



Our Mission: We strive to provide exceptional services that enhance quality of life and promote a safe, healthy, and welcoming community for all.

Date: Aug. 6, 2024
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 6, 2024, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Board adopts 2024-2029 Countywide Strategic Plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners adopted the 2024-2029 Countywide Strategic Plan Aug. 6.

The plan was developed with extensive input from stakeholders, including the County Board. It includes updated mission, vision, and values statements for the county. The plan also outlines four main priorities for the next several years: Organizational Excellence, Safe Communities and Thriving People, Strong and Sustainable Environment, and Financial Health and Capacity.

Each priority has clearly defined goals and objectives with measures to track progress and ensure accountability.

County staff will now start working on an implementation plan to put the strategic plan into action.

Contact: Emily Jorgensen, Planning Manager, 651-430-6011

County Board appoints manager to second term on Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed David Bakke of Scandia to a second term as manager on the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District Board Aug. 6.

The term is for a period beginning Sept. 24, 2024, and expiring Sept. 23, 2027.

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

Audio-visual upgrades coming to Washington County boardroom

The Washington County Board of Commissioners has approved a \$642,032.07 contract with AVI Systems, Inc. to upgrade the audio-visual (AV) system in the county boardroom, overflow areas, and control room.

County staff recognized the need to update the AV system to improve live broadcasting, simplify access for residents and stakeholders, and support dedicated video streaming platforms with closed-captioning. The new system will also allow for multicasting to the county website and social media channels and will give the county's cable access channels access to the video feed.

The upgrades will include better equipment to provide system redundancy, protect devices, and save default settings. The control panels will be updated for a simpler user interface and improved boardroom operations.

The project is scheduled to be finished before the board meeting on Nov. 12.

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

County Board approves off-site gambling application for Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an off-site gambling application for Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center Aug. 6.

Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center submitted the off-site gambling application to conduct a raffle on Sept. 8, 2024, at 12805 St. Croix Trail S., Hastings, Minnesota in Denmark Township.

State law requires the County Board to approve permits for organizations to conduct off-site gambling within townships. The County Auditor reviewed the applications and Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center meets the requirements to conduct a raffle. The approved application will now be sent to the State Gambling Board for consideration.

Contact: Christine Piskura, Taxpayer Services and Election Division Manager, 651-430-8272

Nadeau Companies to complete Neal Avenue culvert replacement in West Lakeland Township

Washington County will replace a metal culvert under County Road 71 (Neal Ave.) with a new concrete culvert. The County Board approved a \$165,795.10 contract with Nadeau Companies for this project.

The county's Public Works Department oversees over 840 culverts, which help prevent local flooding by channeling water under highways. They regularly inspect these culverts and track their condition and maintenance needs.

The culvert being replaced is in poor condition and helps balance water levels between ponds on either side of County Road 71. It is part of a drainage system that moves water from Lake Elmo and Oakdale to the St. Croix River. The new concrete culvert is expected to last 70-100 years.

Bids for the project were opened on July 16, 2024, and Nadeau Companies was the lowest bidder.

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

County Board accepts grant for erosion control at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park

The Washington Board of Commissioners accepted a grant to improve drainage issues along the entrance road in Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park Aug. 6.

The park's access road experiences erosion when it rains, which has created maintenance challenges. This project will add curbs, gutters, and storm sewer structures to eliminate the erosion issues along the park entrance road.

The South Washington Watershed District Coordinated Capital Improvements Program grant will cover 50% of the project cost, or \$87,500.

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

Bituminous Roadways, Inc. to complete pavement preservation project in Lake Elmo Park Reserve

Over four miles of roadways and trails in Lake Elmo Park Reserve will be repaved, and new pedestrian ramps will be installed at crossings. The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$757,565.89 contract with Bituminous Roadways, Inc. for this project on Aug. 6.

The project includes repaving 0.7 miles of the main park entrance road and 3.8 miles of park trails. New pedestrian ramps will be added at trail-roadway intersections, and crosswalk striping will be installed.

Bids for the project were opened on July 11, and Bituminous Roadways submitted the lowest bid, which was below the county's estimate. The project will be funded by Metropolitan Council Bonds for Regional Parks and the Transportation Advancement Account.

Contact: Erin Clarkowski, Engineer II, 651-430-4384

County, South Washington Watershed District to complete Central Greenway Regional Trail extension near Glacial Valley Park

Washington County and the South Washington Watershed District (SWWD) are finishing the last part of the Central Greenway Regional Trail south of Interstate 94, just north of Glacial Valley Park in Woodbury.

The County Board of Commissioners approved a cooperative agreement with SWWD, where SWWD will handle the project, and the county will contribute \$100,000, which is approximately one-third of the project's estimated cost.

The new trail segment will stretch from 63rd St. S. to Glacial Valley Rd., near Keats Ave. N. (County State Aid Highway 19). SWWD owns land in Glacial Valley Park, making it a key link between existing trails in Woodbury and Cottage Grove. This extension aligns with the Central Greenway Regional Trail's Long Range Plan, aiming to enhance the region's transportation and recreation options with a safe, accessible trail connecting regional parks.

Contact: Erin Clarkowski, Engineer II, 651-430-4384

County Board begins reviews of 2025 budget recommendations

The Washington County Board of Commissioners, in a livestreamed and recorded workshop, began its review of the county's 2025 recommended budget Aug. 6.

The board will hear presentations from each county department between Aug. 6 and Sept. 3. The board will follow a budget calendar through early December, which will include:

- Sept. 24: Set a preliminary levy.
- Oct. 15: Review the county's five-year capital improvement plan.
- Nov. 12: Conduct a public hearing on the five-year capital improvement plan.
- Nov. 26: Conduct a public hearing on the proposed 2024 budget and levy; the public hearing will occur after 6 p.m.
- Dec. 17: Adopt a budget and property tax levy for 2024, and the capital improvement plan.

The Office of Administration's budget recommendation is for a 5.9% levy increase to \$139.3 million. If the recommended levy is adopted, a median-valued home, worth \$412,000, would see a 3.2% increase in county property taxes, totaling about \$30 more for 2025. The county has the second-lowest tax rate and the third-lowest property tax levy in the seven-county metro area.

One major factor impacting the 2025 budget is maintaining competitive wages and benefits, with increased personnel costs due to new contracts and expanded employee support programs. To accommodate a growing population, particularly in Lake Elmo, Cottage Grove, Woodbury, and Oakdale, the budget adds eight new full-time employees, mainly funded by federal and state funds. The budget maintains the historical ratio of five employees per 1,000 residents.

One-time funding is included for EV charging stations, the 2025 residential survey, and a managed print project. Technology costs are rising due to planned cost increases, software maintenance, and an identity access management system to enhance security.

The budget includes \$9 million for several long-term capital investments, including the Emergency Housing Service Building, the R.H. Stafford Library project, improvements to the Law Enforcement Center and Oakdale Library, and replacing the court security camera system. It also allocates \$47.7

million for the road and bridge program, including pavement preservation, road reconstruction, and planning for the Public Works South Shop. It also includes \$2.6 million in park investments, including improvements to Square Lake and Point Douglas regional parks.

Departmental budgets for Accounting and Finance, Administration, Commissioners, Human Resources, Information Technology, and the Community Development Agency were also reviewed in workshops Aug. 6.

All budget presentations can be found on the county website. Archived livestreamed meetings may be found on the county website at washingtoncountymn.gov/countyboard. Budget documents presented at the workshops may be found at washingtoncountymn.gov/budget.

Contact: Brian Kaufenberg, Senior Communications Specialist, 651-430-6008