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**Date:** Dec. 1, 2020  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 1, 2020, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

### **County receives money to support community services for those with mental illness, mobile crisis services**

Washington County will receive \$2.16 million from the state Department of Human Services to support community-based services to individuals who have a mental illness.

The County Board accepted the grant, which runs through Dec. 31, 2022.

The county will also receive \$1.04 million from the Department of Human Services over the same time frame to pay for mobile crisis response services. The County Board accepted the grants Dec. 1.

Community-based services for those with a mental illness include housing subsidies, support for people experiencing homelessness, in-home skills development, community-based nursing services, crisis intervention training, psychiatric services, expenditures for traditionally non-reimbursed client needs, residential crisis stabilization services, mobile crisis services, and support for the Mental Health Alliance. In addition, the Adult Mental Health Grant Award supports adult mental health case management staff positions.

The grant is split evenly over the term, with \$1.08 million provided in 2021 and 2022. The money is the same amount that was provided to the county for the previous grant cycle.

The Crisis Response Services Grant funds support the delivery of crisis response services to adult and child residents of Washington County. This service includes 24-hour telephone screening and triage,

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mobile crisis response teams, face-to-face crisis assessment, and/or intervention and community stabilization.

Washington County moved the Mental Health Crisis Response Services in-house at the beginning of 2019 as part of a newly-created Crisis Response Unit to provide critical safety net services.

The increase for this contract from \$800,000 for 2019-2020 to \$1.04 million for 2021-2022 is related to increasing capacity for providing Crisis Stabilization services.

**Contact: Kathy Mickelson, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6532**

### **Canvas Health will continue to provide mental health services to county residents in 2021**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$1.36 million contract with Canvas Health Dec. 1, to continue to provide services to county residents through 2021.

Canvas Health provides services to children, adolescents, adults, elderly individuals, and families who struggle with aging, crises, chemical and mental health, and domestic and sexual abuse.

Washington County has contracted with Canvas Health for many years to provide many state-mandated mental health services and other services to county residents. Services include adult psychiatry, crisis clinic psychiatry services, outpatient mental health services, psychological and parenting evaluation services, abuse and recovery services, case management for children diagnosed as Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED), and family-based services.

With the advent of Minnesota Managed Care Organizations and the Affordable Care Act, there has been a large shift in funding for services that were historically funded through the Canvas Health contract. Data continues to be collected and reviewed to understand these changes and to adjust funding accordingly. In review of data that was collected in 2019 and part of 2020, a number of services in the Canvas Health contract were identified as services now funded by health plans for a large number of Washington County residents. Subsequently, adjustments have been made to the county contract with Canvas Health. All changes have been made with the focus of ensuring that residents are receiving needed services in an appropriate and timely manner, while also ensuring the responsible use of taxpayer funds.

The overall changes from the 2020 contract is a reduction of \$90,109, or 6.2%.

Outcome data is collected and analyzed on all services purchased from Canvas Health. An annual performance report is submitted to Washington County Community Services and is available upon request.

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

### **County Board comments on plan to deal with PFAS contamination**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a comment letter Dec. 1 to the Minnesota Pollution Agency regarding the Conceptual Drinking Water Supply Plan developed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as co-trustees in the 3M Settlement Process to address groundwater contamination in the East Metropolitan area.

In 2018, the State of Minnesota and 3M settled a Natural Resources Damages lawsuit for \$850 million. The terms of the settlement called for the funds to be used to provide safe and sustainable drinking water and improve natural resources in the east metropolitan area. Over the last two years, the state has been developing a Conceptual Drinking Water Supply Plan for the region.

The comment letter states that the county is encouraged that the options put forth by the co-trustees provide assurance that settlement funds will be available to treat drinking water to meet health standards even if those standards are strengthened further.

The county suggests the state provide additional information on the decisions within the plan related to operation and maintenance costs into the future, specifically clarifying the differences between treating public water systems versus private wells.

The letter also says that the county recognizes the importance, and advocates for the setting aside of funds for “drinking water protection” and “sustainability and conservation” to the extent possible.

