storycountyiowa.gov or contact one of the Offices and Departments listed in this report.

Access to Historic Property Records in an Historic Year

The Auditor's Office and the Recorder's Office were doubly pleased about co-hosting the County's historic property records on the web. The County's older records were digitized by Cott Systems, and became publicly available online in 2019 (newer records were already available).

Record books were scanned to allow for public access and disaster recovery. If there was ever a year we needed both, it was 2020!

Recruitment Video Production

Story County Human Resources produced a recruitment video to enhance recruitment efforts. Viewers will learn more about the great community of Story County and the importance of each County department or office that is located within our buildings!

The passion of our staff to create the best environment for the residents of Story County is our biggest goal. We are committed to building a culture of inclusion within our workforce that continues to succeed and grow.

To learn more about "Our Story" the video can be viewed by visiting the link at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6zul0fgpPw&feature=youtu.be>.

Review of Board of Health Meetings in 2020

During a normal year, the Board of Health meets six times. This year, due to COVID-19, there was a need for an additional 15 special meetings. Items discussed at the meetings included such items as:

- Preparations needed related to COVID-19
- Testing sites
- Updates on confirmed positive cases and hospitalizations
- Contact tracing
- The role of the Board of Health and closed session protocol
- Procedures in the event of enforcing quarantine
- Mitigation guidance
- Letter encouraging face covering requirements for mitigating further spread
- Recommendation letter to Governor requesting a shelter-in-place order
- Housing for homeless individuals during recovery
- Face covering regulation and enforcement

The Board of Health passed a Regulation Requiring Face Coverings and recommended to the Board of Supervisors for approval. On October 13, 2020, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution approving the Story County Board of Health Face Covering Regulation. The Regulation requires everyone in Story County to wear a face covering in public.

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County Attorney Launches New Pre/Post Arrest Diversion to Treatment Program

Story County is one of three counties in Iowa awarded grant funding through the Governor’s Office of Drug Control Policy to pilot an arrest diversion program for individuals struggling with substance use. In September 2020, after nearly a year of planning, the County Attorney, in collaboration with local law enforcement and social services agencies, officially launched the ALTERNATIVES program.

The program’s focus is on those individuals whose substance use is the primary cause of an interaction with law enforcement that may result in arrest, as well as those whose substance use has resulted in homelessness or near homelessness. Programming is also open to those who may not have a substance use related charge, but their use

will inevitably lead them into more trouble with the legal system. The goal of the program is to divert people away from the criminal justice system at the earliest possible point. If someone can be diverted before arrest, they can avoid costly court and jail time, fines and an arrest record that could ultimately impede their ability to find housing, get a job or obtain a driver’s license. For someone who is already in the justice system, connecting them to resources and helping them break the cycle is the goal.

For information on the program, please contact the program coordinator Linda Hanson at 515-520-0856 or LHanson@storycountyiowa.gov

2020 Planning and Development Activities

2020 required the Planning and Development Department to adapt to many changes and new roles while continuing to provide permitting and development review services to Story County.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our department staffed the Emergency Support Function 14—Long-Term Recovery—in the Story County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Our work included research and disseminating information on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance Program, Small Business Administration (SBA) Assistance, Small Business Relief Grant Program & Tax Deferral, and monitoring impacts on businesses in the community to develop and maintain situational awareness and begin to develop long-term recovery plans.

Our Department also worked on a part-time basis in the EOC after the August 10, 2020 derecho. After this event, our department worked with the County Conservation Department, Engineering and Secondary Roads, and the Board of Supervisors to identify and open a debris site for the County and public’s storm debris.

In August, our Department went live with online permitting through Citizenseve for zoning, floodplain and other permits. Applications for development cases will be live in early 2021.

The Board of Supervisors adopted amendments to the County’s floodplain management ordinance in November in preparation for new Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for Story County as part of a new Flood Insurance Study, with new maps effective January 15, 2021. Those interested in seeing the changes from the effective to the new FIRM may use FEMA’S Preliminary Map Comparison Tool.

The Ames Urban Fringe Plan was set to expire July 2021. In February 2020, the Board of Supervisors and Cities of Ames and Gilbert, all partners in the Urban Fringe joint planning effort, extended this expiration date. The County, Ames, and Gilbert, will begin to work through the readoption process in early 2021.

