

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

Date: Aug. 27, 2024
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 27, 2024, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Board reappoints manager to Brown's Creek Watershed District

The Washington County Board of Commissioners reappointed Celia Wirth of Grant to a third term as manager of the Brown's Creek Watershed District Aug. 27.

Wirth's third term will begin on Oct. 23, 2024, and expire Oct. 22, 2027.

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

County Board approves annual report for development agency

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the county Community Development Agency (CDA) 2023 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report Aug. 27 for submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) details Washington County's progress toward meeting the goals outlined in Washington County's 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan and projects undertaken with 2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) program funds.

The CAPER is a means to communicate to the HUD and policymakers how funds are spent and the impact the programs make in the community.

Washington County's Program Year 2023 accomplishments included nine home improvement loans that achieved construction completion; street and public improvements in the city of Landfall; public improvements by Rise, Inc at their Cottage Grove and Forest Lake facilities; land acquisition and new rental construction by MWF Properties; new construction of homes in St. Paul Park by Habitat for

Humanity; and Two Rivers Community Land Trust acquisition and improvements of six single family homes scattered throughout Washington County for sale to income-eligible households.

Utilizing CDBG funds, Washington County Community Services also provided resources for homelessness prevention to 3,188 people. An additional eight households that had fallen behind on their mortgage payments because of the COVID-19 pandemic were provided emergency mortgage assistance grants.

The draft CAPER was released for public comment and published on the CDA website Aug. 2 with instructions on how to comment. The public comment period closed Aug. 20. The CDA conducted a public hearing at its Aug. 20 meeting. No public comments were received at the public hearing or during the public comment period.

The CAPER and certifications will be submitted to HUD by Sept. 28. The full report can be viewed on the CDA's website at www.washingtoncountycda.org.

Contact: Karly Schoeman, Community Development Agency Deputy Executive Director, 651-458-6556

County Board receives GFOA Triple Crown awards

The Washington County Board of Commissioners was presented with awards from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Aug. 27, representing the “Triple Crown” for financial reporting.

The awards are for:

- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR).
- Award for the 2022 Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR).
- Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 2024 budget.

The award for the 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) marks the 38th consecutive year that the county has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Award. The award is intended to recognize and encourage excellence in financial reporting by state and local governments. The county's consistent participation in the program demonstrates its commitment to quality financial management practices and open and clear communication with its residents. The award has a direct impact when rating agencies assess the county's financial practices during bond issuance.

This is the fifth consecutive year the county has received the GFOA Award for Outstanding Achievement in the 2022 Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR). The PAFR is designed to be readily accessible and

easily understandable to the public. It aims to reduce jargon and technical language, and includes charts and graphs to assist users in understanding the financial position of the county.

The board also received the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the county's 2024 budget. The 2024 award marks the 27th consecutive year of receiving the award. To receive the award, the budget document is submitted to the GFOA and goes through peer reviews to determine if the quality of the document meets the nationally recognized standards for effective budget presentation. The county document must also meet 14 mandatory criteria on which it is rated.

The budget satisfies nationally recognized guidelines as:

- A policy document.
- A financial plan.
- An operations guide.
- A communications device.

Washington County is one of only a small number of counties in Minnesota and the U.S. to receive these three awards.

The GFOA's Triple Crown recognizes governments that have received all three of these awards.

The award program began in 1998 and is the only national awards program in governmental budgeting.

Contact: Renee Vought, Accounting and Finance Deputy Director, 651-430-6033

Photo cutline 001: Accounting and Finance Director Cat Piepho (center right) and Deputy Director Renee Vought (second from left) and Office of Administration Budget Analysts Xai Tao (second from right) and Trung Le (right) were recognized by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Aug. 27 for receiving the GFOA's Triple Crown of financial reporting awards.

Family Health Nurse Supervisor Tyler Roenicke named Minnesota Counties and Computer Cooperative Member of the Year

The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized Family Health Nursing Supervisor Tyler Roenicke as the Minnesota Counties and Computer Cooperative Member of the Year Aug. 27. Public Health & Environment is a member of the MnCCC, which works with all Minnesota counties as a joint powers organization facilitating services and training related to software solutions.

Each year MnCCC awards a Member of the Year to an individual whose outstanding dedication and service to the mission and vision of MnCCC is recognized and felt by the Board, staff, and MnCCC members.

Over the last year, Roenicke has spent significant time and energy supporting the Community Health Services (CHS) User Group and the PH-Doc Software used by nearly 40 counties across the state. Roenicke's work has impacted various PH-Doc efforts, including the PH-Doc roadmap committee and the recent Title V Grant Reporting Standardization. Roenicke participates in the CHS User Group and the Enhancement Committee meetings and activities. He is dedicated to sharing information among users to support continued learning, encouraging innovation, and advocating for using new and best practices across the electronic health record documentation continuum. Because of his continued commitment to making PH-Doc a more accessible, user-friendly, and cost-effective product, MnCCC has chosen to recognize Tyler Roenicke as the 2024 Member of the Year.

