



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

Date: March 23, 2021
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the March 23, 2021, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board makes appointments to citizen advisory groups

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed residents to citizen advisory groups March 23.

Those appointments are:

- Jeneal Olsen, West Lakeland Township, to the Mental Health Advisory Committee as a NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) representative to a partial first term expiring Dec. 31, 2023;
- Celia Wirth, Grant, to the Brown's Creek Watershed District to a partial first term expiring Oct. 22, 2021;
- Klayton Eckles, Stillwater, to the Brown's Creek Watershed District to a second term expiring Oct. 22, 2023.

Contact: Alyssa Soderlund, Administrative Assistant, 651-430-6015

County Board endorses president's proclamation of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month, receives Citizen Review Panel annual report

The Washington County Board of Commissioners endorsed the President of the United States' proclamation that April 2021 is Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month March 23.

A great place to live, work and play...today and tomorrow

The board also received the Washington County Child Protection Citizen Review Panel 2020 Annual Report.

Each year in April, the President of the United States issues a proclamation to announce National Child Abuse Prevention Month. States and local governments are encouraged to support such proclamations to encourage public awareness of child abuse and neglect, recommit state and local resources to the cause, and promote community involvement through state and local activities. National Child Abuse Prevention Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to promote the social and emotional well-being of children and families. During April, and throughout the year, Washington County encourages all individuals and organizations to play a role in making Washington County a better place for children and families. Ensuring that parents have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to care for their children can help prevent child abuse and neglect by creating strong and thriving children, youth, and families in the community.

Research shows that protective factors are present in healthy families. Promoting these factors is among the most effective ways to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. The factors are:

- nurturing and attachment;
- knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development;
- parental resilience;
- social connections;
- concrete supports for parents; and
- social and emotional competence of children.

The County Board endorsed the observance of National Child Abuse Prevention during April 2021 and thanked and honored county employees who work every day to help parents and families counter the problem of child maltreatment and abuse.

The board also accepted the annual Citizen Review Panel report. The State of Minnesota has a federal mandate to operate Citizen Review Panels (CRP) for child protection. Counties are not mandated but are encouraged to participate in a CRP. There are five other Minnesota counties, in addition to Washington County, that host a CRP. The mission of the CRP is "Citizens partnering with child protection services, advocating to keep children safe."

Each year, an annual report is compiled to highlight activities and projects that the CRP has completed over the past year.

The panel is charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the county's child protection services and enhancing the quality of those services whenever possible. The panel offers recommendations regarding changes in the child protection system to both the county and the state.

According to the report, identified issues of concern changed dramatically with the onset of the pandemic. COVID-19 put children more at risk for abuse and exploitation. Teachers are generally on the front lines of spotting abuse, but with schools closed, mandated reporters can't monitor at-risk children very easily with the limitations of distance learning. The panel changed its project plans to focus on ways to educate the community, including supporting at-risk families during the pandemic, identifying child abuse, reporting child abuse, and requesting assistance from the community. Several sub-groups of the panel coordinated projects throughout the year via email and virtual meetings.

The report includes information on training for panel members, as well as community outreach projects that continued despite the pandemic, such as continued online training and sharing informational pamphlets through food shelves and any public places that allowed distribution.

Additional projects have been put on hold until the loosening of pandemic restrictions allow for more in-person meetings and communications.

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

County Board approves labor agreement with Minnesota TEAMSTERS Public and Law Enforcement Employees Union Local No. 320 Probation Officers

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a 2021 collective bargaining agreement with the Minnesota TEAMSTERS Public and Law Enforcement Employees Union Local No. 320 Probation Officers March 23.

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

Washington County will receive grant to support recycling

Washington County will receive almost \$250,000 in a Local Recycling Development Grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to support recycling programs in the county.

The County Board accepted the grant March 23.

These funds come from a landfill surcharge on metropolitan landfills. According to state law, the grants are provided to metropolitan counties for implementing new or enhanced activities in recycling or yard waste composting. The county primarily uses its funds for recycling grants to cities and townships and other assistance.

