

Washington County, Minnesota

Board of Commissioners - Actions

Actions at the Tuesday, March 1, 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.

Leiser to join Ground Water Advisory Committee

Craig Leiser, Grant, was appointed to the Washington County Groundwater Advisory Committee March 1. The appointment was made by the Washington County Board of Commissioners.

The committee is required by state statute. The Groundwater Advisory Committee advises the County Board on matters relating to the development, content, implementation and periodic review and revision of the Washington County Groundwater Management Plan. The committee

takes into account the relationship of the Groundwater Plan with watershed plans and any other local plans upon which the Groundwater Plan may have an impact, and assists the Department of Public Health and Environment in the development of an annual groundwater work plan. Commissioner Dennis Hegberg, District 1, recommended the appointment.

County Board accepts donations, gifts to the county

The Washington County Board of Commissioners officially accepted gifts March 1 given to Washington County during the last quarter of 2010.

The county received memorial gifts; gifts provided to support county activities, such as the Victorian Christmas event at the Historic Courthouse; contributions left in Washington County Library donation boxes; contributions designated for specific library programs or equipment; and contributions to specific departments in the county.

Washington County gratefully accepts donations, gifts, and bequests from public and private sources to enhance the programs and services it provides. Offers may be accepted if they promote the county's mission or benefit the county's citizens. Any accepted gift, donation, or bequest becomes the property of Washington County, which will have sole discretion over its disposition.

The county regards all activities initiated through donations as provisional and does not guarantee the continuance of such programs or services in the absence of donated resources. Offers that compel the county to take specific actions or obligate county resources in any manner must be approved by the County Board before acceptance by Department Heads.

Fee paid to conservator, guardian increases

The fee Washington County will pay for a private guardian or conservator will be raised to up to \$55 an hour, and the county will pay for up to three hours per month for the service for indigent residents who require this service.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners raised the fee from \$35 an hour, which was set in 1991, at its meeting March 1.

When individuals are found incapable of making safe and sound judgments about their finances and/or overall well-being, the court may appoint a conservator or guardian. Often a family member will provide this service at no cost. However, when such a person is not available or appropriate, the court may appoint an independent person or agency; if that person is found indigent, the county is responsible for funding this service.

That rate was set at \$35 per hour in 1991, not to exceed three hours per month, or \$105 for an individual who is a professional guardian.

In recent years, the county staff has struggled to find an adequate number of professional guardians to meet demand based on the prior fee. To remedy this, the county will enter into a contractual relationship with at least one private or public agency, which is allowed by state law. To allow for flexibility in contract negotiations, the rate for guardian/conservator services will be raised to up to \$55 per hour.

Liquor licenses in townships renewed

Liquor licenses for establishments located in Washington County townships, which are overseen by the county, were renewed by the Washington County Board of Commissioners March 1.

The liquor licenses were renewed for:

- on sale and Sunday liquor license for Stoneridge Golf Club in West Lakeland Township.
- on sale and Sunday liquor license for Withrow Ballroom Catering Services, in May Township.
- off sale liquor license for the Holiday in Denmark Township.
- on sale and Sunday liquor license for The Point in Denmark Township.
- on sale and Sunday liquor license for Afton Alps in Denmark Township.
- on sale 3.2 malt liquor and Sunday liquor license and consumption and display permit for the Disabled Veteran's Rest Camp in May Township.

All applicants provided a certificate of liability insurance and paid a fee to the county ranging from \$350 for the malt liquor license to \$500 for the off-sale license to \$2,200 for the on-sale and Sunday liquor licenses.

County will receive Met Council funds for parks projects

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed March 1 to a grant agreement with the Metropolitan Council (Met Council) to receive funds to pay for construction projects in two county parks.

A project at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park will provide a new shower building that meets Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines, a new dump station, well, and electrical services. The Metropolitan Council grant for \$249,000 will provide additional funds for this \$891,500 project. Previous grants for this project were received from the Met Council. With this grant, the project will be funded by Met Council grants of \$791,000 and parks revenue of \$100,500. At Lake Elmo Park Reserve, a Met Council grant for \$350,000 will pay for facilities to accommodate evening cross country skiing, which will include ski trail lighting and the construction of a trailhead facility. The total project budget is \$1,661,000. Previous grants include \$1,311,000 from the state parks and trails fund program. With approval of this grant, the project will be 100 percent funded with grants with no use of county levy.

When the project is completed, the Lake Elmo Park will have lighted trails and a new trailhead facility. The trail lighting plans are being designed and scheduled for bids this summer. Original plans called for remodeling of a barn in the park for the trailhead. During the design development process, other options for a trailhead were discovered, and those options will be presented to the County Board in the future.

Because the Met Council grants include state bond funds, the agreements require that Washington County sign a "declaration" document to be filed with the Washington County Recorder's Office acknowledging that the properties cannot be sold, mortgaged or otherwise disposed of by the county.

Scandia Fire Department will do controlled burn of house on park land

The Scandia Fire Department will do a controlled burn of a house that is on Washington County land that will be included in Big Marine Park Reserve in the future. The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to the burn at its meeting March 1.