Finally, regarding development case and zoning permit activity, the table above illustrates zoning permit activity throughout unincorporated Story County as well as the numbers of various development review cases processed by the Department.

Type	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Totals
Zoning Permits for Dwellings	7	16	7	5	35
Other Zoning Permits	13	48	30	23	114
Conditional Use Permits	5	5	3	2	15
Subdivisions	1	6	2	2	11
Rezoning	0	1	1	1	3
Variations	1	0	2	1	4
Other Development Cases	1	1	0	0	2

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During 2020, Story County Conservation...

*Named Best Environmental Education Program in Iowa (counties with more than three naturalists)
2,000 volunteer hours
3,500+ Prairie Horizons newsletters quarterly*



Recently Completed Projects

- Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor – Phase #2
- Hickory Grove Lake Watershed Project Phase #1 (shoreline and gully stabilization)
- “Designate the Skunk” – South Skunk River was designated as a state water trail
- New beach house at Hickory Grove Park
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Paving Phase #1
- Carroll Prairie acquisition
- Ronald “Dick” Jordan Family Wildlife Area acquisition
- Sleepy Hollow Addition acquisition
- Peterson Access improvement
- Askew Access improvement
- Advancement of our conservation heritage through non-toxic ammunition requirement

Current Projects

- Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor – Phase #3 (trail connector) – in design
- Praeri Rail Trail extension to Dakins Lake
- Hickory Grove Lake Watershed Project Phase #2 (dredging and access improvements)
- Hickory Grove Lake trail expansion
- Sensitive Areas Inventory Phase #2 (county-wide)
- Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Paving Phase #2 – in design
- Cabin Needs Assessment
- Oriole Ridge Lodge renovation
- Wicks & Osheim land acquisitions
- Habitat restoration at multiple properties
- Common Ground Stories of the Land

Bird Friendly County Designation

On a global scale, birds are facing many challenges; fragmented habitats, exotic invasive species, sterile lawns, pollution and toxic pesticides, urbanization, and domestic predators are taking a toll on our bird populations. Story County has been doing good work in protecting and restoring valuable habitat, reducing threats to birds, and educating and engaging people in birding and conservation.

Story County was designated as a Bird Friendly County in 2020. Story County recognizes that birds benefit our environment, economy, and quality of life. We strive to do our part in protecting and restoring valuable habitat, reducing threats to birds, and educating and engaging people in birding and conservation. From species inventory to legal protections through Story County Land Development Regulations, fishing line receptacles to school programs, multiple County departments and community organizations are constantly working to be more bird-friendly.

Notable bird-friendly practices in Story County include the requirement of non-toxic ammunition on all County-owned hunting areas, the enrollment of several County-owned areas in the Good Neighbor Iowa program, a conservation-minded roadside management program, and assisting three schools in transforming mowed grass into flower-filled pollinator habitat. We will continue to identify ways to inspire our community as a whole to be more bird-friendly in our daily and professional lives.



