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Date: Nov. 15, 2022
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Nov. 15, 2022, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board makes appointments to Groundwater Advisory Committee

The Washington County Board of Commissioners made two appointments to the county Groundwater Advisory Committee Nov. 15.

The appointments are:

- Amanda Meyer to a partial term as a municipal government representative on the committee, with a term expiring Dec. 31, 2023, and
- Elizabeth Finnegan to a partial term as a municipal government representative on the committee, with a term expiring Dec. 31, 2023.

Contact: Holly Hess, Administrative Assistant, 651-430-6015

County Board approves right-of-way acquisitions for future road projects

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved acquisitions of right-of-way Nov. 15 for road projects scheduled for 2023 and 2024.

The project in 2023 will be the realignment of County Road 61 (120th Street/Myeron Road) at County State Aid Highway 15 (Manning Avenue) in Stillwater Township. The board approved the acquisition of right-of-way, permanent roadway easements, drainage and utility easements, and temporary easements as a part of the project. The cost to acquire right-of-way for this project is estimated at \$30,000 and is to be funded by the wheelage tax.

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The project planned for 2024 is in Forest Lake. The County Highway 33 (Everton Avenue North) project will increase safety, reduce congestion, and improve traffic operations. The roadway will be built as a three-lane roadway. The traffic signal at the intersection of County State Aid Highway 33 (Everton Avenue North) and County State Aid Highway 2 (Broadway Avenue) will be upgraded, and there will be improved pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and safety, as well as improved surface water management.

The board agreed to acquire right-of-way and associated easements for the project, estimated to cost \$750,000. It will be funded by the county transportation sales tax and the City of Forest Lake cost share.

Contact: Mindy Leadholm, Right of Way Specialist, 651-430-4361

Sheriff's Office receives donation from Hugo Lions for Water Recovery Team

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive a \$5,050 donation from the Hugo Lions Club to be used for the office's Water Recovery Team.

The County Board accepted the donation Nov. 15. It will provide training and equipment to the team. The Sheriff's Office staff expressed its gratitude and thanked the Hugo Lions Club for the donation.

Contact: Laura Perkins, Public Information Officer, 651-430-7994

County Board conducts public hearing on proposed fee schedule

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public hearing Nov. 15 to review revisions to the county's fee schedule for 2023.

The county's fee schedule is updated annually. All fee changes are brought to the County Board for approval. By law, the fee schedule can only be adopted after conducting a public hearing.

The Office of Administration and the Attorney's Office worked with county departments to revise the county's fee schedule and presented the proposed fees for 2023 to the board. The fee increases proposed were included in department proposed budgets for 2023.

No members of the public commented. Any comments received by the board will be considered prior to the county board action Dec. 13 to consider adoption of the fee schedule for 2023.

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

County Board conducts public hearing on capital improvement plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public hearing Nov. 15 to review comments on the 2023-2027 Washington County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

During the public hearing, the County Board accepted public comments and will consider any recommended changes to the draft CIP. The board will adopt the final 2023 levy, budget, and capital improvement plan Dec. 13.

Comments have been received from cities in the county and one watershed district.

The CIP covers the next five years of capital projects, with the first year of projects to be included in the county's adopted 2023 budget. The 2023-2027 CIP includes nearly \$400 million in community investment. Of that, 70% will be for roads and bridges, 25% will be for public facilities, and 6% will be for parks and land. The funds come from intergovernmental revenue, the county transportation sales tax, bond proceeds, and the wheelage tax.

The proposed CIP includes more than \$17 million in investments at seven different county parks and trails, along with major maintenance projects at location across the county. They include:

- renovations to the shelter and play area at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park;
- facility improvements at Point Douglas Park;
- an extension of the Hardwood Creek Trail, and
- parks and trails pavement preservation.

Public facilities improvements include renovations at the Stillwater Government Center campus, a new service center in Woodbury, as well as improvements to the highway maintenance facility in Woodbury and the Park Grove and R.H. Stafford libraries.

