



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

**Date:** Oct. 15, 2024  
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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The following actions were taken at the Oct. 15, 2024, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

## **County Board sets public hearings for fee schedule, Capital Improvement Plan**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set two public hearings for Nov. 19 at its Oct. 15 meeting.

The first public hearing will be to consider revisions to the county's 2025 fee schedule, which establishes the amounts of fees to be charged for fee-based county services. The fee schedule is updated annually. By law, the fee schedule can only be adopted after holding a public hearing. The public hearing notification will be made as required in the county's official newspaper. The board will consider adoption of the 2025 fee schedule at its Nov. 26 board meeting.

The second public hearing will be to consider the county's 2025-2029 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). During the public hearing, the county board will hear public comments and consider any recommended changes to the draft CIP. The board will consider adoption of the 2025-2029 Capital Improvement Plan at its final 2024 board meeting on Dec. 17.

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

## **County's Coordinated Mental Health Response Program expanding to Cottage Grove**

Washington County's Coordinated Mental Health Response Program will expand to Cottage Grove after the County Board approved an agreement between the county and the City of Cottage Grove Public Safety Oct. 15.

In 2021, Washington County Community Services partnered with Washington County Sheriff's Office and the City of Woodbury to launch the Coordinated Mental Health Response Program to address mental health related calls. The integration of social workers into emergency response reduces law enforcement patrol contacts for mental health calls and increases opportunities and likelihood of connecting individuals to appropriate mental health and substance-use disorder services. The City of Stillwater was added to the partnership in 2023.

In 2024, Washington County made the decision to expand the program to additional city partnerships, including the City of Cottage Grove Police Department. Following the County Board's direction, the cost share for the coordinated mental health response position will be 75% county funded/25% city funded for the first year, and 50% county funded/50% city funded in the second year and thereafter.

**Contact: Kathy Mickelson, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6532**

## **County Board reappoints Lisa Young as County Assessor**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners selected and reappointed County Assessor Lisa Young to a new term beginning Jan. 1, 2025, through Dec. 31, 2028.

Under state statute, every county in the state has a County Assessor appointed by the County Board of Commissioners. The County Board made the appointment Oct. 15. The appointment will next be forwarded to the Minnesota State Commissioner of Revenue for confirmation.

Young has served as the Washington County Assessor since December 2022. The County Assessor is selected and appointed because of knowledge and training in the field of property assessment and taxation.

**Contact: Amy Stenftenagel, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Director, 651-430-6182**

## **County to provide grants for cyanazine well treatments**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a joint powers agreement (JPA) with Dakota County and Scott County Oct. 15 to participate in a pilot program to provide funding to private well owners with wells that have cyanazine detections.

The program is funded by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Dakota County will serve as the fiscal agent under the JPA. Washington County is allocated \$35,300 for well treatment grants and up to an additional \$6,000 for other program related expenses.

Cyanazine was a corn herbicide used in the 1980s and 1990s that is no longer used, but its degradation products are still being found in groundwater. Well owners determined by MDA to have cyanazine exceedances will be contacted and offered grant funding for well treatment to remove pesticides. Washington County's Department of Public Health and Environment will work with eligible well owners to provide grant funding for well treatment.

**Contact: Stephanie Souter, Senior Community/Environmental Health Program Manager, 651-430-6071**

## **County Board approves purchase of right-of-way, easements for Lake Elmo Ave./Highway 36 intersection project**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the acquisition of the necessary right-of-way and easements for the construction of a grade separated interchange at County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 17 (Lake Elmo Ave.) and Trunk Highway (TH) 36.

The interchange project is programmed in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and is located in the cities of Grant and Lake Elmo. Construction is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2026. The right-of-way estimate is approximately \$4 million.

The County Board authorized staff to proceed to acquire right-of-way, plus sight corners, permanent slope, drainage and utility easements, and temporary construction easements Oct. 15.

**Contact: Sharon Price, Senior Right-of-Way Specialist, 651-430-4391**

## **County Board approves bond grant agreement for Square Lake Park improvements**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$113,145.46 bond grant agreement with the Metropolitan Council to improve the facilities at Square Lake Park Oct. 15.

