

Washington County, Minnesota

Board of Commissioners - Actions

Actions at the Tuesday, December 22, 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.

County increases available supported work services

The Washington County Workforce Center will be able to assist additional residents find work in the community after receiving additional funds for 2010 from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners voted Dec. 22 to approve an amendment to a contract with East Suburban Resources, Inc., (ESR) to use an additional \$71,273 to provide 17 additional paid supported work placements. Those who will receive training and support are enrolled in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). Because of the additional funds available, ESR will then have 34 MFIP customers in the program. The funds are primarily used for wages to those in the program. It is expected that the project will produce 85 offers of full-time employment. The project provides job skills training, job development, placement services and/or subsidized wages for those in the work-training programs. MFIP is the state's welfare reform program for low-income families with children. MFIP helps families move to work and focuses on helping them transition to economic stability. Parents are expected to work, and are supported in working.

In addition, the county will contract with East Suburban Resources, Inc., to provide services for an initiative called EXTRA, designed to address the disparity in workforce successes experienced by African-Americans and American Indian populations as compared to the Caucasian population. The Department of Human Services has provided Washington County with \$71,420 for the second year of the EXTRA project for 2010, to provide support to increase the likelihood of African-American customers' success at securing employment and job retention.

For 2009, the project met its goals, including securing 39 employment opportunities for African-American MFIP customers in Washington County.

County seeks adoption, foster care homes

Washington County is in need of families who provide foster care or who may adopt children.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted a \$47,700 grant Dec. 22 from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to be used for recruitment programs in 2010 and 2011. Specifically, the county is seeking eight providers for children who are part of a cultural or ethnic minority group; eight providers for youth, ages 15 to 21; and five providers who will be licensed as new providers for children or youth in the community.

Workforce Center receives additional funds for dislocated workers

The Washington County Workforce Center will receive an additional \$286,978 – \$239,464 of which was approved by the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Board, and \$50,514 of which is federal funds – to allow it to continue to assist unemployed workers in the county.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted the funds at its meeting Dec. 22. The Workforce Center receives funds to provide employment and training services to dislocated workers, adults, youth and seniors in the county. Because of the recession and continuing unemployment, the Workforce Center has experienced an increase in the number of dislocated workers, and has exhausted most of the funds available for training. The funds will be used to assist 565 customers.

County will get equipment, training for investigating criminal abuse

The Washington County Attorney's Office and Community Services Department will receive \$33,277 from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to upgrade equipment used to record interviews of criminal abuse victims, and to obtain training for individuals conducting forensic interviews with children.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved acceptance of the funds Dec. 22. The county will provide a 25 percent match for the grant, which will be use for the purchase of digital recording equipment.

There are several locations in the county, primarily police departments throughout the county, where forensic interviews of child abuse victims are conducted. Most locations have updated to digital equipment, with the exception of the Oakdale and Forest Lake police departments. The funds will be used to upgrade these systems. The local police departments will provide matching money for the grants.

The County Attorney's Office will also purchase a digital camcorder to record remote testimony when necessary. Four professionals from the county will be trained in child abuse forensic interviewing, with \$3,000 of the grant covering a portion of the \$4,000 cost of training. The Community Services Department will pay the additional funds.

County libraries receive donations, grants

Washington County Libraries were the recipients of more than \$9,000 in donations for 2009, which the Washington County Board of Commissioners formally accepted at its meeting Dec. 22. Of this amount, \$7,000 was received by way of grants from Target stores in Forest Lake, Woodbury, Cottage Grove and Oakdale.

The remaining \$2,354 was received from donations from individuals, other businesses and book clubs, including the donation boxes at the library's branches.

Stillwater Township neighborhood will buy forfeited lots

Two lots in the Stillwater Township Otchipwe Trails development, which are tax forfeited land, will be added to the development, after initial action by the Washington County Board of Commissioners at its meeting Dec. 22. The lots do not have buildings on them, but are included in the original development.

The two parcels went into tax forfeiture when the developer failed to deed the lots to the homeowners' association, and both the developer and the association declined to pay the taxes on the parcels. However, the development agreement and conservation easements on the land require that the homeowners' association own and manage the lots.

Washington County and Stillwater Township officials have come to an agreement whereby the lots will be purchased by the township board, which will in turn sell them to the homeowners' association. The purchase price will be \$11,274.

County sets new agreement with Washington Conservation District

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to a contract with the Washington Conservation District, under which the district will provide technical and educational services to promote and apply soil and water conservation

projects throughout the county. The County Board approved the \$198,200 contract at its Dec. 22 meeting. The Washington Conservation District's purpose is protecting natural resources. To do that, the district provides technical and financial assistance to county residents, local government units, and watershed organizations as well as other agencies and organizations.

Jail food prices go up slightly

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Dec. 22 to a contract with Aramark Correctional Services, LLC, to provide inmate meals in the Washington County Jail through Oct. 31, 2010.

The cost for the meals will increase 3.05 percent over the contract, which ended Oct. 31, 2009. The county has budgeted \$477,600 for meals in the county jail during the contract period.

Washington County commits resources to 4-H for 2010

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Dec. 22 to provide \$30,000 toward the cost of a full-time 4-H Program Coordinator for the program in the county in 2010.

The County 4-H Federation will provide \$34,900 to pay for additional costs for the coordinator, who is an employee of the University of Minnesota Extension.

The county also provides office space, telephone, computer support and general office supplies. The County Board chose to reduce funding for the 4-H program last spring, in light of reductions in state aid payments to the county.

Board sees statewide rail plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners saw a preview of a Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan, prepared by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, at a workshop Dec. 22.

The plan will provide guidance for rail initiatives and investments in the state, and will be included in the state transportation plan. The plan includes elements of freight and passenger rail service.