The county uses money from the County Environmental Charge (CEC) funds for the local match for the grant.

Contact: Jamie Giesen, Environmental Resource Supervisor, 651-430-6707

Sheriff's Office will receive grant to assist with emergency management

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive an Emergency Management Performance Grant of \$111,730 to pay for managing local emergency.

The County Board accepted the grant March 23. It will cover personnel costs for the Washington County Emergency Operations Center staff for the past year. The grant does require a 100% match, which is covered by levy dollars.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County will sell fuel to Oak Park Heights' law enforcement through state contract

Washington County will sell fuel to the City of Oak Park Heights for use in law enforcement vehicles through the county's state contract, after the County Board approved an agreement with the city March 23.

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 750 gallons of gasoline a month to the City of Oak Park Heights 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

Aviat Networks will provide upgrades for Sheriff's Office microwave equipment

Aviat Networks will work on phase two of an upgrade to the Washington County Sheriff's Office radio towers in the county's public safety radio system, after the County Board approved a \$128,300 contract with the company March 23.

All radio towers in the Washington County Public Safety Radio System use microwave links to provide data connections and links to the State of Minnesota's core system. The prior microwave equipment was installed in 2008 and is no longer supported by the factory.

The first phase of the upgrade, which is near completion, obtained all of the necessary hardware and engineering to replace the prior system. Phase two is expected to be completed by Dec. 31, and will provide for the installation of the new equipment, spare parts, and removal of the old system.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

Sheriff's Office will receive grant for drug control

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive \$96,530 from the Office of National Drug Control Policy for participation in the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program. The grant runs through Dec. 31, 2022.

The HIDTA program is designed to provide resources to federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to coordinate activities to address drug trafficking in designated areas of the county. The program helps to identify and disrupt/dismantle drug trafficking and money laundering organizations; reduce drug-related crime and violence; and identify and respond to emerging drug trends.

No county match is required for the grant.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Board approves submission of proposal, agreements for Land and Water Legacy Program in Afton, approves submission of proposal for land in May Township

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved project partnership agreements and submittal of a proposal to the state March 23 to potentially place five adjacent parcels of land around a segment of Valley Creek in the county's Land and Water Legacy Program.

The county was approached by landowners seeking to place their property at 14020 and 14040 Valley Creek Trail South in Afton under permanent land protection. The project is in the county's Valley Creek Corridor top-10 high-priority protection area. The site features steep woodlands, bluffs, low lands and open water, including spring-fed ponds, and 1,300 feet of Valley Creek. It is near two existing conservation easements across the road and 1,800 acres protected by Belwin Conservancy and the Minnesota Land Trust. The parcel hosts a variety of wildlife and a Regionally Significant Ecological Area.

The potential partnership to protect the property includes Washington County, Belwin Conservancy, the City of Afton, and the Afton Historical Society. Additionally, a proposal has been drafted for submission to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to request funds to cover 50% of the conservation easement. If funds are awarded, Washington County's role would be to contribute the remaining 50% of the cost of the conservation easement, hold and monitor the conservation easement, and fund the appraisal and archeological study.

The board approved a Memorandum of Understanding with Belwin Conservancy, a cooperative agreement with the City of Afton, and a resolution approving the submission of the state grant.

The board also approved sending a proposal to the DNR for a 50% conservation easement match for a Land and Water Legacy Program potential land protection project in May Township. The county has been approached by two landowners seeking to place conservation easements over four parcels on approximately 108 acres at May Avenue North and County Road 4 in the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District.

The parcels have Regionally Significant Ecological Areas, Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan priority areas, and are in the County Land and Water Legacy Program's top-10 high-priority area called the Carnelian Creek Corridor.

The project is between a County Conservation Area and Big Marine Park Reserve. The conservation easement area hosts woodlands, open water, grasslands, wetlands, previously cultivated area, and a significant presence of wildlife.

The DNR proposals must be submitted by March 31. Awards will be announced in July.

Contact: June Mathiowetz, Senior Planner, 651-430-6016