

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

Date: Nov. 12, 2024
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Nov. 12, 2024, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Board makes appointment to Mental Health Advisory Council

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed Michael French to the Mental Health Advisory Council as a District 2 representative Nov. 12.

French was appointed to a partial term beginning Nov. 13, 2024, and expiring Dec. 31, 2024, as well as a full term beginning Jan. 1, 2025, and expiring Dec. 31, 2027.

Contact: Megan Carlson, Administrative Assistant to the County Board, 651-430-6001

County Board makes 2025 reappointments to citizen boards, committees, and commissions

The Washington County Board of Commissioners made 2025 reappointments to citizen boards, committees, and commissions Nov. 12.

The County Board made reappointments to the Community Corrections Advisory Board with terms beginning Jan. 1, 2025, and expiring Dec. 31, 2026.

The board also made reappointments with terms beginning Jan. 1, 2025, and expiring Dec. 31, 2027, to the Community Development Agency, Groundwater Advisory Committee, Historic Courthouse Committee, Library Advisory Board, Mental Health Advisory Committee LAC, Parks and Open Space Commission, Personnel Board of Appeals, University of Minnesota Extension Committee, and the Workforce Development Board.

Contact: Holly Hess, Administrative Assistant to the County Board, 651-430-6015

Public hearing on proposed county cannabis ordinance set for December 3

A public hearing to review the proposed Washington County Cannabis Ordinance #219 is set for Dec. 3.

State statute sets the local retail cannabis and hemp regulations across Minnesota. This law was adopted in 2023 and updated in 2024. The Department of Public Health and Environment is proposing adoption of the Washington County Cannabis Ordinance #219.

The proposed ordinance will:

- Establish authorities and procedures for the county to issue retail registrations to cannabis and hemp businesses in areas of the county where cities and towns have delegated registration authority to the county.
- Set a baseline for retail practices which apply across the entire county.
- Define compliance check frequencies and penalties for violating the ordinance.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set the date for the public hearing required as part of the ordinance amendment process. The county will publish a notice of the hearing in the Nov. 20, 2024, issue of the county's official newspaper, the Country Messenger.

Contact: Caleb Johnson, Senior Community/Environmental Health Program Manager, 651-430-6680

County Board accepts grant funding for tree planting in county parks

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted a Regional Park Grant for tree planting in county parks Nov. 12.

This grant will provide reimbursement for costs associated with the planting of trees with more diverse, climate-adapted species in the regional park and trail systems within Washington County in the amount of \$106,937.00.

The state legislature approved \$1,400,000 from the natural resources fund for grants to implementing agencies to plant trees within the metropolitan-area regional parks and trails system. This appropriation is from revenue deposited in the natural resources fund and the grants are administered by the Metropolitan Council.

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County Board approves cooperative agreement for Lake Elmo Park Reserve habitat enhancement project

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a cooperative agreement with Great River Greening and Washington County to implement a 12-acre habitat enhancement project in Lake Elmo Park Reserve Nov. 12.

The Pollinator Central IV project includes oak savanna enhancement along Eagle Point Lake focused on creating native demonstration habitats while engaging the community with an emphasis on local youth and underserved groups in the process. The project cost is \$81,700 and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) grant will provide \$64,700.

To implement this project, a cooperative agreement with Great River Greening was necessary. The cooperative agreement with Great River Greening includes \$13,000 in a county cash match to support Great River Greening staff time and a \$4,000 county in-kind staff match.

Great River Greening is a Minnesota nonprofit corporation that was organized in 1999 and is located in St. Paul. The organization's mission is to inspire, engage and lead local communities in conserving and caring for the land and water that enriches our lives.

Contact: Dan MacSwain, Natural Resources Coordinator II, 651-430-4323

County receives donation of park bench in Big Marine Park Reserve

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received a \$2,500 donation on behalf of Washington County Parks Nov. 12.

The donation was made Jill Meath and the Stucynski family for a cedar bench to be placed in Big Marine Park Reserve. The bench will be dedicated to David Meath, who was an avid user of Big Marine Park Reserve before he died.

The bench program is one of many donation opportunities for individuals and groups to support Washington County Parks. The program allows an individual or group to donate funds to install and maintain a bench to be used on a trail or near a park facility.

Donations from park users over the years have allowed the county to enhance natural areas and improve trails.

Contact: JJ Williams, Parks Manager, 651-430-8245

County Board receives performance measurement report

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received the county's annual performance measures and indicators report Nov. 12.

For the 24th consecutive year, the county has completed an annual Performance Measures and Indicators Report and continues to use the measures and information provided within the report, along with other data and measures, to support decision-making and help drive continuous improvement efforts.

The county's 12 departments collect and track the 2023 measurement data. The report notes 31 indicators grouped under the county's four goals:

- Promoting Health, Safety, and Quality of Life.
- Providing Accessible, High-Quality Services.
- Addressing Today, Planning for Future.
- Maintaining Public Trust.

Along with the overall report, the board also highlighted some selected indicators from the report during the meeting, including food support cases and unemployment in the county, crime rate, and the per capita human services costs.

The document will be available at the county's libraries and service centers, and on the county's website at WashingtonCountyMN.gov/PerformanceMeasures.

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

County Board approves conservation easement for La Lake property

Washington County will use Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP) bond funds to place a conservation easement on a 3.23-acre parcel on the shoreline of La Lake in Woodbury.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the \$251,000 contribution and conservation easement Nov. 12.

The land protection project is a partnership between the county, the City of Woodbury, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the South Washington Watershed District. It is located at 6895 Bailey Rd. in Woodbury and is located directly on 450-feet of La Lake shoreline. It is adjacent to a city-owned parcel, and is one parcel north-east of La Lake Park, which hosts a 29-acre conservation easement that was acquired by Washington County via the LWLP in 2014.

The property is a priority of the City of Woodbury due to its proximity to La Lake and its contribution towards the city's long term goal of creating continuous public access surrounding La Lake. After a leaseback agreement between the original property owners and the City of Woodbury ends, the city will restore the property for use as a public park. This restoration and continued management will be guided by a Stewardship Plan which has been completed and approved by the county's Parks and Open Space Commission.

Restoration of the property includes the removal of all buildings except for one outbuilding, which will be used to store non-motorized boats for the public. The City of Woodbury will restore the former building sites and current garden area to natural conditions, construct a parking lot of up to 15 spaces, and construct an ADA-accessible dock along La Lake's shoreline. A multi-use trail is also allowed within the conservation easement terms to accommodate the City of Woodbury's long term goal of a continuous trail surrounding La Lake.

Contact: Emily Jorgensen, Planning Manager, 651-430-6011

County Board approves conservation easement for Afton property

Washington County will use Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP) funds to place a conservation easement on a 39.83-acre parcel in Afton.

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The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the \$471,764 contribution toward the conservation easement and fee title on the property Nov. 12.

The unaddressed property is within the St. Croix River Buffer Zone High Priority Conservation Area and ranks “very high” for protection according to LWLP criteria and “very high” for habitat quality. It is located 640 feet from the St. Croix River and just one parcel north of Afton State Park under parcel ID 2602820320001.

The land protection project is in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust and will count towards the county’s acreage protection and financial match deliverables for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund grant awarded in 2022.

The proposed conservation easement will be co-held by Washington County and MLT. After the purchase of the conservation easement, the City of Afton will purchase the fee title of the property for use as a public city park.

Contact: Emily Jorgensen, Planning Manager, 651-430-6011