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

Date: Sept. 3, 2019
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Sept. 3, 2019, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board approves repurchase of forfeited land in Oakdale

Land in Oakdale that was in tax forfeiture was repurchased by its former owner, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the purchase Sept. 3.

The land had been forfeited for non-payment of property taxes July 1. The land is non-homestead, which may be repurchased by the owner, if it is repurchased within six months. The former owner paid the county \$679.69, which is the amount of delinquent taxes, penalties, interest, and fees.

Contact: Steve Gransee, Taxpayer Services & Election Division Manager, 651-430-8272

Contract changes needed to continue work on Wildwood Library

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved changes to plans for the new Wildwood Library Sept. 3, to continue work on the new library that will serve Mahtomedi and surrounding communities.

The county has been working with HCM Architects for the past two years to design the library. The project involves demolition of the current Wildwood Library and replacing it with a new building on the same site. As the design process moved forward, additional services were requested of the architectural team including:

- exploring alternative design options of renovating and re-using the existing structure.

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- performing wetland delineation and tree survey of existing site as required by the City of Mahtomedi.
- design a storm drain from the adjacent retention basin to County Road 12 (this is a City of Mahtomedi project and this portion of the design additions is being paid for by the city).
- additional design services to reduce size and scope of the project due to increased construction cost estimates.
- performing data system (IT) design engineering services not included in the initial contract scope.

The cost of these additional services is \$140,933.

The County Board also made changes to the construction contract with Kraus-Anderson for construction management of the library project. Adjustments are needed to the contract now that the full scope of the project has been finalized and approved. The adjustments are budgeted for and were anticipated. The adjustments are for:

- the addition of those items that are needed to complete the construction process that are not a part of the final building product, such as construction dumpsters, temporary restrooms, perimeter construction fencing, temporary heat and building enclosures, and job site trailers and equipment.
- adjustment of the construction management fee based on the additional size and scope of the project. This fee is based on a percentage of construction costs. The original contract was based on construction costs of \$3,850,000, and the final approved construction costs are \$5,062,234.
- adjustment of construction management service costs. The original contract pricing provided a discount based on the Wildwood Library project and Park Grove project being constructed at the same time. Due to the postponement of the Park Grove project, efficiencies were lost and the pricing is being adjusted to remove that discount and now reflects the cost to provide services only at Wildwood Library.

The total cost of these contract adjustments is \$105,051.

The contract amendments are funded by 2019 bonds. Construction is taking place now, and the library is scheduled for completion next summer.

Contact: Mandy Leonard, Building Services Project Manager, 651-430-6236

County Board approves agreement between Sheriff's Office, DEA

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an agreement between the county's Sheriff's Office and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Sept. 3 to help staff a task force that focuses on large-scale illegal drug operations.

The Sheriff's Office agrees to provide one experienced deputy to the task force from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30, 2020. The DEA will reimburse the Sheriff's Office for overtime, up to a sum equivalent to 25 percent of the salary of a federal employee at the same rank, which is currently \$18,649 per deputy.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

Innovative Masonry Restoration will repair outside of Government Center

Innovative Masonry Restoration will make repairs to the Washington County Government Center in Stillwater, after the County Board approved an \$858,000 contract with the company Sept. 3.

The Government Center, which was built in 1986 and expanded in 1990 and houses many of the county's services, including the Board Room where the County Board meets, has had water leaks where the brick meets the windows in the building.

The project will address flashing around windows that has started to fail and is causing water to leak into the building. It will also address failed joint sealants and tuck pointing needed at brick and mortar joints. In addition to the base scope of work, the county received pricing to address any unknown circumstances found in areas where demolition of the brick walls is needed to repair window flashing. This approach presets pricing for these unknown conditions to control change order costs, and reduces any costs for exploring for additional damage.

Windows that are under warranty will be replaced at the same time by a separate vendor. It is expected that the work will take a year.

Contact: Erik Jalowitz, Building Services Capital Projects Manager, 651-430-6227

County Board declares September as National Preparedness Month

The Washington County Board of Commissioners declared September as National Preparedness Month Sept. 3.

National Preparedness Month creates an opportunity for every resident of Washington County to prepare their homes, businesses, and communities for any type of emergency, including natural disasters and potential human caused attacks.

Investing in disaster preparedness can help save lives and reduce economic devastation. All residents are urged to make preparedness a priority and work together as a team to ensure that individuals, families, and communities are prepared for disasters and emergencies of any type. Washington County has the opportunity to join and support the state and nation in strengthening community and regional resiliency.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Ready Campaign, Citizen Corps, and other federal, state, local, private, and volunteer agencies are working to increase public activities in preparing for emergencies and to educate individuals on how to take action. The 2019 campaign provides resources to help teach children about disaster preparedness.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Board continues review of 2020 budget

The Washington County Board of Commissioners continued to review the county's 2020 budget at workshops Sept. 3.

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 Property Records and Taxpayer Services and the Library and Law Library Sept. 3. The board has reviewed budgets from other departments at previous board meetings. Materials from those meetings are available on the county website at www.co.washington.mn.us, by searching "budget."

The Department of Property Records and Taxpayer Services works with state and federal agencies to provide services at license centers, such as drivers licenses and passports, and oversees the county's election process. It also oversees property value assessment and providing property tax bills to property owners.

About a third of the department's revenue is from the county's property tax levy, with other funding coming from fees charged for assessing property, providing licensing and vital records, and filing property records. More than 80 percent of the department's expenditures is for the department's 106 employees. The department is recommending expenditures of \$11,322,400 for 2020.

Working with the state's Minnesota Licensing and Registration, or MNLARS, has required more employees in the department during the past two years, as the work time for each transition has grown. In addition, Minnesota is adding REAL ID, which will also add to the workload of the department.

The department also oversees elections, and next year, in addition to a primary election in August and a presidential election in November, the state will have a presidential nominating primary in March, adding to the workload. In addition to managing the elections, the county also provides early voting in five locations, which must be managed.

More of the county's property records are being recorded electronically each year, which requires funding from the department's technology fund to ensure the technology systems for storage and

retrieval of images are up to date. Services that are being managed online are the homestead exclusion program, among other online applications.

The department manages the billing for property taxes owed on 113,000 parcels of property in the county, and works with 56 tax authorities in the county. Of the property taxes collected, 20 percent is billed to Washington County.

The Library's recommended expenditures for 2020 are \$8,560,400, two-thirds of which will be used for personnel. Materials and supplies are recommended to cost \$1.2 million, with services and charges recommended to cost \$1.5 million. More than 90 percent of the Library's revenue is from the county's property tax levy.

The Library has worked to create partnerships across the county, such as working with Public Health and Environment on early literacy and fix-it clinics, with CareerForce for job fairs, and with Show Your Library Card as a partnership with local businesses. Community engagement has occurred at storytimes at events throughout the county, at senior programs at senior living communities, and with participation at community events.

The Library is also engaged in rebuilding the Wildwood Library in Mahtomedi, and remodeling and expanding Valley Library in Lakeland. The Library is also upgrading equipment used for handling materials and self checkout, as well as updating meeting rooms at R.H. Stafford and Hardwood Creek libraries.

The county's Law Library recommended budget has \$311,500 in revenue, with less than 20 percent coming from levy, and the rest from court fees and fines. Of recommended expenditures, just less than 40 percent is for personnel, and 40 percent is for materials and supplies, with the rest to pay for services and charges.

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