

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

Date: Feb. 16, 2021
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Feb. 16, 2021, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board concurs with terms of bonds to pay for updates to recycling, energy center

The Washington County Board of Commissioners concurred Feb. 16 with the terms of bonds that will be sold by Ramsey County to raise funds to pay for improvements to the Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy facility in Newport.

The plan provides improvements to increase recycling, including a durable compostable bag processing system and a recyclables recovery system, and other improvements to the facility.

Washington County will work with its partner, Ramsey County, to sell the bonds and manage loan repayment for the program.

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

County Board approves labor agreement with International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a 2021 collective bargaining agreement with the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49, Feb. 16.

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

- effective Jan. 1, a 0% general salary adjustment will be applied.

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- 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 Board approves agreements for farming on county park land

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved contracts with county farmers Feb. 16 to farm county park land during the 2021 growing season.

When Washington County acquires farmland within one of its regional parks, some of the land is often kept as cropland until it is needed for park purposes. In 2020, there was 241.95 acres of land leased for farming, and in 2021, there will be 284.06 acres of land leased, a 17.4% increase based on recent park acquisitions at Pine Point Regional Park and St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park. After the next five years, cropland will be at 250.26 acres, as a result of 11 acres of cropland being taken out of production at Pine Point Regional Park and 23 acres at Lake Elmo Park Reserve for prairie restoration.

Rental rates paid for individual tracts of farmland depend on a number of factors applied to farming. This year, Washington County changed the bid from an annual lease to a five-year lease in the hope that a longer term contract would improve stewardship of the land, allow for staff time savings on developing the bid each year, and allow this time to be spent on initiatives, such as cover crops and obtaining agricultural water quality certification.

In addition to a ban on neonicotinoid insecticides being used on the land, farmers accepting this year's bid will work with Washington County and the Washington Conservation District to establish cover crops on the land.

Based on the results of a competitive bid process, contracts were offered to:

- Ronald Shiltgen for the lease of agricultural land in Big Marine Park Reserve.
- Ronald Shiltgen for the lease of agricultural land in Pine Point Regional Park.
- Herman Farms for the lease of agricultural land in Lake Elmo Park Reserve.
- Matthew Wohlman for the lease of agricultural land in St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park.

Seventy percent of the revenue received from the rental of agricultural land goes into the Parks Division Stewardship; the remaining 30% is used for “in-lieu of tax” payments.

Contact: Dan MacSwain, Natural Resources Coordinator, 651-430-4323

Additional design services set to complete CSAH 14 signal, trail project

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Feb. 16 to pay \$174,800 to Short Elliot Hendrickson for final design of upgrades to County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 14 at Interstate 694. The project includes traffic signal replacement and trail construction plans. The payment brings the total contract for the project to \$300,800 for design services; it does not cover any construction costs. The project will allow the county to fully replace the signals at the CSAH 14/Interstate 694 intersections and add Flashing Yellow Arrows for left turns. In addition, the project will fill in gaps in the trail system along the south side of CSAH 14 in this section. When complete, there will be a trail along the south side of CSAH 14 connected all the way from Granada Avenue to Ideal Avenue, which will better serve pedestrians and bicyclists in the area.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will provide \$702,500 for construction for the project via the Metro District Local Partnership Program. The remainder of project construction funding will be covered in the Washington County Capital Improvement Plan.

Contact: Mitch Bartelt, Engineer II, 651-430-4349

County will receive \$535,000 for Central Greenway, Lake Elmo park trails

Washington County will receive \$535,113 for Central Greenway Regional Trail and Lake Elmo Park Reserve Trail improvement after the County Board accepted the grant from the Metropolitan Council Feb. 16.

The grant will fund a portion of the Central Greenway Regional Trail within Lake Elmo Park Reserve, and include improving existing paved trails to meet regional standards and, where needed, build new trail segments.

Construction is scheduled to begin this fall.

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

County will sell fuel to Bayport law enforcement through state contract

Washington County will sell fuel to the City of Bayport for use in law enforcement vehicles through the county's state contract, after the County Board approved an agreement with the city Feb. 16.

The Washington County Sheriff's Office has a contract with the state for the Fixed Fuel Program for participants in the metropolitan area. The city needs to buy 87 octane gasoline to operate its squad cars and SUVs for law enforcement. The Sheriff's Office will provide up to 650 gallons of gasoline a month to the City of Bayport for \$1.68 per gallon, plus applicable taxes. Any gallons after the designated amount per month will be charged the same amount charged to Washington County by Mansfield Oil.

The contract runs from Feb. 1 through Jan. 31, 2022.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

Washington County will receive federal funds for construction projects

Washington County will receive federal funds for roadways, trails, and transit projects through the regional solicitation program.

The County Board received information on the program Feb. 16. The program is administered by the Metropolitan Council through a biennial process that enables local communities to apply for federal transportation funds. The council's Transportation Advisory Board makes the final decision for awarding projects. In 2020, 137 projects were submitted through the Regional Solicitation process for approximately \$200 million in available federal funds.

Funds awarded to Washington County are:

- \$10 million for the Lake Elmo Avenue at Highway 36 interchange, scheduled to be built in 2025;
- \$825,865 for a trail along Hudson Boulevard between Greenway Avenue and Century Avenue, scheduled to be built in 2024; and
- \$265,800 for a trail from 74th Street to the Mahtomedi school entrance, scheduled to be built in 2024.

In addition, Metro Transit has received \$7 million to modernize downtown St. Paul transit stations for the planned METRO Gold Line.

The cities of Oakdale and Mahtomedi also received funds for sidewalk construction in their communities.

Contact: Emily Jorgensen, Planner II, 651-430-4338