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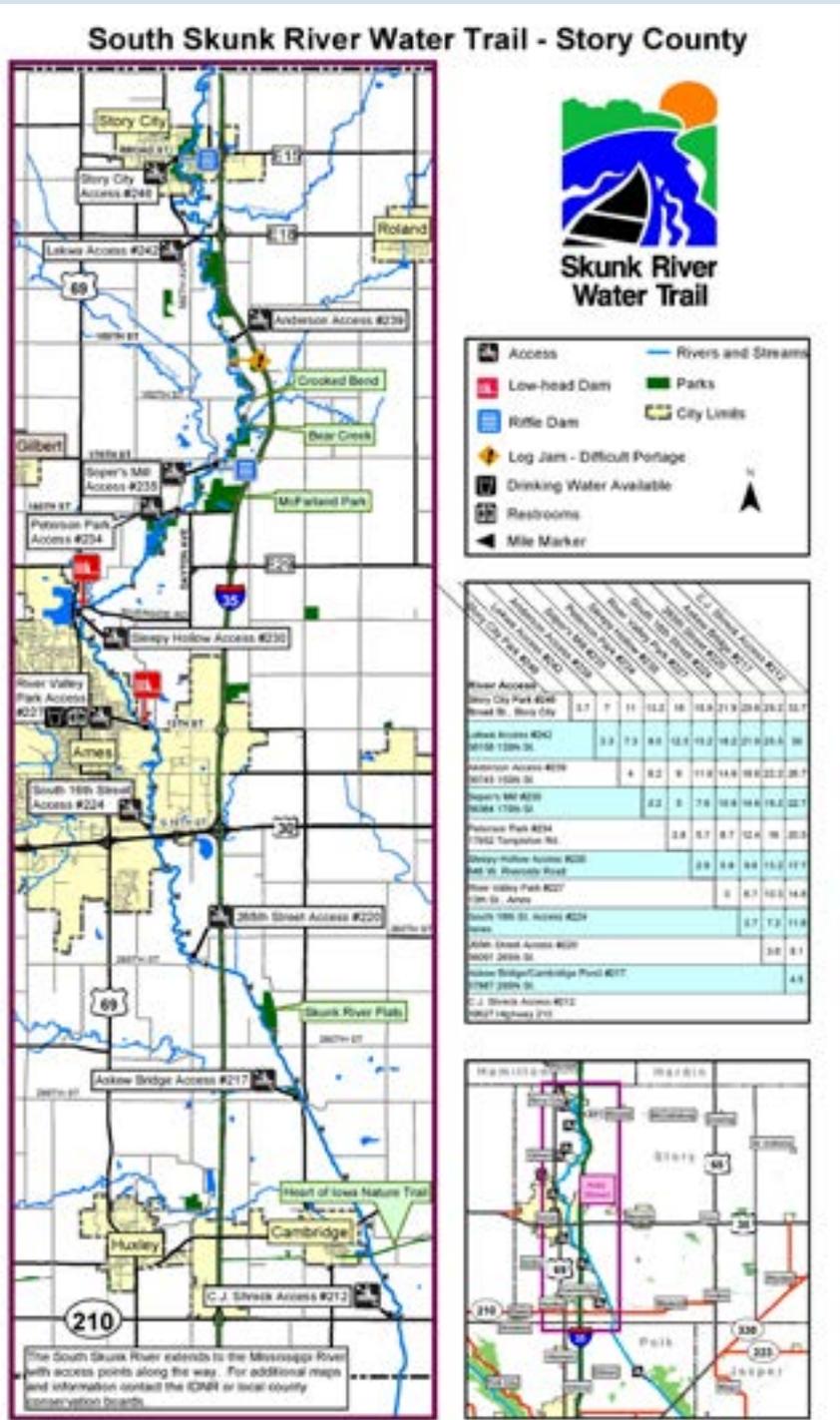
Skunk River Water Trail Designation

The Story County portion of the South Skunk River officially became a State Designated Water Trail in June. The effort to designate it as a State Water Trail began in the mid 2000's. State Designated Water Trails can help re-connect Iowans to their history, heritage, geology, and wildlife. A water trail promotes an ethic of caring that makes us more aware of our surroundings and environment.

Designating the South Skunk River as a State Water Trail will only further enhance the already popular South Skunk River, encourage use and enjoyment by the public, and bring additional awareness of issues such as water quality and need for improved recreational opportunities in Iowa.



Story County Conservation manages more than 3,100 acres of parks and natural areas, including lakes, campgrounds, and trails, and an additional 5,500 acres of roadside habitat through our Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management program. The environmental education staff serves Story County schools and the public with interpretive and informational programs for all ages. Story County Conservation's volunteer program provides volunteer opportunities to individuals and groups interested in making a difference in local natural resources.



Connecting people with nature and improving natural resources -- making Story County a great place to live, work, and recreate.

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Sue McCaskey Retires from Animal Shelter



The year 2020 brought along many changes to the Story County Animal Shelter, most notably the retirement of Sue McCaskey, long time Director of the Animal Control Department. Starting with Story County in 1996, Sue served as the Director for 23 years.

Her retirement is our loss, but nonetheless, well deserved. The passion and commitment Sue brought to Animal Control over the years enabled the department to make its mark within the community. We all will miss the impact she made and continue to carry on her tradition of excellent service to the animal care and control field within Story County.

Under Sue's guidance, the Animal Shelter saw many changes, including moving the Shelter from a rental space to a County-owned building. Another major accomplishment Sue completed before she retired was fulfilling our need for a livestock building. This was made possible by a generous donation. Story County citizens recognized over the years the way that Sue advocated for animals and built relationships within the county.

For many in Story County but also throughout Iowa, Sue's lasting legacy are all the friendships she nurtured, including both with furry-friends and people and their lasting impacts.

