

Washington County, Minnesota

Board of Commissioners - Actions

Actions at the Tuesday, July 20, 2010 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.

County will continue Citizens Review Panel, with help of grant

The Washington County Citizens Review Panel, which works with the Community Services Department, will continue its work in the county, with the acceptance of a \$3,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services by the Washington County Board of Commissioners July 20.

The Citizens Review Panel assists the child protection service agency to evaluate the extent to which the agency is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with the state Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act plan, and prepares an annual report containing a summary of the activities of the panel.

The County Board is required to accept the funds, and agree to terms of reimbursement and record retention, set out by the state department, to receive the money to support the panel. The money is used for members' approved expenses and some county administrative costs.

East Suburban Resources will provide supported work services for MFIP workers

East Suburban Resources, Inc., (ESR) will provide Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) customers in Washington County with services through the Supported Work Project. The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed July 20 to the contract with ESR, to provide services from July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011.

Washington County will receive \$163,589 for the program, which provides job skills training, job development, placement services, links to unsubsidized employment, and subsidized wages. ESR has been providing this service, through a contract with the Washington County WorkForce Center, and will continue to do so. It is estimated that 50 customers will be served, and approximately 12 of them will be in subsidized employment.

A total of 45 MFIP customers were placed in supported work positions during the past contract year, which exceeded the goal of 34. Out of the 45 positions, 26 customers were hired by companies with an average hourly wage of \$9.26. In addition to supported work positions, ESR secured 132 unsubsidized employment opportunities for Washington County MFIP customers.

Services reduced for families with children with severe emotional disturbance

The Washington County Board of Commissioners reduced its 2010 contract with Human Services, Inc., (HSI) by \$88,700, due to ongoing budget pressures at both the state and county level. The contract change reduces the program budget for in-home services to children with Severe Emotional Disturbance.

The board approved the amended contract July 20.

County approves bank purchase of downtown Stillwater property

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a repurchase July 20 of a tax forfeited parcel in downtown Stillwater by North Star Bank.

The land is at the corner of Main Street and Mulberry Street, and was formerly owned by Mainstream Development. The bank asked to repurchase this parcel, one of three taxation parcels in a row on Main Street. The rationale was that it would be easier to market the parcels if they were sold as one. The county will receive \$17,003 from the bank for back taxes, penalties, interest and costs, as well as the first half taxes for 2010.

County could be more green, with GreenCorps grant

Washington County will apply to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to be a host for one of the agency's GreenCorps members. The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the application July 20. The GreenCorps program provides opportunities for GreenCorps members to spend 11 months of service acquiring skills while supporting high-priority environmental activities.

The grant application submitted by the county proposes a partnership with the Forest Lake school district to provide assistance to the school district to implement a food waste recycling program, and to enhance recycling efforts, reduce paper waste and provide education on waste reduction and recycling in the district.

The GreenCorps member would be in place from September until next July, and is expected to complete 1,700 hours of service. The county has been host to GreenCorps members in the past, who worked in similar programs in other school districts in Washington County. Funding is provided through a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service as well as through ServeMinnesota, Minnesota's state commission for AmeriCorps programs. Minnesota GreenCorps provides opportunities for college graduates to spend a year of service acquiring skills while supporting high-priority environmental activities at the local level in Minnesota.

Designers, builders chosen for Lake Elmo, St. Croix Bluffs parks projects

Contracts with architects Hagen, Christensen & McIlwain Architects and building contractors Kraus Anderson Construction Company to plan and build facilities in two county parks were approved by the Washington County Board of Commissioners July 20. The architectural firm will provide architectural, engineering and design services for a winter recreation area project at Lake Elmo Park Reserve, and a shower building at the St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park. Those tasks for the two projects will cost \$206,500. Kraus Anderson will provide construction management for the same projects, at a cost of \$269,521.

The Winter Recreation Area Project in the Lake Elmo park will include cross-country ski trail lighting, construction of a road and parking lot, and remodeling of the existing barn for use as a trailhead. The work at the St. Croix Bluffs campground includes the replacement of the shower building and construction of a dump station, well, septic and other amenities. Funding for the projects will be reimbursed by the State Parks and Trails grants for 2010 and 2011.

County will lease space on tower to Clear Wireless

Washington County will share \$9,500 from a lease agreement with Clear Wireless with the City of Woodbury, when the telecommunications company rents space on Washington County's Valley Creek radio tower, and ground space near the tower. The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to the lease at its meeting July 20. The county and city will share the income, based on an agreement that has been in place between the two.

The income generated for Washington County will be used to support the operation of the 800 megahertz public safety radio system.

County board hears comments on setting Examiner of Titles fees

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public hearing July 20 to consider setting fees for services provided by the county Examiner of Titles. The Washington County Board of Commissioners reviewed a plan June 22 to set fees for the services of the Examiner of Titles in the county.

State law requires judges of the district court to appoint an attorney in each county to serve as examiner of titles and as legal advisor to the registrar. Currently, the county pays for the examiners' services.

The services of the examiner are required on certain property ownership and title transactions, and benefit of the service accrues to the individuals requesting the service. Examples of documents that the examiner of titles reviews include trust documents, probate documents, name changes, street or alley vacations, and eminent domain proceedings. Customers using the service would be required to pay the fee prior to engaging the services of the examiner.

The Washington County Tenth Judicial judges have passed a motion of support for the collection plan. The proposed fee schedule that the board passed is Examiner of Titles Approval, \$100; Examiner of Titles Directive, \$150; Examiner services for district court action, \$300. If adopted, the plan would provide \$42,250 of new revenue from those who use the services and thus reduce the need for general property tax revenue to provide this service.

Regional rail authority solicits grants for local corridors

The Washington County Regional Railroad Authority – which is composed of the Washington County Board of Commissioners – agreed July 20 to submit two grant applications for planning the Red Rock and Rush Line transit corridors, both of which run through portions of Washington County.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has authorized grant solicitations in the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program, to be known as the TIGER II Discretionary Grants. Of the \$600 million available in that program, up to \$35 million will be available for planning grants.

In addition, the Federal Transit Administration has announced the availability of up to \$25.7 million in discretionary funds for studying transit alternatives in the form of an Alternative Analysis Livability Grant.

Both the Red Rock and the Rush Line transit corridors' current projects' status meet the criteria for grant applications in both of these programs, which require that they be in the stage of determining the locally preferred alternative for the projects.

The rail authority is requesting \$3 million from the TIGER II program, and \$2 million from the AA Livability Grant. Both grants would require local matches, which could be provided by the local rail authority overseeing the projects or the County Transit Improvement Board, of which Washington County is a member.

Regional rail authority supports grant for Union Depot work

The Washington County Regional Railroad Authority – which is composed of the Washington County Board of Commissioners – offered support July 20 for a submittal of a grant application for federal funds to pay for the Union Depot project in St. Paul.

The Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority will submit a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant application for approximately \$90 million for the Union Depot Multi-modal Transit Hub in St. Paul.

The Washington County Rail Authority would benefit from the investment in the Union Depot because it will be a connection point for multiple transportation corridors in the eastern metropolitan area. The Rush Line, Red Rock and potentially I-94 Corridor – all potential transit corridors in the east metro – would share a stop at the Union Depot.