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**Date:** Aug. 2, 2022  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 2, 2022, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

**Nexus Family Healing will manage youth shelter**

Nexus Family Healing will manage an emergency shelter for youth that Washington County shares with Dakota County, after the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$1.37 million contract with the agency Aug. 2.

The cost of the contract will be shared between Dakota and Washington counties and other entities that place youth at the shelter.

Due to the closing of a youth shelter in 2018, Washington County youth in need of emergency shelter placement have limited options. In 2021, as part of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) plan, the County Board approved a one-time capital expenditure to assist Dakota County in acquiring a property in Mendota Heights to be used for youth emergency shelter and licensed as a Children's Residential Facility. Nexus Family Healing has been selected as the service provider for this facility to operate the facility from July 15, 2022, to Dec. 31, 2024.

Nexus is a national nonprofit based in Minnesota, and has served children, youths, and families for 50 years. Staff will provide a safe, secure shelter with therapeutic and recreational activities.

The availability of this shelter will allow youth in Washington County to be served much closer to their home and families.

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## **County Board reviews recommended 2023 budget**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received the Administrator's recommendations for the county's 2023 budget Aug. 2.

The recommended budget would be supported by the county's net levy, as well as non-levy revenue sources. Under the budget recommendations, the county net levy would increase 4.9% over 2022, to \$126.6 million, and non-levy revenue would be \$108.3 million, a decrease of 18.6% from 2022. Other sources of revenue include County Program Aid from the state and other financing sources.

The majority of new costs in the budget for 2023 would pay negotiated wages and benefits for employees. The county is facing the same shortage of available workers as are other employers, which leads to increased costs. That is especially true in the areas of public safety for which the county is responsible, such as deputies who patrol county communities, correctional officers who serve in the County Jail, and dispatchers who manage 9-1-1 calls in the Sheriff's Office. High turnover, growth in vacancies, and a small pool of applicants have created an employment atmosphere which makes it necessary for the county to expend more effort to retain employees and attract employees when there are open positions.

There has been an increase of applications for service and more need for the health and human services that the county provides. The recommended budget calls for investments in employees to review applications, determine eligibility, and provide services.

Inflationary costs are having an impact on managing the county's vehicles, such as plow trucks and deputies' vehicles. The cost of replacement machinery, fuel, salt for clearing roads, and construction and building materials have risen substantially over 2022, raising the cost of doing business for the county. Also, the county's Information Technology costs related to data management, data security, data storage, and technology infrastructure are increasing.

The recommended budget calls for 20 new positions countywide, which is typical in an average year. The increase in employees maintains the same ratio of employees to residents as in 2022 in order to keep up with the growth of population. Washington County is the fifth fastest growing county in the state, which is reflected in the growth in the request for services.

The recommended budget includes Gold Line construction costs, the bus-rapid transit line that will be built from downtown St. Paul to Woodbury, roughly along Interstate 94. While money for construction is

part of the recommended budget, no property tax dollars will be used to build the line. It is funded through the local option sales tax and federal money.

As in nearly all counties, property owners in Washington County have experienced increased property values from the rise in sales prices, especially for residential properties in the county. The median value of a home in the county went up about 20% between 2021 and 2022. While the recommended levy recommended is a 4.9% increase, the tax impact on the medium value home would be expected to be 5.4%. The recommended levy combined with the rising valuations results in the county's tax rate decreasing by 13.9%.

Should the recommended budget and levy be approved, the median valued home in the county, which is \$386,500, assuming that its value increased by 20% in the past year, would be taxed \$910 for 2023 by the county, a \$46 or 5.4% increase over 2022.

In addition to a budget overview Aug. 2, the County Board also received presentations on the separate budgets for the Office of Administration, the commissioners, Accounting & Finance, Human Resources, and Information Technology, as well as the recommended budget for the Community Development Agency.

The County Board will conduct workshops on the recommended 2023 budget throughout August, and all are open to the public and webstreamed on the county's website. The workshops provide the opportunity for each department to present its recommended budget to the County Board.

After reviewing the recommended budgets, the County Board will set a proposed levy and adopt a proposed budget for 2023 Sept. 27; after the proposed levy is set, it may be reduced but not raised in the final budget, which will be approved Dec. 13.

An evening public budget meeting will occur at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 6, in the Board Room of the Government Center in Stillwater. The public is invited to attend to comment on the 2023 budget.

The budget workshops may be viewed through webstreaming of the County Board meetings. See the county website at [www.co.washington.mn.us](http://www.co.washington.mn.us) and search "County Board." See budget materials on the same website by searching "budget."