



Our Mission: Providing quality services through responsible leadership, innovation and the cooperation of dedicated people

Date: Nov. 30, 2021
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Nov. 30, 2021, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

Washington County will partner with counties on 2022 residential survey

Washington County will partner with Dakota, Olmsted, and St. Louis counties to perform a 2022 residential survey, after the County Board approved a joint powers agreement with those counties Nov. 30.

Washington County periodically surveys its residents to gather information about the services it provides. Washington County has partnered with these counties since 2006, and most recently in 2019, and will do so again in 2022.

The benefits of this collaboration are cost savings and the ability to compare the results with those from like counties nationally, as well as county partners in Minnesota.

The four counties have proposed contracting with Polco/National Research Center to administer the survey. Polco/NRC administered the previous residential surveys.

Contact: Amanda Hollis, Senior Planner, 651-430-6021

Hoelzel will join planning boards

David Hoelzel, Woodbury, was appointed to the Washington County Board of Adjustment & Appeals and the Planning Advisory Commission by the County Board as the District 5 representative Nov. 30. Hoelzel will serve a partial term expiring Dec. 31, 2022.

Contact: Alyssa Soderlund, Administrative Assistant, 651-430-6015

A great place to live, work and play...today and tomorrow

County will receive funds to provide shelter, services

Washington County will receive \$320,000 from the Minnesota Department of Human Services to provide shelter and other services for those experiencing homelessness.

The County Board accepted the funds Nov. 30.

The program provides funding for emergency shelter operations and support services. Washington County will use the funds to continue to support a hotel emergency shelter program. The funds pay for the cost of rooms and shelter services from the contracted service provider for onsite services to individuals in the program.

The grant goes through June 30, 2023.

Contact: Sarah Tripple, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6480

Sheriff's Office will continue to serve City of Lake Elmo

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will continue to provide law enforcement services to the City of Lake Elmo after the County Board approved an agreement with the city Nov. 30.

The agreement, which begins Jan. 1, 2022, is for five years. The county will furnish and supply all labor, supervision, equipment, and supplies necessary to provide the services required by this agreement.

The City of Lake Elmo will pay the county on a semi-annual basis for the direct costs and expenses of the services of five full-time deputies and one full-time sergeant.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

Sheriff's Office receives donations from community donors

The Washington County Sheriff's Office received donations from the Hugo Yellow Ribbon Network and Walmart, which the County Board accepted Nov. 30.

The Hugo Yellow Ribbon Network contributed \$3,800 to the Sheriff's Office and Walmart donated \$3,500 for the Shop with a Cop event.

The Sheriff's Office also received a \$1,000 donation from Kennon Rothchild Jr. which the County Board also accepted. The donation will provide funding to purchase supplies for community engagement events and job fairs.

Contact: Sheriff Dan Starry, 651-430-7601

County Board conducts public hearing on 2022 fee schedule

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public hearing on the county's 2022 fee schedule Nov. 30.

No one spoke during the hearing. The County Board will consider adopting the new fee schedule at its Dec. 14 meeting.

The county's fee schedule is governed by county policy, as well as state laws and rules. The policy states that when a single user is the beneficiary of a service, the costs of the service should be borne by that individual. Service delivery costs can be supported by revenue other than user fees when there is a public benefit provided by the service.

The county policy is to set fees that have a reasonable relation between the fee and the cost of providing the service, as well as a number of other considerations.

Programs throughout the county may require fees, and each is reviewed and considered for changes each year. Changes in fees are made to reflect changes in services offered, as well as any state legislative changes that affect county services and related fees.

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

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

County Board conducts public hearing on capital improvement plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public hearing on the county's 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Nov. 30.

No one spoke at the hearing. Comment letters were received from a number of county cities, including Cottage Grove, Hugo, Lake Elmo, Oak Park Heights, and Woodbury, and the Rice Creek Watershed District. State law requires the hearing, which covers the county's 2022-2026 CIP. The

plan includes major roadway, parks, and facility projects in the county planned for the next five years, and those projects that are funded by bonds. Along with those projects, specific projects for 2022 are included.

Roads and bridges make up 75% of the proposed projects in the five-year plan, with public facilities making up 17% and parks and land making up 8%

Funding would come from a number of sources, including county program aid from the state, intergovernmental revenue, the local option sales tax, and bonds.

