



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

Date: June 18, 2024
Contact: Tina Elam, Communications Manager
Phone: 651-430-6004 (office), 651-592-5989 (after hours)
E-mail: tina.elam@co.washington.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the June 18, 2024, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

Washington County awards bond sale to JP Morgan Securities, retains AAA bond rating

Washington County awarded a board-approved \$26 million general obligation bond sale June 11 to JP Morgan Securities.

The county's bond sale occurred at 10:15 a.m., June 11, and the county received nine bids. As directed by the County Board resolution passed on May 7, 2024, the Pricing Committee consisting of Board Chair Stan Karwoski, Accounting and Finance Director Cat Piepho, Deputy County Administrator Jennifer Wagenius, and County Administrator Kevin Corbid met to award the winning bid.

The winning bid was received from JP Morgan Securities at a True Interest Rate (TIC) of 3.701% for the 20-year bond. PFM, the county's financial advisor, says the bid was very competitive due to the size of the bond sale, the county's bond rating, and the amount of bond market activity.

The bond sale will fund two capital projects in the county: the Central Service and License Center construction project and the Central Park improvement project in Woodbury.

As a part of the bond sale process, the county participated in ratings calls with Moody's and Standard & Poor's. Both rating agencies assigned the county the highest possible bond rating, AAA. Earning a AAA rating rather than an AA rating resulted in the county saving an estimated \$454,000 in interest on the bond sale.

During the ratings calls, county staff presented information and examples related to property taxes and demographics, financial reporting and management, budget and debt planning, and several exhibits that demonstrated the county's sound financial management.

In its ratings report, Moody's commented on the county's financial health, stating, "Given ongoing development, a diverse revenue base, and conservative budgeting, the county's financial position will remain very strong."

Standard & Poor's noted in its report that Washington County's credit strengths include "its expanding economy with robust market value growth and very strong fund balance." The agency believes "the county will likely preserve its history of stable operations due to strategic planning" and lauded it's "very strong management with strong financial-management policies."

Contact: Tina Elam, Communications Manager, 651-430-6004 (office), 651-592-5989 (after hours)

County Board appoints District 5 Library Board Representative

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed Simi Patnaik to the County Library Board as the District 5 Representative for a partial first term starting June 19, 2024, and expiring December 31, 2024.

The Washington County Library Board is made up of seven Washington County residents appointed by the Board of Commissioners. The Library Board must have one member from each commissioner district and two members who serve in at-large positions. The Library Board provides advice and counsel related to library operations.

Contact: Megan Carlson, Administrative Assistance, 651-430-6001

Metropolitan Council will reimburse 75% of Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park land acquisition costs

The Metropolitan Council will reimburse Washington County's Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP) for 75% of the costs to purchase a portion of property for inclusion into Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park.

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The Washington County Board of Commissioners entered a grant agreement with the Metropolitan Council providing the reimbursement June 18.

The purchase of this property located at 9826 East Point Douglas Road South, Cottage Grove, Minnesota, was approved by the Washington County Board of Commissioners on February 6, 2024. The total cost to purchase the parcel is \$542,296.00 including recording fees and taxes. The grant agreement will reimburse the LWLP funds used to purchase the property up to \$406,722.00.

The grant requires the county to enter into restrictive covenant agreements on the property. These two covenants are standard and have been included in past acquisition grants:

1. The property cannot be sold, encumbered, or conveyed in any way without the written approval of the Metropolitan Council.
2. A permanent easement is established for future regional wastewater conveyance corridors on the property. As a consideration of the Wastewater Facilities Easement, the grant agreement agrees to waive the service availability charge for the property.

As part of the Metropolitan Council Land and Legacy Amendment's Parks and Trails Fund (P&T Fund) to support parks and trails of regional significance, it provides Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grants to assist in the acquisition of recreation open space lands.

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

Sheriff's Office receives \$3,000 donation from Prohibition Barbers for Shop with a Cop event

The Washington County Sheriff's Office received a \$3,000 donation from the Stillwater business, Prohibition Barbers, to support the Shop with a Cop back-to-school shopping community event.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the donation June 18.

Shop with a Cop is an event where students shop for school supplies and clothes directly with a deputy or police officer. This year, the Sheriff's Office will coordinate with School District 834 to select students

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for the shopping event with the Sheriff's Office and the Oak Park Heights, Bayport, and Stillwater Police Departments.

This community engagement event provides an opportunity for law enforcement to give back to the community and help make a difference in the lives of young students before the start of the school year. This event would not be possible without donors and support from community members and local businesses like Prohibition Barbers.

