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**Date:** Dec. 5, 2017  
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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

#### **County Board conducts hearing on 2018 budget, levy; final adoption Dec. 12**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a hearing on the county's 2018 budget and supporting levy Dec. 5.

The hearing was in preparation of approving the levy and budget at the board's Dec. 12 meeting.

Two residents spoke at the hearing.

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

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 could be reduced before the board sets a final levy Dec. 12, but it cannot be raised.

The county's net tax levy is proposed at \$103.5 million, which includes \$335,000 to be levied to support the inclusion of the Lake Elmo Library into the county library system, and \$1.1 million to support the county's voter-approved Land and Water Legacy Program. This levy amount is estimated to produce a tax rate of 29.952, which is a 1.6 percent decrease from 2017.

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

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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 \$176.3 million, an increase of 6.7 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 \$258,000, assuming that home's value increased 5.5 percent during the past year.

County taxpayers benefit from continued growth in the county's tax base, with new construction up 17.1 percent over 2016, or just more than \$425 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 proposed budget, when compared to spending plans for other metropolitan counties, shows that Washington County has a low employee per capita rate, low operating costs per capita, low net property tax levy per capita, and a low tax rate. The planned levy would also drop for the fourth year out of the last five years,

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](http://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**

### **County Board provides comment for City of Landfall comprehensive plan**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners provided comments for the City of Landfall comprehensive plan Dec. 5.

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.

Before formally submitting local comprehensive plan updates to the Met Council, local governments must allow neighboring jurisdictions the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan. The comments received from these jurisdictions and subsequent responses must be included with the formal plan update submittal.

The letter noted that the Washington County Community Development Agency works closely with the city and its Housing and Redevelopment Agency to maintain the affordability and the quality of the housing. It also notes that Tanners Lake is impaired with chloride, and the city may want to note the options the city could take.

The letter also suggested adding specific housing code information for the city's housing stock, and to address the access that residents have to healthy food, goods, and services.

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

### **County Board approves contract with HealthPartners for employee insurance, wellness benefits for 2018-2019**

Washington County employees will continue to be covered by HealthPartners health insurance and wellness benefits for 2018 and 2019 after the County Board extended a contract with the provider Dec. 5.

HealthPartners has offered a two-year extension for 2018 and 2019 to its current three-year contract with Washington County for employee health insurance and wellness benefits. The guaranteed rates represent an overall increase of 8.87 percent for 2018, and 7 percent for 2019 if a Well@Work onsite clinic is implemented in 2018; if no onsite clinic is implemented, then the 2019 guaranteed rates increase by an additional 2 percent.

State law requires that the county next issue a request for proposals in 2019 for coverage beginning in 2020.

**Contact: Jan Webster, Human Resources Director, 651-430-6075**