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

Date: Aug. 27, 2019
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 27, 2019, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County will receive funds to support Citizen Review Panel

Washington County will receive \$5,000 from the state Department of Human Services to support the county's Citizen Review Panel, after the County Board accepted the grant Aug. 27.

The grant is provided through the state Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, and is to be used to cover expenses during the coming year for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for volunteer Citizen Review Panel members and for reimbursement of administrative costs associated with panel activities.

The Child Protection Citizen Review Panel provides opportunities for members of the community to have an integral role in ensuring that child protection Service Systems are protecting children from abuse and neglect and are meeting the permanency needs of children.

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

County Board approves temporary liquor license application for VFW Post 323

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an application for a temporary on-site liquor license Aug. 27 from the Stillwater VFW Post 323 for a special event at the Washington County Fairgrounds Sept. 14.

A great place to live, work and play...today and tomorrow

Washington County processes all liquor license applications for the townships in the county. The county reviews the liquor liability insurance, and the Sheriff's Office, County Attorney's Office, and the Department of Public Health and Environment perform compliance and verification checks. The license fees pay the cost of the county for administration, compliance, and verification checks. **Contact: Steve Gransee, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Division Manager, 651-430-8272.**

County Board approves 2020-2021 Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Board funding

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the 2020-2021 joint activities budget for the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Board Aug. 27.

The Joint Powers Agreement creating the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy Board (R&E Board) provides that the County Board retain the authority to approve the joint activities budget of the R&E Board, which is a two-year budget. The budget is used to administer and carry out non-facility related activities of the R&E Board.

The R&E Board approved and recommended that each county approve the 2020-2021 Joint Activities Budget July 25. Hauler rebates are one of five areas of the Joint Activities Budget. The R&E Board decided to discontinue hauler rebates after 2019. This 2020-2021 joint activities budget includes a return of a portion of these funds to the county, and the remaining are redirected to shared activities with Ramsey County to increase BizRecycling and multi-family recycling grants, give assistance to schools, and focus on food waste reduction, for examples.

Washington County's portion of the budget is \$1.9 million. County Environmental Charge funds, which are taxes on trash collection, are used to pay the county's portion.

Contact: Nicole Stewart, Environmental Resource Manager, 651-430-6713

County will request a speed study on new roadway in Lake Elmo

Washington County will request that the Minnesota Department of Transportation perform a speed study on the new Stillwater Way North in Lake Elmo.

The County Board approved the request Aug. 27.

The roadway is between County State Aid Highway 14 and Manning Avenue in Lake Elmo, part of the road realignment of Manning Avenue project.

The authority to determine speed limits on a county highway resides with the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation. It is normal procedure to request such a determination after a roadway has undergone major changes, such as reconstruction, expansion, or significant changes to the roadside character or access. The study will determine the reasonable and safe speed for the roadway.

Contact: Nathan Arnold, Engineer II, 651-430-4384

County roads will be detour when MnDOT improves Highway 95 next summer

Traffic will be detoured onto county roads in West Lakeland and Baytown townships and Bayport next summer while the Minnesota Department of Transportation rebuilds Highway 95 through those communities.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to the detour Aug. 27.

Work will be done on Highway 95 from a tenth of a mile south of Interstate 94 in Lakeland to just north of Eighth Avenue in Bayport. The improvements include roadway grading, bituminous surfacing, and Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) pedestrian ramp improvements, which will require that the highway be closed to northbound traffic for approximately 103 days.

The state will compensate Washington County \$20,052.40 for the road life consumed by the detour by means of the "Gas Tax Method," which factors in traffic counts, road length, and duration of the detour.

Contact: Joe Gustafson, Traffic Engineer, 651-430-4351

Sheriff's Office will receive grant to pay for extra DWI enforcement

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive a \$120,300 grant from the state Department of Public Safety to increase Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) enforcement, after the County Board accepted the grant Aug. 27.

Due to satisfactory performance during an initial agreement with the Sheriff's Office, the office has been awarded another grant through the Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety to pay

a DWI officer for a second period. The grant funds the wages and benefits of one officer for one year with the purpose of identifying and arresting intoxicated drivers. The first grant allowed for the creation of a new full-time position, and this grant will continue the position.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

Sheriff's Office receives fundraiser proceeds for Explorer program

The Washington County Sheriff's Office received \$1,302 from a speed pitch booth at this year's Washington County Fair.

The County Board accepted the proceeds from the fundraiser on behalf of the Sheriff's Office Aug. 27. The funds will be used for the office's Explorer program.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Board receives report from self-insurance organization

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received an annual report from Tom Suppes, the Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT) risk management consultant, Aug. 27.

Washington County participates in a self-insured pool for property/casualty and workers' compensation coverage and services through the organization.

This is the 40th year that the organization has been in existence. MCIT focuses on providing members cost-effective coverage and quality services tailored to their needs. As a public entity, MCIT is not accountable to shareholders to make a profit.

The historical cost of claims and expenses associated with MCIT operations are used to project the amount of contributions needed for the next year. For the past five years and in eight of the past 10 years, property/casualty and workers' compensation contribution rates have declined or remained steady, even as ratable exposures continue to increase across the membership year over year.

The organization provides consultation services for risk management, loss control, and training for officials and employees on how to manage risks.

Contact: Julie Sorrem, Risk and Loss Control Manager, 651-430-6083

OTI, Inc., will staff county's new Northern County Yard Waste site

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with OTI, Inc., Aug. 27 to staff the county's Northern County Yard Waste site, which is expected to open in late September or early October.