More than 73 projects or programs are included in the capital plan, with \$351 million in planned investments in infrastructure over the next five years.

Projects in the 2022 portion of the plan include an expansion of the Environmental Center in Woodbury, as well as the construction of an environmental center in Forest Lake, and yard waste facilities in the county. Roadway projects throughout the county are also in the proposed plan.

The County Board will evaluate comments at its Dec. 14 meeting, and determine if any changes are justified, and then consider adoption of the plan.

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

County Board conducts public hearing on proposed county redistricting principles

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public hearing Nov. 30 on the principles that it will use when redistricting county commissioner districts.

One resident spoke during the public hearing. The board did receive and review comments that were submitted online.

State law establishes the procedure and process for redistricting of county commissioner districts based on population figures from the federal Census. Although not required, the county board members wish to establish principles to guide the redistricting process. The proposed principles were posted on the county website Oct. 19 for public review and comment. They can be viewed on the county website at www.co.washington.mn.us by searching “redistricting.”

During the Nov. 30 meeting, the board reviewed the population growth in the county’s cities, and how it varied from community to community.

The proposed principles to guide the redistricting process include the number of districts, the population deviation required, the shape and form of the district, the relationship to other boundaries, the state and constitutional standards, the division of political subdivisions, the public notice and participation, how to preserve communities of interest, protect minority representation, the impact on incumbents, and the creation of staggered terms.

The board also reviewed consideration of district size, such as how many communities are in each district, and geographic size. They also reviewed the composition of other county boards in the metropolitan area.

The county will be the last governmental entity to establish its district boundaries before the 2022 election. The schedule will be:

- Feb. 15, 2022 – new congressional and legislative districts set
- March 29, 2022 – reestablishment or redistricting of municipal precincts
- April 26, 2022 – new local government election districts set (county, soil and water conservation, school district, etc.)
- May 17, 2022 – candidate filings open
- Aug. 9, 2022, and Nov. 8, 2022 – State Primary and State General Election based on newly-drawn districts.

After receiving all comment, the board plans to adopt redistricting principles Dec. 14.

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

County Board reviews county's proposed 2022 budget

The Washington County Board reviewed the county's proposed 2022 budget Nov. 30.

With the ongoing response to and recovery from the pandemic, the recommended 2022 budget includes a levy increase that funds increased costs to the county expected in 2022, and those that occurred in 2021.

The County Board conducted workshops on the recommended 2022 budget throughout August. After reviewing the recommended budgets from departments, the County Board set a proposed levy and adopted a proposed budget for 2022 Sept. 14; after the proposed levy was set, it could be reduced but not raised in the final budget, which will be approved Dec. 14.

The proposed levy adopted in September was a 5.78% increase over 2021. During the hearing, the board reviewed options to lower the proposed levy by \$500,000 from the amount set in September. The recommended budget is estimated to have a tax impact that is quite modest. The recommendation that the board is reviewing includes a 5.34% increase in the county's levy, for a levy of \$120.6 million. If adopted, it would result in an increase for the county's portion of the annual property tax of \$25 for the average valued home in the county, which is \$318,700. That same average valued home in 2021 experienced a \$25 reduction in county tax when the board approved a 0% levy increase.

The county continues to respond to the pandemic with services that meet clients' needs. At the same time, much like other service providers, the county has found ways to deliver some county services in a more efficient, less costly way, which will continue in the future. This has included upgrades to county facilities that made them safer places to receive services and work.

New funding in the budget will pay for salaries and benefit increases for existing employees; base salaries of all county employees were held flat in 2021. The recommended budget includes only a small number of new employees and few changes in the services or programs delivered.

The recommended budget includes investments in the county's technology infrastructure and information technology staff to maintain and enhance data and network security. The budget funds a fairly substantial increase in election costs for 2022 as more people vote absentee, which adds to the cost of managing an election. The budget also funds replacements in the public works fleet to ensure the ability to maintain and provide snow removal on county roads.

The recommended budget is impacted by reduced revenue in a variety of areas, including reduced county program aid, a state aid provided to reduce the reliance on property taxes to fund mandated services, and reduced fees for services that have been impacted by the pandemic.

Contact: Jennifer Wagenius, Deputy County Administrator, 651-430-6007, and Jan Lucke, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6003