

Pickin' and Picnics Highlight the Washington County Bluegrass Festival

On September 10, the green grass of Lake Elmo Park Reserve will serve as the site for some of the region's best Bluegrass artists.

Washington County's fourth annual Bluegrass Festival takes place on Saturday, September 10, from 3 to 7 p.m. This family-oriented event features four outstanding bluegrass bands, including Jack Norton and the Mullet River Boys, Free Range Pickin', Monroe Crossing, and the Becky Schlegel Trio.

This event will also feature a variety of food vendors and fun crafts for the kids. The Bluegrass Festival will be held at the South Picnic area, which offers a large picnic shelter, a play area, and plenty of grass for your blanket or chair. The event itself is free, but Washington County annual or daily vehicle permits are required. A daily vehicle permit costs \$5.

For additional information on this and other events, please visit the Washington County web site at www.co.washington.mn.us or call Lake Elmo Park Reserve at 651-430-4370.



Bluegrass Artist Becky Schlegel and her trio perform at Lake Elmo Park Reserve on Sept. 10 as part of Washington County's fourth annual Bluegrass Festival. Schlegel has been a featured artist on many television and radio shows, including Garrison Keillor's *Prairie Home Companion*.

Did You Know?

Washington County's seven county parks received over 1.3 million visits in 2004. Call 651-430-8370 or visit the County web site at www.co.washington.mn.us for information on park hours, locations, special events and vehicle permits.

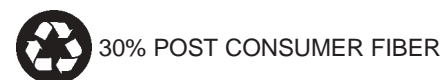
Your County Government - Efficient, Effective, and Responsive

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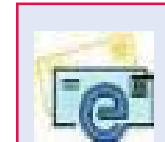
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A Communication from the Washington County Board of Commissioners



Save Time with New County Web Updates

www.co.washington.mn.us



Look for this handy icon to subscribe to county information.

Hectic schedule? Washington County provides numerous online services which can connect you with valuable services and even save a little time in your day.

Recent upgrades to the site include:

- the addition of **calendars** listing upcoming parks, library and general county events and meetings.
- an e-mail subscription service to receive free e-mails from the county with information on upcoming county events, notice of budget hearings, job postings and more. Subscribers can even have a copy of the *Staying In Touch* newsletter e-mailed to them free of charge.
- application forms for jobs and advisory committees to download and submit via e-mail.

The site is also helpful for reserving Washington County library books and other items, paying property taxes and even downloading various county maps for those times when online just won't substitute for in-person.

Washington County - Efficient, effective, responsive, and online

www.co.washington.mn.us

Did You Know?

Residents visit Washington County's web site about 86,000 times every month for information on county services such as:

- **Recycling information**
- **Value and history of properties in your neighborhood**
- **Paying your property taxes**
- **License center hours and locations**
- **Road construction updates**
- **Searching the library catalog and reserving items and much more!**

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Innovative

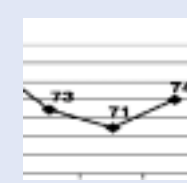
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Downloadable audio e-books at County Library

Efficient

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Performance measures increase public accountability

Effective

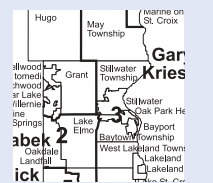
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Site plans for new North and South Service Centers

Responsive

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Contacting your County Commissioners

Downloadable Audio eBooks at Washington County Library – Sounds Exciting!

Washington County Library users have immediate access to over 800 audio books thanks to a new service provided free of charge by the library system.

Most users are familiar with Books on Cassette or Books on CD. Downloadable Audio eBooks are audio books that are available through the Internet. These Audio eBooks can be played on any desktop computer, laptop, or portable device that supports Windows Media Player 9 and above. At no charge, a Library user can set up an account to access the collection on the County's website.

"Audio books are a popular format at our libraries," said Washington County Library Director Patricia Conley. "The new downloadable audio eBook format gives our users access to a wide variety of titles, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week." The system allows people to download audio books simultaneously from any location. There is no need for those with a Washington County Library card to physically visit a library to use the service. Due to high demand, the Library's public computers cannot be used to download or play the Audio eBooks.

