

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

Date: Dec. 3, 2024
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

County Board approves memorandum of understanding with Minnesota Land Trust

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an updated memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Minnesota Land Trust Dec. 3 to affirm the roles and responsibilities of stewardship and co-ownership of conservation easements.

Washington County and the Minnesota Land Trust have frequently partnered to co-hold conservation easements through the county's Land and Water Legacy Program. To date, this continued partnership has allowed the county to leverage funding from the Minnesota Land Trust on eight co-owned conservation easement projects.

In 2006, Washington County and the Minnesota Land Trust entered into an MOU to outline the respective roles and responsibilities for co-owned conservation easement properties. The updated MOU approved by the County Board Dec. 3 has been updated to reflect current processes and best practices.

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

County will continue to provide emergency housing for residents experiencing homelessness

Washington County will continue to provide emergency housing to residents experiencing homelessness after the County Board extended a contract with a hotel in the county Dec. 3.

The county will extend the contract through Dec. 31, 2025, and add \$660,000 in 2025 to secure rooms for emergency housing.

Washington County has provided emergency housing to residents experiencing homelessness since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020 using a hotel with private rooms and onsite support services. The county has secured funding from state and federal grants to keep the program operational.

The contract amendment will continue to fund the current capacity of 20 rooms, with additional rooms as office space for the contracted service provider and other wrap-around services as needed.

Contact: Sarah Tripple, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6480

County will receive funds to fight aquatic invasive species

Washington County will receive \$134,041 in 2025 to fight aquatic invasive species after the County Board requested the allocation from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource Dec. 3.

In the 2014 state legislative session, a county aid program was created to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in Minnesota lakes and rivers. The funding distributions associated with the county aid program are based on the number of watercraft trailer launches and watercraft trailer parking spaces. Washington County has 24 watercraft trailer launches and 354 trailer parking spaces.

A county plan or resolution must be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources annually by the last day of each calendar year before funds can be distributed for the following year.

The resolution outlines the use of funds for 2025, building on the activities that have been carried out for several years. This includes using a portion of funds to partner with the Washington Conservation District on countywide activities related to inspections, awareness, and monitoring. It also includes a competitive grant program to award funds to entities focusing on prevention projects within the scope of the state's aquatic invasive species framework.

Contact: Stephanie Souter, Program Manager, 651-430-6701

Big Marine Park Reserve will expand with 80-acre property acquisition

Washington County's Big Marine Park Reserve will expand by 80 acres after the County Board of Commissioners approved the purchase of a property adjacent to the park Dec. 3.

The 80-acre property is located north of the park's entrance road, in the southeast corner of Manning Ave. N. and 180th St. N. and is adjacent to the Veteran's Campground on Big Marine Lake. The property

owner approached the county with an interest in selling the land. The County Board determined that the purchase fits the conditions outlined in the Big Marine Park Reserve Master Plan, originally adopted in January 1989 and updated in 2010.

After an appraisal was completed, the county and the property owner agreed to a purchase price of \$1,865,000. The purchase will be paid for with Land and Water Legacy Program funds, and the county will submit a request to the Metropolitan Council to reimburse the LWLP fund for 75% of the cost.

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

County to transfer Red Rock Crossing to City of Newport

Washington County will transfer the jurisdiction of Red Rock Crossing east of County State Aid Highway 38 (Maxwell Ave.) from the county to the City of Newport.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the transfer Dec. 3.

In 2010, Washington County Regional Railroad Authority (WCRRA) purchased 2222 Maxwell Ave. in the City of Newport for the construction of the Newport Transit Station. The Transit Station was constructed in 2015. While the Regional Rail Authority owns the Newport Transit Station, the road, Red Rock Crossing, is under the county's jurisdiction.

With the reconstruction of Red Rock Square I, Red Rock Square II, and associated stormwater pond, both the City and County have an interest in transferring Red Rock Crossing to the City of Newport. The roadway is in good serviceable condition.

Contact: Kevin Peterson, Design Engineer, 651-430-4330

Public hearing held on adoption of county's proposed cannabis ordinance

Washington County held a public hearing on the adoption of Washington County Cannabis Ordinance #219 Dec. 3.

During the public hearing, county staff outlined the adoption process for the draft Cannabis Ordinance #219, provided a description of the draft ordinance, and summarized the public feedback received prior to the meeting before the meeting was opened for additional public comment. Zero members of the public spoke during the public hearing.

State law requires that cannabis and hemp retailers obtain a registration from the city or town as part of the licensing process. This law also allows cities and towns to delegate registration duties to the county. Five communities within Washington County have delegated registration duties to the county: Afton, Landfall, Marine on St. Croix, May Township, and West Lakeland Township. Therefore, the county must draft an ordinance to govern the registration of cannabis and hemp retailers.

Cannabis Ordinance #219 is intended to ensure responsible cannabis retailing, allowing legal sale and access without promoting increases in use, and to discourage violations of cannabis-related laws, especially those that prohibit or discourage the marketing, sale, or distribution of cannabis and cannabis products to youth under 21 years of age.

State law authorizes the county to adopt this ordinance, including reasonable standards on the manner of sale of cannabis and hemp products. The county is required to hold a public hearing to receive comments from the public about an ordinance being considered for adoption and the public must be notified of the hearing at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. A public notice about the draft Cannabis Ordinance #219 was published in the Country Messenger on Nov. 20, 2024, which meets this notice requirement.

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

County requests MnDOT speed studies on county roads and highways

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a request to the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to perform speed studies on several county roads and highways Dec. 3.

