

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

Date: June 7, 2022
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the June 7, 2022, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

Agencies will provide day services to county residents

Three agencies will provide Day Support Services (DSS) and related employment services for Washington County residents after the County Board approved contracts with the agencies June 7.

Opportunity Services Inc., Midwest Special Services Inc., and Phoenix Alternatives will provide services from May 1 through Dec. 31, 2023.

DSS services assist adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to achieve and maintain the highest level of independence, productivity, and integration in the community. The day programming provides services related to employment, self-care, communication skills, socialization, physical mobility, and cognitive development.

Opportunity Services and Midwest Special Services also provide three types of employment services, which assist individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to work for compensation in community-integrated work environments in which persons without disabilities are employed. The program is designed to promote regular interaction with persons without disabilities who are not paid caregivers or service providers. Services include:

- Employment Exploration Services – Community-based services that introduce and explore employment. The service assists people in making an informed choice about working in competitive, integrated employment;
- Employment Development – Individualized services that help people find competitive, integrated employment, or attain self-employment; and

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Washington County is an equal opportunity organization and employer

- Employment Support Services – Individualized services that assist people maintain community employment in an individual or group arrangement.

The rate of the services vary for each individual based on their needs. The rate formula is administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Contact: Beth Pierce, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-8389

Library will begin strategic planning

Washington County Library will be developing a new strategic plan, after the County Board approved use of \$45,000 from the library's fund balance June 7.

Washington County Library's existing strategic plan was approved in 2016. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in how residents use library services, the library is developing a new strategic plan with a focus on library users and non-users, along with underserved groups in the county. The goal is to develop a new library strategic plan that is proactive, grounded in data, informed by Washington County communities, and driven by library employees.

Washington County planning and Library Administrative staff are managing and developing the library's new strategic plan. To ensure the voices of underserved groups, library staff, and the Library Board are heard, the library is contracting with a consultant to facilitate community listening sessions and strategic planning workshops. The consultant will also work with library staff to develop an implementation plan. The funding will pay for strategic planning done with Genesis Consulting. It will also cover printing, translation, and incentive costs for promotion and participation in the Library's strategic plan listening session and surveys.

Contact: Aubrey Fonfara, Communications Specialist, 651-275-8504

County will work with watershed district for plant control

Washington County will work with the South Washington Watershed District to control buckthorn and garlic mustard in the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park after the County Board approved a cooperative agreement with the watershed district June 7.

The construction of the Central Draw Overflow (CDO) restoration work has involved clearing common buckthorn and garlic mustard, with the goal of allowing native plants to become established. Native plants have deeper root systems which help to reduce erosion in the ravine, while also supporting native wildlife species.

Animal grazing is used to set back unwanted vegetation, including common buckthorn and garlic mustard. Grazing of land in the spring helps to prevent garlic mustard from going to seed, and also helps control buckthorn through repeated grazing of re-growth.

The South Washington Watershed District will cover costs for the grazing that occurs within the CDO. The county will cover costs for the grazing that occurs outside of the CDO. Washington County staff will provide overall project management. Funding for the county portion of the project, which is \$6,270.80, is paid for with revenue from cropland leasing in the parks.

Contact: Dan MacSwain, Natural Resources Coordinator, 651-430-4323

Metropolitan Council will reimburse county for land purchase in Big Marine Park Reserve

The Metropolitan Council will reimburse Washington County up to \$962,700 for the purchase of land in May Township that will be added to Big Marine Park Reserve.

The County Board approved an agreement with the Met Council June 7.

The reimbursement is for the county's Land and Water Legacy Program and is 75% of the cost to purchase two parcels near the intersection of 170th Street (County Highway 4) and Manning Trail North (County Highway 15) in May Township. The cost to purchase these parcels is \$1,283,600, including recording fees and taxes. By accepting the money from the Met Council, the county agrees to place restrictions on the future use of the property.

Contact: Sharon Price, Senior Right-of-Way Specialist, 651-430-4391

County Board approves annual housing action plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the annual action plan for the Community Development Block Grant and Home Investment Partnerships Program June 7.

