

Washington County, Minnesota

Board of Commissioners - Actions

Actions at the Tuesday, December 1, 2009 Board Meeting

This page is a brief view of the actions taken by the Washington County Board of Commissioners. For further information, please telephone 651-430-6001.

Washington County's mission is to provide quality public services in a cost-effective manner through innovation, leadership, and the cooperation of dedicated people.

Kennedy appointed to HRA board

Katoria Kennedy, Cottage Grove, was appointed to the Housing and Redevelopment Authority for Washington County by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Dec. 1.

Kennedy will serve as a resident commissioner to fill an unexpired term, until Dec. 31, 2010. The authority is authorized by state law to undertake certain types of housing and redevelopment activities in Washington County, and the Washington County Board created it with its resolution.

Newport Police Chief Muiznieks honored on his retirement

Newport Police Chief Veidols Muiznieks was honored by the Washington County Board of Commissioners at its meeting Dec. 1. Dec. 1 was declared Chief Veidols Muiznieks Day in Washington County.

Muiznieks has been the Newport police chief for almost 35 years, during which he provided 18 years of service teaching in the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program. Muiznieks also served on the St. Paul Park City Council for 12 years.

County conveys land to cities for stormwater ponds

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Dec. 1 to convey tax forfeited land to Oakdale, St. Paul Park and Woodbury to be used for surface water management. Two parcels will be conveyed to St. Paul Park.

State law allows the conveyance of tax forfeited land to other government entities for public use, if the County Board recommends such a conveyance.

Washington County shares agreement with counties for waste disposal

The Washington County Board of Commissioners extended an inter-county agreement Dec. 1 with Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin and Ramsey counties for reciprocal use of household hazardous waste facilities.

The agreement allows residents of counties that are part of the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board to use the household hazardous waste program of another county within the consortium. The agreement establishes a mechanism for payment of costs incurred by a receiving county from the county where the resident lives. The costs to receive and handle waste from residents from other counties is balanced by revenue received from those counties.

The agreement, which replaces the current one that expires Dec. 31, will run from Jan. 1, 2010, through Dec. 31, 2014.

Washington County will work with Washington Conservation District on wetland protection

The Washington County Board of Commissioners entered into an agreement Dec. 1 with the Washington Conservation District to continue services related to the Wetland Conservation District.

The Wetland Conservation Act, a 1991 law passed to preserve disappearing wetlands. It calls for “no net loss” of wetlands, which requires excavators to try to avoid disturbing wetlands, or to try to minimize the impact on the wetland. A Natural Resources Block Grant of \$47,337 will be provided to the Washington Conservation District to fund conservation programs in the county, and the county will match that grant with \$18,000, which was raised through the county’s environmental charge on waste disposal.

County leases land in parks

Land in two regional parks in Washington County – Lake Elmo Park Reserve and St. Croix Regional Park – will be leased for agricultural uses to local farmers, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to the leases Dec. 1.

Both parks have agricultural land within their boundaries, and 248 acres in the Lake Elmo park will be leased for \$38,588 and 111 acres in St. Croix Bluffs will be leased for \$18,800. The lease agreements are for 2010. The income is used to reduce the amount of property taxes used to operate the county's parks.

County will seek grants for septic, well projects

The Washington County Board of Commissioners authorized the applications Dec. 1 for two grants that would help pay for septic system inspection and wellhead protection programs in the county. The county’s Department of Public Health and Environment will submit grant applications to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

One application will be for \$50,000, for the 2010 Clean Water Fund Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Inventory Grant. If received, the county would provide \$25,000 of in-kind support for the project. The department would contract with a compliance inspector to conduct septic system inspections in the Carnelian Marine-St. Croix Watershed. Studies show that nine lakes in that watershed district have excess phosphorus, which indicates failing septic systems in the area. Homeowner participation in the testing portion of the project would be voluntary. Should failing septic systems be found, however, ordinances mandate that the systems be replaced. Financial assistance could be available to help in their replacement.

The second grant application is for \$75,000, which would be for two-and-a-half years, with a 25 percent matching grant required from the county. The project would identify abandoned wells, determine if they have the potential to contaminate drinking water, and properly seal any wells to prevent contamination of drinking water.

Community Services programs set five-year priorities

The Washington County Board of Commissioners reviewed a five-year plan for the county’s Community Development Block Grant and the Home Investment Partnership program funds Dec. 1.

The plan is a five-year plan which describes which programs will be undertaken by the Community Services Department in the community development and home investment partnership programs. The plan notes whether programs are a high,

medium or low priority for the county. High and medium priority programs may be paid for with the funds. The board discussed revised priorities, but voted to maintain the program's current priorities until it receives more information from the Community Development Block Grant Citizen Advisory Committee.

Programs include transitional and supportive housing, service to special populations with mental illness or chemical dependency, and homelessness prevention.

County will pursue legal action against Oak Park Heights

The Washington County Board of Commissioners gave its approval Dec. 1 for the Office of the County Attorney to pursue legal action against the city of Oak Park Heights to recover \$114,142 in water and sewer overcharges by the city. The city supplies water and sewer service to the county's Law Enforcement Center, which houses the county jail. When reviewing utility charges during the past five years, it was determined that the county was overcharged by the city during 18 months of that time. The county requested a refund from the city, but it was denied. County Attorney Doug Johnson told commissioners that the case would fall under the area of "unjust enrichment," which prohibits one entity gaining from a mistake.

The County Attorney will now take legal action to recover the money overcharged by the city.
