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Date: Sept. 17, 2019
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Sept. 17, 2019, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board approves comments on City of Grant comprehensive plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a comment letter for the City of Grant comprehensive plan Sept. 17.

All local government units within the seven-county metropolitan region must prepare a comprehensive plan and update that plan every 10 years. The Metropolitan Council is charged with reviewing local comprehensive plans. Before formally submitting local comprehensive plan updates to the council, local government units must provide adjacent and affected jurisdictions the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan. The comments must be included with the formal plan update submittal. County staff reviewed the draft City of Grant Comprehensive Plan Update.

The county's comments support the city's thorough discussion on housing diversity and its willingness to explore accessory dwellings as potential housing options, and the city's framework for managing water resources and its willingness to participate on a task force or working group on the regional trail search as needed.

Contact: Emily Jorgensen, Planner II, 651-430-4338

County will use 3M settlement money to extend well-sealing program

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Washington County will use \$150,000 from the 3M settlement to extend its well-sealing program, after the County Board approved the plan Sept. 17.

The money is to be used between now and June 30, 2022.

The board approved a contract to receive funds from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, via the 3M settlement, to supplement the county's existing well-sealing cost share program. Unsealed wells present a threat to groundwater quality, and well sealing is a strategy in the county's approved Groundwater Plan.

In areas of contamination, such as where per- and poly-fluoro alkyl substances (PFAS) have been found, this is particularly important. Funds will cover the full cost of sealing wells in communities impacted by PFAS pollution. This would include residences that are being hooked up to city water due to new PFAS well advisories, as well as residents in affected communities who have an unsealed well on their property.

Residents in other areas of the county may still access cost share grants, under an existing well-sealing program, depending on funding availability.

Contact: Stephanie Souter, Public Health Program Supervisor, 651-430-6701

Met Council will provide funds for improvements at Cottage Grove Ravine park

A Metropolitan Council grant of \$933,000 will fund the construction of a new multi-use building at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park to house restrooms, storage, and event space after the Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted the grant Sept. 17.

Construction of the building will begin in 2020. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$3.4 million. In addition to the Met Council \$933,000 grant, there is \$2 million of county bond and \$500,000 of Met Council grant funding for the project.

The board approved contracts in May with HGA and Wenck Associates for the design and construction management of the project.

Contact: Sandy Breuer, Parks Director, 651-430-4371

County will contribute to study on needed improvements to Woodbury Central Park

Washington County will be part of a study to review needed improvements at Woodbury Central Park, the building that houses the R.H. Stafford Library, after the County Board agreed to the study Sept. 17.

The Woodbury Central Park and R.H. Stafford Library share the building that is also home to the YMCA and space for Independent School District 833. The building is more than 15 years old and is in need of capital improvements and program upgrades. A Scoping and Needs Study is being proposed to identify the extent and locations of needed improvements. A cooperative funding agreement establishes each entity's financial responsibility for funding the Scoping and Needs Study. The City of Woodbury will hold the contract for the project, although selection of a consultant and approval to move forward must be agreed upon by all parties to the agreement.

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

County will seek state Historical Society money to plan renovations of Historic Courthouse

Washington County is seeking a \$159,000 grant from the Minnesota Historical Society to help create design, drawings, and specifications for repairs to the exterior and roof replacement for the Washington County Historic Courthouse in Stillwater.

The County Board reviewed the request Sept. 17.

Design documents for roof replacement and exterior repairs will allow the county to construct the needed repairs and prevent further water damage identified in the building assessments completed in 2017 and 2018. The grant does not require a match by the county. The grant will position the county to apply for a future grant for the reconstruction of the roof, dome, and cupola, as well as repairs to the bricks and mortar exterior.

Grant awards will be announced in December.

Contact: Alex McKinney, Parks Manager, 651-430-4364

County will request funds to restore natural lands in Lake Elmo Park Reserve

Washington County will request funds from the Conservation Partners Legacy, part of the Outdoor Heritage Fund, to preserve an oak savanna and a prairie adjacent to Eagle Point Lake in Lake Elmo Park Reserve.

The County Board approved the application Sept. 17.

The Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program funds conservation projects that restore, enhance, or protect forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife in Minnesota. Funding for the program is from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, which is funded by the sales tax approved by the voters of Minnesota in 2008.

The application request is for \$390,000 for 166 acres of land to be restored. A 10-percent match is required, which the county will provide through an in-kind donation of county staff time, allowable under the grant program.

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

County residents will be able to use Ramsey County facilities for yard waste, organics

Washington County residents will be allowed to use Ramsey County facilities to dispose of yard waste and organics and food waste, after the County Board approved a reciprocal agreement with its neighboring county Sept. 17.

Washington and Ramsey counties both operate yard waste and organics/food waste collection programs. The agreement will allow residents to use the facilities of either county, providing additional convenience and service options.

The counties have a strong history of collaborative programming through the Recycling and Energy Center, joint activities in their Solid Waste Master Plans, and reciprocal use of household hazardous waste facilities. This agreement expands that collaboration to include yard waste and organics/food waste management.

The agreement includes the Ramsey County sites closest to Washington County:

- Arden Hills Site, 3530 Hudson Ave.;
- Battle Creek Site in St. Paul, 389 South Winthrop St.;
- Frank and Sims Site in St. Paul, 1150 Sims Ave.; and

- White Bear Township Site, 5900 Sherwood Road.

All sites, including Washington County's site soon to open in Hugo, accept leaves, grass clippings, trees, branches, and brush, with the exception of the Battle Creek site, which doesn't accept trees, branches, and brush. Once the Washington County site opens, Ramsey County residents will be able to use it under the agreement.

The agreement runs through Dec. 31, 2024. The cost to Ramsey County for accepting Washington County materials will be calculated annually. It is expected the use by Washington County residents of Ramsey County facilities will cost Washington County between \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year.

