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Date: Nov. 3, 2020
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Nov. 3, 2020, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board sets public hearings on fee schedule, CIP for Dec. 15

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set two public hearings for Dec. 15, one to consider revisions to the county fee schedule and one to consider adopting the 2021-2025 Washington County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

The board set the hearings at its Nov. 3 meeting. They will be conducted at 9 a.m. and 9:15 a.m., respectively, in the Board Room of the Government Center, 14949 N. 62nd St. in Stillwater.

Washington County's Fee Schedule is updated annually. All fee changes are brought to the County Board for approval. By law, the fee schedule can only be adopted after conducting a public hearing. During the public hearing for the CIP, the County Board will hear public comments, consider any recommended changes to the draft CIP, and take action to adopt the 2021-2025 CIP, pending any final changes.

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County Jail will receive body scanner

The Washington County Jail will purchase a body scanner, after the County Board approved a \$145,000 contract with Tek84 Nov. 3 to provide and install the system in the jail.

State law was changed last year to allow security screening x-ray equipment to image and identify contraband items concealed within or outside a human body, which allows body scanners in local

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jails. Inmates and new arrestees often attempt to bring into jail contraband, such as narcotics, weapons, and cell phones. Inmates and arrestees will hide items making it difficult to detect by correctional officers. Body scanners are a less intrusive and dehumanizing method of searching inmates than visual strip searches where close contact is needed.

The company will install, test, and train staff on the new scanner.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Parks recognized for lifejacket, multilingual communication programs

Washington County Parks have been recognized by the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association and the National Association of Counties for their lifejacket loaner station and multilingual signage in parks programs.

The awards were presented to the County Board Nov. 3.

The Minnesota Recreation and Park Association (MRPA), Awards of Excellence Program, is an annual program that recognizes agencies or organizations in Minnesota for outstanding achievements in parks, recreation, and leisure service. The awards recognize programs, projects, or initiatives that were implemented or received substantial revisions in 2019.

Washington County received an award in the Sponsorships and Partnerships Category for its Lifejacket Loaner Station, and an award in the Marketing and Communication Category for Multilingual Signage in Parks.

The Washington County Sheriff's Office was approached by the Safe Kids Council-Greater East Metro/St Croix Valley in 2018 regarding partnering for a lifejacket loaner station somewhere in Washington County. The original purpose was to begin a community collaboration to help reduce the number of youth drownings in Washington County.

Lake Elmo Park Reserve was selected due to heavy use throughout the summer and the desire to provide additional amenities and safety features to the man-made swim pond. Washington County Parks agreed to manage the program within Lake Elmo Park Reserve, while the Sheriff's Office took on the task to build and place the loaner station. A trial lifejacket loaner station was piloted at Lake Elmo Park Reserve in August 2018. The pilot loaner station immediately saw heavy use, with 15 of the 24 initial life jackets being used in the first day,

During spring 2019, Washington County, as part of a larger community partnership, expanded the lifejacket loaner program and installed fully stocked and equipped Lifejacket Loaner Stations at the Lake Elmo Park Reserve swim pond and the Big Marine Park Reserve swimming beach. The stations are made up of weather resistant storage containers and are stocked with an inventory of personal flotation devices, all Coast Guard approved.

Lifeguards on duty at these locations monitor the loaner stations and help ensure swimmers are selecting appropriate sizes and wearing the lifejackets properly. Lifeguards on duty are also responsible to ensure all lifejackets are collected and returned to the storage bins at the end of the day so they can be secured overnight.

In 2019, Washington County Parks started a new equity initiative creating welcoming experiences for non-English speaking visitors to the parks. The initiatives included creating multi-lingual announcements at the Lake Elmo Swim Pond and multi-lingual signage at Lake Elmo Park Reserve and St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park. Staff worked with local school districts in Washington County to identify the highest populations of non-English speaking residents. English, Spanish, and Hmong are the top three common languages spoken in Washington County schools. Once languages were identified, Quality Interpretations, a local interpretation company, assisted in the development of the messaging for both announcements and signage.

To implement the new multi-lingual announcements, staff upgraded the outdoor speaker system at the Lake Elmo Swim Pond to accommodate recorded announcements. The new system allows staff to make announcements up to two miles from the receiver station. With the system in place and messages interpreted, staff started making multi-lingual announcements in June 2019, including information on safety breaks, opening and closing of the pond, and rules to follow. The system can also be expanded to create additional announcements throughout the park for instances of severe weather or a missing child.

Washington County Parks also received awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo) under the Parks and Recreation category for the same projects.

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



The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized awards received by the county's Parks Nov. 3 for lifejacket loaner stations and for multilingual communication in the parks. Commissioners Lisa Weik, District 5, Fran Miron, District 1, Gary Kriesel, District 3, Stan Karwoski, District 2, and Wayne Johnson, District 4, receive the awards from Sandy Breuer, county parks director.

County will continue to work with Larkin Hoffman for state legislative services

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an extension of a contract with Larkin Hoffman Nov. 3 to continue to receive state legislative representation from the company.

The contract is extended through Nov. 12, 2022, at \$48,000 a year.

In 2018, Washington County selected Larkin Hoffman to provide state legislative services for two years. The firm works to implement the county's legislative platform at the Minnesota Legislature by drafting bills, scheduling meetings, working with legislative authors to secure hearings, arranging testimony, and lobbying committee members. The firm members also work closely with county staff to arrange for the necessary research and testimony to support Washington County's legislative

initiatives, and monitor bills. The firms also cooperate with other counties, regional partners, and lobbyists when legislative priorities are similar and/or a joint effort is deemed to be advantageous to the county.

The firm also provides status reports of the Legislature, and provides an end-of-session report of legislative activities and the results of the items included in the county's legislative platform.

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