

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

Date: April 6, 2021
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the April 6, 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 April 6. The appointments are:

- Mike Kazmerski, Woodbury, to a partial first term expiring Dec. 31, 2023, as the District 5 Representative on the county's Parks and Open Space Commission;
- William Sullivan, Oakdale, to a partial first term expiring Dec. 31, 2022, as the District 2 Representative on the Historic Courthouse Committee;
- Peg Larsen, Lake St. Croix Beach, to the Community Development Agency Board of Commissioners as a District 3 Representative, to a partial first term expiring Dec. 31, 2022; and
- Cindy Kallstrom, Mahtomedi, to a partial term expiring Dec. 31, 2023, as the District 2 Representative on the Library Board.

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

County Board approves application for VFW Post 323 for temporary liquor license

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an application from VFW Post 323 April 6 for a one- to four-day temporary on-sale liquor license for a special event at the Washington County Fairgrounds June 3 through June 6.

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The fairgrounds are in Baytown Township.

The Sheriff's Office has been notified of this event. The requirements to issue this license have been met and the appropriate fee has been paid by the applicant.

Contact: Steve Gransee, Taxpayer Services & Election Division Manager, 651-430-8272

County Board approves plat of St. Boniface Oaks East First Addition in West Lakeland Township

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an abstract two-lot plat in West Lakeland Township for St. Boniface Oaks East First Addition April 6.

The plat is east of Oakgreen Avenue North and north of 10th Street North.

Contact: Nancie Schwintek, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Manager, 651-430-6758

County parks will celebrate Earth Day, National Get Outdoors Day with free entrance

Washington County Parks will have free entry for Earth Day April 22 and for National Get Outdoors Day June 12, as well as the Friday after Thanksgiving after the County Board approved the measures April 6.

Earth Day is an annual event recognized April 22 to demonstrate support for environmental advocacy and protection. First designated in 1970, it is now celebrated around the world. Washington County Parks are designating April 22 as an annual free day to visit the parks without purchasing a vehicle permit.

Held every year since 2008, National Get Outdoors Day is a day intended to inspire and motivate communities to get outside for a healthy and fun day of outdoor adventure and to celebrate nature exploration. Parks across the nation continue to celebrate each year to promote access to safe outdoor spaces and support under-resourced communities.

Washington County Parks will designate the second Saturday in June as a free day to visit county Parks without purchasing a vehicle permit. This will replace Explore Your Parks Day, which had traditionally been the first Saturday in June.

The Friday after Thanksgiving is traditionally the busiest shopping day of the year and several outdoor agencies waive entrance fees to encourage the public and communities to spend more time in

the outdoors. Washington County Parks will designate the Friday after Thanksgiving as a free day to visit county parks without purchasing a vehicle permit.

For information on county parks locations and hours, see the county website at co.washington.mn.us and search “parks.”

Contact: Alex McKinney, Parks Manager, 651-430-4364

Valley Paving will do pavement preservation on CSAH 18

Valley Paving will do pavement preservation work on County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 18, or St. Croix Trail South, in Lakeland and Lakeland Shores after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$197,272 contract with the company April 6.

The project will resurface the pavement from 285 feet north of Seventh Street South to 600 feet south of Hudson Road that are failing.

Contact: Eden Rogers, Engineer I, 651-430-4352

Sheriff's Office receives grant for speed enforcement

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive a \$22,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety, to pay for extra enforcement for speed and aggressive driving from Feb. 15 through Sept. 30.

The County Board accepted the grant April 6.

The program is to combat the increased speeds and rising number of speed-related traffic fatalities on Minnesota's roads. This grant requires a local county match of \$4,200 that will be funded by levy dollars.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Board recognizes 9-1-1 Public Safety Dispatchers in county

The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized the county's 9-1-1 Public Safety Dispatchers in Washington County in honor of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week April 11-17.

In 1994, a presidential proclamation was made to designate the second full week in April as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. The National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week honors all of those who help those in need through the use of telecommunications.

The Washington County proclamation thanks and honors the men and women who serve every day as public safety dispatchers by adopting a resolution proclaiming the week of April 11 - April 17, 2021, as National Public Safety Telecommunications Week in Washington County.

The board noted that when an emergency occurs, the prompt response of law enforcement, firefighters, and paramedics is critical to the protection of life and preservation of property; and the safety of citizens, law enforcement officers, firefighters, and paramedics is dependent upon the quality and accuracy of information obtained from citizens who telephone the Washington County Communications Center. 9-1-1 telecommunicators and dispatchers are a critical first contact with residents during an emergency and are often considered the community's "first" first responders who exhibit compassion, understanding, and professionalism during the performance of their job.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Board celebrates Employee Recognition Awards

The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized employees for exceptional service April 6, with the county's Employee Recognition Awards.

The program honors exemplary performance in the areas of customer service, employee engagement, innovation, teamwork, and excellence in county government.