Use of the service is explained on the Library's web pages at www.co.washington.mn.us/library. Click on "Downloadable Audio eBooks."



Woodbury resident Sandee Nezhad demonstrates how easy it is to use Washington County Library's new audio eBook service. To access this service or get more information, visit the Library section of the Washington County web site – www.co.washington.mn.us.

Up to 10 titles can be downloaded at one time for a period of three weeks, with the option to renew once. The rights to play the downloaded file will automatically expire from the user's electronic device after three weeks, unless the title is renewed.

Users can choose from a wide variety of titles including bestsellers, classics, fiction and non-fiction. The selection of titles expands each month.

For more information as well as library hours and locations, please visit Washington County Library's web pages at www.co.washington.mn.us or call 651-731-1320.

"Audio books are a popular format at our libraries. The new downloadable audio eBook format gives our users access to a wide variety of titles, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week."

- Library Director Patricia Conley

Did You Know?

Washington County Libraries loaned out over 2.2 million items in 2004*

* Includes associated libraries in Stillwater and Bayport



Washington County Board of Commissioners

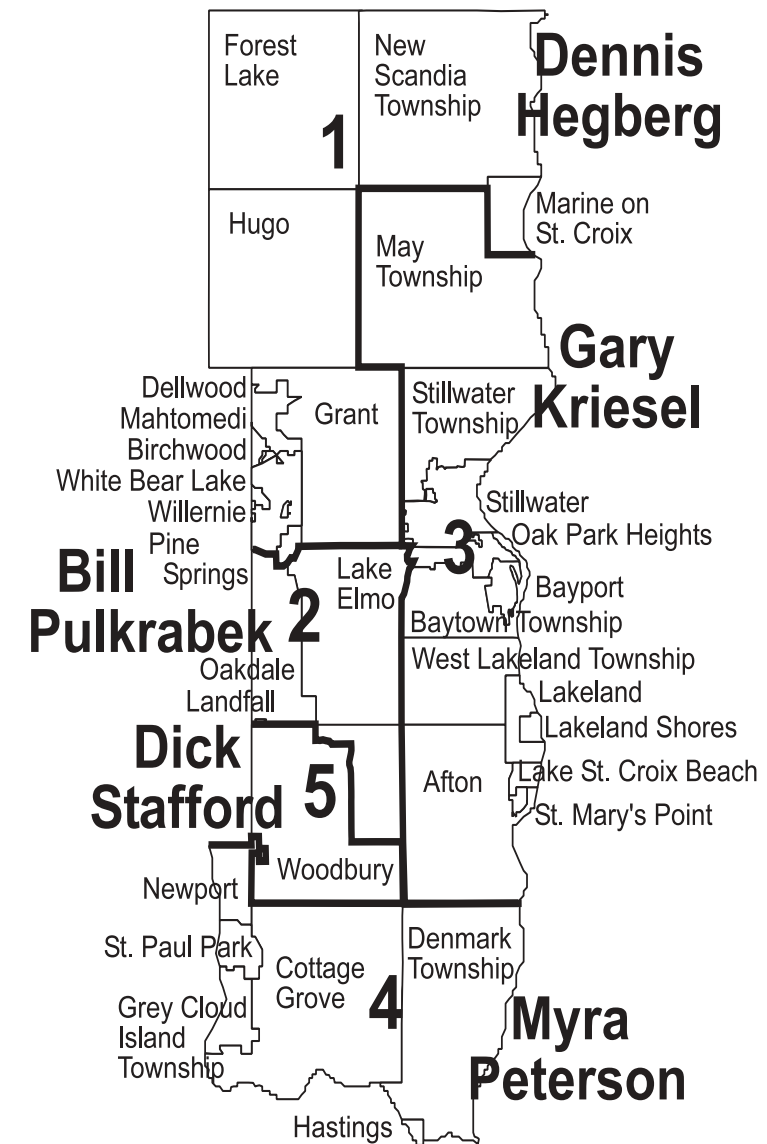
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651-430-6215



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651-430-6211



Gary Kriesel
651-430-6213

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Myra Peterson
651-430-6214

Contacting Your Commissioner

Washington County Commissioners develop policy and make the decisions and laws which govern the county. The Board's responsibilities include establishing a county budget and tax levy, setting policy for delivery of services, and approving and revising ordinances. Commissioners encourage calls or e-mails on any issue related to county government.

