

Washington County, Minnesota

Board of Commissioners - Actions

Actions at the Tuesday, October 18, 2011 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.

Schmidt named to WorkForce Investment Board

The Washington County Board of Commissioners named Mary Schmidt to the WorkForce Investment Board at its meeting Oct. 18. Schmidt will represent Job Services on the board. Her term will expire June 30, 2013.

The purpose of the board, established by state statute, is to determine the most effective designation of administrative entities, grant recipients and program operators for the Workforce Service Area, and provide on-site review and oversight of performance of the WorkForce Investment Board programs.

Marchan, Bucheck named to Valley Branch Watershed District Board of Managers

Edward Marchan, West Lakeland Township, and David Bucheck, Lake Elmo, were named to the Valley Branch Watershed District Board of Managers by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Oct. 18. The members will serve three-year terms expiring Nov. 13, 2014.

Watershed district governance, required by state statute, helps to control or alleviate damage by flood waters; improve stream channels for drainage or navigation; reclaim or fill wet or overflow lands; oversee water supply for irrigation; regulate the flow of streams; divert or change water courses; provide and conserve water supply; and provide for the protection of groundwater and regulation of groundwater use.

County will have continued access to state criminal justice data

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to a joint powers agreement Oct. 18 that will provide county staff access to criminal justice information available from two state agencies.

The county will enter into a Joint Powers Agreement with the State of Minnesota through the Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) for access to the criminal justice data communications network (CJDN.) The agreement provides Community Corrections staff access to criminal justice data required to effectively perform their jobs. The contract states that the BCA must provide criminal justice data to Washington County Community Corrections. In addition to Minnesota specific information, the BCA will also provide the county with access to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Crime Information Center, and allow Washington County Community Corrections staff to access court data, including confidential information.

Each user will be expected to abide by the policies of both the BCA and the FBI while searching in the database, and the county will cooperate with any investigations. The Joint Powers Agreement will be in effect for five years.

County will work with ESR to help residents secure employment

East Suburban Resources (ESR) will provide supported work services for customers in Washington County who are part of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) after the County Board approved an agreement with the agency Oct. 18. The county is required by state law to provide help to MFIP customers to secure employment. The agreement will run through June 30, 2014.

The state allocates Washington County Supported Work funds each fiscal year to help customers of MFIP secure employment. Due to the delayed state budget for the current year, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) only recently notified Washington County of its allocation for the year for \$132,600. Of this, \$122,000 will go to ESR. The remaining funds of \$10,600 will remain with the WorkForce Center for another MFIP project.

As part of Washington County's plan to meet federal and state requirements, the county contracts with ESR to provide supportive services, including job skills training, job development, placement services, and/or subsidized wages.

ESR has exceeded all contractual requirements during the previous fiscal year, July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011. ESR was required to place MFIP WorkForce Center customers into employment placements by either subsidizing the employer through wage reimbursement or by placing customers directly into employment throughout Washington County and the greater Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area. The agency had 123 unsubsidized employment placements, when the annual contract called for 38 placements. It had 21 subsidized employment placements, when its contract requirement was 12 placements. This is a three-year agreement, with the exact allocation known for the coming year only.

County will have vouchers to help homeless in temporary need

The Washington County Community Services Department will have funds to help pay for vouchers for homeless persons needing temporary shelter in motels or host homes, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a grant agreement Oct. 18 with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

This spring, the Community Services Department responded to the DHS Office of Economic Opportunity's (OEO) request for proposals for the 2012 - 2013 biennium to provide funding for various homeless and transitional housing programs. The Community Services Department submitted a proposal to the OEO requesting support for existing homeless assistance services. The office recently notified the department that it will partially fund the request for \$15,000 for each of the fiscal years in the biennium.

This funding will pay for motel vouchers for homeless persons needing temporary emergency shelter, for host homes, and for homeless case management. This grant will fund approximately 20 percent of the total costs of motel vouchers. The department sought this funding to diversify funding streams. Funds used historically for these items have been cut, such as the Adult Mental Health Grant and the Community Development Block Grant. This grant will allow the department to mitigate the impacts of these cuts and preserve services.

Request will ask for grant to help restore Historic Courthouse

Washington County will apply for a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society Legacy Grant Program for \$40,000 to repair and restore the Historic Courthouse north portico and railings.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the grant application at its meeting Oct. 18. During the first special session of the Minnesota Legislature in 2011, \$10.5 million from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund – part of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment – was appropriated to the Minnesota Historical Society for its Statewide Historical and Cultural Grants program. This program funds "projects of enduring value for the cause of history and historic preservation."

Projects proposed at the Historic Courthouse include repair and restoration of the north portico and decorative railings that are currently damaged or deteriorating. A \$10,000 local match is included in the grant application, and is also

included in the proposed 2012 Historic Courthouse Restoration budget. If funding is received, the restoration projects would be completed in 2012.

Board sees plan for ending homelessness in Washington County

The Washington County Board of Commissioners reviewed a community-driven plan designed to end homelessness in Washington County at its meeting Oct. 18.

