

Date: Dec. 2, 2025
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 2, 2025, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Board makes Library Advisory Board appointment

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed Heather Cosby to a first term on the Library Advisory Board as a District 1 Representative. The term begins Jan. 1, 2026, and expires Dec. 31, 2028.

Contact: Megan Carlson, Administrative Assistant, 651-430-6001

Community Development Agency to continue administering HUD funds for Washington County

The Washington County Community Development Agency (CDA) will continue to administer Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and HOME Investment Partnership funds for Washington County.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an agreement allowing the CDA to administer the funds on behalf of the county Dec. 2.

Washington County receives a direct allocation of CDBG funds from HUD. The county also receives an allocation of HOME Investment Partnership funds through its participation in a consortium with Dakota County as the lead agency, Anoka County, suburban Ramsey County communities, and the City of Woodbury.

Washington County has had an agreement with the CDA to be the administrator of the CDBG Program and the HOME Investment Partnership since 2016. The new agreement continues the partnership through Dec. 31, 2030. Washington County will remain the official "grantee" for these programs. Washington County will continue to approve the annual action plans prepared by the CDA, including awarding projects and program funds.

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

Washington County to continue providing child support enforcement services

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a cooperative agreement Dec. 2 between the county's Community Services Department, the County Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Office, and the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Family for child support enforcement services.

The Child Support Enforcement Program works to establish paternity and secure financial support for minor children who are living apart from one or both parents. The agreement includes \$1,292,000 in funding to the county to compensate for the costs it will incur providing the services from Jan. 1, 2026, through Dec. 31, 2027.

In 2024, the county collected \$20,126,256 and served over 5,292 families needing child support.

Contact: Beth Pierce, Community Services Deputy Director, 651-430-8389

Sheriff's Office receives public safety grant to support Drug Task Force

The Washington County Sheriff's Office received \$216,000 in 2026 Violent Crime Enforcement Teams Grant Program funds to support the Washington County Drug Task Force.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the grant agreement Dec. 2, which is for the period of Jan. 1, 2026, through Dec. 31, 2027.

The funds provided by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs, will be used to cover the cost of task force insurance and a portion of personnel expenses for the sergeant overseeing the task force. The grant's purpose is to provide multi-jurisdictional support for the investigation and prosecution of gang, drug, and related violent crime.

Contact: Commander Kyle Schenck, Sheriff's Office Investigations Division, 651-430-7800

County Board approves Lodging Ordinance #221

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved Lodging Ordinance #221 Dec. 2.

Lodging Ordinance #221 repeals and revises Lodging Establishment Ordinance #181 to include statutory references to state law and to advance efforts to prevent human trafficking and sex trafficking from occurring in lodging settings within Washington County.

The ordinance revisions:

- Update and simplify defined terms used throughout the ordinance.

- Require that establishments be licensed if they are advertised for use.
- Adopt the Minnesota Sex Trafficking Prevention Training requirements and apply them to all licensed establishments.
- Permit the county to offer annual ordinance training and require attendance by establishment staff.
- Require closure of parts of establishments that are impacted by an imminent health hazard.
- Require that an establishment develop and implement a sex trafficking prevention plan when recommended by law enforcement.

Contact: David Brummel, Public Health and Environment Director, 651-430-6662

K9 Rookie retired from Washington County Sheriff's Office service

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the retirement of K9 Rookie from the Sheriff's Office Dec. 2. The board also approved the transfer of ownership of the therapy dog to her handler, Sergeant Matt O'Hara.

K9 Rookie was trained through Freedom Service Dogs in Colorado. Freedom Service Dogs primarily trains purpose-bred service dogs for veterans, first responders, and those with autism spectrum disorder. K9 Rookie was the first therapy dog partnered with law enforcement for this purpose in Minnesota.

K9 Rookie served for five and a half years, making a positive impact within the community through presentations, classroom visits, crisis calls, and regular follow-up visits with community members struggling with mental health concerns.

Sergeant O'Hara has agreed to take on the responsibility of caring for K9 Rookie during her retirement so she can enjoy the remainder of her life.

Photos available upon request.

Contact: Commander Sara Halverson, Sheriff's Office Patrol Division, 651-430-7871

County Board conducts public budget meeting on proposed 2026 budget

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public meeting Dec. 2 on the county's 2026 county property tax levy and 2026 budget.

Several members of the public spoke during the public budget meeting, and county tax assessors were available to answer questions.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set a preliminary property tax levy Sept. 23 to support the proposed 2026 county budget. The board also adopted a proposed budget for next year at that meeting.

After setting the preliminary levy, the board may reduce it when it sets the final levy Dec. 16, but it cannot increase it. The certified preliminary property tax levy payable in 2026 is \$148.9 million. The board also set a levy for the Regional Rail Authority at \$660,000 and the Land and Water Legacy Program at \$1.2 million, the same as in previous years.

The preliminary levy is an increase of 6.95% over 2025 — the lowest proposed county levy increase in the metro area. The county had the third-lowest levy per capita in Minnesota in 2025. The county's proposed tax rate of 24.4% is the second-lowest proposed tax rate in the seven-county metro area in 2026, meaning that a similarly valued property would be taxed at a higher rate in every other metropolitan county but one, Dakota.

For homes that saw a median increase in value from last year, the county portion of property taxes is estimated to increase by:

- \$31(4.2%) for a home valued at \$330,000.
- \$41 (4.2%) for a home valued at \$423,700.
- \$58 (4.4%) for a home valued at \$550,000.

The proposed 2026 countywide budget provides critical funding for mandated and core services that directly impact residents' lives and support the community. The proposed 2026 budget includes expenditures of:

- \$299,943,900 in operating expenses.
- \$117,457,900 in capital investments.
- \$16,793,900 in debt service.

The difference between what the levy supports and what the budget calls for in revenue will be provided by funding from other sources, including state County Program Aid. That is funding from the state Legislature designed to reduce local property tax levies, while providing support for mandated programs.

Elements that shaped the proposed budget include:

- Inflationary pressures on fuel for vehicles, equipment, and construction costs.
- Cost shifts from the federal government to the county for existing mandated services
- Adjustments to employee compensation and increases to healthcare costs.

The county plans capital investments in 2026 for the Central Yard Waste Site, Park Grove Library, road construction, and parks improvements. The proposed budget also addresses waitlists and backlogs in our human services area, due to growing service demands and lengthier assessment requirements.

With the proposed budget, the county maintains the same ratio of five employees per 1,000 residents as in the past several years.

The proposed budget was first presented to the County Board in a public workshop July 29. Additional workshops with individual departments occurred throughout August. All budget presentations may 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.

The County Board will consider approval of the county's 2026 property tax levy and budget at its Dec. 16 meeting.

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