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Date: Sept. 5, 2017
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Sept. 5, 2017, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board approves plat in Denmark Township

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a plat of Hidden Valley Acres Second Addition in Denmark Township Sept. 5.

The three-lot plat is north of 108th Street South and west of St. Croix Trail South.

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

County Board agrees to acquire easements for road improvements in Bayport, Baytown Township, Oak Park Heights, Stillwater

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Sept. 5 to acquire permanent and temporary easements for two county road projects that are planned for 2018.

The first project is County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 21, or Stagecoach Trail North, road improvements in Bayport and Baytown Township. The easements are expected to cost \$100,000, paid for with highway state aid.

The Stagecoach Trail North (CSAH 21) Corridor Improvement Project will:

- improve safety, capacity, and operations through intersection improvements;
- improve pavement quality;
- maintain the long-term transportation goals of the county and local communities; and

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- improve stormwater drainage.

The second project is County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 24 (Osgood Avenue) in Stillwater and Oak Park Heights. That project requires the acquisition of permanent right-of-way, permanent roadway easements, permanent drainage and utility easements, and temporary easements. The purchase of the right-of-way is expected to cost \$250,000 and will be funded with highway state aid.

The Osgood Avenue (CSAH 24) Corridor Improvement Project will:

- improve safety, capacity, and operation of intersections;
- improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities and access;
- improve any stormwater deficiencies; and
- improve the quality and life of the pavement.

Contact: Kevin Peterson, Engineer, 651-430-4330, and Allan Brandt, Engineer, 651-430-4348

County Board agrees to acquire right-of-way for Stillwater road project

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Sept. 5 to acquire right-of-way for the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 5 improvement project in Stillwater.

Right-of-way for the project is expected to cost \$50,000, paid for with highway state aid.

The reconstruction and improvements, together with the mill and overlay of the roadway, is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2018 and be completed by the fall.

Contact: Andrew Giesen, Engineer, 651-430-4336

TKDA will provide inspection services for Point Douglas Regional Trail bridge

TKDA will provide inspection services for a trail bridge that will connect the Point Douglas Regional Trail to the Hastings bridge trail after the Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to the \$135,000 contract with the company Sept. 5.

In 2016, Washington County began construction of a paved trail to connect Point Douglas Park with the new Hastings bridge. In August, the County Board awarded the construction contract for the bridge portion of the project. The TKDA contract is for construction inspection for the bridge, and contract administration.

The pedestrian bridge over the BNSF rail tracks will provide a connection between the new Hastings bridge trail and the newly-completed Point Douglas Regional Trail. The trail overlooks the backwaters and main channels of the Mississippi River, and provides a link between Point Douglas Park, Prescott, Wis., and Hastings.

The bridge is expected to be built between now and June 2018. The project is funded from a combination of state bonds through a Metropolitan Council grant, and county funds.

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

County Board continues review of 2018 county budget

The Washington County Board of Commissioners continued its review of the county's 2018 budget Sept. 5, specifically reviewing recommended budgets for the Library and the Department of Property Records and Taxpayer Services.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners began the 2018 county budget review in August, reviewing a recommended budget that would allow the county to continue to serve a growing and aging population, and address a growing demand for services. The recommended budget is estimated to lead to a 1 percent reduction in the county property tax rate, which would be the fourth year out of the last five in which the county tax rate would be reduced.

The recommended budget reflects increased funding for service mandates imposed by the state, but not funded or fully funded by the state; road construction and preservation; the continuation of a major crimes unit in the County Attorney's Office; technology improvements to ensure efficient operations, protect critical technology infrastructure, and secure private data; and the return of the Lake Elmo Library to the county system.

The recommended levy increase, and corresponding tax rate reduction, for 2018 would result in an annual property tax increase of about \$35 for the owner of the median valued home, which is \$257,000, assuming that home's value increased 4.9 percent during the past year. That dollar amount includes a \$3 increase in the voter-approved Land and Water Legacy program.

The Washington County Library saw almost 800,000 visitors in 2016, with a circulation of 1.97 million items. It provides 297 hours of service in six locations each week. Almost 50,000 people attended programs at the library.

The library's 2018 recommended budget would have \$8.1 million in revenue and expenditures. Almost 95 percent of the revenue is from the county property tax levy; personnel accounts for \$5.3 million in the recommended expenditures, with the rest being used for services and materials and supplies.

One of the expenditures that the library is planning for is the return of the Lake Elmo Library to the county library system. In 2012, the City of Lake Elmo chose to have its own library, thus the city collected the local library tax to support the city library. The city made the decision to return the library to the county, starting in 2018. That will add \$355,000 to the library levy and expenditures. In addition, the library will add Sunday hours at the Oakdale Library, and additional time to the teen librarian staff. The library will also use \$50,000 to add virtual reality tools to provide new ways for the community to interact with information and media throughout the county. The county will also spend \$75,000 to pay for a consultant to plan and design facility improvements at Valley Library. The County Board also reviewed the proposed 2018 budget for the Law Library; the Law Library's recommended \$318,700 budget will be used for personnel, services and charges, and materials and supplies. The Law Library receives more than 80 percent of its revenue from court fines and fees. The County Board also reviewed the recommended budget for the Department of Property Records and Taxpayer Services. The department provides assessment, property records, property tax, licensing, vital records, and elections services, with almost 98 employees working in the county's service centers and the Government Center.

The department's recommended \$9.4 million budget shows a third of its revenue from the property tax levy; the remainder is from fees. Expenditures for personnel are about 80 percent of the department's budget.

With 2018 being a general election year, the department will add two election special project employees, will add a location for residents to cast absentee ballots in Oakdale, and update its election management software, including adding e-poll books.

The County Board will be setting a preliminary levy Sept. 26. The board will continue to review the budget until it adopts the final 2018 budget Dec. 12. All budget meetings are open to the public, and will be in the Board Room of the Government Center, 14949 62nd St. N. in Stillwater. They are also

webstreamed on www.co.washington.mn.us, and the meetings are archived on the website. Find them by searching “County Board” on the website.