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

Date: July 5, 2016
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the July 5, 2016, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

Washington County's top bond ratings recognized

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received recognition from its municipal advisor July 5 for retaining its highest bond ratings from two ratings agencies.

Kathy Aho of Springsted, Inc., presented a framed plaque containing the bond ratings to the county board.

As part of the planned \$20 million General Obligation Capital Improvement Bonds awarded in April, the county staff participated in rating calls, one with Moody's and one with Standard & Poor's. The county staff presented information and examples related to property taxes and demographics, financial reporting and management, budget and debt planning, and several exhibits that represented the sound financial management by the county.

Standard & Poor's assigned its "AAA" long-term rating to Washington County, and at the same time affirmed its "AAA" long-term rating on the county's existing general obligation debt issued by the county and Washington County Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Standard & Poor's gave the county a "stable outlook," and highlighted the county's "very strong economy, very strong management, very strong budgetary performance, very strong budgetary flexibility, very strong liquidity and adequate debt and contingent liability profile."

Moody's Investor Services assigned a "Aaa" rating to Washington County and, concurrently, maintained the "Aaa" rating on the county's outstanding general obligation debt. Moody's stated that

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"the outlook remains stable." It further noted in its credit opinion that the "stable outlook reflects our expectation that the county's economic and financial performance will remain strong and the debt burden manageable."

Key credit strengths highlighted were "favorably located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area" and "strong financial operations with ample reserves and conservative budgeting practices."

Aho reported that five counties in Minnesota enjoy AAA ratings from both Standard & Poor's and Moody's, and that Moody's has rated only 84 counties of the more than 3,000 counties in the country with the highest ratings.

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

Photo: Washington County commissioners and staff display a plaque showing the county's top bond ratings. Commissioner Gary Kriesel, District 3, Administrator Molly O'Rourke, Deputy Administrator Kevin Corbid, commissioners Lisa Weik, District 5, and Fran Miron, District 1, Accounting and Finance Director Tabatha Hansen, and Commissioner Karla Bigham, District 4, show off the plaque with Kathy Aho, a representative from Springsted, Inc.

Huntley to serve on homeless prevention committee

Kristin Huntley, Stillwater, will serve on the Washington County Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program Citizen Advisory Committee after the County Board made the appointment July 5.

She will serve a term expiring June 30, 2019.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to provide public input and increase the accountability of the Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program in Washington County. This advisory committee is established under state law.

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

Washington County will work with FamilyWise Services to serve children of color

Washington County will work with FamilyWise Services to provide services to children and families of color.

The County Board approved a contract with the organization July 5, and will use \$112,530 from a grant from the state Department of Human Services to support programs for families of color. FamilyWise has a reputation for providing effective services to diverse populations and has 40 years of success with high-risk families affected by cultural/racial marginalization, poverty, and trauma. Through the High Fidelity Wraparound Services Program, FamilyWise will provide culturally-specific early intervention services to families and youth with serious, unaddressed or poorly supported mental health, emotional, and behavioral issues. The model works with children and families to:

- integrate natural supports and informal services that address specific cultural needs;
- build self-efficacy from experiences of success in making changes on a family-directed, unified plan that engages both natural supports and professional resources; and
- gain skills in social and emotional competence and learn to manage their own crises and become less dependent on professional supports.

The county intends to serve 20 children and families of color through 2018, with the goal of decreasing the over-representation of children of color in the county child welfare system.

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

County Board approves WorkForce Center local plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the WorkForce Center's local plan for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Action for work through June 30, 2017, July 5.

The Washington County Workforce Center (WFC) conducts a planning process on how to make the best use of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding for job seekers and businesses. The planning process takes place on both the state and local levels each year, as Workforce Development Boards in Minnesota develop plans that support the goals of WIOA and the state's plan.

The WFC's Local Plan includes strategies and guidelines on how it will ensure the adult, youth, and dislocated worker programs deliver services to job seekers in compliance with state and federal policies. The Local Plan highlights the partnership and initiatives for the year. The plan ensures the WFC is operating programs within guidelines of the Department of Labor.