On the county's behalf, the Washington County Community Development Agency (CDA) administers the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) programs. Each year, the county must prepare an Annual Action Plan detailing its intended use of the CDBG and HOME funds granted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The funded activities must address the priorities identified in the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan.

The CDBG/HOME 2022 program year runs from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. The CDA solicited HOME applications for the 2022 Program Year in December 2021. The 2022 Annual Action Plan contains those programs and projects that are eligible for funding and meet the funding priorities of the Consolidated Plan.

The highest priorities for housing are:

- affordable housing, rental and homeownership

- new construction and rehabilitation
- emergency and transitional shelters
- homelessness assistance, and
- housing and services for special needs populations.

Nine applications were received for projects, which were due Jan. 21. The applications were scored and action plan projects for 2022 include:

- Two Rivers Scattered Site, \$103,205 from CDGB and \$76,795 from HOME for affordable housing, with the goal of three units of homeowner housing acquired and rehabilitated;
- Habitat for Humanity Scattered Site, \$190,000 from HOME for affordable housing with the goal of two units of homeowner housing acquired and rehabilitated;
- Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties, \$362,653 from Community Housing Development Organization for two to three units of affordable rental housing;
- home improvement loan program for \$245,000 to rehabilitate 10 homes.

Other projects will provide \$56,500 to the City of Landfall and \$71,000 to Rise Disability Center for public infrastructure projects, and \$109,000 to Washington County for homeless prevention programs, with the goal of assisting 540 people.

In Program Year 2022, CDBG and HOME funds will leverage \$2.2 million of other funding for the projects, or \$2.56 of other funds to every \$1 of CDBG and HOME funds. A full copy of the plan is available from the Washington County CDA and on its website. A public comment period was from April 8 to May 9. The CDA held a public hearing on the draft plan April 19, 2022. No comments were received.

Contact: Karly Schoeman, Community Development Agency Deputy Executive Director, 651-458-6556

County Board proclaims June 1 through Aug. 20 as Summer at Your Library

The Washington County Board of Commissioners proclaimed June 1 through Aug. 20 as Summer at Your Library at its meeting June 7.

Washington County Library's summer learning programs include events and activities to encourage children, teens, and adults to make reading and learning part of their summer plans.

In its resolution, the board noted:

- today's libraries are finding creative ways to deliver services that are important to their communities, including lifelong learning opportunities, books, and technology;

- libraries are addressing racial and social inequities in the community and serve as a resource for all members of the community, regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic status;
- participation in summer library programs can neutralize summer learning loss and improve comprehension and memory skills for children and teens; and
- these programs and activities encourage library users of all ages to become lifelong readers and learners.

The board also noted that librarians work to create an equitable society by providing free access to information to all people.

More information is at the library's website at WashCoLib.org.

Contact: Aubrey Fonfara, Communications Specialist, 651-275-8504

Septic Check will update septic system at Lake Elmo Park Reserve campgrounds

Septic Check will update the septic system at the Lake Elmo Park Reserve modern campgrounds after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$719,979 contract with the company June 7. In 2019, Washington County Parks had the septic systems at the modern campground in Lake Elmo Park Reserve inspected and tested by Washington County Public Health & Environment. The septic systems were found to be non-compliant due to the existing holding tanks being undersized for current regulations, and the septic fields were not meeting minimum requirements for being separated from ground water. The county was directed to bring septic systems up to code.

Washington County started to design a new system and went out for bids in summer of 2021. Bids came in higher than the budget and were rejected. The project was analyzed and a new budget was developed. Funding was allocated for this project to be completed in 2022.

The project will require the replacement of three current septic systems, as well as new pavement at the dump stations and a new electrical system, tanks, and pumps for the septic system.

Contact: Eden Rogers, Engineer I, 651-430-4352

County will continue participation in Performance Measurement Program

Washington County will continue to participate in the state's Performance Measurement Program and submit the report on standard measures created by the Council on Local Results and Innovation to the Office of the State Auditor.

