

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

Date: July 7, 2020
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the July 7, 2020, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County will receive \$320,000 to enhance mobility for seniors, people with disabilities

Washington County will receive \$320,000 from the Minnesota Department of Transportation to be used to enhance mobility for seniors and people with disabilities, after the County Board accepted the grant July 7.

The state agency will use federal funds for the grant. The county is required to provide a 20% local match for the grant.

The grant aims to improve access to transportation services and public transportation alternatives for persons with disabilities, seniors, and others with special transportation needs. When responding to the Washington County Resident Survey in 2013, 2016, and 2019, county residents selected “ease of travel by public transit” as the most problematic issue facing the county.

Contact: Sheila Holbrook-White, Policy Analyst, 651-430-6609

Simacor will provide information technology updates for county financial system

Simacor will provide updates to Washington County’s JD Edwards financial system, after the County Board approved a \$126,000 contract with the company July 7.

The JD Edwards Financial System is used countywide and to manage all capital assets, debt, investments, collections, fleet, finance and accounting, project costing, and budgeting. The work will be to analyze, build and repair, test, and implement new interfaces to replace interfaces which are determined to be no longer functioning as designed.

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Contact: Renee Heinbuch, Information Technology Director, 651-430-6421

County Board formalizes parks funding from Metropolitan Council

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a grant agreement for Regional Park & Trail Maintenance for yearly operations and maintenance of the county's parks July 7.

This is the first year that an agreement for these funds has been required and this agreement covers three fiscal years. It is a formal acknowledgement between both parties that the funding amounts are determined by statutorily defined formula. Those are:

- 40% based on use estimates in proportion to the entire regional system;
- 40% based on previous year operation and maintenance expenditures in proportion to other implementing agencies; and
- 20% based on acreage of regional parks and trails in proportion to total acreage of the regional system.

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

County Board proclaims July as Park and Recreation Month

The Washington County Board of Commissioners proclaimed July as Park and Recreation Month in Washington County July 7, and proclaimed that the first non-holiday Tuesday of each month is Free Tuesday in the county's parks, waiving the vehicle permit fee required to enter parks.

Park and Recreation Month brings an awareness about the parks and trails available in Washington County. They are important to establish and maintain the quality of life in the county by contributing to the health of residents, and contribute to the economic and environmental well-being. This can lead to preventing chronic disease and provide recreational services to those who are mentally or physically disabled, and may help improve their mental and emotional health.

Parks and recreation programs increase the county's economic prosperity through increased property values, tax base expansion, increased tourism, reduced crime, and business retention and attraction. Parks and natural recreation areas improve water and air quality, and provide wildlife habitat. They also ensure the ecological beauty of the county and provide a place to connect with nature and outdoor recreation.

During Free Tuesday, the first Tuesday of each month, it is free to visit Washington County Parks.

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

Sheriff's Office will continue to work with cities, townships on CodeRED notifications

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will continue to work with the county's cities and townships to provide a mass emergency notification system, known as CodeRED, after the County Board approved joint powers agreements with the cities and townships July 7.

The joint powers agreements are with 32 cities and townships in the county.

Washington County has a contract with OnSolve LLC for the use of the CodeRED system. CodeRED allows the county to send mass emergency and non-emergency messages to the residents of Washington County. CodeRED costs Washington County \$35,437.50 each year for the purchase of 150,000 minutes. Through these agreements, each city or township of Washington County will use the minutes to communicate with its residents. Each city or township will pay a fee for the minutes based on its population. The combined total that the city and townships will contribute to Washington County is \$18,717.36.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Board recognizes volunteers who made masks to address COVID-19

The Washington County Board of Commissioners July 7 recognized volunteers who made homemade masks to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

A number of volunteers in the county stepped in to create homemade cloth masks over the past four months to donate to a number of public and private facilities throughout the county.

The individuals honored July 9 are either county employees or closely related to county employees. The County Board will be asked July 28 to recognize more than 50 additional volunteers who played a significant role in providing masks who have no ties to the county government, but who, nonetheless, spent countless hours of their own time to provide masks for persons who work in long-term care facilities, restaurants and other public places of business at a time when masks were difficult to acquire.

