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**Date:** Dec. 3, 2019  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

### **Hamerly appointed to Valley Branch Watershed District**

John Hamerly, Lake Elmo, was appointed to the Valley Branch Watershed District board Dec. 3 by the Washington County Board of Commissioners.

Hamerly will serve in a first term that will expire Nov. 15, 2022.

Watershed district governance, required by state law, helps to control or alleviate damage by flood waters; improves stream channels for drainage or navigation; reclaims or fills wet or overflow lands; oversees water supply for irrigation; regulates the flow of streams; diverts or changes water courses; provides and conserves water supply; and provides for the protection of groundwater and regulation of groundwater use.

**Contact: Alyssa Soderlund, Administrative Assistant, 651-430-6015**

### **County will convey tax-forfeited land to other jurisdictions**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to convey tax-forfeited land to other jurisdictions Dec. 3.

The City of Oakdale will receive tax-forfeited land to be used for stormwater management, and agreed to pay \$1,000, along with \$103 for costs.

Both the City of Lake Elmo and the City of Dellwood, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation requested that the county convey tax-forfeited land to them at no cost for public uses.

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Under state law, tax-forfeited land may be conveyed without payment for public use. All the parcels will be used for roadway right-of-way.

**Contact: Steve Gransee, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Division Manager, 651-430-8272**

### **County Board receives update on invasive species prevention program**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received an update Dec. 3 on the aquatic invasive species prevention aid program.

In the 2014 legislative session, a county aid program was established to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in lakes and rivers. Based on the number of watercraft trailer launches and watercraft trailer parking spaces, Washington County received \$135,887 in 2019 aid, plus \$16,000 was left from 2018 projects that went unspent. The total for distribution in 2019 was \$151,887. The money was awarded to the Washington Conservation District for countywide programming, and to grantees in April through an open, competitive request for proposals process.

The countywide programs included:

- watercraft inspections;
- Washington County's Early Detection and Rapid Response Plan;
- education; and
- coordination, oversight, and reporting.

In 2019, 12 water bodies were covered as part of the countywide inspection program. Inspections were able to identify boats that had failed to remove their drain plugs or properly clear plants or invasive species. The inspections prevented the introduction of invasive species into area lakes that are currently not infested.

Funding was also provided to seven lake associations, as well as to the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District, and the St. Croix River Association. Each had different programs to treat a variety of invasive species, or used the funds to do watercraft inspections, or to educate residents on invasive species.

The county's coordination, oversight, and reporting included 338 hours spent on program coordination, leveraging \$29,500 from six organization, coordination with 10 stakeholders, and maintenance and repair of educational signs.

The state Department of Natural Resources will continue the program in 2020, with \$135,414 allocated to Washington County.

**Contact: Maureen Hoffman, Public Health and Environment Planner II, 651-430-6684**

### **Hoffman & McNamara Co. will do landscaping on county road projects**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to a \$189,954 contract with Hoffman & McNamara Co. to do landscaping along county road projects in Woodbury and Oakdale Dec. 3.

The County Board also approved cost-share agreements with the cities for the projects.

The landscaping installation for three projects in Woodbury and Oakdale – roadway and bridge improvements on Radio Drive at Interstate 94, at Central Park Place near Radio Drive, and Bailey Road near Mile Drive – were completed in 2019. Landscaping installation associated with the projects was combined into a single landscaping-only construction project to secure better bids and better work.

The cities will share the cost of the projects, which will include additional design and construction engineering. The City of Woodbury will pay \$115,074 and the City of Oakdale will pay \$16,760 for these improvements. Washington County will use proceeds from the county wheelage tax to pay the remaining \$101,807.

**Contact: Kevin Peterson, Engineer II, 651-430-4330**

### **County Board conducts public meeting on 2020 county budget**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public meeting on the county's 2020 budget Dec. 3.

Two residents spoke at the meeting. The final budget will be adopted at the board's meeting Dec. 17.

In September, the board:

- certified the proposed property tax levy payable 2020 for Washington County, with a net levy of \$114.5 million, a 5.94 percent increase from 2019;

- certified the proposed property tax levy payable 2020 for the Washington County Regional Rail Authority of \$660,000, with no change from 2019;
- adopted the Washington County proposed 2020 budget, with operating expenditures of \$194.8 million, an increase of 3.85 percent over 2019, and capital expenditures of \$39.8 million, a decrease of 51.48 percent from 2019;
- adopted the Washington County Regional Rail Authority proposed 2020 budget of \$689,000; and
- consented to the proposed property tax levy of \$5.4 million payable 2020 for the Washington County Community Development Agency.

The proposed budget includes non-levy revenue of \$134.4 million, a decrease of 3.78 percent from 2019, and expenditures of \$26.9 million for the Gold Line Transit project.

While the board has set the proposed property tax levy payable in 2020 in September, it could lower it before the final levy is adopted, but it cannot raise it.

The board has been reviewing the county's 2020 budget at workshops in August and September. The presentations reviewed by the board may be found on the county website [www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us) by searching "budget."

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 set Sept. 24 translates 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. Should the proposed levy be approved, the impact on the owner of the median-valued home in the county, which is \$296,200, would be an increase of \$33 a year in county taxes.

The proposed budget:

- provides increased investment in public safety, including the addition of two full-time jail correctional officers and a half-time deputy in the Sheriff's Office;
- provides for the addition of a law clerk and a legal assistant in the County Attorney's Office;

- provides three additional maintenance workers for county parks and roadways;
- provides the technology infrastructure improvements needed to secure and protect data, increase efficiency, and fund license agreements;
- addresses deferred maintenance within parks facilities, parks maintenance, and staffing;
- uses a state aid increase for capital costs and equipment to provide greater budgetary flexibility;
- includes even-year election staff and election operations;
- provides additional service staff in license centers to reduce wait times;
- pays for increasing replacement costs in the Public Works and Sheriff's Office fleets;
- adds staff to handle increasing caseloads and service demands throughout the organization; and
- reallocates \$295,300 in debt service savings from 2017 refinancing.

The budget also calls for major road projects in 2020, including:

- County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 19 from Dale Road to CSAH 18;
- CSAH 5 from County Road 64 to Sycamore Street West;
- the intersection of CSAH 18 and CSAH 20 in Woodbury; and
- CSAH 18 from Woodlane Drive to CSAH 13 in Woodbury.

In addition, several county roadways will be designed in 2020, in preparation for construction in later years.

Should the proposed budget be adopted Dec.17, the county would reduce its number of employees per 1,000 residents from 4.9 to 4.8, and its operating expenses would be the second lowest and its net levy per capita would be the third lowest among the seven counties in the Minnesota metropolitan area.

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