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Our Mission: Providing quality services through responsible leadership, innovation and the cooperation of dedicated people

**Date:** Jan. 15, 2019  
**Contact:** Yvonne Klinnert, Public Information Manager  
**Phone:** 651-430-6026, after hours 952-807-3723  
**E-mail:** yvonne.klinnert@co.washington.mn.us

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Jan. 15, 2019, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

### **County will receive funds for mental health screening**

Washington County will receive \$35,063 to pay for children's mental health screening during 2019, after the County Board accepted the money from the Minnesota Department of Human Services Jan. 15.

Children's mental health screenings are required by state law.

The money provides for children's mental health screening, assessment, and mental health services to children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The grant amount varies each year as funds are based on reimbursement for the number of children's mental health screenings completed in the prior year.

**Contact: Sarah Amundson, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6597**

### **County approves labor agreements with deputy sheriff sergeants, supervisors**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved labor agreements with the Law Enforcement Labor Services (LELS) Deputy Sheriff Sergeant Unit and the Washington County Supervisors Association Jan. 15.

The two-year agreements began Jan. 1, 2019, and will end Dec. 31, 2020.

The LELS agreement includes a 2.5 percent general salary adjustment at the beginning of both 2019 and 2020, and a three-week paid parental leave benefit for the birth or adoption of a child. The

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agreement also includes adjustments to the vacation and paid time off schedules for employees hired after Jan. 1, 2019, as well as an increase in the amount of employer contribution towards the cost of health insurance provided to each employee.

The agreement included an additional premium on pay on overtime hours worked on holidays, and an increase in the clothing allowance by \$25 for each year, and an increase in shift differential premium pay from 85 cents an hour, to \$1 an hour.

The supervisors' agreement calls for a 2.5 percent general adjustment to pay on both Jan. 1, 2019, and Jan. 1, 2020. Supervisors will also receive a new shift differential premium of \$1 an hour, as well as an increase in the amount of employer contribution towards the cost of health insurance provided to each employee.

**Contact: Jan Webster, Human Resources Director, 651-430-6075**

### **County continues its agreement with U of M Extension for 4-H programs, staff**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an agreement with the University of Minnesota Extension Services Jan. 15 for 4-H programs and staffing.

The county regularly enters into an agreement with the Extension Service, which outlines the relationship with the county for funding, staffing, and in-kind services. The agreement supports 4-H activities in the county. The agreement for 2019 includes one full-time and two three-quarter-time staff positions for the 4-H Program Coordinator for community youth development and the Youth Teaching Youth school-based programs. The program coordinators are employees of the university, and work in county offices.

The annual cost for these services is \$184,450.

The term of the agreement is from Jan. 1, 2019, to Dec. 31, 2021. The salaries for the positions have been established by agreement between the University of Minnesota Extension and the Association of Minnesota Counties. The annual salary adjustment for the program coordinator is 2.25 percent between year one and two, and 2.5 percent between year two and three.

**Contact: Lowell Johnson, Public Health and Environment Director, 651-430-6725**

### **Farmers will continue to lease agricultural land in county parks**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to two leases for agricultural land in county parks Jan. 15.

When Washington County acquires farmland within one of its regional parks, some of the land is often kept agricultural until it's needed for park purposes. Funds generated by the lease of the farmland is used to fund park natural resource projects, which include trees, seed, contractors, and equipment.

Washington County has 264 acres of land that is leased for farming, 158.3 acres in Lake Elmo Park Reserve and 105.1 acres in St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park. As a part of Washington County's commitment to pollinators, the county is continuing a provision of the 2018 farmland lease that prohibits the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, which are linked to declines in bee and butterfly populations.

Bids for the lease of agricultural land were requested and opened at a public opening Dec. 18.

David See Farms will lease the agricultural land in Lake Elmo Park Reserve, and John Strohfus will lease the agricultural land in St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park.

**Contact: Dan MacSwain, Natural Resources Coordinator, 651-430-4323**

### **Library receives \$30,000 from RAFT Foundation**

The Washington County Library received \$30,000 from the RAFT Foundation, which the County Board accepted Jan. 15.

The Washington County Library has received donations from the RAFT Foundation for a number of years. In the past, the library used the donation to purchase materials, provide training and library outreach, and communications materials. This year, the library is recommending the funds be used for library program supplies.

