

Date: Aug. 26, 2025
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 26, 2025, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Attorney receives grants for victim and witness services, reducing auto thefts

The Washington County Attorney's Office received Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) grants for victim and witness services and for reducing auto thefts in the county.

The County Board of Commissioners approved the grants Aug. 26.

The Attorney's Office received a \$140,000 Minnesota DPS Office of Justice Programs grant for 2026 to support personnel costs associated with victim and witness services. The Attorney's Office has been receiving state and federal grant funding for victim and witness services since 1990 in varying amounts.

The Attorney's Office also received a \$138,956 Minnesota DPS Auto Theft Prevention grant for 2026 and 2027 to decrease auto theft in the county. The Attorney's Office has been receiving this specific grant since 2005. While the grant amount fluctuates each grant cycle, the dollar amounts for this grant are similar to the previous grant received for fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

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

County to restore 19 acres of prairie in Pine Point Regional Park

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$15,000 grant agreement with the Washington Conservation District (WCD) Aug. 26 for the restoration of 19 acres of prairie in Pine Point Regional Park in Stillwater Township.

The grant, through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Pollinator Grant program, was received by the Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District. The WCD is serving as the fiscal agent for grant funding from Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District.

The project will result in a diverse prairie with native grasses and forbs to benefit an array of wildlife. WCD will purchase the prairie seed and provide it to Washington County staff, who will then plant and maintain the prairie. Under the agreement, Washington County is responsible for full establishment, operation, and maintenance of practices and upland treatment criteria for a minimum of 10 years.

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

County acquires right-of-way, easements along County Road 74 in Newport

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the acquisition of right-of-way and drainage and utility easements along County Road 74 (65th Street) in Newport Aug. 26.

The acquisitions are part of an improvement project on County Road 74 between County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 38 to Geneva Avenue. The project seeks to improve drainage along the roadway, stabilize the ravine along the road, and construct a trail within the right-of-way corridor.

The right-of-way estimate is approximately \$200,000.

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

County receives solar grant for Emergency Housing Services Building

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a grant agreement Aug. 26 with the Minnesota Department of Commerce to install solar panels on the county's Emergency Housing Services Building (EHSB) in Stillwater.

The county was awarded \$53,965 from the state's Solar on Public Buildings grant program and \$32,379 in federal funding, bringing the total cost to the county down to \$21,586. The funds will be used to install a solar array that will reduce the EHSB's operational costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

The county estimated \$4,685 in utility savings per year, which should result in a 4.6-year return on investment. The system's life is estimated to be 30 years.

The EHSB is currently under construction at the county's Government Center Campus in Stillwater. The EHSB is the county's first permanent short-term emergency housing facility for adults without children who are

experiencing homelessness. THE EHSB is a two-story, 30,000-square-foot facility with 30 living units expected to open by the end of the year.

With the County Board's approval of the grant agreement, Apadana Solar Technologies will complete installation on the solar array. The company has a pending contract for \$107,928 in place with the county, contingent on grant acceptance.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce is distributing \$4.3 million in grants through its Solar on Public Buildings Grant Program. Grants were competitively awarded to local governments in the Xcel Energy Electric Service Territory to build solar energy-generating systems on or adjacent to publicly owned and operated buildings. Washington County was eligible to receive a maximum grant of up to 50% of the solar system cost, not to exceed \$60,000.

Contact: Christina Mastro, Public Works Management Analyst I, 651-430-6239

County Board approves liquor license application

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an on-sale and Sunday liquor license application for Cenco Farms Inc., Afton Apple Orchard, Aug. 26.

Cenco Farms Inc., Afton Apple Orchard, is located in Denmark Township at 14421 S. 90th St.

The county processes all liquor licenses for the townships in the county. The county reviews the liability insurance, and the Sheriff's Office, the County Attorney's Office, and the Public Health & Environment Department complete compliance/verification checks.

Those requirements have all been completed for the application. The applicant's license fees pay for the administrative costs of the county's administration, compliance, and verification checks.

