



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

**Date:** March 24, 2020  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the March 24, 2020, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

### **Regional Rail Authority signs land over to City of Newport, approves Highway 36 corridor study**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners, sitting as the Washington County Regional Rail Authority March 24, agreed to transfer approximately 10,000 square feet of land near the Newport Transit Station over to the City of Newport. The authority also approved a contract with Kimley-Horn to complete a Highway 36 Corridor Transit Feasibility study.

In 2010, the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority (WCRRA) purchased property in the City of Newport for construction of the Newport Transit Station, which was constructed in 2014. At the time of purchase, a survey made it appear that the WCRRA purchased the right-of-way on the east side of Maxwell Avenue, or County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 38). Over the years, there has been a question of whether the land is owned by the railroad authority or the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

To clear things up, the railroad authority is relinquishing any claim to the land west of Maxwell Avenue to the City of Newport to allow the city to move forward with the transfer or sale and redevelopment of the property. There is no money involved in the transaction.

The railroad authority also approved a \$317,040 contract with Kimley-Horn and Associates for a Highway 36 Corridor Transit Feasibility Study.

The study will explore transit opportunities in the Highway 36 Transit Corridor through analysis of existing and emerging mobility needs within the corridor. The study will examine the feasibility of

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east-west, high-frequency transit service along the 30-mile Highway 36 corridor between the highway's end-point in Minneapolis and the cities of Oak Park Heights and Stillwater, and identifying opportunities to further study or develop enhanced transit service operating along the corridor, as well as to improve connections to the regional transit system.

Items in the study will include:

- public involvement;
- review of study area characteristics;
- travel, transit ridership, and land use analysis;
- options for transit improvements;
- facility and operational analysis; and
- evaluation and implementation recommendations.

It is anticipated that the study, which will be guided by a project management team from Washington, Ramsey, and Hennepin counties, as well as the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation, will take a year.

Funding for the study comes from the dissolution funds to Washington County from the Counties Transit Improvement Board.

**Contact: Sharon Price, Right-of-Way Specialist-Property Manager, 651-430-4391, and Emily Jorgensen, Planner II, 651-430-4338**

### **Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program will contribute to conservation easements in Hugo, Stillwater Township**

Washington County's Land and Water Legacy Program will pay for conservation easements on land in Hugo and in Stillwater Township, after the County Board approved the agreements March 24.

For the project in Hugo, the county was approached by a landowner willing to place a conservation easement on a parcel of land listed in the County's Top Ten High Priority Protection Areas called the Keystone Woods. The project involves approximately 80 acres in Hugo and the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District. The parcel is at 9822 152<sup>nd</sup> St. N. in Hugo, adjacent to Kelly Farm, and south of and connected to Barker Lake. The land has high-quality forest, as well as some threatened species, and is important for groundwater protection.

This is the second parcel in Keystone Woods being placed under permanent protection.

The conservation easement will be co-held by the county and the Minnesota Land Trust.

The county will commit \$167,100 in Land and Water Legacy Program funds toward the acquisition of the conservation easement.

For the project in Stillwater Township, the county was approached by a landowner willing to place a conservation easement on a parcel of land that is also in the County's Top Ten High Priority Area called the Silver-Twin Lakes Corridor. The project involves approximately 47 acres and is upstream of Fairy Falls on Silver Creek, a tributary to the St. Croix River, in Stillwater Township in the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District. It has forest, woodlands, open water, and prairie that will be restored.

The conservation easement will be co-held by the county and Minnesota Land Trust. The county will commit to \$165,040 in Land and Water Legacy Program funds toward the acquisition of the conservation easement.

The County Board also directed staff to submit a grant proposal to the Minnesota Department of Resources Scenic and Natural Areas program for funds for a proposed Land and Water Legacy Program project in Afton.

The Land and Water Legacy Program was approved by county voters in 2006. Through the Land and Water Legacy Program, the county works with landowners and organizations to purchase land or interests in land to keep it in natural condition.

**Contact: Yvonne Klinnert, Public Information Manager, 651-430-6026**

### **County Board states support for 2020 Census, encourages access to multi-unit structures**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners stated its support for engagement in the 2020 Census March 24, and encouraged owners and property managers of multi-unit housing in the county to provide access for Census Bureau employees.

The Census information is used to allocate federal and state funding to communities, and the data determines how many seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives. Census data is

used for redistricting of state legislative seats, county board and city councils seats, and other voting districts.

Approximately 17 percent of Washington County residents are renters. Renter households are more likely to contain historically undercounted individuals, such as infants and toddlers, young adults, low-income residents, and people of color. Federal law directs owners, proprietors, and managers of apartment buildings and other multi-unit housing structures to grant access to any duly-accredited representative of the Census Bureau.

The information collected by the census is confidential and protected by law.