Those recognized July 7 are Shirley Bebensee, a retired HealthPartners nurse practitioner and long-time White Bear Lake resident, whose daughter is employed by Washington County. Bebensee first made 15 masks for members of the county's Human Resources Department, then donated another 150 masks for county employees. Feeling the need to contribute more, she went on to sew another 200 masks from pre-assembled mask kits for Washington County. Recently, she made some "special order" masks for Public Works crew members when other masks were found to be too small. The Sorrem family, Julie, Rich and Isabella, took a weekend to contribute their talents and time to mask making for Washington County employees. Rich Sorrem sewed 50 face masks, while Julie Sorrem and their 14-year old daughter Isabella laundered and ironed more than 700 masks.

Contact: Angie Nalezny, Human Resources Director, 651-430-6075

Washington County will continue to use CPA firm for annual financial audit

The Washington County Board of Commissioners will provide notice to the Minnesota Office of State Auditor that it will retain a certified public accounting firm to perform the county's annual financial audit.

The County Board stated its intent to use a firm July 7.

Washington County previously provided the required notice to the Office of State Auditor that it intends to use the services of a private audit firm for its audits for 2018, 2019, and 2020 as provided for by Minnesota law. A county that plans to change to or from the state auditor and a CPA firm must notify the state auditor of this change by Aug. 1 of an even numbered year.

Washington County has been pleased by the quality of the audits performed by the private audit firm and intends to retain the services of a private audit firm during 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Contact: Tabatha Hansen, Accounting and Finance Director, 651-430-6027

County Board approves subdivision, sale of tax-forfeited land

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to the subdivision and sale of tax-forfeited land in Lake Elmo July 7 to be used for a public purpose.

The land is about 34 acres on the southeast corner of Highway 36 and Manning Avenue. It was forfeited in 2011.

Washington County will receive part of the property, for a payment of \$2,500, and the City of Lake Elmo will receive a portion, for a payment of \$7,500. Both entities pay extra costs for processing. The county will subdivide the parcels before the purchase.

State law allows tax-forfeited land to be sold to governmental agencies when the land will be used for a public purpose.

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

County Board appoints members to canvassing boards for primary, general elections

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed members July 7 to the canvassing boards for the August primary election and the November general election.

The county canvassing board must meet to canvass the state primary election results either the second or third day following the state primary, according to state law. The membership of the county canvass board is established in state law, and shall consist of the county auditor, the court administrator of the district court, the mayor or chair of the town board of the county's most populous municipality, and two members of the County Board selected by the board from its members who are not candidates in the election. Three members constitute a quorum.

The primary election will occur Aug. 11 and the canvass board will meet to canvass those results on Friday, Aug. 14. The commissioners available to serve that day are commissioners Stan Karwoski and Lisa Weik, and they were appointed to the canvassing board.

The general election canvassing board has the same member requirements. The canvassing board for the general election will meet Thursday, Nov. 12. Commissioners Wayne Johnson and Stan Karwoski were appointed to the canvassing board for the general election.

Contact: Debra Ledvina, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Director, 651-430-6182

County Board declares state of emergency related to 2020 county flooding

The Washington County Board of Commissioners declared a state of emergency July 7 related to the 2020 county flooding.

Much of Washington County experienced significant rainfall June 28. The rainfall added to already full and nearly flooded basins within much of the watersheds in the east central portion of the county,

as well as other areas in the county. The county has exhausted its own resources to mitigate the flooding impact on public infrastructure. This declaration will allow the county to work with the state and other partners related to the response to the flooding, including emergency authority to rent equipment and purchase protective measures, and may allow for certain costs to be reimbursable if certain spending thresholds are met.

Because of the emergency nature of this flooding and impact on public infrastructure, the Sheriff's Office, through its Emergency Management Division, requested that the emergency declaration be signed by the board chair, and Chair Fran Miron sign the declaration Saturday, July 4. By law, that declaration under the chair's signature is valid for 72 hours; action by the full County Board was needed to continue the emergency declaration.

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