

Date: Dec. 16, 2025
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 16, 2025, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

County Board approves 2026 levies and budget

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the county's 2026 county property tax levy and 2026 budget Dec. 16.

The certified property tax levy payable in 2026 is \$150,162,700. This is the same as the preliminary tax levy the County Board approved at its Sept. 23 meeting. 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 County Board also consented to a \$7,079,361 levy for the Washington County Community Development Agency.

The certified property tax levy is an increase of 6.95% over 2025 — the lowest county levy increase proposed 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 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 \$420,900.
- \$58 (4.4%) for a home valued at \$550,000.

The 2026 countywide budget provides critical funding for mandated and core services that directly impact residents' lives and support the community. The 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 and federal reimbursements, grants, and fees for services.

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.

Budget development began in March, and 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.

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

County Board approves 5-year Capital Improvement Plan

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a capital improvement plan (CIP) Dec. 16, which will oversee projects throughout the county through 2030.

Capital improvement planning is one of the fundamental building blocks in the county's budget and financial management. The CIP establishes a guide for making capital investment decisions in a logical, deliberate, and accountable manner.

The 2026-2030 CIP includes just more than \$493.8 million in community investment — including a proposed \$40 million bond sale in 2027 — across 105 projects or programs. The CIP outlines plans to maintain current infrastructure and includes projects for new roadways, buildings, and park facilities to address a growing county population and service demands.

The investments in the CIP help keep roadways safe, facilities efficient and effective, and provide amenities that serve the needs of county residents. The five-year plan calls for 69% of the funds to be spent on roads and bridges, 27% on public facilities, and 4% on parks and land. The CIP also plans for the maintenance of 296 miles of county highway, along with separated trails, intersections, signs, culverts, and roundabouts.

Funding sources for the CIP include intergovernmental revenue — meaning funds coming from other levels of government — as well as the county's transportation tax and wheelage tax, and bond proceeds.

Projects planned to be completed in 2026 are included in the 2026 countywide budget, as well as the CIP.

The county maintains 4,800 acres of parkland, with 75 miles of trails and five beaches. The five-year CIP includes more than \$17.6 million in investments through 16 plans and projects in the county's parks. Those include:

- Hardwood Creek Regional Trail extension
- Big Marine Park Reserve improvements
- Lake Elmo Park Reserve facility improvements
- Lake Elmo Park Reserve single-track trail
- Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park lighted trails

The five-year CIP includes \$132.2 million in planned investments for 21 public facilities projects and programs in the county. Plans include funding for:

- Public Works South Shop maintenance facility construction
- R.H. Stafford Library improvements
- Park Grove Library remodel project
- Central and South Yard Waste sites

- Countywide facility improvements

The five-year CIP includes \$343.8 million in planned investments for 68 road and bridge projects and programs across the county. These projects and programs include:

- County Highway 50 corridor studies and intersection improvements in Forest Lake.
- County Highway 27 corridor expansion project from Interstate 694 to County Highway 12 in Mahtomedi.
- Highway 36/Lake Elmo Avenue (County Highway 17) interchange project in Lake Elmo.
- County Highway 16 corridor safety and pavement preservation projects in Woodbury.
- County Road 19A to 100th Street Realignment Project in Cottage Grove.

The County Board reviewed the draft 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in a workshop Oct. 7. Following the workshop, the draft CIP was released for community comment. The County Board conducted a public hearing on the draft CIP Nov. 25 and reviewed community comment letters submitted from Stillwater Township, West Lakeland Township, and the cities of Afton, Cottage Grove, Forest Lake, Hastings, Hugo, Lake Elmo, Marine on St. Croix, Oakdale, Scandia, St. Paul Park, and Woodbury.

Contact: Wayne Sandberg, Public Works Director, 651-430-4339

County Board approves reappointments to advisory boards and committees for 2026

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved numerous reappointments to advisory boards, committees, and commissions Dec. 16.

The County Board reviewed the applications of Washington County advisory board, committee, and commission members whose terms are ending Dec. 31, 2025, and who are seeking another term.

The board approved the following reappointments for two-year terms beginning Jan. 1, 2026, and ending Dec. 31, 2027:

Community Corrections Advisory Board

- Lisa Behr, District 2
- Karen Keller, District 1
- Peter Koerner, Law Enforcement Representative
- Carlo Montgomery, District 5

- Nathan Sosinski, Public Defender’s Office
- Christine VonDeLinde, Victims Representative

The board approved the following reappointments for three-year terms beginning Jan. 1, 2026, and ending Dec. 31, 2028:

Board of Adjustment and Appeals & Planning Advisory Committee

- Brian McCoy, District 5
- John Rheinberger, District 3

Community Development Agency

- Peg Larsen, District 3
- Steven Ryan, Public Assistant Housing Rep

Library Advisory Board

- Kathleen Fink, At Large
- David Olufson, At Large
- Natalie Siem, District 4

Mental Health Advisory Committee LAC

- Tara Dahlager, Child Mental Health Professional
- Katie Pape, Family Support Services

Parks and Open Space Commissioner

- James Kelly, District 3
- Michael Kraemer, District 2
- Benjamin Meyer, District 1
- Gary Severson, District 2
- Kevin Smith, At Large
- Corcoran Wicker, District 5

Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake

Kelly Ammerman, Lay Person

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

County Board makes appointment to Audit Advisory Committee

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed Jeanine Kuwik to a first term on the Audit Advisory Committee Dec. 16.

