



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

Date: Sept. 24, 2024
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Sept. 24, 2024, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Board sets preliminary levy, proposed budget for 2025

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set a preliminary property tax levy to support the proposed 2025 county budget Sept. 24. The board also adopted a proposed budget for next year.

After setting the preliminary levy, the board may reduce it when it sets the final levy in December, but the board cannot increase it. The certified preliminary property tax levy payable in 2025 is \$140,479,200. The board also set a levy for the Regional Rail Authority at \$660,000 and the Land and Water Legacy Program at \$1.2 million, the same as in previous years.

The preliminary levy is an increase of 5.9% over 2024. The county tax rate will remain stable with recent years, increasing slightly from 22% in 2024 to 23.7% in 2025. A decline in existing home values in 2025 contributes to the increase in tax rate. Since 2020, the county's tax rate has fallen a total of 5.2% and Washington County remains below the average for property tax rates in the metro area. The county had the third-lowest levy per capita in Minnesota. It also had the second-lowest tax rate in the seven-county metro area in 2024, meaning that a similarly valued property would be taxed at a higher rate in every other metropolitan county but one, Dakota.

It is anticipated that under the preliminary property tax levy, the owner of a median-valued home that had a median decrease in value in the county would see a \$24 increase in the county portion of property taxes for 2025, or a 2.6% increase from 2024. The median value home is valued at \$412,000 in Pay 2025, which includes the median decrease in value of 2.7% from 2024.

The board also adopted a proposed budget for 2025. The budget includes expenditures of:

- \$277,177,100 in operating expenses.
- \$64,672,300 in capital investments.
- \$17,441,400 in debt service.

The difference between what the levy supports and what the budget calls for in revenue will be provided by funding from other sources, including state County Program Aid. That is funding from the state Legislature designed to reduce local property tax levies, while providing support for local programs.

The county will also receive additional state aid to boost public safety services, housing assistance, and library and public health programs.

Elements that shaped the proposed budget include changes in service delivery to residents, including expanding the county's coordinated response team that responds to mental health crisis service calls and opening two new county facilities with the North Environmental Center in Forest Lake and Central Service and License Center in Woodbury. The county is also planning capital investments in 2025 for the Emergency Housing Services Building, county facility upgrades, electric vehicle charging station installation, road construction, and parks improvements. Population growth in the county is requiring additional services in libraries and other programs that provide direct service to residents. Inflationary pressures for salaries and wages, fuel for vehicles, and the increased cost of construction of buildings are also influencing budget requests.

With the proposed budget, the county would maintain the same ratio of five employees per 1,000 residents, which is what it has been for the past several years.

The proposed budget was first presented to the County Board in a livestreamed workshop Aug. 6. Additional workshops with individual departments occurred through August and September. All budget presentations may 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:

- 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 2025 budget and levy; the public hearing will occur after 6 p.m.
- Dec. 17: Adopt a budget and property tax levy for 2025, and the capital improvement plan.

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

County Board accepts donations to Sheriff's Office

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted two donations made to the Sheriff's Office Sept. 24.

The first donation for \$1,028 was made by the Oakdale Gun Club. The donation will be used by the Training Unit to purchase targets, equipment, and to complete target frame repairs at the Sheriff's Office firearm range.

The second donation for \$5,420 was made by Joshua's Hope. Joshua's Hope is a nonprofit started by the Greene family, whose family member Joshua died of an accidental fentanyl overdose. The Greene's raised money through a Joshua's Hope golf fundraiser and their donation will be used by the Washington County Drug Task Force for law enforcement training and community education initiatives.

Photo Cutline: Washington County Sheriff Dan Starry (left) and the Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted a donation from Joshua's Hope presented by Joshua Greene's sister McKenna (front center), mother Denise (third on front right), and father Greg (second on front right).

Contact: Laura Perkins, Law Enforcement Public Information Manager, 651-430-7994

County Board approves grant for traffic enforcement

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$212,200 grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Office of Traffic Safety Sept. 24.

The funding is part of the 2025 Enforcement Grant Program, which promotes safety for those who use public roadways. The grant, awarded for the period of Oct. 1, 2024 through Sept. 30, 2025, provides

reimbursement for overtime costs associated with enforcement of the following violations: Impaired driving, pedestrians, seat belts, speed, distracted driving, and move over laws.

Participating agencies in the 2025 Enforcement Grant Program include the Washington County Sheriff's Office and the Police Departments of Bayport, Cottage Grove, Forest Lake, Oakdale, Oak Park Heights, St. Paul Park, Stillwater, and Woodbury. The Washington County Sheriff's Office will act as the fiscal agent for this grant.

Contact: Laura Perkins, Law Enforcement Public Information Manager, 651-430-7994

County Board approves solar panel contract for Central Service and License Center

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$191,014 contract with Energy Concepts for the purchase and installation of rooftop photovoltaic solar panels Sept. 24.

The solar panels will be installed on the Central Service and License Center currently under construction near the corner of Woodlane Drive and Guider Drive in Woodbury. The facility will be the first county building to have rooftop solar panels installed.

In addition to rooftop solar panels, the building also incorporates sustainable design elements in its building materials, stormwater runoff, and indoor air handling and lighting systems. The facility will also have the infrastructure for installing EV charging stations in the future.

The Central Service and License Center will replace the current service center at 2150 Radio Drive and offer expanded services to better meet the needs of residents in the central part of the county.

Construction began this May with a target completion date of the Summer 2025.

The County Board also approved a maintenance agreement with the City of Woodbury for the Central Service and License Center Sept. 24. This maintenance agreement defines the responsibilities of the County and City for fire hydrant, private sanitary sewer, watermain, street sweeping, and stormwater management maintenance and repairs.

Contact: Mandy Leonard, Senior Building Services Project Manager, 651-430-6236

County to provide snow removal, maintenance services for Metro Transit Gold Line

Washington County and the Metropolitan Council have entered into maintenance agreements for the county to provide snow removal and maintenance services along the majority of Metro Transit's Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) guideway.

Under the agreements, the Metropolitan Council will reimburse the county all costs to maintain the route from Mounds Blvd. in St. Paul to Guider Drive in Woodbury at the same levels it does with county roads for the next 10 years or when the budget cap of \$5,000,000 is met. These services include snow and ice control, snow removal, mowing, lane striping, and pothole filling. The Metropolitan Council will provide the county up to \$859,040 in project funds to purchase equipment to provide the services. The Metropolitan Council will maintain Gold Line BRT stations.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the agreements Sept. 24.

The Gold Line BRT is expected to open to the public in March 2025. Washington County contributed \$120.5 million in funding for the project, none of which came from property taxes.

Contact: Lyssa Leitner, Public Works Planning Director, 651-430-4316