Contact: Robert Crawford, Workforce Center Division Manager, 651-275-8660

County wraps up work, payments for work on CSAH 21

The Washington County Board of Commissioners reviewed the final work on a pavement preservation project on County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 21, or Stagecoach Trail, July 5, which included road work done in West Lakeland Township, Afton, and Denmark Township.

The project was a 7.4-mile pavement preservation project done in 2015 on a highway on which a large portion is designated as a Natural Preservation Route.

The project replaced the pavement and drainage along the route. The roadway also had limited shoulders. The deteriorated road required a full-depth reclamation to make the road structurally sound. The poor condition of the base of the roadbed required extra work and materials, making the final cost of the roadway a 12 percent increase over the original contract.

The pavement preservation project was paid for with state aid.

Contact: Frank Ticknor, Design Engineer, 651-430-4319

County will work with engineers from Kimley-Horn

Engineers from Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., will work along with Washington County public works staff to assist on major projects across the county, after the County Board approved a contract with the company July 5.

Engineers from the Kimley-Horn have been working on Washington County projects during the past year. Future projects that the engineers will work on will be:

- County State Aid Highway 24 (Osgood Avenue) pavement management and safety improvement;
- Highway 61 and CSAH 19 interchange improvement project;
- Cottage Grove Ravine Park entrance road and parking lot improvement project; and
- County Road 75 Channel Crossing on Grey Cloud Island.

The new contract is for \$195,000 for projects' design and construction through 2017. The contract calls for work by a project manager and access to consultant expertise on the projects.

Contact: Frank Ticknor, Design Engineer, 651-430-4319

County staff will receive assistance with storm sewer inspections

Visu-Sewer, Inc., will perform storm sewer inspections in Washington County in preparation for roadway projects, after the County Board approved a \$52,255 contract with the company July 5.

Washington County inspects storm sewer piping in advance of roadway projects so that any needed maintenance or repairs of the pipes can be accomplished as a part of the road project

The following pavement management projects are scheduled for either 2017 or 2018. The company will conduct condition assessments of the corresponding storm sewer segments on:

- County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 13 (Ideal Avenue North) from 36th Street to CSAH 6 on the border of Oakdale and Lake Elmo;
- CSAH 19 (Woodbury Drive) from Park Crossing to Tamarack Road in Woodbury;
- CSAH 24 (Osgood Avenue) from the north side of the railroad track to 400 feet south of 49th Street, and from the intersection of CSAH 24 and CSAH 14 (47th Street North) to 230 feet east in Baytown Township;
- County Road 52 (Oakhill Road) from Highway 95 (St. Croix Trail) to Highway 97 (Scandia Trail North) in Scandia.

The work will be done in 2017 prior to the roadwork.

Contact: Frank Ticknor, Design Engineer, 651-430-4319

County will work with state agency for performance measurement training

The Management, Analysis, and Development Division of the office of Minnesota Management and Budget will work with Washington County for training of the county's Performance Measurement and Improvement Team (PerMIT) members.

The County Board approved a contract with the organization July 5.

Since the mid-1990s, Washington County has tracked, reported, and monitored performance measures to support decision-making and to drive continued improvement in its core functions and the services it provides. A countywide workgroup of employees meets on a monthly basis to advance the performance measurement and quality improvement efforts of the organization.

PerMIT, which includes employees from each county department, has experienced significant turnover during the past year, with almost half of its membership changing. A series of training opportunities for PerMIT members related to performance measurement, quality improvement, change management, and facilitation skills to further the county's focus on data-driven decision making will be available to the group's new members.

The trainers will teach approximately 30 county employees Results Based Accountability, an approach that many state and local government agencies in Minnesota are using to connect their programs' performance to measurements by easy-to-answer questions about the program, such as “how much did we do, how well did we do it, and is anyone better off.”

The contract is for \$3,375.

Contact: Amanda Hollis, Senior Planner, 651-430-6021