The presentation was made by Kellie Cardinal of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, the current chair of the Washington County Housing Collaboration, and David Browne of CommonBond Communities and chair of the Heading Home Washington (HHW) Steering Committee.

The message to the board was that there are several steps in ending homelessness. They include prevention, which addresses crises to prevent homelessness; rapid rehousing, which connect the homeless to resources and services; and housing, which is designed to assist the homeless with obtaining and maintaining stable housing.

In Minnesota, 85 of 87 counties are currently covered by a local Heading Home Plan, and in 2010, there was the release of the state of Minnesota and federal plans to end homelessness.

According to the group's report, "To be sure, homelessness looks different in Washington County than in downtown Minneapolis. Instead of waiting in line to get into a shelter, families are sleeping in their cars, staying in a motel with the support of the county or a local church, camping, doubling up in a friend or relative's place, or leaving their community to go to Minneapolis or St. Paul where they can find the shelter and services that are lacking in the county. The fact remains that Washington County has seen a steady increase over the past."

The report uses personal stories, from a young mother who struggles to find a home close to her workplace, a middle-aged mother whose mental illness stopped her from working, and a family of six caught up in the joblessness and debt of the recent recession that forced them out of their middle-class suburban home.

A plan is needed to coordinate county-wide efforts, meet future funding requirements, increase responsiveness while reducing and eliminating duplication in services, and act as a policy guide.

The group has conducted a community survey and a community retreat, analyzed six studies to provide information on trends, and then wrote the Heading Home Washington Plan.

The plan documents the nature and extent of homelessness, and recommends goals and strategies to reduce the impact of homelessness. It also reviews the information compiled, which shows chronic health issues increases the risk for homelessness, and that there is a lack of affordable housing and an inability to serve households at 30 percent of the Area Median Income. There is also an increase in the incidence of homeless youth.

The group's goals are to increase awareness and involvement, prevent households from experiencing homelessness, increase housing opportunities for homeless and low-income households, and provide coordinated outreach. The plan the group wrote calls for development and preservation of affordable housing, programs and services that support people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, and community awareness and engagement.

The five-year budget for the project is \$20,147,400. The plan will be evaluated on its ability to have an impact on people and bring about systems change. The entire plan may be read at www.isd622.org/hhw.

County will purchase land for Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Oct. 18 to purchase 4.86 acres of land known as the Anderson/Ott property.

The land is adjacent to the Cottage Grove Regional Park and is within the planned boundary of the park. It will cost \$164,000.

The property is just north of the Highway 61 frontage road in the northeast quadrant of the highway and Keats Avenue (County State Aid Highway 19). Full reimbursement of the cost of the land is anticipated in the future. The City of Cottage Grove could use this acreage to complete its replacement obligation for its current development. The city removed land from the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park to build its new city hall and public safety building. It must replace the land that it removed from the park, and has a deadline of Dec. 31, 2015, to do so.

If the city secures other property to complete its replacement obligation for the current city development, Washington County will request reimbursement from the Metropolitan Council.

County begins plans to upgrade roads, sidewalks, lots around Government Center

Plans for upgrading the roadways, parking lots and sidewalks around the Washington County Government Center in Stillwater were reviewed by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Oct. 18.

The board also approved a contract with the firm of Bolton & Menk, Inc., to do preliminary and final design services for the project. The project will include work on County Road 62 (62nd Street North), County Road 63 (Oxboro Avenue North), County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 24 (Osgood Avenue North), and the Government Center Parking Lots Improvement Project in Stillwater and Oak Park Heights. The cost for preliminary and final design is not to exceed \$373,469.

Deteriorating pavement conditions, lack of pedestrian connectivity and deficient intersection traffic control and drainage facilities on 62nd Street North, Oxboro Avenue North, Osgood Avenue North and the Government Center surface parking lots will be addressed by this project. Improved Government Center campus-wide signs are also part of the project, as are plans to address missing links in the pedestrian network, which will provide for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Currently, construction is scheduled to take place in 2013 and last one season. The contract cost is approximately 15 percent of the estimated project construction cost. This cost is consistent with previous preliminary and final design services. The overall project is expected to cost about \$2.5 million.

The public will be asked to weigh in on the plans, and the county will do outreach with open houses, mailers and communications through the county's website and social media outlets.

County will return two properties to private landowners after tax forfeiture

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the repurchase of one property and the auction of another Oct. 18 to return both properties to private owners after being in tax forfeiture.

The first property, a home in Oak Park Heights, will be returned to the heir of a person who lost the property for delinquent taxes. The heir has paid the delinquent taxes, penalties, interest, fees and management costs incurred during forfeiture of \$21,089.70 to repurchase the property.

Land in Forest Lake will be sold after the County Board approved the adjacent owner sale. It is a 13.5-acre piece of vacant land. It has been withheld from public sale because it has more than 150 feet of land that borders a public body. The county requested special legislation to allow the land to be sold, and received authorization from the Legislature to sell the property to one of the adjacent landowners.

Most of the land is designated as wetland. The sale will be conducted Dec. 2, and the minimum sale price that the county will accept is \$12,500.