Environmental Health 2020 Review

The Story County Environmental Health Department is gearing up to implement the new septic ordinance that was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on December 8, 2020. The Board of Health recommended the Board of Supervisors consider its adoption. The ordinance enhances the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' IAC Chapter 69 septic regulations, written as minimum standards for all counties to enforce. During the public hearings, most of the comments received concerned the regulation for mandatory pumping at least every five years.

Septic system maintenance, i.e., pumping, is important to good water quality and public health. What is the connection? Septic systems, if working properly, treat wastewater before it reaches waterways or bubbles up on the ground surface. Pumping keeps septic systems in good working order so they can do their job. Without proper treatment, wastewater, laden with human pathogens, medications, bacteria, sediment, and nutrients, can impair water bodies and sicken people that come in contact with the untreated wastewater. An added bonus to tank pumping is that it can save the homeowner money. Maintaining that tank protects the secondary treatment components from plugging, and the system from backing up into the house. This saves on the cost of jetting or replacing septic lateral lines, and service calls for backups.

This ordinance, effective January 1, 2021 is one of many initiatives Story County is implementing to improve water quality.

2020 Statistics from Environmental Health

- 6 geo well permits issued
- 11 water well permits issued
- 20 wells plugged
- 2 wells rehab
- 83 water samples
- 17 pools inspections
- 11 tattoo inspections
- 29 complaints
- 80 new septic permits issued
- 30 septic repair permits issued
- 97 septic time of transfer inspections reviewed
- 12 septic binding agreements signed
- 3 septic pumper annual inspections
- 180 zoning applications reviewed for septic and well
- 39 interagency reviews

HVAC Work at Justice Center

In 2020, work on the Justice Center HVAC replacement project Phase 1 neared completion. The three to four year project began in 2017, and it is anticipated that Phases 2 and 3 will be completed in summer 2022. All equipment will meet the new air exchange standards, and should increase efficiency. Repair and maintenance costs will be reduced.

Highlights and milestones for the HVAC Replacement Project include:

- Phase 1 is complete
- Engineering has begun for Phase 2 and 3
- Total pieces of HVAC equipment to be replaced is roughly 130
- Current equipment is at its life expectancy and the majority of it is obsolete



Installation of HVAC Equipment on Justice Center in Nevada

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NoWaitInside Appointment Software



One of the core principles of local government is public trust in our ability to serve you efficiently, effectively, and as 2020 has emphasized, safely. With that in mind, the Recorder and Treasurer Offices have moved to requiring appointments for all customers. The appointment process allows customers to come into and out of our offices as quickly as possible to avoid unnecessary contacts while allowing us to carefully control the flow of people into the building. This system keeps lines from forming, and avoids crowds in our lobbies, which were not designed for social distancing.

We are using the "NoWaitInside" appointment software system. To make an appointment, please visit www.storycountyiowa.gov and click the large, red "SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT" button just below

the picture. When you schedule an appointment and enter your mobile phone number, you will receive a confirmation text immediately and a reminder text on the day of your appointment. There will be a link in the reminder text that you can click on when you arrive at the Administration building that lets us know you are here. When we are ready for you, we will send you one more text telling you to come into the office.

We know this is a new process and is quite different from how things have worked in the past, but we are convinced that it allows us to provide the safest possible environment to serve you, while also keeping other customers and workers in the Administration Building secure as well. We look forward to providing you the great customer service you have come to expect, even during these trying times.

Thank you, *Stacie Herridge, Story County Recorder and Ted Rasmusson, Story County Treasurer*

Fast Facts about the November 3, 2020 General Election

Voter Turnout: 71.1%

Absentee ballots counted: 30,469

Highest percentage of Election Day turnout: Sherman Township

Most voters on Election Day: Huxley

Highest overall turnout (absentee and Election Day): Ames 2-5

Treasurer's Office 2020 Annual Report

2020 has been a very unique and challenging year for all Story County residents, and the Treasurer's Office has tried to do our best to continue to provide excellent customer service while offering a safe way to do your business. When the pandemic hit, we were unsure how exactly to do that, but we have been learning on the go and continue to evolve to deliver all of our possible Motor Vehicle and Property Tax services as safely and efficiently as possible.