The site, which is at 5527 170th St. N. in Hugo about a quarter of mile west of the round-about at Highway 61, is the former City of Hugo site, which the county has expanded and will open to all county residents.

The cost of the contract is \$116,000, which will be paid for from the County Environmental Charge, which is a tax on trash collection services.

The site will accept yard waste, grass clippings, leaves, lake weeds, garden waste, organics and food waste, branches and twigs, and tree waste, such as branches and logs. No root balls with rocks and dirt will be accepted, and no commercial yard waste material will be accepted.

The site will be open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., or until dusk, Wednesday; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday; and noon to 4:30 p.m. Sunday.

OTI staff will greet customers and do traffic control, and monitor and screen items dropped off. Staff will also distribute organics/food waste pails and informational flyers. Additional tasks will include maintenance of site, including consolidation of yard waste into storage piles, removal and proper processing of all yard waste, and monitoring organics and food waste bins. Staff will also ensure site safety and regulatory compliance.

The county has been seeking a way to provide yard waste collection in the county since 2016. The county has been negotiating with the City of Hugo, and a private property owner who has land adjacent to the city site, as the county site needed additional space to manage its yard waste site. The county will be leasing space from that property owner. The county approved a contract for the site with the City of Hugo Aug. 6.

The collection of the yard waste and organics and food waste is directed in the county's Waste Management Master Plan, and is part of the county's work to comply with the state's mandates for diverting waste from landfills.

Contact: Jeff Travis, Environmental Program Manager, 651-430-4033

County Board continues review of 2020 budget

The Washington County Board of Commissioners continued to review the county's 2020 budget at workshops Aug. 27.

The board received its first overview of the county's 2020 budget at a workshop Aug. 13.

The board will review the budget through September, with individual departments presenting more detailed recommended budgets at workshops. A public hearing on the budget will be the evening of Dec. 3, before the final budget is adopted Dec. 10.

The recommended budget reflects the continued population growth in the county, which is now the third fastest growing county in the state, growing at an annual rate of 1.8 percent. Increased population requires additional road improvements, increased county services, and buildings in which to house those services. More people place demands on recreational opportunities in county parks, and services at county libraries.

The property tax levy, which will be set Sept. 24, is recommended to increase by 5.94 percent, which would translate into a 2.3 percent decrease in the county's tax rate. This would be the sixth time in the last seven years that the county tax rate would fall. Once the County Board sets the levy, it may lower it, but it cannot raise it in the final budget.

Should the recommended levy be approved, the impact on the owner of the median-valued home in the county, which is \$295,200, would be an increase of \$37 a year in county taxes.

The County Board reviewed budgets for the Department of Public Health and Environment, which includes the county's contribution to the University of Minnesota Extension Service programs in the county, and the Department of Community Services Aug. 27.

The Department of Health and Environment works in six key priority areas:

- access to care;
- access to health, which refers to the social and environmental conditions that directly and indirectly affect people's health, such as housing, income, employment, and education, etc.;
- environmental conditions that promote and protect health;
- mental health and well-being;
- nutrition and physical activity; and
- substance abuse.

The department's recommended budget is \$17.5 million, to support almost 90 employees. Almost half of the department's income is from the County Environmental Charge, which is the tax residents pay on garbage collection. Just more than a quarter of the income for the department is from federal and state grants, and the rest is from the property tax levy, licensing fees, and fees for other services.

More than half of the department's expenditures is on environmental programs, such as supporting the Environmental Center in Woodbury. Healthy Communities programs account for almost a quarter of the budget, with health services, fighting infectious disease, infrastructure, and emergency preparedness accounting for the remainder of the budget.

The department's capital requests include:

- Environmental Center expansion design;
- land purchase for a northern environmental center;
- land purchase for a northern yard waste collection site; and
- land search for central yard waste collection site

All 2020 capital requests are funded by the County Environmental Charge revenue.

The Washington County Extension's local presence includes:

- 4-H Youth Development, which employs 2.5 staff positions as 4-H program coordinators;
- Extension Master Gardeners, which is volunteer led; and
- administrative office support, which is just less than a full-time position.

The organization's recommended budget for 2020 is \$203,140 to support the staff positions, and has a requested increase of \$15,440 over the 2019 budget to fund more of the administrative staff position.

The county has 621 enrolled 4-H members, and the county was represented by 144 4-H members at the state fair. 4-H also has a Youth Teaching Youth program that had 1,050 elementary school-age participants last year, with 34 teen teachers. Washington County has 143 Extension Master Gardeners volunteers, who contributed 13,022 hours in 2018, who focus on clean water, local food, pollinators, and connecting people with nature.

Critical issues facing the Community Services Department in 2020 will be child protection screening, and providing round-the-clock crisis response for child protection and mental health crisis, as well as

the unsheltered homeless. The department is also requesting additional resources for transportation and economic assistance programs.

The department has a staff of more than 350, with a recommended budget for 2020 of \$51 million. Almost 40 percent is used for social services for adults and people with disabilities, and a quarter is used for social services for children. About a quarter is used to manage economic support programs. Just more than 40 percent of the department's revenue is from the county's property tax levy, with one-third coming from the federal government and one-fifth coming from the state government.

The county's human services costs per capita of \$1,429 remains second lowest among the metropolitan area's seven counties, and remains well below the state average. Its administrative costs per capita remain the lowest of all metropolitan counties, and below the state average.

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