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**Date:** Aug. 20, 2024  
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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 20, 2024, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

## **County Board makes appointment to Workforce Development Board**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed Lori Tapani to a partial term on the Workforce Development Board as a Business Representative Aug. 20.

The partial term starts Aug. 20, 2024, and expires June 30, 2026.

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

## **County Board approves grants for St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park improvements**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved \$1.75 million in grant funding with the Metropolitan Council to improve the hilltop shelter area of St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park Aug. 20.

Significant improvements to the park's hilltop shelter area have not been made since the county acquired the property in 1996. Grant funds will be used towards improving the play structure, building a new restroom facility, making lighting improvements to the pavilion, and resurfacing the tennis court. Site prep will begin in 2024, and construction will be completed in spring 2025.

The first grant is a Modernization Grant for \$325,600. Modernization Grant funds are meant to improve or replace aging infrastructure within the regional park system. The second is a Park Legacy Grant for \$1,429,662.31. The 2023 legislature approved funding for the Metropolitan Council to allocate state funds towards the regional park system.

**Contact: Alex McKinney, Parks Director, 651-430-4364**

## **County Board approves grants for Lake Elmo Park Reserve improvements**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved \$1.75 million in grant funding with the Metropolitan Council for the purchase and installation of a new play structure at Lake Elmo Park Reserve Aug. 20.

The play structure at Lake Elmo Park Reserve is over 25 years old. The 2023 legislature approved state bonds to be allocated to the regional park system through the Met Council. Funds from the Met Council will be used to replace the current play structure equipment, perform site work, make parking lot upgrades, and improve access. Site prep will begin in 2024, and construction will be completed in spring 2025.

The first grant is a Modernization Grant for \$700,000. Modernization Grant funds are meant to improve or replace aging infrastructure within the regional park system. The second is a Park Legacy Grant for \$1,053,680.96. The 2023 legislature approved funding for the Metropolitan Council to allocate state funds towards the regional park system.

**Contact: Alex McKinney, Parks Director, 651-430-4364**

## **Washington, Olmsted, Dakota, and St. Louis counties to partner for 2025 Resident Survey**

Washington County will work with Dakota, Olmsted, and St. Louis counties to conduct its 2025 resident survey.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution Aug. 20 authorizing the County Board Chair and County Administrator to enter into a Joint Powers Agreement with the counties.

Washington County periodically surveys its residents to gather information about the services it provides. Washington County partnered with several Minnesota counties in 2006, 2008, 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2022. The county will continue this partnership in 2025 with Dakota, Olmsted, and St. Louis counties. The benefits of this collaboration are cost savings and the ability to compare outcomes on a national scale and locally with peer agencies.

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The JPA will include the scope of services, cost sharing, and the delegation of authority for Dakota County to act as the fiscal agent on behalf of the partners. The four counties have proposed contracting with Polco/National Research Center to administer the survey. Polco/NRC administered the 2006, 2008, 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2022 resident surveys.

**Contact: Kelli Matzek, Senior Planner, 651-430-6021**

## **County Board continues review of 2025 budget**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners, in a livestreamed and recorded workshop, continued its review of the county's 2025 recommended budget Aug. 20.

The initial budget workshop, available in the County Board livestream archives, was Aug. 6 and provided an overview of a recommended budget for 2025.

The board will hear presentations from each county department between Aug. 6 and Sept. 3. The Aug. 20 presentations were from the Community Corrections Department, Community Services Department, Public Health & Environment Department, and the University of Minnesota Extension.

The overall county budget recommended by the Office of Administration includes 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 per capita in the seven-county metro area.

Community Corrections provides probation and parole supervision for both adults and juveniles in the community. The recommended budget includes additional funding to meet the increasing use of electronic monitoring for clients. Client numbers for the department are increasing, with the estimate that 5,450 adults will be served in 2024. This estimate is still 12% below the overall client base from 2019.

The Community Services Department provides services to those who are aging or have a disability, and supports children and families through adoption services, childcare, child support, alcohol, and drug abuse services, foster care, housing, mental health, protection services, truancy, and veterans and job

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search services. The department anticipates increased costs in 2025 due to rising demand for housing and homelessness support, mental health services, and community engagement efforts.

The Department of Public Health and Environment provides services to protect, promote, and improve the community's health and the environment. The department anticipates increased expenditures from the operational costs of the new North Environmental Center, opioid settlement-funded projects, and expanding community engagement efforts.

All budget presentations can be found on the county website. Archived livestreamed meetings may be found on the county website at [washingtoncountymn.gov/countyboard](https://www.washingtoncountymn.gov/countyboard). Budget documents presented at the workshops may be found at [washingtoncountymn.gov/budget](https://www.washingtoncountymn.gov/budget).

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.

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