

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

Date: Sept. 3, 2024
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Sept. 3, 2024, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Board approves contract with case management provider for those with disabilities

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with a case management provider Redeemer Services, Inc. at its Sept. 3 meeting.

The county provides case management services to over 1,500 children and adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The case management for these individuals is performed by county social workers or contracted through private agencies. The approved contract with Redeemer Services, Inc. is for a term ending Dec. 31, 2025, and not to exceed \$30,000.

Contact: Denise Landry, Community Services Division Manager, 651-275-7754

Sheriff's Office receives funding for two airboats, digital evidence management system

The Washington County Sheriff's Office received \$963,000 to secure two airboats and a digital evidence management system. The funding comes from the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs for the Bureau of Justice Assistance FY 2024 Byrne Discretionary Community Project Funding/Byrne Discretionary Grants Program sponsored by Congresswoman Betty McCollum.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted the grant Sept. 3.

With 251 lakes in Washington County, the waterways patrolled by the Sheriff's Office vary in both terrain and accessibility. Airboats give rescuers a secure and stable platform to navigate through unstable ice and wetland areas, granting access to remote locations. These boats allow responders to

safely navigate and transition from solid ground, swamp, ice, or open water with enhanced response times and reliability to perform essential lifesaving operations.

Most criminal investigations involve digital evidence in some form, and the current management process utilized by the Sheriff's Office is limited by space, functionality, and performance constraints. The implementation of a cloud-hosted case management system would allow not only the Sheriff's Office, but all municipal public safety agencies in Washington County, the ability to efficiently store, analyze, and share digital evidence, thereby improving the communication and overall effectiveness of public safety operations throughout the community.

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

County Board proclaims September as Library Card Sign-up Month

September is officially Library Card Sign-up Month in Washington County. The Washington County Board of Commissioners made the proclamation Sept. 3.

Library Card Sign-up Month is a national campaign to remind everyone about the valuable resources available with a library card. Library Card Sign-up Month began in 1987 and was inspired by then Secretary of Education William Bennett, who encouraged the initiative because "Every child should obtain a library card and use it."

Washington County Library is celebrating September as Library Card Sign-up Month by promoting the benefits of signing up for a library card, including access to materials and resources that serve students of all ages as well as lifelong learners, job seekers, small business owners, and more. By declaring September 2024 as Library Card Sign-up Month in Washington County, the county acknowledges the important role libraries play in our communities and encourages everyone to sign up for their library card today.

Contact: Aubrey Fonfara, Senior Communications Specialist, 651-275-8504

Parks playground equipment to get second life through Kids Around the World, Inc.

Kids Around the World, a not-for-profit corporation that refurbishes and redistributes used playground equipment to communities in over 60 countries, will remove two playgrounds from Washington County Parks.

The county is replacing aging playground equipment from Lake Elmo Park Reserve and St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park as a part of two improvement projects. Both playground areas have been well maintained by county staff. However, the equipment is out of date and parts availability for repairs is limited.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved two “equal exchange” contract agreements with Kids Around the World Sept. 3. Under the agreements, the county will sell Kids Around the World the playground equipment for a price equal to the cost of removing the play equipment. The county entered a similar “even exchange” sale with Kids Around the World in 2019.

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

County Board declares September as National Preparedness Month

The Washington County Board of Commissioners declared September as National Preparedness Month in the county Sept. 3.

Since 2004, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has observed September as National Preparedness Month to promote the importance of individuals, families, and communities to prepare for emergencies and disasters. The month is an opportunity for Washington County residents to prepare their homes, businesses, and communities for disasters and emergencies.

Investing in disaster preparedness can help save lives and reduce economic devastation. All residents are urged to make preparedness a priority and work together as a team to ensure individuals, families, and communities are prepared for disasters and emergencies. Washington County has the opportunity to join and support the state and nation in strengthening community and regional resiliency.

Contact: Doug Berglund, Emergency Services Manager, 651-430-7682

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 Sept. 3.

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 heard presentations from each county department between Aug. 6 and Sept. 3. The Sept. 3 presentation was from the Sheriff's Office.

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.

In 2023, the Sheriff's Office responded to 72,884 calls for service. This includes 16,832 traffic stops, 1,040 arrests, and 1,152 crashes. This also resulted in the Records Unit processing over 41,500 reports. The Washington County Emergency Communications Response Center received 191,443 calls. Of those calls, 86,457 came in through 911. This equates to over 525 calls answered on an average day. Each year, Washington County deputies drive a combined 2.1 million miles patrolling over 423 square miles of the county. In 2023, the Washington County Jail booked 5,378 inmates with an average daily population of 139.

In the coming year, key factors that will impact the budget are employee training and retention, the rising number of mental health service calls to the county's coordinated response team, and technology needs to meet state mandates on inmate wellness checks.

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. 1: Review the county's five-year capital improvement plan.

- Nov. 19: 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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