**Contact: Bethany Venable, Communications Specialist, 651-275-8504**

### **County Board adopts 2019 legislative agenda**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners adopted its 2019 legislative agenda Jan. 15.

Each year, the Washington County Board of Commissioners adopts position statements on state legislative issues that impact Washington County. The county's legislative agenda includes priority

items that are specific to county interests. The platform items provide a position statement, supporting information, likely supporters and potential opposition, and the financial impact. This year's platform includes positions related to state and federally mandated programs, transportation and transit issues, parks funding, election improvements, and licensing fees.

The County Board's 2019 legislative positions include:

- **Highway 36/Manning Avenue Interchange:** Washington County requests a \$15 million appropriation to match more than \$16 million in federal and local funds for a new interchange at Highway 36 and Manning Avenue (CSAH 15). This interchange is needed to address congestion and safety issues at the intersection, while preserving future mobility along the highway. The State of Minnesota needs to be a financial partner in preserving and improving this interregional corridor.
- **Local Property Taxpayer Protection:** Washington County seeks to protect local taxpayers from any further shifts of state costs to the county property tax and the potential erosion in its ability to deliver high-quality, essential services in an efficient manner. The Legislature and the Governor should provide flexibility and full funding for mandates imposed on local governments.
- **Licensing Service Fees:** Washington County supports legislation to increase the fees retained by deputy registrars for completing license transactions. The 2017 implementation of the MN Licensing and Registration System (MNLARS) and the 2018 implementation of the new driver license system, Fast DS, with Enhanced and Real ID-compliant driver licenses, has increased the costs of license center operations by moving data entry from the state to the deputy registrar offices, requiring additional background checks for employees, and increasing transaction time.
- **Assistive Voting Technology:** Washington County supports legislation that allows for alternative printed ballot styles to be used in voting, specifically assistive voting technology that creates a marked paper ballot indicating the voter's selection for each office by use of a touch screen or other electronic device.

The County Board is also taking legislative positions on:

- 4th Street Bridge – Oakdale: Washington County supports \$4 million in state funding for general purpose lanes and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure on a reconstructed 4th Street Bridge over Interstate 694 in Oakdale.
- Motor Vehicle Lease Sales Tax Revenue: Washington County supports the current distribution of the Motor Vehicle Lease Sales Tax Revenue (MVLST) and opposes any change to this distribution.
- State Funding For Safety Net Services: Washington County supports ensuring adequate state funding for essential health and human service safety net programs without shifts in costs from the state budget to the county property taxpayers.
- County Commissioner Appointment: Washington County supports legislation that would allow, but not require, the County Board to appoint an interim county commissioner to fill a vacancy until a special election can be held and a replacement elected.
- Two-year Demonstration of Bus Route 363: Funds are requested for a two-year demonstration of a new bus route (Route 363), estimated at \$5.6 million, that would provide all-day, bi-directional service between St. Paul and Cottage Grove.
- Interstate 94/494/694 Interchange: Washington County supports the Minnesota Department of Transportation in developing regional partnerships in its efforts to plan and construct both short-term and long-term improvements to the Interstate 94/494/694 interchange.

The county legislative agenda includes the adopted platforms from the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), the Partnership on Waste and Energy, and the Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA).

For more information, see the county’s website at [www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us) and search “legislative agenda.”

**Contact: Kevin Corbid, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6003**

### **County Board accepts gifts for fourth quarter of 2018**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted gifts given to the county during the fourth quarter of 2018 Jan. 15.

The Library received gifts of cash from a memorial, and to purchase teen materials, as well as money from donation boxes, totaling \$727.33. Parks also received donations for Historic Courthouse tours, and donations during the Christmas at the Courthouse event, totaling \$3,316.25.

The county received holiday gift cards valued at \$100 to be given to offenders in a recovery program from members of the St. Croix Alano Club. Gifts were also given as door prizes at a CareerForce job seeker event, which included books, gift cards, and classes and membership at the Science Museum of Minnesota, totaling \$503.

The Parks received in-kind gifts totaling \$5,588.78. The donations supported the Nooks & Crannies Tour and the Scary Stories Program, with the largest gifts coming from vendors that supported the Christmas at the Courthouse fundraiser, providing door prizes, food, drinks, and a Christmas tree. The Sheriff's Office also received an American flag from the jail staff.

The value of gifts received for the quarter was \$10,335.36.

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