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Date: Dec. 7, 2021
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 7, 2021, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board extends contracts with attorneys for family counsel

The Washington County Board of Commissioners extended contracts Dec. 7 with attorneys who provide representation in court during family cases.

The county is required by state law to provide representation for parents or guardians for child in need of protection or services (CHIPS), termination of parental rights (TPR), and permanency cases. State law requires reasonable compensation for the attorney. Since 2014, the county has been contracting with attorneys to provide these services for a flat monthly compensation to manage and predict costs. The county contracts with five attorneys, and contracts with Amy Senn, John Chitwood, Gregory Schmidt, and Megan Hunt were extended.

The contract amendments extend the term of the contracts one or two years, depending on the attorney. The contracts increase the monthly payment by 2.2% each year. The amendments change the hourly amount provided for representing clients on appeal to \$100 per hour (previously \$75 per hour), but continues the current total compensation for an appeal at \$5,000.

Contact: Jennifer Wagenius, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6007

County Board comments on TIF district in Cottage Grove

The Washington County Board of Commissioners offered comments on a tax increment financing (TIF) district in Cottage Grove Dec. 7.

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Tax increment financing allows the increased taxes on an improved property to be “captured” to assist in financing the project.

The City of Cottage Grove and its economic development agency are considering a TIF district in the Northpoint Industrial area to facilitate the construction of approximately 3.44 million square feet of manufacturing/distribution buildings. The TIF district will be for nine years.

The County Board reviews proposals to understand the financial implications, its consistency with the county’s comprehensive plan for land use and transportation, the impact on the county’s tax base, and its impact on economic development, blighted areas, and increasing housing opportunities within the county.

The board expressed its support for the TIF plan, which is consistent with the County Board’s goals to support the efforts of cities within the county to increase tax base.

County staff reviewed the draft TIF plan, and noted the location of the proposed district, the intensity of the planned use, and the likely routes that vehicles would use to and from the development.

Washington County worked closely with Cottage Grove and other partners to develop the Southwest Arterial Master Plan. The TIF development is adjacent to the preferred concept for the future county road. Based on the site plan, this development will generate a significant amount of new traffic, including increased truck traffic, which will require significant upgrades to highway infrastructure, and will act as a catalyst to push the need for major road realignments contemplated in the recently completed Southwest Arterial Study. However, many of the roads are not county-owned.

Contact: Jennifer Wagenius, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6007

Washington County will receive \$134,973 to combat aquatic invasive species in 2022

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted \$134,973 Dec. 7 from the state to fight aquatic invasive species in the county’s waterways.

In the 2014 state legislative session, a county aid program was created to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in lakes and rivers. Based on the 24 watercraft trailer launches and 354 watercraft trailer parking spaces in the county, Washington County will receive \$134,973 in local AIS prevention aid in 2022.

A county plan or resolution must be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources annually by the last day of each calendar year before funds can be distributed the following year.

Contact: Jessica Collin-Pilarski, Senior Planner, 651-430-6703

County Board sets salaries for attorney, sheriff

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set salaries for 2022 for two elected county officials Dec. 7.

The County Board set the salaries of:

- Attorney Pete Orput, at \$198,833 for 2022, a 3.5% increase over 2021; and
- Sheriff Dan Starry, at \$178,424 for 2021, which is a 3.5% increase over 2021.

State law requires the board members to set a salary before the beginning of the year.

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