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Date: Dec. 12, 2017
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 12, 2017, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County will sell tax-forfeited land for various uses

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed to sell parcels of tax-forfeited land to a number of buyers Dec. 12, including county municipalities and a private company.

One parcel, a fifth of an acre of land, was sold to the City of Forest Lake. The city's sanitary sewer line runs through the land. The city will pay \$500, plus transactions cost of \$92.65.

According to state law, non-conservation tax-forfeited lands may be sold by the County Board, for their market value to another governmental subdivision of the state for any public purpose.

The county also recommended that the state Department of Revenue convey four other parcels of tax-forfeited land to the City of Forest Lake through conditional use deed. The parcels will be used for right-of-way for roadways, a lift station, and a forcemain adjacent to the lift station. The city must pay the costs of recording the land transfer.

Two other parcels in the City of Forest Lake, which were forfeited for non-payment of taxes in July, were sold to Alpine Capital, LLC, one for \$8,992.37, and one for \$9,603.77, which is the amount of delinquent taxes and other costs. The parcels were classified as non-homestead at the time of forfeiture. Repurchase of non-homestead property is allowed for six months from the date of forfeiture. By law, any party to whom the right to pay the property taxes on the parcel has been given by statute, mortgage, or other legal agreement, may apply for a repurchase. Alpine Capital was eligible to submit an application for repurchase.

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The County Board also approved the conveyance of tax-forfeited land parcels to the cities of Hugo and Oakdale for conservation purposes. Conservation lands may be sold to a governmental subdivision of the state for less than its market value under state law. The City of Hugo requested a parcel for preservation of wetlands and has agreed on a purchase price of \$500, plus transaction costs of \$77.65. The City of Oakdale requested two parcels for storm water management and has agreed on the purchase price of \$100 for one parcel, and \$500 for a second parcel. The state Department of Natural Resources approved the purchases.

The state requires the county to manage any tax-forfeited land in the county.

Contact: Steve Gransee, Elections Division Manager, 651-430-8272

County will seek state grant to help pay for new election equipment

Washington County will submit an application to the Minnesota Secretary of State for a grant to help pay to replace the county's election equipment.

The County Board approved the application Dec. 12.

State law authorized a statewide Voting Equipment Grant of \$7 million. To receive funds from the grant, the county must submit an application from the County Board.

The money would be used to purchase voting equipment for election administration.

Contact: Steve Gransee, Elections Division Manager, 651-430-8272

County will administer elections in Pine Springs, Grant in 2018

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved joint powers agreements with the cities of Pine Springs and Grant Dec. 12 to administer the cities' elections in 2018.

The cities approached the county to ask for election administration services for all elections that would be conducted by the cities, including the statewide primary and general election and any special elections in 2018. The cities have already approved the agreements.

The cost of the elections is reimbursed by the cities.

Contact: Steve Gransee, Elections Division Manager, 651-430-8272

State will pay county for wear, tear on county roads for detour of Highway 95 work

The State of Minnesota will pay Washington County \$2,714 for the road life consumed by planned detours of Highway 95 when the Minnesota Department of Transportation does road work in Stillwater in summer 2018.

The State of Minnesota will be constructing a portion of the "Upper Loop Trail," a component of the new St. Croix River Crossing, during summer 2018 on, along, and adjacent to Highway 95 from Sunnyside Drive to Chestnut Street in Stillwater. The improvements include construction of a storm sewer system on Highway 95, reinforcing the soils adjacent to the highway, and adding curb and gutter to manage highway drainage. The project will include constructing a bituminous trail, a parking lot, decorative pipe railings, signing, roadway striping, and traffic management infrastructure. Traffic must be detoured onto county highways to accomplish the improvements. The state will compensate the county for the road life consumed by the detour by means of the "Gas Tax Method," which factors in traffic counts, road length, and duration of the detour.

Traffic will be detoured onto Highway 36, County State Aid Highway 15 (Manning Avenue North), and Highway 96 (Dellwood Road) through Stillwater Township and the cities of Grant, Stillwater, and Oak Park Heights. Additional local route signing will be provided for traffic to and from downtown Stillwater.

Contact: Joe Gustafson, Traffic Engineer, 651-430-4351

Tenants will remain in county's Historic Courthouse, rent set for 2018

The Washington County Board of Commissioners extended the lease agreements Dec. 12 with tenants who rent office space in the county's Historic Courthouse in Stillwater.

The Youth Service Bureau has been renting office space at the Historic Courthouse since 2000.

The Youth Service Bureau will continue to rent 1,928 square feet, in what is historically known as the Sheriff's Residence. Its lease term will be for one year ending Dec. 31, 2018, with a monthly rent of \$2,260.42, which is an increase from 2017.

Valley Tours, Inc., has rented 306 square feet of office space on the first floor of the Historic Courthouse since 1995. The proposed amendment extends the term of the lease for one year through Dec. 31, 2018, with no change in the monthly rent of \$318.75.