The board's support of the census coincides with the delivery of census information to residents of the county. The board also asks the owners and managers of multi-unit housing facilities to allow access for census workers as required by federal law. A letter from the county board chair will be sent to property owners.

**Contact: Amanda Hollis, Senior Planner, 651-430-6021**

### **County Board endorses Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month, receives Citizens Review Panel report**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners endorsed the presidential proclamation of April 2020 as Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month March 24, and received the annual report from the county's Citizen Review Panel.

Each year in April, the President of the United States issues a proclamation to announce National Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to promote the social and emotional well-being of children and families. During April, and throughout the year, Washington County encourages all individuals and organizations to play a role in making Washington County a better place for children and families. Ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children can help prevent child abuse and neglect by creating strong and thriving children, youth, and families.

Research shows that protective factors are present in healthy families. Promoting these factors is among the most effective ways to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. The factors are:

- nurturing and attachment;
- knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development;
- parental resilience;
- social connections;
- concrete supports for parents; and
- social and emotional competence of children.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners expressed appreciation to all of the county employees who work every day to help parents and families counter the problem of child maltreatment and abuse, and noted that the proclamation is also an opportunity to urge residents of Washington County to recognize the month by dedicating themselves to the task of improving the quality of life for all children and families.

The board also received an annual report from the Citizen Review Panel.

The State of Minnesota has a federal mandate to operate citizen review panels (CRP) for child protection. Counties are not mandated but encouraged to participate in a CRP. There are five Minnesota counties, in addition to Washington County, that host a CRP. The mission of the CRP is "Citizens partnering with child protection services, advocating to keep children safe." Each year, an annual report is compiled to highlight activities and projects that the CRP completed over the past year in Washington County.

The group has eight members. Three members left the group in June, and three members joined the panel in September. Two of the new members are from Hugo, an area that has not been represented on the panel. The panel reviewed eight reconsideration requests.

During 2019, the issues of concern that the group identified are homelessness/affordable housing, sex trafficking, messaging and education, and family/community support. The panel members had a series of training during the year, and paid special attention to the county's Crisis Response Team, which was started in-house at the county at the beginning of the year. Several of the panel's projects during the year included community outreach and education.

Proposed activities for 2020 include analyzing trends and offering insight that those working within the system may overlook; reviewing the effectiveness of the county's child protection services; and setting a goal of increased community understanding, ownership, and investment in child protection.

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

### **County Board approves application for VFW Post 323 for temporary liquor license**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an application from VFW Post 323 March 24 for a one- to four-day temporary on-sale liquor license for a special event at the Washington County Fairgrounds May 29 through May 31.

The fairgrounds are in Baytown Township.

The Sheriff's Office has been notified of this event. The requirements to issue this license have been met and the appropriate fee has been paid by the applicant.

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

### **Washington County reports on use of recycling grant**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a report to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) March 24 that reports how the county used Local Recycling Development Grant (LRDG) funds.

Following state law, the grants are provided to metropolitan counties for implementing new or enhanced activities in recycling or yard waste composting. The county primarily uses its LRDG funds for recycling grants to cities and townships and other assistance.

The county received a fiscal year 2020 grant of \$276,383 from the MPCA, and budgeted County Environmental Charge (CEC) funds for the local match for the grant.

The county will apply for the coming year's funds, and provide the county's annual report to the MPCA.

Of the funds received for fiscal year 2019, \$276,383 was used for recycling grants to cities and townships. The county matched those funds with \$160,680. The county also spent \$14,447 on the City of Woodbury's public space recycling project, and \$127,588 to construct the Northern Yard Waste Site.

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

## **County will sell fuel to Bayport, Oak Park Heights law enforcement through state contract**

Washington County will sell fuel to the City of Bayport and the City of Oak Park Heights for use in law enforcement vehicles through the county's state contract, after the County Board approved an agreement with the cities March 24.

The Washington County Sheriff's Office has a contract with the state for the 2020 Fixed Fuel Program for participants in the metropolitan area. The cities need to buy 87 octane gasoline to operate their squad cars and SUVs for law enforcement. The Sheriff's Office will provide up to 650 gallons of gasoline a month to the City of Bayport for \$1.91 per gallon, plus applicable taxes, and 750 gallons to the City of Oak Park Heights at the same price. Any gallons after the designated amount per month will be charged the amount charged to Washington County by Mansfield Oil.

The contract runs from Feb. 1 through Jan. 31, 2021.

**Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601**

## **Sheriff's Office will receive money to fight drug trafficking**

The Washington County Sheriff's office will receive \$150,878 from the Office of National Drug Control Policy to participate in an anti-drug trafficking program.

The County Board accepted the grant March 24. The term of the grant is through next year.

The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program is designed to provide resources to federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to coordinate activities to address drug trafficking in specifically designated areas of the county. The program helps to identify and disrupt or dismantle drug trafficking and money laundering organizations; reduce drug-related crime and violence; and identify and respond to emerging drug trends.

No county match is required.

**Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601**