For everyday questions, go to the Departments and Services section of the county website - www.co.washington.mn.us, or call 651-430-6000. (TTY - 651-430-6246)

At Your Service

New Service Center projects in Forest Lake and Cottage Grove move forward

Washington County recently released preliminary site plans for two facilities which will help bring county services closer to home for many residents. Construction is expected to begin next spring on County Service Centers in Cottage Grove and Forest Lake. Both site plans include the possibility of enhancing service by co-locating with other government services and private sector amenities.

Watch for more information as plans for these two exciting projects move forward.

North Service Center and Library

The North Service Center will be located south of the Forest Lake Airport and 202nd Street and west of Highway 61. Key elements of the facility include a 26,000 square foot library, and a 30,000 square foot building housing a licensing center and service offices for Public Health, Community Services, and Community Corrections. A Transit Center and Hardwood Creek Trail head will also be added. It is currently scheduled to open in the summer of 2007.



South Service Center

The South Service Center will be located west of County Road 19 at 90th Street in Cottage Grove, just north of Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park. Key elements of this 40,000 square foot facility include service offices for Public Health, Community Services, and Community Corrections. It is currently scheduled to open in early 2007.



Help Keep Your County a Great Place to Live: Volunteer!

Washington County is a special place for those who live and work here because of the resolve of its residents to remain active and involved in its community services and governance.

The following list includes current vacancies on county advisory committees. These committees play a crucial role in advising the County Board on a variety of issues affecting the citizens of Washington County. Please contact the Washington County Office of Administration at 651-430-6014 to receive an application or go to the Citizen Participation section of the county web site, www.co.washington.mn.us, for committee descriptions and more. Keep checking back as new committee vacancies open periodically.

Current Vacancies

(committee name and district of representation)

- Community Development Block Grant Citizens Advisory, District 3, nonprofit and private sector
- Community Services Advisory Committee, District 2
- Groundwater Advisory Council, Agricultural Representative
- Historic Courthouse Advisory Council, District 1
- Mental Health Advisory Council, Consumer representative (two openings)
- Planning Advisory Commission, District 1
- Sentence to Service, At Large

Historic Courthouse Seeks Volunteers

The Washington County Historic Courthouse is looking for volunteers to assist with its fall programming for school group tours and Victorian Christmas.

School Group Tour Guides

Volunteers are sought to serve as costumed tour guides for school groups. Volunteers with an interest in sharing county history and who enjoy children are encouraged to contact the Courthouse. Call 651-430-6233 for more information.

Victorian Christmas

Volunteers are also needed to assist with the Victorian Christmas at the Historic Courthouse. This Historic Courthouse restoration fundraiser takes place November 18 – 20, 2005. Volunteer possibilities include serving as a tour guide, helping in the tea room, selling tickets at the door, serving food at the preview event, and assisting artists throughout the building.

Committees are now being formed to help decorate the building, coordinate entertainment, oversee the Tea Room,

County Budget Open House

An open house will be held in the County Board Room at the Washington County Government Center, 14949 62nd Street North, Stillwater on September 13, 2005 at 4:30 p.m. Residents are encouraged to attend the open house to share any ideas or concerns they have regarding the county budget, programs, and services. Staff from each county department will be available to respond to questions and follow up on any issues that surface.