The term starts Jan. 1, 2026, and expires Dec. 31, 2028.

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

County Board extends contracts for homeless prevention services in 2026

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved two contract amendments Dec. 16 with organizations to provide homeless prevention services in 2026.

The board extended the term of the county's contract with Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties (CAPRW) and Solid Ground through Dec. 31, 2026, and added \$100,000 to provide the services through the updated term.

The funding comes from the State of Minnesota's Local Affordable Housing Aid (LAHA). Washington County distributes LAHA funds to community partner agencies engaged in homelessness prevention work under the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program. Washington County entered into contracts with CAPRW and Solid Ground on Feb. 26, 2025.

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

County Board extends contracts for case management services through 2028

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved three contract amendments Dec. 16 with organizations to provide case management services through 2028.

The County Board extended the term of the contracts with Country Services Inc., Accord, and Shakir Consulting Services through Dec. 31, 2028. The board added \$228,000 per year to the Country Services Inc. contract, \$43,000 per year to the Accord contract, and \$51,000 per year to the Shakir Consulting Services contract to provide case management services in 2026, 2027, and 2028.

Washington County is responsible for providing case management services to over 2,500 children and adults, serving both the aging population and individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The case

management for these individuals is performed by social workers in the Community Services Department or contracted through private agencies.

Contact: Denise Landry, Community Services Division Manager, 651-275-7754

County to continue its Septic and Well Low Interest Loan Program

Washington County will continue to offer low-interest loans to residents in need of updating non-compliant septic systems and private wells deemed eligible by the county.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a joint powers agreement (JPA) with the Washington County Community Development Agency and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Washington Conservation District Dec. 16. The JPA and MOU will expire Dec. 31, 2030. They then may be renewed, barring changes to the program structure.

These agreements are necessary to continue the Washington County Septic and Well Low Interest Loan Program, first launched in 2014. The county also has an ongoing Lender Participation Agreement with MDA that does not have an expiration date.

The program utilizes funds from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture through their Agricultural Best Management Practices program, along with other available funding sources.

Contact: Stephanie Souter, Public Health and Environment Senior Community/Environmental Health Program Manager, 651-430-6071

County receives funds to fight aquatic invasive species

Washington County will receive \$143,718 in 2026 to fight aquatic invasive species (AIS) after the County Board accepted the funding allocation from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resource Dec. 16.

In the 2014 state legislative session, a county aid program was created to help prevent the spread of AIS 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 25 watercraft trailer launches and 388 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 details how funds will be used in 2026. It builds on activities done over the past few years. This includes money to work with the Washington Conservation District and other partners. They will provide activities to stop the spread of AIS. These activities include watercraft inspections and AIS training. They also involve working with local law enforcement. There are also projects for public awareness and prevention in Minnesota's AIS framework.

Contact: Stephanie Souter, Public Health and Environment Senior Community/Environmental Health Program Manager, 651-430-6071

County Board updates Transportation Sales Tax project eligibility list

The Washington County Board of Commissioners added the County Road 19A/100th Street Realignment Project to the eligibility list associated with the county transportation sales tax (CTST) Dec. 16.

By adding the project to the list, the county can use CTST as a funding source for the project.

State law authorizes counties to implement a transportation sales and use tax to support transportation-related projects. Counties may impose a transportation sales tax of up to 0.5% on taxable retail sales, as well as an excise tax of \$20 per motor vehicle purchased from a retail seller within the county. Revenues generated through this tax must be dedicated exclusively to capital costs for transportation projects and/or transit operating expenses.

Eligible projects are limited to those formally designated by the County Board through an adopted project eligibility list.

Contact: Frank Ticknor, Public Works Deputy Director, 651-430-4319

County Board approves purchase, lease agreements for River Valley Christian Church

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a purchase and a lease agreement for the River Valley Christian Church (RVCC) property at 5900 Lake Elmo Ave. N., Lake Elmo. The agreements will allow the county to take a key step toward constructing the new Trunk Highway 36/Lake Elmo Avenue (County State Aid Highway 17) interchange in Lake Elmo.

Under the agreement, the county will purchase the church's 11.88-acre parcel located within the footprint of the new interchange for \$7.35 million. The agreement considers the value of the property, the expenses the church would incur in relocating, the public cost of redesigning the interchange, the inflationary impact of the delay on project costs, and public safety concerns at this hazardous interchange.

As a nonprofit religious institution, RVCC has specific statutory protections relating to roadway project impacts. After negotiations with the church stalled earlier this year, the county paused to reassess the project timeline and develop designs that would avoid the church property. These alternative designs were estimated to increase the project costs by \$4.6 million to \$5.2 million due to added right-of-way, engineering, and inflation, as well as new property impacts. It would also delay the project by one to two years.

This agreement allows construction to begin in 2026.

In addition to the purchase agreement, the board approved a lease agreement in which RVCC will lease the property back from the County until May 31, 2026. The lease agreement provides RVCC time to transition to a new facility while allowing the county to maintain its project schedule.

Contact: Wayne Sandberg, Public Works Director, 651-430-4339