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Date: Aug. 28, 2018
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 28, 2018, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board makes appointments to advisory boards

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed several members to county advisory groups Aug. 28.

The appointments are:

- Jennifer Pelletier, to the Mental Health Advisory Committee as the education representative, to a partial term ending Dec. 31, 2019;
- Mike Lang, to the Workforce Development Board as the job services representative, to a partial term ending June 30, 2021;
- Tori Dupre, to the Parks and Open Space Commission as the at-large representative, to a partial term ending Dec. 31, 2018; and
- Louisa Lienke, to the Mental Health Advisory Committee as the District 2 representative, to a partial term ending Dec. 31, 2020.

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

County WorkForce Center will receive funds to assist former Herberger's workers

The Washington County WorkForce Center will receive a \$210,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to provide employment and

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support services to the workers who will lose their jobs as a result of the Stillwater Herberger's closing Aug. 31.

The County Board accepted the grant Aug. 28.

The WorkForce Center will serve approximately 50 dislocated workers and offer them career services, training, and support services to assist them in finding other employment or career paths. Herberger's parent company Bon-Ton is closing all stores nationwide, with 20 locations affected in Minnesota.

DEED awarded grants to the service providers that have store locations in their service area.

The grant funds cover administrative costs, career services, direct customer training, and support services.

Contact: Rick Roy, WorkForce Center Manager, 651-275-8660

Amended contract will provide for maintenance of county's fiber optic system

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract amendment with MP Nexlevel for \$212,000 Aug. 28, to provide maintenance of the county's fiber optic system.

Services will include replacing, repairing, and rearranging fiber optic cable when breaks occur, placing new fiber, screening and clearing of Gopher One Calls, and locating and marking the county's fiber locations.

Additional fiber relocations are required due to ongoing road construction projects in the county, including the County State Aid Highway 24 (Osgood Avenue) project and the County Road 15 (Manning Avenue) and County Road 14 realignment project in the City of Lake Elmo. The amendment will also allow for the completion of fiber connections to a number of county facilities, including the Lake Elmo Library branch.

The county-owned fiber provided to these facilities will replace leased connections already in place. MP Nexlevel will also identify the cost for improved route options for an additional connection to the state's fiber optic system.

Contact: Renee Heinbuch, Information Technology Director, 651-430-6421

County Board continues public hearing on naming Cottage Grove lake, recommends naming it Lake Robert

The Washington County Board of Commissioners continued a public hearing on a petition to name an unnamed lake in Cottage Grove Aug. 28, and recommended that it be named Lake Robert.

A petition signed by registered voters in Washington County was received by the county requesting to name an unnamed body of water in the City of Cottage Grove Lake Robert. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lake identifier is 82-83W. The lake is south of Military Road, west of Jamaica Avenue, and north of 70th Street.

After the public hearing was ordered, a letter was sent to the City of Cottage Grove, the South Washington Heritage Society, and the DNR notifying them of the petition and planned public hearing, and asking them to provide any comments on the proposed name to the county prior to the public hearing.

The public hearing was conducted Aug. 7 and several residents spoke at the hearing. A representative for the petitioners provided testimony to the board. There was a response to the petition to have the lake named Shepards Lake. Other suggested names were Wolterstorff Lake, McHattie Lake, and R.W. Lake. The County Board asked for additional time to receive public comments and the public hearing was continued to Aug. 28. Several residents spoke again at the hearing.

The board's resolution naming the lake will be sent to the DNR commissioner for approval and then will be recorded in the county Recorder's Office.

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

County Board accepts money from fundraiser for Sheriff's Office Explorer program

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted a \$1,491 donation to the Sheriff's Office Explorer program Aug. 28.

The Sheriff's Office Explorers program operated a speed pitch booth fundraiser at this year's Washington County Fair, and raised the money at the booth. It will be used for training expenses for the Explorers.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Board approves expansion of Crystal Spring Scientific and Natural Area in Scandia

The Washington County Board of Commissioners expressed support for the expansion of the Crystal Spring Scientific and Natural Area in Scandia Aug. 28.

The Trust for Public Land and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources have been working to expand the 38-acre Crystal Spring Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) in Scandia, which is near the St. Croix River, east of the intersection of highways 95 and 97. The SNA would be expanded by adding the Lerdal parcel of approximately 21 acres, and the Zavoral property of approximately 60 acres.

The state requires formal county approval before an SNA can be established.

The bluffs, forest, prairie, and swamp land present on these parcels will help protect rare features, buffer Zavoral Creek and the St. Croix River from agricultural runoff, and provide space for improving public access.

