



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

**Date:** April 22, 2025  
**Contact:** Tina Elam, Communications Manager  
**Phone:** 651-430-6004 (office), 651-592-5989 (after hours)  
**E-mail:** tina.elam@washingtoncountymn.gov

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The following actions were taken at the April 22, 2025, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

## **County Board signs letter voicing concern over state budget proposals**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners prepared a letter to state legislators representing the county April 22 in which the board voiced serious concerns over state budget proposals that could result in a minimum \$3 million cost impact to the county's budget and a 3-5% levy increase.

The County Board's letter focuses on the shift in costs of providing essential state-mandated public services from the state to counties, as proposed in the budgets from the Governor, House, and Senate.

The letter notes that this cost shift is compounded by the rising cost of purchasing goods and services, and employee cost increases driven by inflation and other cost pressures. Further, the board argued that shifting state costs to counties does not provide relief to residents and businesses; rather, it may force the county to impose a record-high levy increase to continue providing the safety-net services mandated by the state, which are often of greatest need in difficult economic times.

The county included details on the programs and services that would be impacted, estimating that the cost shift would result in reduced revenue of \$658,000 and increased expenditures of \$2,540,000.

The board affirmed its commitment to serving its residents, particularly its most vulnerable, while passing a balanced and responsible budget. The board implored legislators to find state budget solutions that do not involve shifting state costs onto counties and consider mandate relief and other solutions that do not impact local property taxpayers.

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

## **County to continue fraud prevention investigation program**

Washington County's Community Services Department, in partnership with the Washington County Sheriff's Office, has received \$295,258 in grant funding to continue its fraud prevention investigation (FPI) program.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families grant April 22. The grant term is from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027. The county is allocated \$147,629 in FPI grant funds for each of the State fiscal years 2026 and 2027, an increase of \$17,629 per year from the last grant term.

**Contact: George Stone, Community Services Division Manager, 651-430-6472**

## **County continues participation in Snowmobile Trails Assistance Program**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners voted to continue county participation in the Snowmobile Trails Assistance Program and will administer \$49,848 in grant funding for the Star Trail Association April 22.

The Star Trail Association uses funds from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) snowmobile trail maintenance and grooming grants-in-aid (GIA) program to cover the cost of trail maintenance. However, because the snowmobile club cannot receive the funds directly, Washington County sponsors the club and acts as a pass-through agency.

The Washington County Board first entered into a county/club agreement with the Star Trail Association on July 31, 1991. The DNR requires a board resolution each year to facilitate the official involvement of the county.

The term of the grant will be from the date of the DNR approval to June 30, 2026. All grant revenue received by the county on behalf of the Star Trail Association will be forwarded to the club as a reimbursement for costs expended for trail maintenance during the 2025-2026 snow season.

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

## **Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park to add second fishing pier**

Washington County will add a second fishing pier to the south end of Ravine Lake at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$125,000 grant from the Metropolitan Council for the new pier April 22.

The Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park Long Range Plan (2017) includes a plan to implement a new fishing pier located on the south end of Ravine Lake. This is a popular area for fishing, with access currently from the shoreline only. The 2023 legislature approved one-time funding for new fishing piers for the regional park system and the county was awarded funding to install a fishing pier at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park.

The grant will provide the full funding to implement the pier and complete the necessary access and site improvements.

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

## **County receives grant for stormwater management improvements at Square Lake Park**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted an \$80,000 grant for stormwater management improvements at Square Lake Park April 22.

The grant is from the Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant program through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources and requires a 10% match from grant recipients. The Clean Water Fund was established to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams, in addition to protecting groundwater and drinking water sources from degradation.

Washington County and Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District (CMSCW) is partnering to design and construct stormwater management improvements at Square Lake Park. The stormwater improvements are part of a larger capital improvement project at Square Lake Park, and this grant will supplement existing project funding.

**Contact: Michael Kline, Public Works Engineer I, 651-430-4304**

## County approves CDA's 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the Washington County Community Development Agency's (CDA) 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan and 2025 Annual Action April 22 for submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The five-year Consolidated Plan describes the community needs, resources, and priorities to be addressed with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) program funds. On the county's behalf, the Washington County CDA administers the CDBG and HOME programs.

Every five years, a Consolidated Plan must be prepared that evaluates the community's needs and CDBG and HOME funding priorities. Each year, an Annual Action Plan must be prepared detailing the intended use of the CDBG and HOME funds granted by HUD. The 2025 Annual Action Plan is the first year of the Consolidated Plan. The funded activities must address the priorities identified in the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan, which are housing activities, public services, public facilities, public improvements, and economic development.