We spent the summer months with buildings closed to the public but were still able to process more title transfers in June, July, and August than in previous summer months. We worked closely with other Treasurer's Offices and the Governor's Office on multiple proclamations that helped ease the effects of the pandemic, including suspending late fees for property taxes and registrations for multiple months, cancelling our 2020 property tax sale, extending deadlines and due dates, and mailing out specialty and personalized plates. It was hard work for our team to adjust to all of the new rules and requirements, but they did an amazing job adapting to continue to provide the level of service Story County residents are accustomed to.

Story County citizens will notice some changes at our office. It is paramount that we provide a safe environment for everyone, so we have implemented the following changes. Customers will need to make an appointment to come see us (see the "NoWaitInside" section). This limits your time in the building and helps avoid lines and large groups. We have limited the number of stations open to ensure customers can stay six feet apart. We have installed plexiglass barriers at our counters to keep both customers and our team safe. We have also installed a new drop box directly east of the building's front door that drops documents right inside our office. This offers a secure way to make payments after hours or in a way that customers can avoid unnecessary interactions.

2020 challenged our office to find ways to continue providing services in completely new and innovative ways, and our team rose to the challenge in amazing ways. It also reminded us that we need to offer the safest environment possible to our citizens. We look forward to serving you in these new ways and maintaining a secure setting. We are excited for 2021 and at some point, returning to "normal". However, pandemic or not, we will always be trying to improve our process to best serve the people of Story County.

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Story County Opened Debris Site for August 10, 2020 Derecho Storm Debris to Speed County's Recovery

Due to the widespread damage across Story County from the August 10, 2020 derecho, Story County opened a temporary site for debris cleared from County roads, County parks, and that members of the public dropped off. The 10-acre site on 160th Street and 600th Avenue in Milford Township was leased from Carol and Charles Strom, Kathleen Vaezi, and tenant farmer Brian Sampson. It was previously the location of a stover storage site for DuPont.

After the derecho, Story County Secondary Roads crews cleared debris from County roadways and road right-of-way in over 200 locations. They also repaired over 260 road signs damaged due to the wind.

The public was able to drop off vegetative debris Monday through Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. The debris site's first day open to the public was August 29, 2020. The last loads of debris were accepted on October 31, 2020. In total, the public dropped off 131 loads of debris. Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management will coordinate with a third party to chip and dispose of the debris this winter at no cost to the County.

Thank you to the staff from Story County Conversation and Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management, Secondary Roads, and Planning and Development who staffed the site during the public drop off hours.



Story County Offices and Departments

Animal Control & Shelter

(515) 382-3338

Assessor & Property Values

(515) 382-7320

Auditor & Elections

(515) 382-7210 Real estate and property records, financial audits, voter registration and elections

Board of Supervisors

(515) 382-7200 Legislative body, budget and administration oversight

Community Services

(515) 663-2930 General Assistance, Mental Health and Disability Services

Conservation & Parks

(515) 232-2516

County Attorney

(515) 382-7255

Emergency Management Agency

(515) 382-7316

Engineer & Secondary Roads

(515) 382-7355

Environmental Health/Sanitarian

(515) 382-7240 Septic systems, wells and water testing, nuisance complaints, pools, and tattoos

Facilities Management

(515) 382-7400

Geographic Information Services

(515) 382-7327

Human Resources

(515) 382-7204

Planning & Development

(515) 382-7245 Zoning regulations, building permits, subdivision

applications, and land use inquires

Public Health

(515) 239-6730 or (800) 529-4610

Recorder & Vital Records

(515) 382-7230 Repository for public records like land transactions and titles, marriage licenses and death certificates

Sheriff's Office

Administration (515) 382-6566
Support Services (515) 382-7473
Jail (515) 382-7464

Treasurer

(515) 382-7340 Motor vehicle transactions and property tax collection

Veterans Affairs

(515) 956-2626

Administration Building

Phone: 515-382-6581

Animal Shelter

Phone: 515-382-3338

Engineer and Secondary Roads

Phone: 515-382-7355

Justice Center

Attorney Phone: 515-382-7255

Sheriff Phone: 515-382-6566

Human Service Center

Phone: 515-663-2930

Conservation

Phone: 515-232-2516

STORY COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS

County Sheriff
Paul Fitzgerald

County Attorney
Timothy Meals

County Auditor
Lucy Martin

County Treasurer
Ted Rasmusson

County Recorder
Stacie Herridge

Supervisor
Latifah Faisal

Supervisor
Lisa Heddens

Supervisor
Linda Murken