The County Board agreed to participate June 7, the 12th year that the county has participated.

In 2010, the Legislature created the Council on Local Results and Innovation, tasked with creating a standard set of 10 measures for cities and 10 measures for counties. The list of measures was reviewed by the council and revised in 2013, when the council released an expanded set of performance measures. Participation in the standard measures program is voluntary. A county that elects to participate in the standards measures program may be eligible for a reimbursement of 14 cents per capita in county program aid, not to exceed \$25,000.

The county will report the results of the 10 adopted measures to residents on the county website at www.co.washington.mn.us/performanceasures, in the county's budget, and file a copy with the Office of the State Auditor.

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

County Board appoints Magnuson County Attorney

The Washington County Board of Commissioners unanimously appointed Kevin Magnuson as the Washington County Attorney June 7. He will take the oath of office at the June 14 County Board Meeting. With the death of County Attorney Pete Orput Sunday, April 3, 2022, a vacancy existed in the position of County Attorney.

State law provides for filling the vacancy. When a vacancy occurs in the office of an elected county official, the county board shall fill it by appointment. The person appointed shall give the bond and take the oath required by law, and serve the remainder of the term until a successor qualifies. When a vacancy occurs in an office that has a chief deputy or first assistant, the chief deputy or first assistant may perform all the duties and functions of the office until it is filled by appointment by the county board.

As provided for in the statute, First Assistant County Attorney Brent Wartner has been performing all the duties and functions of the office since Attorney Orput's death.

Magnuson grew up in Lake Elmo. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from Wheaton College in 1990. Magnuson was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army, stationed in Germany. After his service, he attended graduate school at Philipps-Universität Marburg in Germany and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium, where he received a master's degree in philosophy.

Magnuson studied law at the University of Minnesota and the University of Leuven. After graduating from the U of M law school in 1999, he clerked at the European Commission, Directorate General for Competition, in Brussels. He returned to the Twin Cities to practice civil litigation at the law firms of Briggs and Morgan, and Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, and then for 11 years at the criminal defense firm of Kelley, Wolter & Scott.

He has handled cases at every level of the state and federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

After 20 years of practicing law, Magnuson joined the Washington County Attorney's Office in the civil division, providing legal counsel to the County Board, Office of Administration, and department leadership on a variety of matters, including transit, attorney ethics, redistricting and, until recently, election law. He also prosecutes fraud and vulnerable adult cases.

Magnuson lives in his childhood home in Lake Elmo with his wife and two children.

Contact: Yvonne Klinnert, Senior Communications Specialist, 651-430-6026

County Board sends message to state legislators

Washington County commissioners approved a letter to state legislators June 7, expressing support to continue work on legislative issues that were addressed but not completed in the regular Legislative session that ended at the end of May.

The commissioners noted that as partners in delivery services to residents, the lack of adopting a tax bill, appropriations bills, and a bonding bill will have a significant impact on county operations and county property taxpayers. For example, the tax bill that was agreed to includes a much-needed increase in county program aid, and would have provided a projected \$1.4 million to Washington County in 2023. This increase is needed to help fund a portion of the increases in public safety costs, including pay for county deputies, county correctional officers, and county telecommunicators or dispatchers. To replace that county program aid would require a 1.2% increase in the county levy.

The board also noted that after years of inaction, the Legislature was poised to provide significant funding for county probation services. The state has never met its stated goal of providing 50% of the funding for probation services. The lack of action in this budget area continues to impact public safety and drive up property taxes.

The board also pointed out the work of county license centers. The county provides state services related to driver's licenses and motor vehicle titles and renewals. If a transportation bill would have passed, it looked very likely to have included a fee increase that would have provided more than \$600,000 to Washington County in 2023. This fee increase is critical to stabilizing license center operations. Lacking action on license center fees could lead to a closing of city- and county-run centers, or the continued need to highly subsidize a state service function with county property taxes.

Contact: Jan Lucke, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6003