Current facilities at Square Lake Park require repairs and upgrades to meet the current and future community expectations, including upgrades related to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The 2023 legislature approved funding for the Met Council to allocate state bonds towards the regional park system. Funds from the approved bond grant agreement will be used towards the design and construction of the following improvements at Square Lake Park:

- Rehabilitation of existing restroom facility.
- Parking improvements.
- Implementation of trails and corresponding wayfinding to provide additional recreational opportunities for park visitors.
- Beach and fishing pier improvements.
- Boat launch and picnic area improvements.

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

## **County Board approves bond grant agreement for St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park improvements**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$400,000 bond grant agreement with the Metropolitan Council to improve the hilltop shelter area of St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park Oct. 15.

Significant improvements to the park's hilltop shelter area have not been made since the county acquired the property in 1996. The playgrounds in St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park are 24 years old. The hilltop facilities are heavily used and require repairs and improvements to continue hosting large gatherings. Trails within the park can be improved to mitigate erosion and accessibility issues.

The 2023 legislature approved funding for the Met Council to allocate state bonds towards the regional park system. Grant funds will be used to improve the play structure, build a new restroom facility, make lighting improvements to the pavilion, and resurface the tennis court. Site prep will begin in 2024, and construction will be completed in spring of 2025.

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

## **Sheriff's Office receives \$117,000 from Emergency Management Performance Grant Program**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$116,794 grant agreement with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division Oct. 15.

The funding is from the 2023 Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Program. The EMPG provides financial assistance for the administration of local emergency management programs that meet state and federal requirements.

This grant will provide \$116,794 in funding to the Sheriff's Office to cover personnel costs for the Emergency Management staff for the period of Jan. 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025. The grant requires a 100% match, which is budgeted annually in the levy.

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

## **Washington County Opioid Settlement Council awards \$520,000 in opioid settlement grants**

Eight projects were awarded a total of \$519,898 to community-based projects related to the opioid crisis by the Washington County Opioid Settlement Council in the first round of opioid settlement grants Oct. 15.

The eight projects were selected by the 15-member council, made up of community members from the county, professional experts across a wide range of sectors, and people with lived experience with opioids. Applications were accepted from June 24 through Aug. 9 and 18 proposals were received and reviewed by the council.

To be eligible for funding, projects had to serve Washington County community members and fall into one of these four categories: access, education/outreach, evidence-based treatment/interventions, and primary prevention. The budgets for the selected projects range from \$9,000 to \$158,750 and include:

- Family recovery programming through Thrive! Family Recovery Resources.
- Technology and access to care through YourPath.
- Focused community education through ShelettaMakesMeLaugh, LLC.

- Recover and peer support through Waymakers to Recovery.
- Hispanic/Latino community health through Wellshare International.
- Education in rural/faith communities through Elim Lutheran Church.
- Youth programming in schools through Change the Outcome.
- Support for veterans and first responders through Invisible Wounds Project.

These projects will fill gaps and meet community needs by supplementing the strong network of services and resources already available in Washington County. These services include the Naloxone Access Point (NAP) Program, a partnership with the Steve Rummeler HOPE Network providing no-cost naloxone and fentanyl test strips to community members at NAP sites across the county, and providing medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) in the Washington County Jail.

The county's approach to forming the Opioid Settlement Council and awarding grant funds to community-based projects earned Washington County the Award for Excellence in the Application of the Opioid Litigation Principles from the Principles Coalition in September.

**Contact: Rolando Vera, Public Health Program Manager of Nursing Services, 651-430-7962**

## **Alliance Architects to provide architectural and engineering design services for Park Grove Library project**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$909,117 contract with Alliance Architects for the architectural design and engineering services for the Park Grove Library Project Oct. 15.

The Park Grove Library is outdated and requires significant repair and renovation to meet today's needs for energy efficiency, sustainability, and community space and program needs. A renovation project has been identified in the county's Capital Improvement Plan with a budget of \$13.5 million. This budget will be funded by capital investment funding, unspent funds from the previous budget year, and a proposed 2027 bond sale. The contract with Alliance Architects is the first step in the project.

Alliance Architects will begin with a feasibility study of the site to determine the appropriate size and layout of the building and how the existing building and site could be utilized. This study will identify if the existing building structure can be renovated or if a new building would be more efficient to meet the county's needs. Alliance will coordinate with Public Works and Library staff to engage the community and gather input on the design of the facility.

The goal of the design will be to provide a welcoming, inclusive, and safe space for all customers and staff. In addition, a comprehensive, flexible design of technological systems will be a significant project component to allow customers to access, use, and explore technology in different formats as needs change in the future. The project will emphasize energy efficiency and sustainability.

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