Public use of SNAs varies with each site. Typically, nature observation, education, scientific research, and other non-motorized recreation are allowed. Hunting is not allowed in Crystal Spring SNA due to very steep terrain, including vertical cliffs and erodable soils. Caution is also required due to slippery slopes, and foot travel is potentially hazardous to visitors and sensitive vegetation. Camping, campfires, trapping, damaging vegetation, bikes, and motorized recreation are not allowed in Crystal Spring SNA.

The county will receive payment in lieu of taxes on the Zavoral and Lerdal parcels if they are added to the SNA. The exact amount is calculated from the purchase price, but \$4,200 per year is currently estimated for these additions to the SNA.

Five of the state's 168 SNAs are in Washington County, including Crystal Springs (38 acres) in Scandia, Falls Creek (136 acres) in Scandia, Grey Cloud Dunes (237 acres) in Cottage Grove, Lost Valley Prairie (320 acres) north of Hastings, and St. Croix Savannah (148 acres) in Bayport. The purpose of SNAs is to protect the best of Minnesota's remaining natural features, such as rare species, native prairies, old-growth forests, and significant landforms and geologic features, assuring rare features persist in each region of the state.

No county funds are requested or involved in this project. The City of Scandia approved a resolution of support for the acquisitions Aug. 21.

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

County Board continues review of 2019 budget

The Washington County Board of Commissioners continued review of the 2019 budget Aug. 28, reviewing budgets for the departments of Community Services and Public Health and Environment. The board began work on the 2019 budget Aug. 14. Commissioners will review the recommended budget of separate departments throughout August and September, and set a preliminary property tax levy Sept. 18. Once the preliminary levy is set, it may be lowered, but cannot be raised in the final budget vote.

The recommended net property tax levy would increase 5.47 percent over the 2018 levy, and would result in a drop of the county's tax rate by .7 percent. If approved, it would be the fifth year in the last six that the county's tax rate decreased. Should the recommended levy be approved, the impact on the owner of the median valued home in the county, which is \$273,200, would be an increase of \$42 a year in county taxes, offset by a \$1 reduction in the county's Regional Rail Authority levy. That is based on the average home's value increasing 5.7 percent during the past year.

The increase in the levy is spurred in part by service demands from a population that grew 1.5 percent during the last year, and inflationary costs of goods and services that is currently close to 3 percent annually.

The board reviewed specific budgets for the Community Services and Public Health and Environment departments Aug. 28.

The Community Services key initiatives for 2019 will be:

- staffing and programming for a 24/7 Mobile Crisis Unit for child protection and mental health;
- development of an Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team to improve services to adults with serious mental illness;
- increased funding to serve hospitalization and treatment for mental illness and recovery;
- increased staffing for MN Choices assessments;

- increased staffing to assist people with disabilities;
- additional resource for the licensing of child care sites; and
- increased staffing to assist in the growth and development needs in support services area.

The initiatives will require the addition of 6.4 social worker positions, and an office supervisor.

The department has a staff of almost 350, and a recommended 2019 budget of \$49 million. The department oversees veterans services, economic support, social services for adults and those with disabilities, social services for children, and workforce development.

The Public Health and Environment Department is tasked with:

- protecting the environment;
- preventing infectious diseases;
- promoting healthy communities;
- ensuring public health infrastructure;
- preparing and responding to emergencies; and
- assuring quality and accessible health services.

A challenge for the department in 2019 will be meeting Recycling and Energy Board initiatives, including research and development of alternative technologies for waste processing; research and development of alternative products developed from refuse-derived fuel; and continued support for increased business recycling and waste reduction as both an environmental and economic strategy. Other strategies will center on waste reduction, healthy aging, partnerships for mental and chemical health, partnerships in response to sexually-transmitted illnesses; serving families with evidence-based home visits; and the Community Health Improvement Plan.

The department has 90 employees, and a recommended 2019 budget of \$19 million.

The County Board also reviewed the University of Minnesota Extension budget for 2019. The local presence for the organization includes:

- 4-H Youth Development;
- Extension Master Gardeners; and
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Education.

The county's 4-H program has 636 enrolled members, with an 81 percent re-enrollment rate of returning members from 2017. They are led by 350 screened adult 4-H volunteers. 4-H's Youth Teaching Youth participants have reached 1,035 elementary school-age participants. The Master Gardeners program has 143 members, who volunteered 13,343 hours in 2017.

The recommended 2019 Washington County Extension budget request is for \$187,700 to fund 2.5 positions for the programs in the county. The program also receives 4-H Federation funding, and county in-kind contributions for office operations.

A public hearing on the county's budget will be conducted Dec. 4, and the final budget will be adopted Dec. 11.

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