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Date: Dec. 20, 2022
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 20, 2022, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

Gehrz appointed to Mental Health Advisory Committee

Bridget Gehrz, Woodbury, was appointed to a first term as the family member representative on the Mental Health Advisory Committee by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Dec. 20. Gehrz' term begins Jan. 1, 2023, and will expire Dec. 31, 2025.

Contact: Jennifer Ochocki, Coordinator to the County Administrator, 651-430-6010

County will continue contracts with satellite tracking systems company

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved two contracts with Satellite Tracking of People LLC (STOP) Dec. 20 to continue electronic monitoring of juveniles and adults.

One contract is for the Sheriff's Office. The office uses the company for electronic home monitoring. The renewed agreement is effective to the end of next year, and will automatically renew for three additional one-year periods, with an annual cost not to exceed \$75,000.

Community Corrections also uses the company for monitoring. That department will also have a contract with the company for 2023, at an annual cost of up to \$150,000. Electronic monitoring is a corrections tool that monitors, tracks, and limits the movement of justice-involved clients that provides an alternative to costly incarceration and promotes public safety. The county is able to maintain this contract at the current level by taking advantage of the Cooperative Purchasing Agreement through the state.

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Contact: Laura Perkins, Public Information Manager, 651-430-7994, and Terry Thomas, Community Corrections Director, 651-430-6951

Youth Services Bureau will continue to provide diversion services

The Youth Service Bureau (YSB) will continue to provide diversion services for juveniles who would otherwise be brought to juvenile court in Washington County after the County Board approved a \$186,618 contract with the agency Dec. 20.

The contract is for 2023, and is a 20% reduction from the 2022 contract, which aligns with anticipated service needs in 2023.

These services may be accessed by referral from a variety of sources, including the County Attorney's Office, other county departments, law enforcement agencies, and schools. While on diversion, a juvenile may participate in community work service, an educational program, and/or early intervention services through the YSB. Juveniles are required to make restitution to the victim and complete the diversion conditions to avoid a formal court record.

Contact: Terry Thomas, Community Corrections Director, 651-430-6951

Tubman will continue to provide services

Tubman will continue to provide services in Washington County to victims and families of domestic violence, including shelter, crisis intervention, counseling, advocacy, Orders for Protection assistance, and community presentations after the County Board approved a contract with the agency Dec. 20.

The \$212,411 contract will run through 2023.

Tubman is also the community point of contact for the Lethality Assessment Protocol (LAP) program, a risk assessment tool used by law enforcement officers in Washington County.

The 4% increase will help offset an increase in service expenses from the previous adjustment in 2022.

Contact: Terry Thomas, Community Corrections Director, 651-430-6951

Social worker will continue to be a partner at Woodbury Public Safety

Washington County will continue to embed a social worker with the Woodbury Public Safety after the County Board approved a contract extension with the department Dec. 20.

The contract between Washington County and the City of Woodbury Public Safety for \$122,058 was extended through June 30, 2024.

In 2022, the City of Woodbury Public Safety partnered with Washington County to launch a new response to mental health-related calls in the field: embedding a social worker in the police department. This approach allows for a tailored assessment and response for people calling due to mental health and substance-use issues.

Through the program, the embedded social worker receives referrals from the municipal police department and dispatch offices when applicable regarding individuals who appear to have mental health, substance use, or other issues during interactions with police and/or dispatch. The embedded social worker offers support, assessment, and connections to community services that will best meet the person's needs.

The goal of the program is to reduce criminal justice system involvement and create timely access to social services. The integration of social workers into emergency response reduces unnecessary law enforcement contacts and raises the quality of life for individuals through ongoing stability in their community.

Contact: Kathy Mickelson, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6532

Sheriff's Office will begin upgrade of community pager system

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will begin upgrading the pager network that activates firefighter pagers and outdoor warning sirens after the County Board approved the plan Dec. 20.

Washington County has deployed a network of transmitters in a very high frequency (VHF) band that activates the system, which has 11 sites that transmit simultaneously to provide countrywide coverage, along with a backup site.

The current transmitters were installed during the original buildout between 2006-2008, and have been discontinued by the manufacturer. The replacement will use spare parts interchangeability.

The Sheriff's Office will begin phase one of the upgrade to the paging system, which would replace all VHF transmitters and include installation. The cost of this phase is estimated at \$448,400.

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

County Board approves purchase of land for service center in Woodbury

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the purchase 3.15 acres of land in Woodbury Dec. 20 to build a new service center.

The 2019 county strategic facilities plan identified the need for a new service center in the west central region of the county to replace the current service facility near the intersection of Radio Drive and Central Park Place in Woodbury. In 2021, a property search was started with the goal of locating a parcel of land in the west central region of the county that had easy and convenient access to multi-modal transportation, including transit.

In early 2022, property was identified adjacent to a future Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit station. It is east of Interstate 494 at Valley Creek Road and Woodlane Drive. In April 2022, the County Board approved negotiations to purchase the parcel, and the property owner and county have negotiated a purchase agreement for \$2.1 million.

Washington County will use 2023 bond proceeds to pay for the purchase of the property. It is expected that the project will be put out to bid in fall 2023, with construction in summer 2024 and completion in summer 2025.

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

County Board approves legislative agenda for 2023

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a legislative agenda Dec. 20 that it will promote during the 2023 legislative session starting in early January.

Each year, the Washington County Board of Commissioners adopts position statements on state legislative issues that impact Washington County. The county's legislative agenda focuses on items that are specific to county interests, while also supporting the platforms of the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Inter-County Association, and the Partnership on Waste and Energy. The legislative agenda provides a position statement, supporting information, likely supporters, and the financial impact.

The legislative positions include requesting funding for improving the intersection of Highway 36 and Lake Elmo Avenue, requesting additional funding to supporting the county's community corrections services and increasing licensing fees to support license centers, and state funding for regional parks operations and maintenance, in addition to statements requesting assistance paying for all state-mandated services in the county.

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

County Board sets salaries for attorney, sheriff

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set salaries for 2023 for two elected county officials Dec. 20.

The County Board set the salaries of:

- Attorney Kevin Magnuson, at \$199,080 for 2023, a 4.5% increase over 2022; and
- Sheriff Dan Starry, at \$190,912 for 2023, which is a 7% increase over 2022.

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

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County Board recognizes Fixmer for years of service

The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized Don Fixmer Dec. 20 for 33 years of service videotaping government meetings and community events in Washington County.

Fixmer, of Stillwater, started taping the City of Stillwater meetings in 1987, and began taping the county meetings in 1989. Fixmer's work with the county and other governments allows for residents to view meetings and provide input to the elected officials on issues of importance to them.

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Don Fixmer is honored by the Washington County Board of Commissioners for his more than 30 years as the videographer at County Board meetings. Honoring Fixmer are commissioners Wayne Johnson, District 4, Lisa Weik, District 5, and Fran Miron, District 1, Fixmer, and commissioners Stan Karwoski, District 2, and Gary Kriesel, District 3.