Contact: Christine Piskura, Taxpayer Services and Elections Division Manager, 651-430-8272

RSP Architects to provide design and engineering services for Public Works South Shop project

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$1,838,755 contract with RSP Architects Aug. 26 to provide architectural design and engineering services for the Public Works South Shop project in Woodbury.

RSP Architects will begin design this fall on the new South Shop building, which will be located south of the current South Shop maintenance facility and South Environmental Center in Woodbury. The design phases are expected to be completed in the fall of 2026.

The current South Shop, which serves as a maintenance and storage facility for Public Works equipment, was determined during a 2013 study to be outdated and in need of major repairs. The design of the space is no longer suited for the size and amount of equipment needed in the southern portion of the county. The county is moving forward with the construction of a new, modern South Shop facility that will cut down on operational inefficiencies and staff time to access equipment.

The county put out a request for proposals, which closed July 18, and received 13 proposals. RSP Architects were selected as the preferred contractor.

Contact: Dan Lawrence, Public Works Senior Building Services Project Manager, 651-430-6226

County Board declares September as National Preparedness Month

The Washington County Board of Commissioners proclaimed September as National Preparedness Month on Aug. 26, encouraging residents to take steps to be ready for emergencies and disasters.

Since 2004, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has recognized September as National Preparedness Month to promote the importance of planning and readiness at home, at work, and in the community.

Preparedness can save lives and reduce economic losses during disasters. FEMA's Ready Campaign, along with state, local, private, and volunteer partners, provides resources to help people take action.

Washington County urges all residents to make preparedness a priority — by creating family emergency plans, preparing supply kits, and staying informed. The county joins communities across Minnesota and the nation in strengthening resilience through preparedness.

Residents can find resources and tips at www.ready.gov and on the Washington County Sheriff's Office social media pages.

Contact: Doug Berglund, Sheriff's Office Emergency Services Manager, 651-430-7682

County Board continues review of 2026 budget recommendations

The Washington County Board of Commissioners continued its review of the recommended 2026 departmental budgets in livestreamed and recorded workshops Aug. 26.

The countywide budget recommendation is for a 6.9% levy increase to \$148.9 million. If the recommended levy is adopted, the owner of a median-valued home that had a median increase in value in the county would see a \$50 increase in the county portion of property taxes for 2026, or a 5.1% increase from 2025. The county has the second-lowest tax rate and the third-lowest property tax levy per capita in the seven-county metro area.

The County Board reviewed the recommended 2026 budget for the Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office.

The Attorney's Office promotes justice and public safety through vigorously prosecuting crime, protecting those in need, and providing quality legal representation for Washington County. In the Attorney's Office, key factors impacting the 2026 budget are the costs of eLitigation and technology, improving office wellness, and employee recruitment, development, and retention. The Attorney Office's initiatives for 2026 include continuing to innovate to enhance productivity and efficiency and building the office community by supporting our staff and department partners.

The Washington County Sheriff's Office is to work in partnership with the community to provide quality public safety services in a reasonable manner through innovation, leadership, and the cooperation of dedicated people. In 2024, Washington County deputies responded to 72,972 calls for service. This includes 16,371 traffic stops, 1,262 arrests, and 1,243 crashes. This also resulted in the Records Unit processing over 46,029 reports. The Washington County Jail booked 3,846 adult and 129 juvenile inmates with an average daily population of 138. The Sheriff's Office also is active with the Drug Task Force, East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force and operate a K9 Unit, School Resource Officer program, and an embedded social worker co-response program. Key factors that will impact the 2026 Sheriff's Office budget are employee recruitment and retention and technology needs to conduct investigations and hold criminals accountable.

After the department budget presentations, the board will follow a budget process from September through early December, which will include:

- Sept. 23: Setting a preliminary levy.
- Dec. 2: Conducting a public meeting on the proposed 2026 budget and levy.
- Dec. 16: Adopting a budget and property tax levy for 2026, and the capital improvement plan.

All budget presentations can 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.

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