

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

Date: June 22, 2021
Contact: Yvonne Klinnert, Public Information Manager
Phone: 651-430-6026, after hours 952-807-3723
E-mail: yvonne.klinnert@co.washington.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the June 22, 2021, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County will add social workers to respond to calls involving mental illness, chemical health needs

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the addition of two social workers to county staff June 22, to assist the Sheriff's Office and the Woodbury Police Department when responding to calls that may involve those with a mental illness or chemical health needs.

The new employees will work within what is called a co-response model. A co-response model, although varying in practice, typically consists of law enforcement personnel and mental health professionals working together to respond to calls involving mental health or chemical health needs. This could be a real-time response to an active crisis situation or a follow-up contact/case management service following an incident.

The benefits of this model are associated with reduced pressure on the justice system and stronger links to community supports. Co-responder models have positive, measurable effects on how law enforcement and other first responders handle mental health crises. Individuals in crisis report feeling less threatened and stigmatized in interactions with co-response teams as compared to interactions with law enforcement alone.

The model proposed is a ride-along hybrid. In this model, a law enforcement and a mental health professional respond to incidents together in one vehicle, with incidents consisting of active crisis situations and follow-up case management services for mental health incidents.

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

Each position will cost approximately \$100,400 each. One of the positions is fully funded with money from federal and state governments, and the Woodbury Police Department, and that person will work directly with the Woodbury Police Department. The other position will be funded by federal and state money, and \$65,600 in county levy funds, and work with Washington County's Sheriff's Office.

Contact: Kathy Mickelson, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6532

County Board accepts grant for supportive housing for those with disabilities, housing instability

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted a \$261,355 grant June 22 from the state Department of Human Services to provide housing support for the next two years.

The state, through its Community Living Infrastructure grant, allocates funds to develop community living infrastructure throughout the state. The grant funds activities to provide support for people with disabilities and housing instability who want to live in the community. Activities paid for include outreach efforts, assistance from a housing resource specialist, and funding to administer and monitor the Housing Support Program.

Washington County uses this funding for the management of the Housing Support program, emergency shelter planning, and outreach services, which are essential to connect those experiencing homelessness to services and housing opportunities in the community.

This grant includes a slight increase of almost \$13,000 for the biennium.

Contact: Sarah Tripple, Community Services Planning & Program Manager, 651-430-6480

Washington County Library receives \$30,000 from anonymous donor

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted \$30,000 from an anonymous donor June 22.

The Washington County Library has received donations for more than 15 years from this donor, who wishes to remain anonymous. In the past, the library has used the donations to purchase materials, provide staff training, and offer additional programs. The library expects the funds be used on projects to make Washington County Library more welcoming and inclusive. Projects will include

translations into various languages of print and website content, and improved signage and spaces within branches.

Contact: Aubrey Fonfara, Communications Specialist, 651-275-8504

Washington County will participate in Mapping Prejudice Project

Washington County will participate in the Mapping Prejudice Project, after the County Board approved an agreement with the University of Minnesota Libraries June 22.

The county has been asked by the University of Minnesota Board of Regents to participate in its Mapping Prejudice Project, a research initiative that involves identifying and mapping racial covenants in property deeds.

The project will identify and document any racial covenants in property deeds filed in Washington County. Under this agreement, Washington County will allow the University of Minnesota bulk access to property record images free of charge for deeds filed from 1910 to 1968.

Contact: Debra Ledvina, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Director, 651-430-6182

County Board approves amendments to county development code to coordinate membership between citizen advisory groups

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved amendments to the Washington County Development Code June 22 to enable coordination of membership between the Planning Advisory Commission (PAC) and the Board of Adjustment and Appeals (BAA) as recommended by the Planning Advisory Commission.

In 2018, a significant amount of land use authority was assumed by townships, resulting in a reduction in the volume of work for the PAC and BAA, with less frequent meetings. That created practical challenges for the efficient functioning of the committees and for making effective use of the time of residents' who serve as members. The County Board has reviewed the potential changes, and conducted a public hearing June 1 to receive public comments on the changes.

To implement the changes, sections of the Washington County Development Code that set out the makeup of the two boards needed to be repealed and replaced. The County Board referred the issue to the PAC for its study, report, and recommendation. At its meeting in April, the PAC made a

recommendation to the County Board to repeal and replace sections of the Development Code by ordinance.

Under the merger, the county will maintain the two boards, with identical membership, with seven members each. Meetings will be conducted on the same date, one after the other.

The transition to the new configuration of the PAC and BAA will occur as individual appointments expire or resignations occur, and no current member will be asked to relinquish an appointment.

Contact: Kurt Howard, Planner II, 651-430-4307

County Board proclaims July Park and Recreation Month in Washington County

The Washington County Board of Commissioners proclaimed July as Park and Recreation Month in Washington County.

The County Board made the proclamation June 22. County parks and trails are used by more than 2 million visitors each year.

The board's resolution noted that parks and recreation are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in communities, ensuring the health of all residents, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and region. Also, parks and recreation programs build healthy, active communities, and aid in the prevention of chronic disease, provide therapeutic recreation services for those with mental or physical disabilities, and improve the mental and emotional health of all residents. Parks and recreation programs increase a community's economic prosperity through increased property values, expansion of the local tax base, increased tourism, the attraction and retention of businesses, and crime reduction. The parks and natural recreation areas improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of the air, provide vegetative buffers to development, and produce habitat for wildlife.

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