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Date: Sept. 26, 2017
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Sept. 26, 2017, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

Schmaltz will continue to serve on Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District board

Stephen Schmaltz, Forest Lake, was re-appointed to a second term on the Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District board by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Sept. 26.

Schmaltz will serve a second term, expiring Sept. 21, 2020.

Watershed district governance, required by state law, helps to control or alleviate damage by flood waters; improves stream channels for drainage or navigation; reclaims or fills wet or overflow lands; oversees water supply for irrigation; regulates the flow of streams; diverts or changes water courses; provides and conserves water supply; and provides for the protection of groundwater and regulation of groundwater use.

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

County Board approves comments on Downtown Stillwater plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a comment letter regarding the Downtown Stillwater Plan Sept. 26, part of a review process for that city's comprehensive plan. All local government units within the seven-county metropolitan region must prepare a comprehensive plan and update that plan every 10 years. The Metropolitan Council is charged with reviewing local comprehensive plans.

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Before formally submitting local comprehensive plan updates to the Met Council, local governments must provide adjacent and affected jurisdictions the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan, typically adjacent cities, towns and counties, school districts, and state and federal agencies.

The comments must be included with the formal plan update submittal.

The county letter points out possible streets in and near downtown that are currently county roads that could become city streets, and vice versa, now that traffic patterns have changed with the opening of the new St. Croix Crossing. It also asks for clarification regarding comments on biking routes in the city, and requests more detail on planning for housing, especially affordable housing, in any redevelopment plans set out for the city's downtown.

Contact: Colin Kelly, Planner, 651-430-6011

County will work with Solid Ground on homelessness prevention

Washington County will work with Solid Ground, formerly East Metro Women's Council, to prevent homelessness, after the County Board agreed to provide \$129,140 in homelessness prevention funds to the agency Sept. 26.

The grant is to be used between now and June 30, 2019. The money is from the state's Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program. The funds will be used to serve 32 households with families experiencing homelessness with support services and rent payment assistance through the Home Again program. The outcomes of the program are to ensure families and individuals will be permanently housed at the end of the program and will not re-enter shelters or become homeless within six months of leaving the program.

In 1993, the Minnesota Legislature established the program to assist families with children, youth/unaccompanied youth, and single adults who are experiencing barriers to housing stability. The program is conducted through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency with funds awarded on a biennial basis.

Washington County will serve as fiscal agent of the program, and will also compile reports to Minnesota Housing.

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

County Board agrees to use some proceeds from tax-forfeited land to fund parks

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set parameters for the use of proceeds from tax-forfeited lands Sept. 26, including a portion that will be used for the acquisition and maintenance of parks and recreational areas.

State law allows the County Board to set aside up to 20 percent of the net proceeds from the sale of tax forfeited property for the acquisition and maintenance of county parks or recreational areas.

The ownership of property that forfeits because of the non-payment of property taxes rests with the state and the counties are tasked with the management and disposition of the property. When a tax-forfeited property is sold to a governmental agency or the public, the proceeds are deposited into the county's tax-forfeited sale fund. Prior to any distribution of funds from this account, the department recovers the costs for management of the tax-forfeited land in the county.

From the net proceeds remaining, the distribution as established in state law is:

- 20 percent of fund proceeds to the county for acquisition and maintenance of county parks and recreational areas;
- of the remaining funds, 40 percent is distributed to the county general fund, 40 percent to the school district, and 20 percent to the city or township.

The financial implications for the county vary by year depending on the amount of sale proceeds from tax-forfeited land and maintenance costs.

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

CBM will continue food service agreement with county jail, cafeteria

CBM Managed Services will continue to provide food services for the Washington County Jail and the Government Center Cafeteria, after the County Board approved an agreement with the company Sept. 26.

CBM requested a renewal of the contract, with an increase in pricing of 0.9 percent for the new contract year starting Nov. 1, 2017, and ending Oct. 31, 2018. The current price per inmate meal is \$2.17; with the increase the new price per meal will be \$2.19.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

Sheriff's Office will use bequest to pay for use of garage, office in Afton

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will use a \$100,000 bequest to reimburse the City of Afton for a garage and office for the deputies who patrol in that city.

The County Board approved the use of the money Sept. 26.

The Sheriff's Office received the bequest from a trust that is to be used for the benefit of the deputies that patrol in the City of Afton. The city will build a garage and office for the use of the Washington County Sheriff's Office deputies who patrol the area. It will be built next to City Hall.

Washington County will reimburse the city \$100,000, the amount of the bequest, for the purpose of using the garage and office for 20 years. The city will provide all additional funds necessary to complete the project.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County submits report on progress made on affordable housing in past year

Washington County will submit a report to the federal government on its accomplishments in providing affordable housing to county residents, after the County Board reviewed the report Sept. 26.

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) details Washington County's progress toward meeting the goals outlined in the county's 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan and projects undertaken with 2016 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the HOME program funds.

The full report can be viewed on the Washington County Community Development Agency's (CDA) website at www.washingtoncountycda.org.