The county has many similar goals in both its Comprehensive Plan, and its county Groundwater Plan. In addition, the county stated that use of funds related to natural resource enhancements be held off until such a time when all parties are confident that drinking water protection will be achieved.

Finally, the county encouraged the state to make sure the selected options are fully supported by the impacted communities.

**Contact: Lowell Johnson, Public Health & Environment Director, 651-430-6725**

### **Washington County will receive \$135,409 to combat aquatic invasive species in 2021**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted a \$135,409 of aid funds Dec. 1 from the state to fight aquatic invasive species in the county's waterways.

In the 2014 state legislative session, a county aid program was created to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in lakes and rivers. Based on the 24 watercraft trailer launches and 354 watercraft trailer parking spaces in the county, Washington County will receive \$135,409 in local AIS prevention aid in 2021.

A county plan or resolution must be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources annually by the last day of each calendar year before funds can be distributed the following year.

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

### **County will receive money to administer outreach for child, teen checkups**

Washington County will receive \$487,944 to administer child and teen checkup services over the next three years.

The County Board approved an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Services for the money Dec. 1, which will be used through 2023.

Under the Child and Teen Checkup program, the county provides outreach to the county's medical assistance eligible population, ages birth to 21 years. Outreach focuses on ensuring that those eligible receive comprehensive and routine well child care through primary medical providers. Outreach is also provided to the medical providers to ensure that they understand and provide comprehensive well child care and that they seek reimbursement from the state Department of Human Services.

**Contact: Jill Timm, Public Health Program Manager, 651-275-7286**

### **County Board approves agreement to add trail to Highway 36/Manning project**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Dec. 1 to assure that a non-motorized recreational trail will be included in the area of the Highway 36/Manning Avenue interchange when it is constructed.

Construction is planned to begin next summer on an interchange at Highway 36 and Manning Avenue where Stillwater, Grant, Lake Elmo, and Oak Park Heights meet that will eliminate the signalized intersection.

The project provides an opportunity to build a critical portion of the Central Greenway Regional Trail that crosses Highway 36. The trail is important as Highway 36 is one of the most challenging barriers for pedestrians and bicyclists along the planned regional trail route. The project is managed by Washington County in coordination with the local municipalities, but when construction is complete, the ownership and maintenance of the bridge, ramps, and right-of-way will reside with MnDOT. The regional trail is the responsibility of Washington County, and MnDOT requires the permit to put a portion of the regional trail in MnDOT right-of-way around the interchange. This project will also require cost share agreements and maintenance agreements with MnDOT and the local municipalities.

The County Board also approved a \$191,000 payment to Xcel Energy to relocate a transmission tower to accommodate the construction of an off-ramp and Manning Avenue as part of the interchange project in its southwest quadrant. The payment is to allow the company to design the proposed tower, order materials, and complete the relocation of the transmission tower this winter or spring 2021. Unlike most other county highway project utility relocations, Xcel Energy owns a utility easement corridor that requires reimbursement for changes to its system.

**Contact: Nathan Arnold, Engineer II, 651-430-4384**

### **Sheriff's Office will continue to use Motorola Solutions to service radio system**

Motorola Solutions will provide round-the-clock service to Washington County Sheriff's Office 800-MHz radio system, after the County Board approved a three-year contract with the company Dec. 1. The \$123,172 contract will run from Jan. 1, 2021, through Dec. 31, 2023.

The agreement provides for around-the-clock monitoring of the radio sites and the dispatch of technicians if a problem is discovered. The company will also provide annual maintenance service at each radio site to perform preventative maintenance on the radio equipment.

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

## **County Board enters agreement to implement Lower St. Croix One Watershed, One Plan with its partner agencies**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved measures Dec. 1 to move the county toward membership in the Lower St. Croix One Watershed, One Plan, a Lower St. Croix River comprehensive management plan.

The county and its partners have developed the collaborative and comprehensive Lower St. Croix One Watershed, One Plan to guide the protection and restoration of priority natural resources within the Lower St. Croix watershed. Fifteen units of government, including counties, watershed organizations, and soil and water conservation districts, have participated in the planning process. The state Board of Water and Soil Resources approved the final plan Oct. 28.