Throughout 2020, county employees nominated fellow employees for the service awards. A committee of six county employees gathered in February to review, provide feedback, and make recommendations on the nominations to the County Board's Personnel Committee.

The Customer Service Award honors an individual or team whose performance exemplifies the county value of ensuring services delivered to the public are up to the organization's highest standards and consistently meet or exceed the needs of external customers.

The recipients of the Customer Service Award are Therese Gilbertson, Allison Kier, and Laura Erickson from Community Services for their work with homeless individuals during the COVID-19

pandemic, and Carroll Davis-Johnson from Public Health & Environment (PHE) for her work in coordinating essential services requests during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As many people were moving to work remotely and limiting in-person interactions with clients at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Gilbertson, Kier, and Erickson were doing the opposite. This team donned personal protective equipment and went out into the county looking for homeless individuals to assist. They drove many miles to rest areas, parking lots, campgrounds, and parks in the hope of assisting as many people in need as possible. They delivered daily necessities, such as food, personal hygiene items, face masks, and sanitizers to young families, individuals who had been homeless for decades, and individuals with compromised immune systems. In addition to providing supplies, the team also worked to find shelter and housing for more than 150 individuals through November 2020. Davis-Johnson was nominated for her work as a lead staff person managing essential services requests for basic needs items, including food, medication, cleaning supplies, and/or medical equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Davis-Johnson received and responded to requests from case investigators at the Minnesota Department of Health and from the county's own PHE department. Each request was unique. Davis-Johnson took time to understand what was needed and created systems for meeting those needs. Davis-Johnson has covered requests seven days a week to match community needs. She has shopped for and made deliveries to many residents as part of her role. Through Dec. 31, 2020, Davis-Johnson and the essential services team fielded nearly 450 requests from individuals in the community on isolation or quarantine.

The Employee Engagement Award honors an individual or team who encourages and promotes an environment within the county in which all employees are committed to the mission of the organization and motivated to work hard and perform their best.

The recipient of the Employee Engagement Award is Jill Timm. Timm was nominated for her work in engaging the employees she supervises in the Public Health & Environment department. This nomination came with support from many people who work with Timm. According to the employees she supervises, Timm is skilled at providing personalized opportunities for learning, growth, and leadership, and she has a passion for developing employees. She wants an employee's work to be interesting and engaging. When staff is interested, they have opportunities to take on new projects that might bring a new challenge to the day-to-day work duties. Timm promotes self-care and work-

life balance. She responds to her team with compassion and encouragement. Through her work, she has made a positive impact on the organization and, by extension, the community.

The Innovation Award honors innovation and creativity in delivering services in a more efficient or effective manner. The recipient of the Innovation Award is Jake McNulty. McNulty was nominated for his work in creating a virtual option for cognitive skills classes in Washington County through Community Corrections. Research has shown that these classes have a significant impact on recidivism, reducing the likelihood of re-offense by approximately 30 percent. With the outbreak of COVID-19, face-to-face group classes were put on hold. McNulty knew the benefits of these classes and wanted to continue offering them, so, rather than waiting for a virtual option, he created one. With McNulty's quick troubleshooting, the classes had minimum disruption and were converted to virtual classes in just three weeks. Because of this innovative work, Washington County was one of the first criminal justice organizations in the nation to implement virtual cognitive group programming. To ensure the success and integrity of the program, curriculum authors were consulted as materials were adapted and the authors were invited to observe the virtual class. This early adaptation made Washington County a resource nationally with agencies reaching out for technical assistance. Through McNulty's leadership, innovation, and hard work, Washington County has continued to provide top quality direct client-facing services throughout the pandemic.

The Teamwork Award honors a team of employees who have worked collaboratively to deliver exceptional services or bring about a new program, process, procedure, or method of service delivery. The recipients of the Teamwork Award are members of the Homemade Mask team and the Emergency Operations Center section chiefs team. The Homemade Mask team was nominated for its role in expanding a community-focused homemade mask collection to meet the needs of the entire county. At the beginning of the pandemic, community volunteers stepped up and donated masks and mask-making kits in mass quantities. The county responded to this initiative by developing a process to make masks and deliver them to vulnerable populations.

That included collecting material donations, distributing and collecting mask prep kits, distributing mask sewing kits, collecting homemade masks, and distributing homemade masks. Together with community organizations, Washington County received and distributed 15,000 homemade masks to more than 100 facilities, including long-term care facilities, clinics, and schools. In addition to

providing service to the community, this project also led to new relationships internally and with community partners.