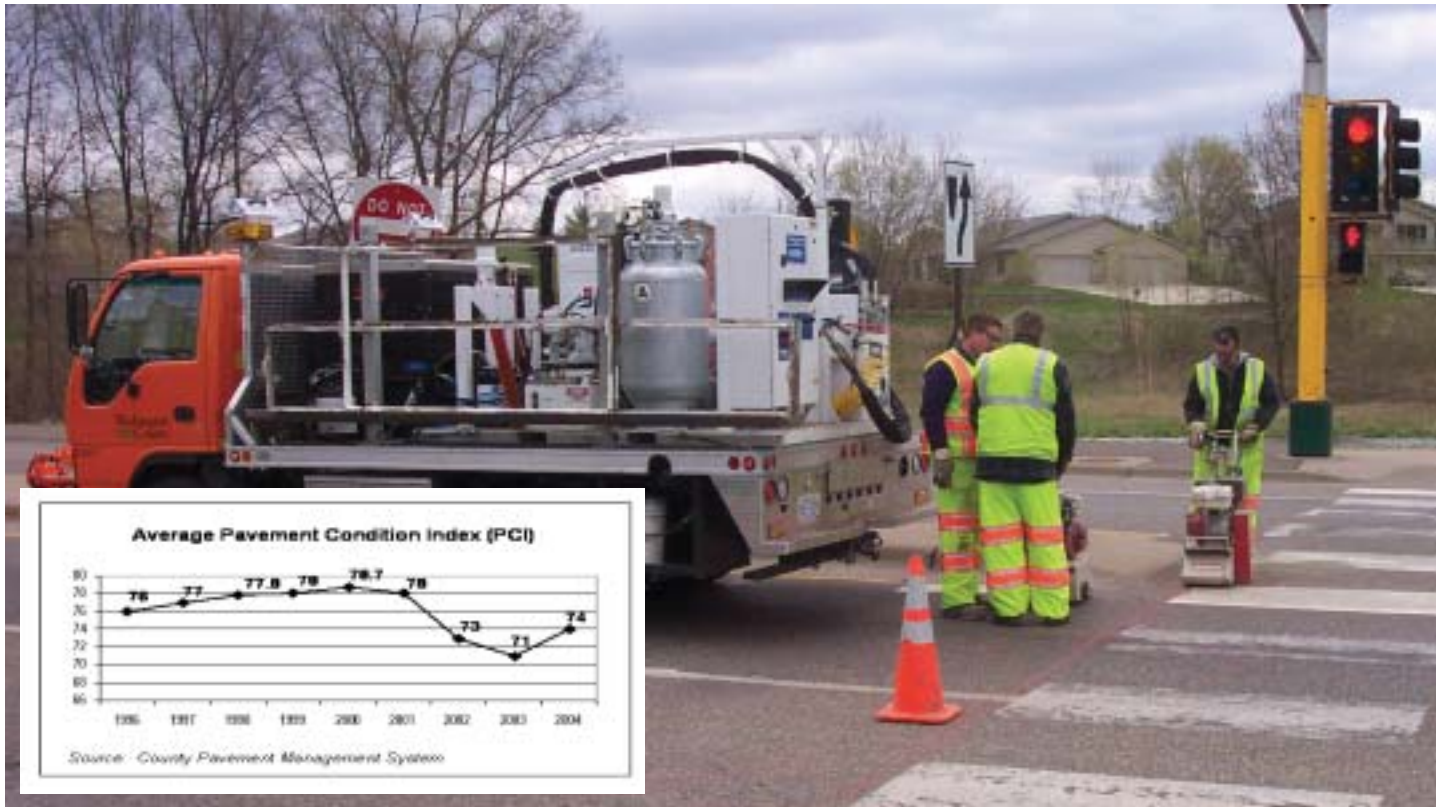
As required by state law, the County Board will set the 2006 preliminary property tax levy on September 13 following the open house. The final 2006 county budget will be adopted in December. The county's 2006 fiscal year begins Jan. 1, 2006.

and help in the kitchen during the preview event.

This is the perfect event for those looking for variety and a chance to make new friendships in the process. Call Donna Siemers at 651-430-6233 for more information or to volunteer.



Washington County Historic Courthouse volunteers and others in many different service areas help make our county the great place it is.



How Are We Doing?

New performance measures help increase public accountability

What is excellent county government service?