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

Gibson will serve as Washington County surveyor

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed Samuel D. Gibson as the county surveyor Sept. 17.

He will serve a four-year term beginning Oct. 1. State law requires the appointment.

Gibson most recently was the chief surveyor/division manager for the City of St. Paul, and prior to that was a Washington County Public Works employee.

Gibson will be the 20th person to hold this position. He succeeds Michael Welling, who retired.

Contact: Don Theisen, Public Works Director, 651-430-4304



The Washington County Board of Commissioners welcomed Samuel D. Gibson, who will serve as the county’s surveyor starting Oct. 1. Those welcoming Gibson are commissioners Lisa Weik, District 5, and Fran Miron, District 1, Gibson, and commissioners Wayne Johnson, District 4, Stan Karwoski, District 2, and Gary Kriesel, District 3.

Pember Companies, Inc., will do renovations, expansion at Environmental Center

Pember Companies, Inc., will renovate and expand the Washington County Environmental Center in Woodbury, after the County Board approved a \$754,150 contract with the company Sept. 17. The Environmental Center is 10 years old. Throughout its years in operation, its use has steadily increased, and the hours of operation have expanded to support the added use. Additional collection services have been offered to better serve residents.

To accommodate this ever-expanding need in the county, a long-term plan to guide the center into the future was created. The short-term goals of improving the configuration of operations, updating the free product room, enhancing site security, and expanding parking availability have been met. Now, this project will address the mid-term goals to improve the overall site for the flow of both customers and operations. These improvements will make it more efficient to manage certain materials, such as scrap metal and organics, which have been added for collection in recent years. The project will also ease the traffic flow and wait times for residents dropping off larger bulk items. Lastly, these improvements to the traffic flow will increase the safety of the site for both employees and the public. Upon completion of the mid-term goals, planning can begin for long-term goals, which include storage expansion and the addition of a service road to improve safety and efficiency of semi-trucks picking up and dropping off trailers.

The budget for the project includes the work that Pember Companies will do, plus design costs, site preparation, and contingency, for a total of \$935,000. It is being funded by the County Environmental Charge, which is a tax on household trash collection.

It is anticipated that the work will take three months.

Contact: Joe Welter, Senior Building Services Project Manager, 651-430-6226

Land in Bayport will be included in county Land and Water Legacy Program

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a Land and Water Legacy Program conservation easement Sept. 17 that will permanently protect 11 acres along the St. Croix River in Bayport, and provide additional open space, scenic river access, and a trail to better connect people to the riverfront and surrounding natural resources.

The program, which was created by a voter-approved referendum in 2006, will use \$745,000, previously approved by the County Board, to acquire land and place conservation easements on four parcels next to the Andersen Corporation property for a city park. The land is currently owned by three sets of willing sellers. Additional funds for the project include:

- \$500,000 from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Outdoor Recreation and Natural and Scenic Areas grants funded by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust

Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR); and

- \$550,000 from an Andersen Corporation donation.

The conservation easement allows:

- a picnic shelter, benches, a walking trail, nature observation, fishing, a scenic lookout, canoe/kayak rack and other public watercraft access/recreation, and boat trailer parking stalls;
- water quality improvement structures and streambank stabilization;
- restoration of plant communities and habitat; and
- building removal.

With the conservation easement protection, there will be no industrial or agricultural use, or residential development. The next steps of the project include community engagement to create a master plan for the site and completion of a natural resources stewardship plan. The city will also work with the state to determine the feasibility of a public boat launch on the site.

Contact: June Mathiowetz, Senior Planner, 651-430-6016

County Board continues review of 2020 budget

The Washington County Board of Commissioners continued to review the county's 2020 budget at workshops Sept. 17.

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 proposed 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 proposed 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 proposed to increase by 5.94 percent, which would translate into a 2.8 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 proposed 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 \$33 a year in county taxes.

The County Board reviewed proposed budgets for the Public Works Department and the Regional Rail Authority Sept. 17.

The Public Works Department has 162 employees who oversee the county's roads and bridges, parks, and surveyor services.

The department's Parks Division will have proposed expenditures of just more than \$4 million, with \$2.8 million going to wages and benefits. The division proposed the addition of two new maintenance workers, one for Lake Elmo Park Reserve, and one to work between Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park and St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park. The parks expect to spend \$700,000 on seasonal staff, who maintain the parks grounds, especially in the summer, among other work.

The department's Transportation Division is proposed to spend \$10.8 million, with \$7 million of that for wages and benefits. That includes one new maintenance worker. Other expenditures include fuel and salt and sand for winter road maintenance, proposed to cost almost \$600,000 in 2020. The cost of the salt and sand mix is expected to rise 19 percent in 2020 over 2019. The division also proposes to spend \$857,000 on its fleet in 2020.

The department's Planning Division expects to spend almost \$100,000 in 2020 to create a master plan for Square Lake Park.

Expenditures of \$26.9 million for the Gold Line, the bus-rapid transit project planned to run between downtown St. Paul and Woodbury along Hudson Boulevard, are included in the 2020 budget. The project will enter the engineering phase in 2020, and the expenditures are for Washington County's share of engineering and right-of-way acquisition for the project. The revenue to support the expenditures will come from the transportation sales tax and the County Transit Improvement Board distribution of funds.

Major capital improvements for 2020 include \$500,000 for a boat launch at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park, and \$1.34 million for a multi-use building at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park. Major road

and bridge projects throughout the county are also included in the proposed budget, along with pavement preservation projects that will be funded by the county's wheelage tax.

The Washington County Regional Railroad Authority 2020 proposed budget has a proposed levy of \$660,000, with expenditures going to professional services, personnel, and a Highway 36 transit study.

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