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**Date:** Jan. 19, 2021  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Jan. 19, 2021, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

### **Library receives donations which will be used to expand diversity in collection**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted donations to the county's Library Jan. 19. One donation was for \$30,000, from an anonymous donor. The Washington County Library has received donations for a number of years from this donor, who wishes to remain anonymous. In the past, the library has used the donation to purchase materials and provide staff training. This year, the library is recommending the funds be used to make improvements to the library's collection. The library is conducting a diversity audit of its collection to ensure it includes diverse books of wide perspectives, while also being responsive to Washington County communities and reflective of the diversity of the world. The donation will be used to strengthen the library's collection in areas identified by the diversity audit.

The County Board also accepted a donation of \$1,003.95 for the Library from the Washington County Library Partners. The money will be used for the same purpose.

**Contact: Aubrey Fonfara, Communications Specialist, 651-275-8504**

### **County Board supports grant request for fishing pier on Shields Lake Park**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners offered a letter of support Jan. 19 to a grant request for a fishing pier on Shields Lake Park.

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Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District, in partnership with the City of Forest Lake, is applying for a grant to place a new Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fishing pier in Shields Lake Park through the DNR's Fishing Pier and Shore Fishing Area Program.

The program supplies and installs a floating fishing pier for the applicant, with the cost dependent on the final design.

The letter of support noted that the current fishing pier has begun to decay, and is often underwater in the spring. To keep the public waterbody accessible, a new pier is needed.

The letter also noted that the City of Forest Lake is a strong steward of its water resources. The city provides financial support and engages in numerous partnerships with its lake associations and the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District, and the county asked the DNR to assist the City of Forest Lake with the Shields Lake Fishing Pier Replacement Project.

**Contact: Maureen Hoffman, Planner II, 651-430-6684**

### **County Board revises budget contribution for Gold Line BRT**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners made adjustments Jan. 19 to the planned Gold Line bus rapid transit (BRT) project planned from downtown St. Paul to Woodbury.

The County Board agreed to contribute \$145.4 million to the project, which currently includes the development of a new county service center in Woodbury, which will also serve as a terminus and parking ramp in western Woodbury. The county's Transit Tax will fund the county's costs.

The project is at a stage called "Entry Into Engineering," when the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) shows support for the project, and locks in the amount of funding that it will provide. The plan reviewed by the FTA includes the service center in Woodbury, which has recently been added to the project.

During a recent review by the FTA to assure that the budget is adequate, the FTA added \$12.7 million to the project, for contingency, after costs were added to the budget last May. The updated cost is now \$531.9 million.

In addition to funding from the county's transit tax, funding will come from County Transit Improvement Board funds, the state, Ramsey County, and regional funding for bridges and stations along the route, as well as from the FTA.

Ramsey County has already committed to funding the project.

It is expected that the BRT line will open for service in 2024.

**Contact: Don Theisen, Public Works Director, 651-430-4304**

### **County receives donation from HealthPartners**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted a donation of \$16,000 from HealthPartners Jan. 19.

HealthPartners provides health insurance to county employees.

The donation is to acknowledge and support work the county does to enhance individual and community health. It is suggested the donation be used in the county to align with the UCare Grant, which is used to better understand barriers to health equity that may be inherent to county services.

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### **County Board discusses potential removal of watershed district manager**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners discussed the removal of a manager on the Rice Creek Watershed District board of managers Jan. 19.

Rice Creek Watershed District Manager Michael Bradley provided public comment to the County Board Dec. 1, 2020, regarding the district's resolution "Findings and Resolution in the Matter of Complaints regarding Manager John Waller pursuant to the Board of Managers Code of Ethics." The administrator of the district, Nick Tomczik, provided an email to the County Board containing materials related to the resolution in November.

The resolution requested the County Board convene a hearing for the purpose of the removal of Waller. After listening to comments from four residents, the board chose not to conduct a public hearing on the matter. The board noted that the manager's term is up in a year and that the board would review his performance at that time.

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### **County Board recognizes 40 years of Community Development Agency service**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized the county's Community Development Agency for 40 years of service to Washington County residents Jan. 19.

The Washington County Community Development Agency (CDA) was established Jan. 20, 1981. For 40 years, the Washington County CDA has provided the residents and communities of Washington County with quality housing, redevelopment, and economic development programs and services. The citizen volunteers serving as commissioners and the employees of the CDA have helped build strong communities where everyone has an opportunity to succeed.

To celebrate its milestone of 40 years of service, the County Board recognizes and honors the Washington County CDA and the value it adds to the residents and communities of Washington County.

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