The CAPER details accomplishments, including:

- funds invested in projects and activities;
- households and persons assisted;
- actions taken to affirmatively further fair housing; and
- grant-funded projects that meet housing and community development needs in Washington County.

Washington County's program year 2016 accomplishments include:

- renovation of five CDA rental properties installing modernized fire panels, using \$157,059 in CDBG grants, assisting 347 low-and moderate-income households;
- seven home improvement loans, using \$169,353 in CDBG grants;
- street improvements in Landfall, using \$34,046 in CDBG grants for railings and concrete steps to serve the 686 residents;
- construction of 79 rental units at Piccadilly Square in Mahtomedi, using \$35,709 in CDBG grants and \$27,502 in HOME grants, serving 79 low- and moderate-income households;
- Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity finished and sold four single-family townhomes in Generation Acres Phase I, using \$4,833 in HOME grants, and began construction on a five-unit structure in Generation Acres Phase II, using \$149,513 in HOME grants, both in Hugo;
- construction of four single-family homes through Habitat for Humanity, using \$154,347 in HOME grants, and the use of \$79,500 in CDBG grants for Habitat for Humanity to do home rehabilitation; and
- Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity used \$79,500 in CDBG funds to acquire two vacant lots for single-family homes in St. Paul Park.

Funds of \$124,340 were also used to prevent homelessness by providing public services to 862 households with housing emergencies.

Washington County, as a member of the Fair Housing Implementation Council, did community engagement and identified additional barriers to equal housing opportunities. This resulted in an addendum to the 2014 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice report. The addendum was accepted by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development July 17.

The draft CAPER was released for public comment and published Sept. 1. The public comment period ended with a public hearing conducted by the CDA Sept. 19. A public hearing was also conducted Sept. 12 by the Dakota County HOME Consortium. No comments were received at any of the hearings.

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

Architects chosen to oversee rebuilding Park Grove, Wildwood libraries

Two architects were chosen by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Sept. 26 to develop plans to rebuild the Park Grove and Wildwood county library branches.

Hagen, Christenson & McIlwain Architects was chosen to design the Wildwood Library; a \$380,000 contract with the firm was approved by the board. Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, Inc., was chosen to design the Park Grove Library; a \$631,000 contract with the firm was approved by the board.

The Wildwood Library has been determined to require \$1.3 million in building repairs over the next five years; that projection does not include work required to repair the parking lot. The building is also not an efficient space, or flexible for library programs

The Park Grove Library has been determined to require \$2.4 million in building repairs over the next nine years; that project does not include work required to repair the parking lot.

The libraries are in the county's building plans for 2019. The library projects would be funded by the proceeds of tax exempt bonds to be issued by the county in 2019. The project schedule calls for a detailed design to be ready by next fall, with construction beginning in fall 2019. Occupancy would be in fall 2020.

The Wildwood Library was built in 1990, and the Park Grove Library was built in 1984. Both libraries have been evaluated by the county, and fall into a "needing improvement" in the county's facility condition index.

Contact: Joe Welter, Senior Buildings Services Manager Project Manager, 651-430-6226

County Board sets preliminary levy, adopts budget for 2018

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set the county's preliminary property tax levy for 2018 Sept. 26, and approved budgets for the county, the Regional Rail Authority, and the Community Development Agency.

Prior to its adoption, the County Board reduced the county property tax levy that was recommended by county administration Aug. 8.

The board has been reviewing the proposed budget since it was first introduced by county staff Aug. 8. The board also reviewed detailed budget recommendations from each of the county's departments. The preliminary levy may be reduced before the board sets a final levy in December, but it may not be raised.

The county's net tax levy is set at \$103.9 million, which includes \$335,000 to be levied to support the inclusion of the Lake Elmo Library into the county library system. This levy amount is estimated to produce a tax rate of 30.031, which is a 1.4 percent decrease from 2017.

The County Board also set a preliminary levy of \$776,800 for the Regional Rail Authority, and a \$5.05 million levy for the Community Development Agency.

It is anticipated that the county will receive \$109.8 million in non-levy revenue, an increase of 7.2 percent from 2017. Operating expenditures are anticipated to be \$176.5 million, an increase of 6.8 percent from 2017, with capital expenditures at \$31.9 million, an increase of 12.8 percent over 2017.

The recommended levy increase for 2018 would result in an annual property tax increase of about \$32 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.

County taxpayers benefit from continued growth in the county's tax base, with new construction up 17.5 percent over 2016, or almost \$427 million, which, coupled with the levy increase, will result in a tax rate drop for the county.

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; debt service; employee wages and benefits; 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 County Board will conduct a public hearing on the budget at 6 p.m. Dec. 5 in the Board Room of the Government Center, 14949 N. 62nd St., Stillwater. The final levy, budget, and capital improvement plan will be adopted Dec. 12.

All budget meetings are open to the public, and are in the Board Room of the Government Center.

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.

Contact: Kevin Corbid, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6003