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**Date:** Feb. 2, 2021  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Feb. 2, 2021, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

### **County Board approves labor agreement with assistant county attorneys**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a 2021 collective bargaining agreement with the Assistant Washington County Attorneys' Association Feb. 2.

Consistent with agreements that have been reached with other bargaining groups, the agreement states:

- effective Jan. 1, a 0% general salary adjustment will be applied.
- effective the beginning of the year, a one-time 2% lump sum of salary will be paid;
- effective July 9, a one-time \$1,000 lump sum salary payment will be made.

The agreement also sets out how much the county will pay for the cost of health insurance for employees.

**Contact: Angie Nalezny, Human Resources Director, 651-430-8324**

### **County Road 78 receives county state aid highway designation**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved designating County Road 78, or 110<sup>th</sup> Street, from Manning Avenue to St. Croix Trail South as a County State Aid Highway Feb. 2.

The designation is subject to the approval of the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The new designation will ensure that any future improvements to this highway are built to current state aid standards, improving safety of this highway.

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The designation change is estimated to bring an additional \$66,000 a year in state aid funds to the county.

The designation change is supported by the Denmark Township Board.

**Contact: Andrew Giesen, Engineer II, 651-430-4336**

### **County will receive grant to fund portion of Central Greenway Regional Trail**

Washington County will receive an \$831,000 grant from the Metropolitan Council to fund a portion of the Central Greenway Regional Trail within Lake Elmo Park Reserve.

The County Board accepted the grant Feb. 2. The grant will fund a project to improve existing paved trails and, where needed, build new trail segments.

Project construction is scheduled to begin this fall.

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

### **County receives financial reporting awards, board reviews reports**

County staff presented the Washington County Board of Commissioners with the 2019 annual financial audit highlights, and the 2019 summary financial statement that will be in the annual newspaper publication Feb. 2.

The board received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Excellence in Financial Reporting Award for the county's 2018 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and the GFOA 2018 Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR).

The board also received the GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the county's 2020 Budget.

Each year, the county is required by state law to publish financial information in a newspaper insert.

This year, the 2019 financial information will be published in the Country Messenger, which serves the northeastern portion of the county, and the Stillwater Gazette, in the middle of the county. The information will include the county's financial statements and balance sheet, as well as a statement of revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance. It also lists the disbursement of county funds of more than \$5,000.

The County Board also received the GFOA's Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting Award for 2018. This is the 34th consecutive year the county has received the award. The award is intended to recognize and encourage excellence in financial reporting by state and local governments. The county's consistent participation in the program demonstrates its commitment to quality financial management practices and open and clear communication with its citizens. The award has a direct impact when rating agencies assess the county's financial practices during the bond issuance process. About 20% of counties in Minnesota receive the award, as do about 18% of counties nationwide. The County Board also was presented with the first GFOA award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award for 2018. This report is designed to be readily accessible and easily understandable to the general public. It aims to reduce jargon and technical language, and includes charts and graphs to assist users in understanding the financial position of the county. The County Board also received GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the county's 2020 Budget. The 2020 award marks the 23rd consecutive year of receiving the award. The budget document is submitted to the GFOA and it goes through a number of peer reviews to determine if the quality of the document meets the nationally recognized standards for effective budget presentation. To receive the award, the county document must meet all 14 mandatory criteria on which it is rated. The award program began in 1998 and is the only national awards program in governmental budgeting.

**Contact: Carl Jacobson, Principal Accountant, 651-430-6044**

### **County will use fund balance to meet pandemic response operating expenses**

Washington County will use \$933,400 from its fund balance over the next six months to meet operating expenses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The County Board agreed to the expenditures Feb. 2.

The money will be used for:

- \$76,200 for food security programs, which include emergency food delivery, food distribution, and communication;
- \$19,800 for communication regarding vaccinations and masking;
- \$14,000 to deliver essential services for those in quarantine and isolation;

- \$348,000 for enhanced cleaning, for the work and supplies, and contracted cleaning in the jail;
- \$75,000 for additional cleaning in the courts to allow for more trials to help with the backlog of cases;
- \$100,000 for system improvements for accounting; and
- \$300,000 for five squad vehicles for the Sheriff's Office to allow for adequate cleaning between shifts and safety for deputies.

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