The rent is used for Historic Courthouse operations.

Contact: Brad Swenson, Parks Manager, 651-430-4393

KLJ will design intersections along Keats Avenue in Lake Elmo, Cottage Grove

KLJ will do preliminary and final design engineering for intersection improvements of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 19 (Keats Avenue) at Hudson Boulevard in Lake Elmo and County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 19 (Keats Avenue) at Indian Boulevard in Cottage Grove, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$199,921 contract with the company Dec. 12.

The project involves constructing roadway improvements along Keats Avenue at the intersections of Hudson Boulevard and Indian Boulevard in coordination with the cities.

The immediate area to the northwest of Interstate 94 and CSAH 19/Keats Avenue is rapidly adding commercial and retail development. With housing developments also being constructed north of the study intersection, increasing traffic volumes have prompted the need for a traffic signal.

Indian Boulevard provides access from CSAH 19 to Cottage Grove Middle School and Grey Cloud Elementary School. The project will improve intersection safety and operations through the addition of turn lanes. Pedestrian enhancements will be evaluated for both project locations.

The contract is funded by highway state aid and local contributions. Construction is expected in summer 2018.

Contact: Kevin Peterson, Engineer II, 651-430-4330

County Board adopts county fee schedule for 2018 after public hearing

The Washington County Board of Commissioners adopted a schedule of fees Dec. 12 that the county will charge for services and programs in the coming year.

The board conducted a public hearing on the proposed fees before adopting the fee schedule. No residents spoke at the hearing.

The fee schedule is governed by county policy and state law. The county's policy states that when a single user is the beneficiary of a service, those costs should be borne by that individual. When setting fees, there must be a reasonable relation between the fee and the cost of providing the service.

The fee schedule includes fee for services, and for rental of county facilities.

Information on fees charged for a variety of services and programs can be found on the county's website www.co.washington.mn.us.

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

County Board adopts 5-year capital improvement plan after public hearing

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a hearing on the county's five-year capital improvement plan (CIP) Dec. 12.

No residents spoke at the hearing. Comments were received from a number of county municipalities, including Cottage Grove, Forest Lake, Scandia, and Woodbury. Responses to those communities were included at the hearing.

State law requires the hearing, which covered the county's 2018-2022 CIP. The plan includes major roadway and facility projects in the county planned for the coming five years. The plan includes the budget for capital projects in the 2018 county budget.

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

County Board receives update on return of Lake Elmo Library to county system

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received an update Dec. 12 from Library Director Keith Ryskoski on progress toward incorporating the Lake Elmo Library into the Washington County Library system, which will occur Jan. 1.

Ryskoski said that a manager has been chosen, Martha Riel, to manage the branch, the current employees at the branch will continue to be employed, and a staffing plan for the Lake Elmo Library is in place. A communications plan is also in place, to assure that Lake Elmo and other county residents know what library services will be available at the Lake Elmo branch.

One issue has arisen, as county staff are working to assure that the library will meet the safety and other building standards of a Washington County library branch. While assessing the building, it has been discovered that the older restrooms contain lead. It is not a hazard for current users, but there is a plan to turn the restrooms into the data closet for the library. The remodeling would disrupt the lead, which must be removed.

Currently, Washington County is working with the City of Lake Elmo to see if the Lake Elmo Library Board would oversee the removal of the lead before the beginning of the year. The work would be paid for with money that the Library Board would otherwise turn over to the county at the beginning of the year.

If the Library Board will oversee the lead removal, it could be completed before the end of the year. If not, it will be necessary to do the work when the county takes ownership of the building in January. The county is already planning a two-week closure to transition the Lake Elmo Library to the county library system. If the lead removal work cannot be done before the beginning of the year, it would delay the opening of the library by at least a week.

In any event, it is the goal of the Washington County Library to open its Lake Elmo branch as soon as possible, with as little disruption to residents as possible, Ryskoski said.

Contact: Keith Ryskoski, Library Directory, 651-275-8501

County Board sets 2018 budget, levy

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set the county's 2018 budget and levy Dec 12.

The board certified:

- a tax levy of \$103.5 million for county operations;
- the board also consented to the property tax levy set by the Washington County Community Development Agency at \$5.05 million; and
- the Washington County Regional Rail Authority levy of \$776,800.

The board has been reviewing the 2018 recommended budget, which will be supported by the levies, since mid-summer. The county's net tax levy of \$103.5 million 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.

Expenditures for 2018 adopted by the County Board total \$223,441,400, along with \$821,300 for the Regional Rail Authority. Of that, \$179,996,300 is operating expenditures, \$29,895,500 is capital project funds, and \$13,549,600 is for debt service.

Archives of the webstreamed meetings at which the board members discussed the budget are on the county website at www.co.washington.mn.us. Budget presentations may also be viewed on the website by using the search word “budget.”

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