

Official pilots plant project as Government Center model

By Tony Daley

A pilot project in the Town of Rushford could model low-maintenance landscaping for the Green Lake County Government Center.

District 13 Supervisor, Thomas Traxler, Jr., donated seeds and plant materials for "mesic" prairie and wetland landscaping of historical flora around Rushford's town hall building, along with flowers bordering one side.

Traxler said the project's use of wetland aquatic flora includes plants filling a berm, which encircles a nearby detention pond.

A nursery crop will be cultivated to preserve seedlings, in order to retain their moisture and ensure stability during their first year of establishment.

The restoration project in Rushford goes to bringing back ancestral grassland communities replaced by high-productivity crops such as soybeans and corn.

The nursery crop in Rushford will aid growth of 27 species of native prairie seedlings germinating over the next few years.

According to Traxler, a Rushford-type planting needs far littler maintenance, in this case, perhaps interval burns or mowing every three to five years, depending on the amount of built-up biomass.

No- or low-maintenance landscaping should help local govern-

ments balance their budgets in part by reducing costs on equipment and personnel.

Traxler envisions more alternative, native-plant landscaping for Green Lake County properties, including acreage around the Government Center, to help the county balance a budget already facing a provisional cut of 3% across-the-board.

Jim Hebbe, the County's Land Conservationist, and the Land Conservation Committee are reviewing a donation of approximately \$10,000 in seeds and plant materials that would establish two rain gardens on Center property.

Current poor land conditions around the Government Center include insufficient topsoil layering, with recent heavy rains washing down the soil, increasing sedimentation in a nearby rainwater detention pond.

Hebbe and Traxler agreed that the county needs to talk to the Samuels Group's landscaping contractor, to see what topsoil quantity the county originally contracted for, and, if possible, to extract a credit for topsoil not provided as stipulated.

Meanwhile, the Rushford pilot project inaugurates possibly more widespread use of native botanicals whose green power could aid local governments shave expenditures and increase revenues.