The house is on May Avenue North in Marine on St. Croix. It is on acreage purchased in 2000 to include in the park reserve. The original owner rented the home from the county, until it was determined that the cost to maintain the home exceeded its value, and there are no plans to use the home elsewhere. The former owner has moved out, and the Scandia Fire Department will use the controlled burn of the home as a training exercise.

County will store airboat, trailer in Cottage Grove

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to a joint powers agreement with Cottage Grove, which will allow the Sheriff's Office to store an airboat and its trailer with the city's Fire Department.

Under the agreement, the Fire Department provides indoor storage of an airboat and trailer owned by the Washington County Sheriff's Office, and, in turn, the Fire Department is allowed to use the airboat to respond to waterborne and remote emergency situations.

County, City of Forest Lake agree to change in designation of roads

Washington County has been working with the City of Forest Lake to align roadway jurisdiction in the city to best meet current and future transportation needs. The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to the changes at its meeting March 1.

The county is currently building significant transportation projects in Forest Lake, including the 2010 construction of the new County Road 83 freeway overpass, and the upcoming 2011/2012 reconstruction of the CSAH (County State Aid Highway) 2 (Broadway Avenue) freeway interchange and business corridor. The proposed jurisdictional changes will allow the county to focus resources on a "ring road" that will serve the Forest Lake commercial and residential area between Interstate 35 and Trunk Highway (TH) 61. The revisions are:

- revoke County State Aid Highway (CSAH) designation on the entire length of CSAH 34 (11th Avenue Southeast, South Shore Drive, Southeast 15th Avenue, and Southeast 11th Street) between TH 61 and TH 97, a distance of 1.23 miles. This roadway will be a Forest Lake city street.
- revoke CSAH designation on the portion of CSAH 2 (North Shore Trail) between TH 61 and TH 97, a distance of 7.28 miles. This roadway will be a Forest Lake city street.
- establish CSAH designation on the portion of 11th Avenue Southwest/220th Street North (County Road 83) between Everton Avenue North and TH 6, a distance of 1.4 miles. This roadway will be CSAH 32.
- establish CSAH designation on the portion of Everton Avenue North between 220th Street North and CSAH 2 (Broadway Avenue), a distance of 0.8 miles. This roadway will be CSAH 33.

The agreement with the City of Forest Lake provides for an orderly transfer of these roads and was developed consistent with County Board policies for jurisdictional transfers. The city has already agreed to the transfer.

County board passes resolution in support of new St. Croix River Crossing

The Washington County Board of Commissioners affirmed its support for a new St. Croix River Crossing with a resolution of support at its March 1 meeting.

Discussion has been ongoing for dozens of years regarding a replacement for the Stillwater Lift Bridge, which carries traffic between Houlton, Wis., and downtown Stillwater. The United States National Park Service (NPS) Oct. 15, 2010, determined that a new St. Croix River Crossing Bridge, proposed to cross the St. Croix River about a mile south of the current lift bridge, would have "direct and adverse effects" on the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, thus reversing the 2003-2006 mediation process that produced a recommended alternative and mitigation package for the project.

As a result of the NPS determination, the proposed St. Croix River Crossing Bridge cannot proceed without the intervention of the United States Congress. The County Board's resolution states that a new bridge is a vital component to the infrastructure of the regional transportation system, and will generate jobs and spur economic development upon its completion.

The resolution supports the continued efforts to develop, design and construct this project, and asks the U.S. Congress to exempt the St. Croix River Crossing project from the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act so that construction on a new bridge may begin.

Sheriff's Office to purchase new computer system

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will purchase a new public safety computer system, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to a contract for the new system March 1.

The current system, the Automated Law Enforcement Reporting System, or ALERTS, was developed by the county and has been in use for more than 21 years by the Washington County Sheriff's Office and eight of the nine city police departments within Washington County. The average life expectancy of computer software is between five and 10 years, which means the ALERTS system has outlived its life expectancy.

Its main hindrance to efficiency is that ALERTS does not allow Washington County to work with the state's public safety systems efficiently. New public safety software has the capability to provide immediate access to information vital to dispatchers, law enforcement officers, firefighters, and first responders. The ability to access this information will assist public safety personnel in making split-second decisions that impact the safety and protection of Washington County residents and communities as well as public safety personnel.

The Sheriff's Office sought bids for a software system in August 2010. Seven companies submitted proposals, and each was evaluated and scored according to the requirements in the bid request. After evaluating proposals from the top three vendors, a committee recommended Tiburon's IQ Response System. The Sheriff's Office expects the county to spend \$893,972 on the project in 2011, and \$306,027 in 2012.

Veterans Service Office receives grant to continue community outreach

The Veterans Service Office (VSO) in Washington County will receive a \$5,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) for 2011, to continue outreach efforts in the county. The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted the grant at its meeting March 1. The grant will allow the office to continue to create news releases, conduct seminars, and generally spread the word throughout the county about the services and programs available to military veterans and their families.

In 2010, the county received funding from MDVA for similar purposes. That funding allowed the county VSO to purchase advertisements in the Forest Lake and Cottage Grove newspapers announcing VSO office hours in the service centers. These office hours have been so successful that the VSO often had to schedule additional days in those locations to work with veterans. The funds also paid for the promotion and organization of the Veterans Resource Fair and Blood Drive at the Forest Lake American Legion.