It's a challenging question, but for citizens in Washington County, the measurements necessary to define efficient, effective and responsive service are coming into focus.

Performance Measures have been a part of Washington County's service evaluation since the mid-1990s. Last year the county began taking part in a three-year initiative with the National Center for Civic Innovation. Through this grant, Washington County and others across the country are not just creating measurable standards for performance but are making those standards easy for residents to access and understand.

The county recently issued the 2004 Annual Performance report, using some of the easy-to-follow reporting strategies developed through the new initiative.

One of the many measures included in the report monitors the condition of pavement in the county highway system. Using a rating system developed to measure road surface distress, the county determined that pavement conditions declined over 2002 and 2003. In 2003, the rating dipped below the accepted minimum standard for the first time since measures were adopted in 1996. Workers responded to this news by increasing crack sealing efforts on new pavement as a way to lessen water damage. This resulted in a significant improvement in the 2004 rating, and more

importantly, better roads for county drivers.

Watch for more information on the county's Performance Measurement plan as the County works to ensure that the public continues to play a key role in evaluating public service.

The 2004 performance report is available on the Washington County web site – www.co.washington.mn.us in the "Your County Government" section. Paper copies of the report can also be found at county libraries or by calling the Office of Administration at 651-430-6001.

Those interested in getting involved in an upcoming performance measurement initiative may call Jennifer Menke Blanchard at 651-430-6016.



New County Program Offers Help with Home Improvements

Program offers project coordination and loans up to \$20,000 to many low-income households

Many lower-income residents needing home repairs have a new option for help thanks to a program made possible through Washington County.

The Washington County Board recently approved a contract with the Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation's HousingResource Center to assist lower-income people in coordinating and financing needed smaller repairs and improvements. The Owner-Occupied Residential Rehabilitation Deferred Loan program is available to applicants in Washington County communities that participate in the federal Community Development Block Grant program.

Board Chair Myra Peterson noted that programs such as this have a strong track record of success throughout the metropolitan area. "This program is effective because it focuses on more than just the funding. The HousingResource Center is available to consult on every aspect of the project, from providing advice on the improvements, to preparing and reviewing bid packages and monitoring construction progress."

Priority projects include safety and accessibility improvements, code-related improvements, and projects to reduce long-term energy or maintenance costs.

Owner-Occupied Residential Rehabilitation Deferred Loan

- Available for county residents at or below 50 percent of median area income. This ranges from an annual income of \$26,950 for a family of four, up to \$50,800 for a family size over eight.
- The maximum deferred loan amount is \$20,000. The loan has no interest and no monthly payment. The full amount of the loan will become due when the homeowner sells, transfers, or conveys title to the property.

The HousingResource Center offers several other financial programs for metropolitan area residents including a fix-up loan for those making \$89,000 or less in gross income and a program for assisting in work on affordable rental properties. Call 651-228-1077 or go to www.housingresourcecenter.org for more information.

Adult Foster Care

An emerging care option in your neighborhood

Most people are familiar with family child foster care, but you may not have heard of one of the more recent trends in providing safety and nurturing to vulnerable individuals.

Family adult foster care is similar to family child foster care in that both are provided by a couple or a single person, living in their own home. They are both licensed by the State of Minnesota through Washington County and are required to give supervision, safety and emotional support, and expected to incorporate the individual into family activities and routines.

Currently Washington County has 48 licensed family adult foster homes which can serve elderly adults, individuals with fragile mental conditions, people with physical or developmental disabilities and others. These homes are a safe, personal, community-based option.

Residents who notice such a home in their neighborhood are sometimes curious and would like more information about it. County officials suggest that a constructive first step is to contact the home directly and start a conversation just as one might do with any other new neighbor.

The county's Community Services Department is another good resource. They are available for questions about family adult foster care, advice on seeking such care for someone in one's own family and information on becoming a licensed adult family foster care provider.

Contact them at 651-430-6455 or visit the county web site at www.co.washington.mn.us for more information. Foster care licensing information can be found in the "Info For Residents" section under the "Community Services" heading.