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**Date:** Sept. 18, 2018  
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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Sept. 18, 2018, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

#### **County Board approves comments on draft comprehensive plans for City of Bayport, West Lakeland Township**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved comments Sept. 18 prepared following review of draft comprehensive plans for the City of Bayport and West Lakeland Township.

All local governments 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 provide adjacent and affected jurisdictions the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan during a mandatory six-month review period. Comprehensive plans must be submitted to the Met Council by Dec. 31.

The county's comments stated it was encouraged by the City of Bayport's commitment to protect solar access for its residents through zoning ordinances and potential adoption of developmental regulations, and the city's goal of having diversity in housing types and values. The county is encouraged by the city's efforts to implement new parks and trails and maintain current parks/trails to provide better access for all. Its comments also said it is encouraging to see efforts to provide bike lanes and maintain sidewalks to encourage different healthy methods of transportation.

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Comments on the West Lakeland Township plan suggest providing additional details regarding groundwater water resources, and that Washington County and the Minnesota Department of Health can be a resource for such data. The county also encouraged the township to expand its discussion on affordable housing, and stated it is encouraged by West Lakeland's commitment to assure access to solar resources through land use controls.

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

### **County will continue to lease out home in Afton**

Washington County will continue to lease out a house in Afton, after the County Board agreed to a lease extension Sept. 18.

Washington County acquired the property for the construction of a 800 MHZ radio tower in the City of Afton. The Washington County Board approved the initial 24-month lease agreement in September 2016. The County Board amended the agreement to extend the lease to lease the house for another 24 months, until Sept. 5, 2020, for \$1,200 per month, an increase of \$50 per month. The tenant also pays utilities and sanitation. Revenue received from rental of the house helps pay for the maintenance of the property.

**Contact: Sharon Price, Property Manager, 651-430-4391**

### **Radio club will use Sheriff's Office tower to provide volunteer services**

The South East Metro Amateur Radio Club (SEMARC) will place a radio repeater on the Washington County Sheriff's Office Newport tower to support its activities, after the County Board agreed to the license agreement Sept. 18.

The SEMARC provides volunteer communications support for planned and unplanned public safety events in Washington County. SEMARC wishes to place a ham radio repeater at the Newport tower site to support these events and other club activities. The county will supply the tower antenna, feedline, and electricity. SEMARC will supply and install the repeater equipment in the county's shelter.

The lease between the county and SEMARC will have no cost for the county. All expenses will be paid using Radiological Emergency Preparedness grant funds, which is around \$8,000.

**Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601**

### **County, City of Woodbury will share costs on Radio Drive, Valley Creek Road improvements**

Washington County and the City of Woodbury will cooperatively fund the design and construction of safety improvements on Radio Drive and Valley Creek Road in Woodbury, after the County Board approved an agreement with the city Sept. 18.

Radio Drive is also known as County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 13 and Valley Creek Road is also known as CSAH 16.

The City of Woodbury is leading a project to reconstruct City Centre Drive, a Woodbury local street, between Radio Drive and Valley Creek Road, including adding a left turn lane at Radio Drive. The project will include improvements to the three associated intersections along county highways of:

- installation of medians at the unsignalized intersection of CSAH 13 and Donegal Drive to improve traffic safety and reduce vehicle conflicts;
- make improvements to the existing traffic signal at the intersection of CSAH 13 and City Centre Drive, including improved pedestrian buttons, Flashing Yellow Arrow (FYA) capability, and improved signal placement; and
- installation of a new traffic signal at the intersection of CSAH 16 and City Centre Drive.

Construction of these improvements is in progress and anticipated to be substantially complete this fall. The project cost is \$1,215,061; the county's share is \$337,326.

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

### **Sheriff's Office will receive grant to pay for deputy to combat impaired driving**

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive a \$111,816 grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety to pay for a "DWI Officer," after the county board accepted the grant Sept. 18.

This is a competitive grant funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a one-year grant with the potential of a one-year extension based on the work of the Sheriff's Office. The grant

funds the wages and benefits for one officer for one year with the purpose of identifying and arresting intoxicated drivers.

Intoxicated driving continues to be a leading cause of traffic deaths in the country. The grant period is Oct 1, 2018, to Sept 30, 2019. The grant will allow for the creation of a new full-time position.

**Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601**

### **County Board sets preliminary levy, adopts budget for 2019**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set the county's proposed property tax levy for 2019 Sept. 18, and approved proposed budgets for the county, the Regional Railroad Authority, and the Community Development Agency.

The board has been reviewing the proposed budget since it was first introduced by county staff Aug. 14. 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 proposed property tax net levy for 2019 is \$108.1 million, an increase of 5.47 percent over 2018. The county's voter-approved Land and Water Program levy will be \$1.1 million, with no change from 2018.

The county's non-levy revenue is expected to be \$139.7 million, an increase of 27.17 percent over 2018. Operating expenditures are expected to be \$187.9 million, an increase of 6.59 percent, and capital expenditures are expected to be \$79.5 million, including \$31 million from bond proceeds. The proposed property tax levy for the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority is \$660,000 for 2019, which is a reduction of 15 percent from 2018, and the proposed property tax levy for the Washington County Community Development Agency is \$5.23 million.

The net property tax levy increase of 5.47 percent over the 2018 levy is estimated to result in a drop of the county's tax rate by 1.5 percent. This would be the fifth year in the last six that the county's tax rate decreased. The impact of the proposed levy on the owner of the median valued home in the county, which is \$273,200, would be an increase of \$36 a year in county taxes, offset by a \$1 reduction in the county's Regional Rail Authority tax. 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.

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**