Contact: Doug Anschutz, Chief Deputy Sheriff, 651-430-7846

Cottage Grove Police Department joins the East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force

The Cottage Grove Police Department joined the East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force, alongside the Washington County Sheriff's Office and Attorney's Office.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an amended and restated joint powers agreement (JPA) adding the Cottage Grove Police Department June 18. The JPA also changed the name of the task force from the East Metro Sex Trafficking Task Force to the East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force.

The purpose of this task force was to form a coordinated and formal framework for targeted sex trafficking investigations, membership and personnel commitments, allocation of resources and equipment, distribution of forfeiture funds and proceeds, and general management of the overall operations of the group.

Contact: Doug Anschutz, Chief Deputy Sheriff, 651-430-7846

Sheriff's Office to provide transportation services from County jail

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will provide transportation services for individuals released from the Washington County Jail.

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The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract June 18 not to exceed \$100,000 with BG Transportation Service, LLC, to provide rides within a 25-mile radius of the county jail.

Public transportation options from Stillwater to the metro area are limited, which creates challenges for individuals who do not have friends or family in the area to provide a ride. Transportation in the winter months is especially critical.

The 25-mile radius will encompass all of Washington County, the eastern part of the metro area, and portions of western Wisconsin. This will provide access to many additional options for travel, including bus and light rail transit stations.

Contact: Doug Anschutz, Chief Deputy Sheriff, 651-430-7846

July proclaimed Park and Recreation Month in Washington County

The Washington County Board of Commissioners proclaimed July as Park and Recreation Month in the county.

The resolution passed June 18 continues “Free Tuesdays,” allowing vehicles to enter Washington County Parks for free on the first non-holiday Tuesday of each month.

Park and Recreation Month helps bring awareness of the parks and trails available in Washington County. Parks are important to establish and maintain the quality of life in the county by contributing to the health of residents and the economic and environmental well-being of the county.

Parks and natural recreation areas improve water and air quality and provide habitat for wildlife. They also ensure the ecological beauty of the county and provide residents with a place to connect with nature and enjoy outdoor recreation. Providing recreational services can help prevent chronic disease and improve the mental and emotional health of all residents, including people living with mental or physical disabilities.

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In addition to health and wellness benefits, parks and recreation programs boost the county's economic prosperity through increased property values, tax base expansion, increased tourism, and attracting and retaining businesses.

Washington County Parks manages 4,773 acres of public land spread across eight parks, two regional trails, one conservation area, and the Historic Courthouse site. County parks saw an estimated 2 million visitors in 2022. In addition to Free Tuesdays, Washington County provides free park access on Earth Day, National Get Outdoors Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving, and to residents who qualify for cash assistance and veterans with a service-connected disability.

Contact: JJ Williams, Parks Manager, 651-430-8245

County secures \$400,000 in grants for Parks Equity initiatives

Washington County Parks secured \$400,000 in grant funding from the Metropolitan Council for seven equity-based initiatives.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the grant agreements June 18.

Metropolitan Council's Park Equity Grant program aims to fund projects that strengthen the equitable use of the Regional Parks System. In 2024, the program had \$2,068,000 in available funds. Washington County submitted seven separate proposals as part of a competitive process and secured funding for all seven of the following initiatives.

- Playground upgrades to include more accessible features and sensory-rich play equipment at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park – \$100,000.
- American Indian Historical Cultural Study with goals of cultivating a relationship with Native stakeholders and communities, documenting historical and present-day perspectives, and providing guidance on authentic Indigenous interpretation, programming, and natural system stewardship – \$125,000.
- Social Media Influencer Awareness Campaign for Regional Parks and Trails to increase awareness of regional parks and trails in Washington and Anoka County – \$10,000.

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- Mountain Bike Beginner Skills Area construction at Lake Elmo Park Reserve to provide a location for new bikers to develop skills – \$75,000.
- Cultural Arts Festival at Lake Elmo Park Reserve to serve communities from around the metro and beyond by celebrating and sharing diverse perspectives and backgrounds while enjoying healthy, green spaces – \$45,000.
- Purchase of an Action Trackchair, an all-terrain electric wheelchair that smoothly maneuvers over various landscapes – \$25,000.
- Water Safety Outreach Programs that instruct on staying safe in and around water – \$20,000.

Contact: JJ Williams, Parks Manager, 651-430-8245

Stonebrooke Engineering Inc. to consult on County Road 74 Corridor Improvement Project

The Washington County Board of Commissioners awarded a contract to Stonebrooke Engineering Inc. for consultant services on the County Road (CR) 74 Corridor Improvement Project June 18.