State law gives the authority to determine speed limits on all county highways solely to the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The county typically requests speed studies after a roadway has undergone major changes such as reconstruction, expansion, or significant changes to the roadside character or access.

The county's request to MnDOT is to perform engineering and traffic studies to determine the reasonable and safe speed limits for the following highway segments:

- County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 11 (Otchipwe Ave. N./Fairy Falls Rd. N./Boom Rd.) from CSAH 96 (Dellwood Rd.) to CSAH 7 (Square Lake Trail N.) in the City of Stillwater and Stillwater township.
- CSAH 12 (75th St. N./Myrtle St. W.) from CSAH 15 (Manning Ave. N.) to CSAH 5 (Owens St. N.) in the City of Stillwater.
- CSAH 14 (Stillwater Blvd./34th St.) from Stillwater Way N. to 100 feet east of Omaha Ave. N. in Baytown Township.
- CSAH 16 (Valley Creek Rd.) from CSAH 19 (Woodbury Dr.) to TH 95 (Manning Ave. S.) in the City of Woodbury.
- CSAH 17 (Lake Elmo Ave.) from CSAH 10 (10th St. N.) to 470 feet north of 32nd St. in the City of Lake Elmo.
- CSAH 29 (Hilton Trail) from TH 36 to CSAH 12 (Stillwater Rd.) in the cities of Pine Springs and Mahtomedi.
- CSAH 33 (Everton Ave. N.) from CSAH 32 (220th St. N.) to CSAH 2 (W. Broadway Ave.) in the City of Forest Lake.
- CSAH 38 from Glen Rd. to the Ramsey/Washington County Line in the City of Newport.

County Road 74 (65th St. S.) from CSAH 38 (Hastings Ave.) to CSAH 13 (Hinton Ave. S.) in the Cities of Newport and Cottage Grove.

Contact: Joe Gustafson, Traffic Engineer, 651-430-4351

Alliant Engineering, Inc. to do final design on Lake Elmo Avenue and Highway 36 improvement project

Alliant Engineering Inc. will do the final design on the County State Aid (CSAH) 17 (Lake Elmo Ave.) and Trunk Highway (TH) 36 interchange improvement project.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract with Alliant Engineering, Inc. in the amount of \$1,924,763 for the services Dec. 3.

The at-grade intersection at TH 36 and CSAH 17 is planned to be converted to a grade-separate intersection due to growing traffic demands and safety concerns on both TH 36 and CSAH 17. This plan is consistent with the Minnesota Department of Transportation's goals for the TH 36 corridor.

A comprehensive review of alternatives was recently completed, and a preferred alternative for the intersection has been determined and supported by our agency partners on the project. The contract with Alliant Engineering, Inc. will take the project through the final design phase and provide design support during the construction phase.

Washington County issued a request for proposal (RFP) in October to provide project coordination, final engineering, stakeholder and public engagement, utility coordination, permitting, environmental documentation, and bidding and construction services. Alliant Engineering was selected to complete this work as they have a good track record working on projects for the county, a strong project approach, relevant qualifications and experience, and are able to meet the project schedule.

The contract is funded by highway state aid and local contributions. Project construction is scheduled to begin in 2026.

Contact: Andrew Giesen, Engineer III, 651-430-4336

Sheriff's Office K9 Unit wins top awards at National Patrol Dog Field Trials

The Washington County Sheriff's Office K9 Unit was awarded 1st place for Department Team in the 2024 United States Police Canine Association National Patrol Dog Field Trials held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in October.

The K9 teams that participated and represented Washington County were:

- Deputy Chris Majeski and K9 Jake
- Deputy Brandon Yetter and K9 Huck
- Deputy Nate Thienes and K9 Goose
- Deputy Josh Liebenow and K9 Viking

The Washington County Board of Commissioners honored the K9 teams at the Dec. 3 board meeting.

At the field trials, 67 of the best K9 teams from around the U.S., representing 13 different states, were in attendance. With Washington County Sheriff's Office K9 Unit's 1st place award for Department Team, the unit has won back-to-back National Championships. Deputy Yetter and K9 Huck were also awarded the Individual National Champion for the second year in a row.

The county's K9 teams also won several individual awards in many of the events. Nate Thienes and K9 Goose placed 4th, and Josh Liebenow and K9 Viking placed 10th individually overall. This was a major accomplishment once again for the Sheriff's Office K9 Unit, which has become a nationally recognized team.

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

Photo Cutline: Left to right: Washington County Sheriff Dan Starry, Commissioner Stan Karwoski, Commissioner Fran Miron, Commissioner Karla Biggam, Deputy Sheriffs Josh Liebenow, Brandon Yetter, Nate Thienes, and Chris Majeski, Commissioner Michelle Clasen, Sergeant Ty Jacobson, and Commissioner Gary Kriesel. Also pictured K9 Goose.

County Board accepts donations to county for 2023 third quarter

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted donations that were made to the county during the third quarter of 2024 Dec. 3.

The Library received \$1,389.46, including a donation made in memory of former Woodbury City Councilmember Julie Ohs.

The Parks received \$456.60 directed to the Parks and Trail Fund and the Milkweed for Monarchs fund, and Living Forest donations. The county also accepted \$800.00 in previously unreported donations to the Parks from the first and second quarters of 2024.

The Sheriff's Office received \$900.00 from several people and organizations. The Sheriff's Office also received \$4,537.00 of in-kind donations to support its employee recognition event.

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