Major roadway improvements planned for the coming five years include:

- more than a mile of improvements to a portion of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 32 in Forest Lake;
- a grade-separated intersection at Highway 36 and CSAH 17 at the border of Grant and Lake Elmo;
- a half-mile of improvements of County Road 74 in Cottage Grove;

- more than six miles of improvements on County Road 50 from Highway 61 to Manning Avenue; and
- the realignment of 100th Street in Cottage Grove.

Contact: Wayne Sandberg, Public Works Director, 651-430-4339

Highway 96 will become county roadway

The nine miles of Highway 96 that are in Washington County and connect Dellwood, Grant, Stillwater Township, and Stillwater will become a Washington County roadway after the County Board approved the transfer from the state to the county Nov. 15.

Plans for the transfer, which is called a turnback, have been in the works since 1994, and are included in the county's long-term plans. Between 3,700 and 7,600 vehicles use the roadway each day. It has a posted speed limit of 45 to 55 miles per hour.

The roadway comes with a need for upgrades to provide better pedestrian facilities and intersection improvements, and to correct drainage issues. The county will receive \$14.46 million from the state in 2023 to make the improvements when the county manages the roadway. Also, after the transfer, the county plans to do a corridor study in 2025.

Contact: Andrew Giesen, Engineer II, 651-430-4336

Bolton & Menk will complete Highway 61 study

Bolton & Menk will complete a Highway 61 corridor visioning and jurisdictional transfer study for Washington County, after the County Board approved a \$249,724 contract with the company Nov. 15. The City of Hugo will pay \$50,000 of the cost of the study.

The long-term vision for the highway within Washington County is for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to turn jurisdictional control of the roadway to Washington County. However, prior to that occurring, the county will develop a jurisdictional transfer plan that would outline key improvements, timing, costs, and limitations to guide the transfer of the highway to the county.

This is also an opportunity to establish a common vision for access, right-of-way, and future roadway design for the highway, which is a priority for the City of Hugo as it will assist the city in long-range

planning and economic development. The Highway 61 Visioning and Jurisdictional Transfer Study is an opportunity to work with the city to accomplish both goals.

The highway carries between 10,000 and 20,000 vehicles each day and has speed limits that range from 35 to 55 miles per hour. It is a key corridor for the cities of Hugo and Forest Lake.

Contact: Lyssa Leitner, Public Works Planning Director, 651-430-4316

County acquires 79-acre conservation easement on May Township property

Washington County, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT), and two landowners have created a partnership to permanently protect approximately 118 adjacent acres in May Township.

The County Board approved the county's role in the program Nov. 15. It involves using Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP) and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Scenic and Natural Areas funding to place a permanent conservation easement over 79 acres owned by a willing seller in May Township. The county will contribute \$876,500 to the project.

The property is adjacent to the new County Conservation Area and the Big Marine Regional Park Reserve. It is approximately one mile northwest of Manitou Fund property and Wilder Forest, and is in the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District.

The property is in the LWLP High Priority Area called the Carnelian Creek Corridor. It hosts woods, open water, wetlands, grassland, and a previously hayed area. The project will protect habitat, surface water, and likely groundwater.

Further, the property is identified as a Regionally Significant Ecological Area by the DNR, ranking at the highest level. The DNR notes endangered, threatened, and special concern species on or within one mile of the property. The open and natural character of the property provides scenic views to be enjoyed by the public from May Avenue North.

The DNR's contribution of \$361,500 will originate from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources. The MLT will place a conservation easement over an adjacent 39-acre property owned by another landowner. This landowner will purchase the underlying fee title of the 79 acres owned by the willing seller and provide ongoing stewardship of both properties.

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

County Board sets salaries for administrator, board members for 2023

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set the 2023 salaries for the county administrator and for County Board members Nov. 15.

The board also approved a program to provide commissioners with an equipment and technology stipend. Administrator Kevin Corbid, who has been the county administrator since the end of January 2020, will have a salary of \$205,079, or a 4.5% increase, for 2023. County commissioners will receive a salary of \$75,025, or a 3.5% increase, in 2023.

Commissioners will also receive an equipment and technology stipend. A recent policy change provides commissioners with the same devices, software, and security measures used by employees. This approach will allow the county's Information Technology Department to support and maintain protection for the devices the commissioners use, including providing call support and remote access support.

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