The corridor improvement project spans a half-mile stretch of CR 74 from Geneva Ave. to County State Aid Highway 38 (Hastings Ave.) in Newport.

Under the contract, totaling \$399,600, Stonebrooke Engineering will provide project coordination of preliminary and final design, public engagement, utility coordination, geotechnical services, topographic surveying, permitting approvals, and the necessary right-of-way.

The main objectives of the CR 74 corridor improvement project are:

- Pavement improvement.
- Installation of curb, gutter, and guardrail throughout the corridor.
- Feasibility and analysis of the trail installation on one side of the roadway.
- Ditch improvements and ravine stabilization throughout the corridor.

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County staff released a request for proposals in February and eight proposals were received. Stonebrooke Engineering Inc. was selected as the consultant to complete this work. The project is scheduled for construction in 2026.

The contract will be paid for with County Transportation Sales Tax Funds.

Contact: Mike Kline, Engineer I, 651-430-4304

County Board approves contract to replace the county-wide phone system

Washington County's phone system will be replaced with a new system from RingCentral, Inc.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with RingCentral, Inc., totaling \$1,713,916.20 over five years.

County staff identified a need for a new county-wide phone system to provide cloud-based communication platforms. The county is currently using a 15-year-old Mitel private branch exchange (PBX) telephone communications system.

As with many organizations, the pandemic changed how the county communicated. The county relied on Teams for internal communication and cell phones and One Talk from Verizon for external communication.

Services through RingCentral, Inc. will work with existing Microsoft Teams technology to provide staff with a fully integrated communications platform that can utilize audio and video calling, web conferencing, web page integrations, and even older technologies like faxing and SMS. RingCentral, Inc. will also reduce the amount of telephony hardware and decrease the service and support necessary.

The county received fifteen proposals during a request-for-proposal period that closed in February. RingCentral, Inc. was selected as the best value for the described services.

The contract will be paid for using American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Contact: Adam Larson, Information Technology Director, 651-430-6421

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Sheriff's Office to replace its mobile command vehicle

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will replace its mobile command vehicle with a new vehicle from LDV, Inc.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the contract with LDV, Inc. June 18. The contract totals \$1,076,140 over 24 months.

The current mobile command vehicle was purchased in 2011 and is nearing the end of its life. The Sheriff's Office has been advised by Public Works staff that the vehicle requires replacement due to current and future mechanical failures associated with the vehicle's age.

Washington County's mobile command vehicle is a resource used by all public safety agencies in the county during small- and large-scale events, such as critical incidents, trainings, and community engagement events.

A Request for Bids process was completed, and the Sheriff's Office received one bid from LDV Inc., which was selected as the lowest responsible contractor. LDV Inc., will design and build a new, custom mobile command vehicle for the Sheriff's Office.

The contract will be funded with Public Safety Aid (\$850,000) and the County's 2024 contingency (\$226,140).

Contact: Doug Anschutz, Chief Deputy Sheriff, 651-430-7846

June proclaimed as Pride Month in Washington County

The Washington County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution June 18 declaring June as Pride Month in Washington County.

The month of June is nationally designated as Pride Month in recognition of the Stonewall Uprising of June 1969, widely considered the start of the LGBTQIA+ rights movement. Numerous events have been organized around the country to commemorate that event. Here in Washington County, the PRIDE Employee Resource Group (ERG) hosted a Pride Month celebration for staff entitled "Hear My Story" on

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Thursday, June 6. This event featured seven amazing storytelling stations, resources, activities, and time to connect with other county employees.

The resolution affirms the county's commitment to fostering acceptance of all residents and preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. It also recognizes the vital contributions that LGBTQIA+ community members make in Washington County.

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County holds Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting June 18

The Washington County Board of Commissioners and County Auditor convened as the County Board of Appeal and Equalization at 5 p.m., June 18, to conduct its annual review of the value and classification of property in the county.

The date and time of this meeting were shared with the public on valuation statements mailed to each property owner. Individuals who wish to have their appeal heard by the County Board of Appeal and Equalization were asked to register with the County Assessor. Pre-registration allows staff the chance to review the property and provide information to the Board.

This is the first of two meetings of the County Board of Appeal and Equalization required by state law. Property owners were allowed to speak to the Board and present their case.

The second meeting of the Board of Appeal and Equalization will take place on the morning of June 25, 2024. At the second meeting, the Board will review recommendations from staff, ask questions, discuss, and act on each appeal.

Contact: Amy Stenftenagel, Property Records and Taxpayers Services Director, 651-430-6182

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