Contact: David Brummel, Public Health and Environment Director, 651-430-6662

Photo cutline 002: Public Health Nursing Supervisor Tyler Roenicke holding the MnCCC Member of the Year award was recognized by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Aug. 27.

St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park to get new play equipment

New play equipment will be installed at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park to replace the aging play equipment in the hilltop area of the park.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$283,255.02 purchase order with Landscape Structures for the play equipment and a \$361,300.03 purchase order with Flagship Recreation for the installation of the new play equipment Aug. 27. Metropolitan Council grants will fund the purchase orders.

The new play equipment includes nature-themed equipment and will emphasize inclusive play. The new play container will be 100% poured-in-place rubber surfacing, which promotes accessibility.

Valley Friendship Club was engaged as part of the playground design process and the feedback received was incorporated into the final design concept.

The existing St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park playground equipment was installed in 1999. The current playground is characterized by outdated equipment, sand surfacing, and mature oak trees which

provide natural shade for kids and caretakers. Construction is anticipated to be completed in early summer 2025.

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

JM Hauling, LLC to complete of river trail stabilization project at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$128,851.63 contract with JM Hauling, LLC for the stabilization of the river trail at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park.

The project will address erosion by stabilizing the ravine below the park's campground and repairing a failing culvert at the eastern end of the ravine. Funding comes from the Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) grant program, which helps local governments tackle important water quality issues based on a watershed's highest priorities. The WBIF program is administered through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

The South Washington Watershed District is supporting this contract by providing the grant's required local match of up to \$30,000, or approximately 20 percent of the project's construction. Bids for the project were opened on Aug. 6 and JM Hauling, LLC had the lowest and compliant bid.

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

Forest Lake Contracting, Inc to complete North Environmental Center connection to State Highway 61

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with Forest Lake Contracting, Inc. to connect the North Environmental Center to State Highway 61 and Headwaters Parkway Aug. 27.

The \$1,351,390.85 contract for Bid Package 3 will include the construction of a future city street that will connect the new site to the intersection of State Highway 61 and Headwaters Parkway, and the necessary modifications required at the existing traffic signal. It also includes a fiber communications connection to the new environmental center building.

The environmental center building is nearing completion with an expected occupancy this fall. Following a 2017 study, the County Board directed staff to develop a North Environmental Center (household hazardous waste facility) to service the northern portion of Washington County. The new center will

allow residents in the northern part of Washington County to dispose of hazardous materials, electronics, and other items that don't belong in the trash.

Bids for Bid Package 3 were opened on Aug. 6 and the county received six bids. Forest Lake Contracting, Inc. was the lowest bid, meeting all bid requirements.

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

County recognized for five Minnesota Association of Government Communicators Northern Lights Awards

The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized staff Aug. 27 for receiving five awards at the Minnesota Association of Government Communicators annual awards banquet that took place this July.

The Northern Lights Contest recognizes outstanding work in Minnesota's government, educational and nonprofit communications, and provides valuable feedback for all entries from the communications professionals who judge the contest.

The following awards were awarded:

- 1st place Northern Light Award in the General Publication category for the Library's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.
- 1st place Northern Light Award in the Public Information Project category for Public Health and Environment's Recycling Matters campaign, done in collaboration between Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties.
- 1st place Northern Light Award in the Logo, Illustration, or Graphic category for the Parks animal stickers collection developed by the Office of Administration.
- 1st place Northern Light Award in the Website Design or Redesign category for the Office of Administration's redesign of WashNet, the county's employee intranet system.
- Silver Award in the Writing category for the Comprehensive Website Evaluation Request for Proposal developed by the Office of Administration.

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Photo cutline 003: Staff from the Office of Administration, Public Health and Environment Department, and Library Department were recognized by the Washington County Board of Commissioners Aug. 27 for receiving 2024 MAGC Northern Lights communications awards.

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. 27.

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. 27 presentations were from the Library and Law Library and Property Records and Taxpayer Services Department.

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.

The Library has eight physical branches across the county, provides Library Express lockers for material pickup in Marine on St. Croix, Hugo, and Newport, and supports its digital branch that holds its website, catalog of materials, email, and online chat services.

Checkouts at county library branches in 2024 are on pace to match 2023, new library card registrations are exceeding pre-pandemic levels, and the Library continues to expand the number of performers and events offered to those of all ages. Use of digital checkouts continues to grow for library users. Key factors impacting the 2025 budget are rising costs of materials and investments in that improve access and reduce barriers to library services.

The Property Records and Taxpayers Services Department provides a wide variety of mandated and core services in five locations throughout Washington County. It is projected in 2025 that the Property Records and Taxpayer Services Department will:

- Oversee property records of 119,100 parcels.
- Collect \$675 million in property taxes.

- Conduct 254,650 transactions in licensing centers.
- Support 186,000 registered voters.
- Record 50,000 documents.

The department's services are provided in the Government Center in Stillwater, and service centers in Stillwater, Forest Lake, Woodbury, and Cottage Grove.

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.

The board will follow a budget calendar through early December, which will include:

- Sept. 24: Set a preliminary levy.
- Oct. 1: 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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