



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

Date: April 13, 2021
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the April 13, 2021, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board accepts donations to county for first quarter of 2021

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted donations made to the county during the first quarter of 2021 April 13.

The county's Library received donations of \$1,640.61 during the first quarter. Most donations were in memory of Sandra Heikkila and Bonnie Prokosch, with the remainder coming from donation boxes at the libraries.

Other donations of \$104.50 were for the Historic Courthouse and trail enhancements in county parks.

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County Board recognizes April as National County Government Month

The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized April as National County Government Month April 13.

The National Association of Counties (NACo) has proclaimed April 2021 as National County Government Month in appreciation of county government employees who provide services for residents in Washington County. This year's theme is "Counties Matter."

The employees of Washington County provide core and mandated services of county government to more than 260,000 residents each day. County services range from public health and environmental services to law enforcement and prosecution, from probation to community services that support

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those with mental illness, disabilities, or the elderly, from elections to roads and parks, and from libraries to all the internal services needed to deliver all county services.

By adopting a resolution, the County Board recognized, congratulated, and thanked all Washington County employees who fulfill the county's mission by providing quality services through responsible leadership, innovation, and the cooperation of dedicated people.

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

County Board recognizes National Crime Victims' Rights Week

The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized April 18-24 as National Crime Victims' Rights Week April 13.

County Attorney Pete Orput requested the designation to remind residents that every April the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) helps lead communities throughout the country in their annual observances of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) by promoting victims' rights and honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This year's theme, Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities., emphasizes the importance of leveraging community support to help victims of crime. This is the 40th anniversary of NCVRW.

Contact: Pete Orput, County Attorney, 651-430-6115

County Board approves application for liquor license

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an application for a liquor license for Holiday Station Stores in Denmark Township April 13.

The company does business as Point Liquors at 12370 Point Douglas Road, Hastings.

Washington County processes all liquor licenses for townships within the county. The county reviews the necessary information for the license, and the Sheriff's Office, Attorney's Office, and the Department of Public Health & Environment complete compliance/verification checks.

All requirements for the application have been completed, and the appropriate fees were paid by the applicant. The license fees pay for the cost of the county for administration, compliance, and verification checks.

Contact: Steve Gransee, Taxpayer Services Manager at 651-430-8272

County Board receives annual report from Metropolitan Mosquito Control District

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received its annual report from Stephen Manweiler, executive director of the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District, April 13.

Mosquitoes are major carriers of diseases that can be fatal to humans. They live in water bodies that may be permanent, caused by cyclical flooding, or in human-made containers.

The mosquito control district provided a number of services to Washington County in 2020. They included:

- 6,420 sites inspected for larval surveillance;
- 14,588.44 acres treated for larval control;
- 1,438.16 acres treated for adult mosquito control;
- 23,475 catch basins treated for disease prevention;
- 1,753 tires collected and recycled for disease prevention; and
- 354 customer inquiries responded to for information or service.

One of the diseases carried by mosquitoes is West Nile virus; in 2018, there were 63 cases in the state, with two fatalities. In 2019, there were three cases, with no fatalities, and no cases were reported in 2020.

La Crosse encephalitis is another disease that is carried by mosquitoes, as well as Jamestown Canyon virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, and Zika virus.

The mosquito control district fights the insect in three ways: killing the larvae, killing the adults, and reducing the habitat for the larvae. The district also works to control black flies, and surveys for ticks that carry Lyme disease.

The district uses a number of precautions to assure that good insects, such as bees, are not killed while killing the mosquitoes.

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

County Board provides additional time to pay certain property taxes without penalty

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed April 13 to provide additional time to pay 2021 first half property taxes without penalty for certain property owners.

As set by state law, the due date for the first half of annual property tax payments for most property owners is May 17.

Property owners who continue to feel the impacts and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and have non-escrow properties listed will be allowed to pay current property taxes due by or before June 15, 2021, without the imposition of penalty.

This affects:

- commercial/industrial properties with a total 2021 total tax due of \$100,000 or less;
- residential properties; and
- agricultural/rural vacant land properties.

Residential properties would include both homesteaded properties and non-homesteaded properties. Property tax payments made by lending companies, banks, or mortgage companies of funds collected via escrow payments from property owners are not eligible for this extension and payments are expected to be made on or prior to the May 17, 2021, deadline.

All property owners who are able to pay their first half property taxes by the due date are encouraged to do so to help support the county, school, and city operations and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

County Board reviews potential to raise transportation tax

The Washington County Board of Commissioners reviewed a proposal to increase the county's Transportation Sales, Use & Excise Tax April 13 during a workshop.

The board had previously studied the proposal for nearly a year during 2019, but suspended discussion once the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in March 2020.

The tax, generally referred to as the Local Option Sales Tax, state law allows local governments to levy a sales and use tax of up to .5% and a vehicle excise tax of up to \$20 per vehicle. Washington County currently has a .25% sales and use tax, and a \$20 vehicle excise tax. Fifty-one other counties in the state have similar taxes. The County Board must conduct a public hearing to raise the tax.

The revenue raised by the tax may be used for roads or bridges, and for both capital and operating costs of transit projects.

The board reviewed a proposal to increase the county's Local Option Sales Tax to .5%, and maintain the \$20 excise tax. The board also reviewed a list of projects that would benefit from the increased sales tax. If the tax were to be increased, it is estimated that it would raise \$21 million in 2022, as opposed to the \$10.8 million that was raised by the tax in 2020.

Previously, the county was part of the Counties Transit Improvement Board, which imposed a .25% sales and use tax, and a \$20 per vehicle excise tax. That board was disbanded in 2017, and Washington County maintained the taxes, and approved its uses.

Transportation funding from state sources is not keeping pace with the expense of building roads and bridges, and the proceeds from both the motor vehicle leased tax and the wheelage tax are not increasing. With Washington County's population growth, the county is responsible for expanding highways to meet that growth, and rebuilding interchanges to improve safety for the traveling public. General road maintenance is also falling behind, and the pavement on county roads is deteriorating more quickly than there are resources to repair it. Other road projects in the county are backlogged. If the board chooses to move the tax increase ahead, it would set a public hearing, and then make a decision later this year. The county must report its decision to the state Department of Revenue before the tax may be collected.

Contact: Wayne Sandberg, County Engineer/Deputy Public Works Director, 651-430-4339, and Tabatha Hansen, Accounting and Finance Director, 651-430-6027