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Date: June 13, 2017
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the June 13, 2017, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County will receive grant to investigate potential fraud in public assistance

Washington County will receive a \$170,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to investigate fraud in public assistance programs over the course of two years, after the County Board approved the grant June 13.

The Fraud Prevention Investigation (FPI) program is a partnership involving county public assistance program staff and Sheriff's Office investigators to ensure that appropriate public assistance benefits are issued to people who are eligible to receive them. The program's focus is to quickly identify and resolve instances where applicants are receiving undeserved benefits, which helps ensure that federal, state, and county funding can be saved as well as made available to eligible families and individuals. State law sets forth the legal requirements and funding for the FPI program in the state, and requires an updated FPI plan for each biennium.

Contact: Linda Bixby, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6472

Bridges MN will provide group residential housing in Washington County

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an agreement with Bridges MN June 13, to provide group residential housing (GRH) in the county for the coming year.

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Equal Employment Opportunity / Affirmative Action

GRH is a state-funded income supplement program that pays for room and board costs for low-income adults with a disabling condition who have been placed in a licensed or registered setting that holds a formal agreement with the county. The current rate for GRH is \$891 per person per month. GRH providers may offer an array of services, but at a minimum they must include housing, utilities, household furnishings, toiletries, and food.

The program is designed for persons in need of regular supervision and assistance with daily activities. Each client receives individualized services based on level of need.

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

Stillwater Elks apply for temporary liquor license for event at Kissing Birch Farm

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the application for a temporary on-sale liquor license for the Stillwater Elks No. 179 June 13 for a special event at Kissing Birch Farm in Stillwater Township in September.

The event will be Sept. 9 and 10 at the farm, and the Elks will contract with Bridge Banquet, LLC, for the event.

The Sheriff's Office has been notified of the event, the requirements for issuing this license have been met, and the appropriated fee has been paid.

Contact: Steve Gransee, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Division Manager, 651-430-8272

County will receive grant to prepare for health emergencies

Washington County will receive a \$176,676 grant from the Minnesota Department of Health for public health emergency preparedness and the Cities Readiness Initiative.

The County Board accepted the grant June 13.

The county has received grant funds for a number of years through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's federal program administered by the state to assist in preparing for health emergencies. The funds allow the county to plan, train, and exercise so that staff is ready and able to respond in the event of a health emergency. These activities include community partners, such as

local medical providers, school districts, police, fire and emergency medical services, and non-profit organizations.

The grant period is July 1 through June 30, 2022.

Contact: David Brummel, Public Health and Environment Deputy Director, 651-430-6662

County will continue to work with snowmobile club to manage state grants

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed June 13 to continue to sponsor the Star Trail Association and act as a pass-through agency for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for grants to pay for snowmobile trail maintenance and grooming.

The county first entered into a county/club agreement with the Star Trail Association in 1991, and has supported the funding application ever since. The snowmobile club cannot receive the grants-in-aid directly. All revenue received by the county on the club's behalf will be forwarded to the club. The grant amount varies slightly from year to year, but has averaged \$40,000.

The application is for the 2017-2018 snow season for grants that may be available.

Contact: Wayne Sandberg, County Engineer, Deputy Public Works Director, 651-430-4339

County requests funds to maintain cross-country ski trails in county parks

Washington County will apply for funds from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to pay for maintenance of cross-country ski trails within county parks, after the County Board approved the request June 13.

The DNR cross-country ski grant-in-aid program supports the maintenance and grooming of cross-country ski trails throughout the state. Washington County has participated in the program in prior years and wishes to continue. The board approved a request for \$21,428 in financial assistance for maintenance on cross-country ski trails at Pine Point Park, Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park, St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park, Big Marine Park Reserve, and Lake Elmo Park Reserve.

The program can fluctuate from year to year due to snowfall, and the needed ski trail grooming. The Parks Division will budget \$10,000 for 2018, and grant-in-aid funding received in excess of that will be added to the budget.

The county also requested reimbursement for its trail grooming costs for the past season. Parks staff groomed county ski trails 170 hours this past winter, 100 hours less than the year prior, making the county eligible for \$8,890 in reimbursement.

Contact: Dan MacSwain, Natural Resources Coordinator, 651-430-4323

County Board conducts public hearing on reimplementing transportation sales tax

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public hearing June 13 on reimplementing a transportation sales tax to replace a current sales tax being collected.

Two residents spoke at the hearing. It is expected that the board will take action on the transportation sales tax at its June 20 meeting.

Washington County is a member of the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) joint powers agreement, along with Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, and Ramsey counties. As a member of that organization, the county imposes a 0.25 percent sales tax to fund transit projects. The members of CTIB are considering options for the possible dissolution of that joint powers agreement.

As required by law, the county board conducted a public hearing to review a transportation plan and to consider a transportation sales tax allowed by state law. That transportation sales tax may only be considered if CTIB is dissolved, and the tax would replace the existing sales tax that is being imposed.

Washington County's comprehensive plan calls for the county to promote the development and use of a transit system that meets existing and future travel needs of the public, and to develop and maintain a roadway system that accommodates the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. That plan is in place partly to address a response to the 2015 Washington County Residential Survey, in which residents stated that the lack of access to public transit was the "most problematic issue" in the county.

With the reimplementation of the tax, the county transportation plan calls for:

- Capital and operating costs for transitways in CTIB Phase I and Phase 2 Program of Projects, which are:
 - Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit;
 - Red Rock Corridor Bus Rapid Transit;

- Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit Extension; and the
- Highway 36 Transitway; and
- operating costs for the Forest Lake and Newport transit stations.

The plan may be amended by future actions of the County Board.

Contact: Jan Lucke, Transit/Transportation Planner, 651-430-4316

SRF Consulting, Inc., will do study of Highway 36, Manning Avenue intersection

SRF Consulting, Inc., will do a study of the Highway 36 and Manning Avenue, or County State Aid Highway 15, intersection, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with the company June 13.

The \$419,636 contract is for the coming year.

Highway 36 is a critical east-west principal roadway and medium priority interregional corridor that serves the northeast metro to the Wisconsin border. Manning Avenue is a four-lane divided roadway that provides access to northern Washington County. The existing at-grade intersection of Highway 36 and Manning Avenue, which is where Grant, Lake Elmo, Oak Park Heights, Stillwater, and Stillwater Township meet, experiences significant congestion during morning and afternoon peak hours that will worsen with increased traffic volumes from the opening of the St. Croix Crossing bridge. The intersection also has a significant crash rate with crashes high in severity, and inadequate intersection spacing.

SRF will study the intersection and local roadway connections, and develop and evaluate interchange designs based on the needs of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the county, the cities and township, business, and the public's needs. The contract will provide the necessary public and agency involvement and interchange alternative analysis, and seek additional funding assistance for a grade separated interchange that will improve access management for the development area while benefiting pedestrians and stormwater drainage.

The SRF contract is funded by highway state aid. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2021.

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

County Board meets as board of appeal, equalization

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met as the County Board of Appeal and Equalization June 13, to hear concerns from property owners regarding the 2017 estimated market value of their property.

The 2017 assessments, which will be used to levy 2018 property taxes, are based on the analysis of residential “arms-length,” meaning not lender mediated, sales between October 2015 and September 2016.

A total of 100,206 valuation notices were mailed to property owners in March; 503 property owners contacted the county’s Assessor’s Office regarding their assessments, and 91 attended meetings already conducted in their communities to discuss their assessments.

The board heard from property owners at the June 13 meeting, and will act on each appeal at its June 20 meeting.

Contact: Jennifer Wagenius, Director Property Records and Taxpayer Services, 651-430-6182