To include Washington County's in the new watershed organization, the county had to withdraw from the original agreement that formed the organization, and approve a new Joint Powers Agreement for plan implementation and appoint a commissioner to the new policy committee. The County Board also adopted the approved comprehensive Lower St. Croix One Watershed, One Plan as a supplementary planning document to the county's Groundwater Plan.

The mission of One Watershed, One Plan is to work with partners to develop a collaborative and comprehensive plan to guide the protection and restoration of priority natural resources in the region over the next 10 years. The goal of the One Watershed, One Plan is to align local water planning on major watershed boundaries with state strategies towards prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation plans, and to foster collaboration between upstream and downstream neighbors. The Lower St. Croix plan encompasses the area of 15 local units of government, including several from Washington County, and the counties of Chisago, Pine, and Isanti.

The County Board also appointed Commissioner Fran Miron, District 1, to serve as standing representative of Washington County on the Policy Committee of the organization.

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

## **County will waive late fees for health licenses**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Dec. 1 to waive late fees on 2021 health licenses for local businesses in the county.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has included the governor's Executive Orders to protect public health, which has had an unprecedented and unexpected impact to the business activity of licensed food service establishments, lodging establishments, public pools, recreational camping areas, and youth camps.

The county will waive late fees for 2021 health licenses to recognize the impact of the pandemic on these businesses and provide financial relief. Late fees remitted during the 2020 license process totaled about \$15,500.

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

### **County Board receives update on Coronavirus Relief Funds use**

Washington County continues to use Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) funds to assist community members weather the COVID-19 pandemic.

The County Board received an update on use of funds in the county Dec. 1. Washington County received \$31.7 million in CRF funds. It has been used for:

- small business assistance: \$6 million
- rental, mortgage assistance and basic needs: \$4.4 million
- assistance to hospitals/health care providers: \$715,000
- assistance to public schools: \$3 million
- public health direct costs for testing/tracing: \$600,000
- internet access and computer access through libraries: \$520,000
- public service/equipment modification: \$2.5 million
- support for telework/remote working: \$1.6 million
- payroll for public health and public safety: \$11 million
- substantially redirected personnel costs: \$1 million
- federally required employee benefit costs: \$200,000.

Washington County undertook three separate application periods to provide grants to businesses impacted by the pandemic, which included both home-based businesses and those with employees.

Businesses with up to \$5 million in annual revenue and fewer than 50 employees were eligible. To be eligible a business must have incurred increased costs because of the pandemic or a loss of revenue. A total of 477 businesses in the county received assistance. County communities and the number of businesses in them assisted are:

- Afton: 6
- Bayport: 5
- Cottage Grove: 27
- Forest Lake: 33
- Hastings: 2
- Hugo: 16
- Lake Elmo: 17
- Lakeland: 3
- Mahtomedi: 15
- Marine on Saint Croix: 5
- Newport: 15
- Oak Park Heights: 13
- Oakdale: 47
- Saint Paul Park: 1
- Scandia: 9
- St. Paul Park: 3
- Stillwater: 131
- White Bear Lake: 4
- Willernie: 3
- Woodbury: 122

In addition, federal guidance allows the county to use funds to pay for certain public health and public safety staff, to avoid laying off these employees during the middle of a pandemic response. By using CRF funds to cover these expenses, the county will have about \$10 million available to

continue the pandemic response into 2021. The County Board will determine how to use that money moving forward. Options may include:

- costs for vaccine distribution;
- continued COVID-19 testing costs;
- continued costs for contact tracing;
- small business assistance;
- non-profit assistance;
- rental and mortgage assistance for those with job losses/income declines;
- costs for sheltering homeless individuals and families; and
- personal protection equipment and safety measures for county facilities and programs.

The State of Minnesota provided coronavirus relief funds to cities and townships to pay for eligible pandemic related costs. They had until Nov. 15 to spend their funds. If not expended, the funds must be transferred to the county, and any funds returned to the county had to be expended by Dec. 1 along with the county's CRF allocation. Any county funds not expended by Dec. 1 must be returned to the state.