The Homemade Mask team includes Rick Tungseth, Nathan Heilman, Reese Glaser, Jerome Evans, Charlie Ihrke, Sara Morrell, Scott Wahl, and Michael Krueger from Community Corrections; Jacob Burton, Julie Sorrem, Glenda Apman, Jennifer Johnson, Jodie Anderson, and Karrie Sagness from Human Resources; Adam Snegosky from Information Technology; Justina Pope, Jeff Travis, Kathleen Nyquist, and Mark Riegel from Public Health & Environment; Alyson Vogel, Greg Wood, Jamie Darst, and Rosemary Peterson from Public Works; and Douglas Berglund from the Sheriff's Office.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) section chiefs were nominated for their work in leading the county's response to COVID-19. This group has and continues to serve in the Incident Command System (ICS), a critical role in assuring consistent service delivery, while effectively integrating measures for employee safety. Their efforts afforded countywide transparent communication both internally and externally, as well as provided fiduciary responsibility for more than \$30 million in federal grants by using newly developed documentation measures.

Because of the skill, talent, and dedication of these county workers, operational procedures and policies were developed, integrated, and improved along the way. The Logistics team processed more than 1,000 resource requests. The Planning team developed 57 situational reports, with an equal number of Incident Action Plans, organized and facilitated more than 100 WebEx meetings, and documented pandemic resource allocations. In addition to the Finance section's approval analysis of more than 1,000 resource requests, it processed several Federal Emergency Management Agency applications for federal reimbursement. All of this was accomplished by individuals who continued to work in their regular assigned role in the county.

EOC Section Chiefs are Tabatha Hansen and Dee Bernard from Accounting and Finance; Tina Simonson from the Office of Administration; Rebecca Conroy from Community Services; Angela Eastman and Caitlin Suginaka from Public Health & Environment; Rosemary Peterson from Public Works; and Kelli Matzek and Lee Dhein from the Sheriff's Office.

The Excellence in County Government Award honors an individual or group of individuals who has made an outstanding contribution to Washington County and contributed to meeting the county's

vision as a great place to live, work, and play...today and tomorrow. The 2021 recipient of the Excellence in County Government Award is Vivien Fowler.

Fowler was nominated for her work in the Cottage Grove CareerForce Center. Fowler continually delivers exceptional customer service for job seekers, ensuring that they can achieve the career success they are seeking, providing economic stability for individuals and families. The CareerForce Center in Cottage Grove is consistently acknowledged by the state as having one of the highest customer satisfaction ratings through feedback provided by customers.

Fowler's reputation for assisting individual job seekers is at such a high level that she is sought out by people from across the metro area and western Wisconsin.

"Thank you" messages are commonly sent to her and the State Department of Employment and Economic Development. Fowler also regularly volunteers for and supports other county department efforts, such as food distribution centers, early voting, and working with Community Corrections on individuals exiting its system.

Contact: Kirsta Sanchez, Public Information Specialist, 651-430-6008

Minger Construction Companies will rebuild Farney Creek Dam in Lake Elmo park

Minger Construction Companies Inc. will reconstruct the Farney Creek Dam and outlet in Lake Elmo Park Reserve, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$279,965 contract with the company April 6.

The dam is in the remote western part of the Lake Elmo Park Reserve in the City of Lake Elmo. The Farney Creek Dam was constructed in the 1980s to prevent flooding of Farney Creek. Since that time, a larger repair/maintenance project is needed to restore functionality and replace the failing outlet and piping. The dam was inspected in 2016, and the pipe was in poor condition, and removal was determined not to be an option. A 2019 inspection showed that the pipe was failing, the dam was washing out, and significant sediment was accumulating behind the dam. A plan to replace the dam was created, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources issued a permit for the plan. The work will be paid for with County Program Aid, and is anticipated to be completed before the end of June.

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

County Board receives update on county's vaccination work

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received an update April 6 on the county's work on community COVID-19 vaccinations.

As of March 31, 75,261 county residents have received at least one vaccine dose, and 46,544 have completed their vaccine series. Washington County staff have distributed more than 12,000 vaccines. The county distributes 100% of its allotted vaccines within three days of receipt.

The county, which has been providing community vaccination clinics based on the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) priority lists, has sought a larger space to conduct larger vaccination clinics. After conferring with community leaders throughout the county regarding the needs for such a large vaccination site, the county is finalizing a lease agreement for the former Herberger's store, which is on Washington Avenue South in Stillwater off of Highway 36. The county needed at least 25,000 square feet of exclusive space that could be used between now and the end of July. The space also needed to have power, water, restrooms, and be climate-controlled and Americans with Disabilities accessible. More than 20 locations were reviewed before the Herberger's site was chosen. For more information, and for an opening date of the vaccination site, see the county's website at www.co.washington.mn.us and search "COVID-19 vaccination." The county will continue to follow MDH vaccination guidance and prioritize people in the groups that carry the highest risk through targeted outreach and communications. To ensure clinics are full, county clinic appointments will be added to the county's COVID-19 vaccine webpage as they become available.

Residents are encouraged to take the first vaccine offered to them through any avenue, such as a health care provider, public health clinic, employer, or pharmacy provider.

All Minnesotans who have not yet been vaccinated should sign up for the COVID-19 Vaccine Connector to find out when, where, and how to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Minnesotans may also use the Vaccine Locator Map to find local vaccine providers.

Contact: Yvonne Klinnert, Public Information Manager, 651-430-6026