The CDBG/HOME 2025 program year runs from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. The Washington County CDA solicited HOME applications for the 2025 Program Year in January. Washington County CDA staff and the CDBG Citizen Advisory Committee reviewed the three applications received and the funding allocations. The 2025 Annual Action Plan contains those programs and projects that are eligible for funding and meet the funding priorities of the Consolidated Plan.

The projects funded by CDGB funding are:

- Two Rivers Community Land Trust for \$101,200 to acquire and renovate six affordable housing units.
- Hammer and NER for \$45,000 to make ADA updates to two group homes.
- Home Improvement Loan Program for \$294,000 to acquire and rehabilitate 10 affordable housing units.
- Washington County Homeless Prevention for \$101,584 to provide homeless prevention to 540 persons.

The projects funded by HOME funding are:

- Two Rivers Community Land Trust for \$189,212 to acquire and renovate six affordable housing units.
- Setting aside \$37,842 for Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs).

A public comment period was open from March 17, 2025, through April 15, 2025. The Washington County CDA held a public hearing on April 15, 2025. The plan will now be submitted to HUD to meet the submission deadline, which is currently May 15.

**Contact: Karly Schoeman, Washington County CDA Deputy Executive Director, 651-458-6556**

## **May 1 is Law Day in Washington County**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners proclaimed May 1 as Law Day in the county at its April 22 meeting.

Law Day, held annually on May 1, is a national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law. Law Day provides an opportunity to understand how law and the legal process protect our liberty, strive to achieve justice, and contribute to the freedoms that all Americans share. Thousands of Law Day programs are conducted each year for youth and adults across the country by bar groups, courts, schools, youth groups, and community organizations alike. In addition, the president of the United States has issued a Law Day proclamation recognizing the importance of the rule of law every year since 1958.

The resolution passed by the board stated that Law Day is an opportunity to recognize the efforts of the lawyers, judges, law enforcement officers, and other members of the legal profession who endeavor each day to uphold the values of our free and just society. The county will celebrate Law Day by recognizing and thanking all the county employees who, through their daily work, promote justice and public safety by providing fair, just, and quality legal representation for Washington County.

**Contact: Kevin Magnuson, Washington County Attorney, 651-430-6112**

## **Arbor Day and Arbor Month declared in Washington County this May**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners declared Friday, April 25, as Arbor Day, and the month of May 2025 to be Arbor Month in Washington County. They made the declaration April 22.

Trees help purify the air and retain water, conserve soil, provide habitat for wildlife, provide shade, and enrich the lives of community members. The resolution passed by the board noted that Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is becoming more established in Minnesota, and will ultimately eliminate many green and white ash trees from parks, boulevards, residential yards, and natural areas.

Reforestation efforts are critical to help replace the benefits that these trees provide. Thanks to state funding received in 2023, the county is planning to plant new trees in Lake Elmo Park Reserve's Modern Campground, St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park Campground and Hilltop Shelter, and Square Lake Park.

With the resolution, the County Board encouraged local communities and residents to take proactive steps to plan for increased wood waste and plant a more diverse array of trees when replacing them.

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

## **May 4-10 declared National Correctional Officers Week in Washington County**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners proclaimed the week of May 4-10 as National Correctional Officers Week in the county.

The board passed a resolution proclaiming the week at its April 22 meeting.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan announced the first week in May as National Correctional Officers Week. "The important work of Correctional Officers often does not receive the recognition from the public it deserves," President Reagan said.

The week is an opportunity to acknowledge and thank the individuals who work in the Washington County Sheriff's Office Jail Division. Correctional Officers exemplify professionalism, integrity, and strength in the face of a difficult and often dangerous work environment. These officers play a vital role in the criminal justice system, and Washington County extends its appreciation.

**Contact: Commander-Jail Administrator Roger Heinen, Sheriff's Office Jail Division, 651-430-7606**

Government Center | 14949 62nd Street North | P. O. Box 6 | Stillwater, MN 55082-0006  
P: 651-430-6001 | F: 651-430-6017 | TTY: 651-430-6246  
WashingtonCountyMN.gov

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## **County Board accepts donations for the first quarter of 2025**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted donations made to the county during the first quarter of 2025 April 22.

The Library Department received \$1,403.83 in donations from the public during the first quarter.

The Parks Division in the Public Works Department accepted \$158.00 in donations for parks and trail enhancements and the Living Forest program that contributes to reforestation efforts of native trees throughout the parks.

The Sheriff's Office received \$1,516.00 for the K9 unit.

Community Corrections received an in-kind donation of \$100 in gas gift cards for the Offender Recovery Program.

Community Services received in-kind donations of \$1,600 in stuffed animals, diapers, and hygiene products for the Social Services Children's Division Prevention Team.

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