

**Date:** Jan. 6, 2026  
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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Jan. 6, 2026, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

## County Board elects chair and vice chair

At the Jan. 6 Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting, Commissioner Karla Bigham, District 4, was elected to serve as the Washington County Board of Commissioners' board chair in 2026. Commissioner Bethany Cox, District 3, was elected to serve as board vice chair for the year.

Bigham, elected in 2022, is in her second tenure on the Washington County Board after serving previously from 2015 to 2018. In addition to her county-level experience, she has served in the Minnesota State Senate for five years, in the Minnesota House of Representatives for five years, and on the Cottage Grove City Council from 2005 until 2007. Prior to the city council, she chaired the Cottage Grove Public Safety, Health, and Welfare Commission. Bigham was chair of the Cottage Grove Charter Commission and was a member of the Cottage Grove Environmental Commission.

Commissioner Bethany Cox was elected to the County Board of Commissioners in November 2024 to represent District 3. Before being elected to the County Board, Cox worked as the Director of Development at the Wild Rivers Conservancy of the St. Croix and Namekagon from 2019 to 2024. Cox served on the City of Stillwater Planning Commission from 2022 to 2024 and the Public Library Board of Trustees from 2018 to 2022.

The board also set its meeting dates for 2026. Information on board meetings can be found on the county's website at [WashingtonCountyMN.gov/CountyBoard](http://WashingtonCountyMN.gov/CountyBoard).

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## **County Board makes Community Corrections Advisory Board Appointment**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners appointed Larry Odebrecht to a partial term on the Community Corrections Advisory Board as a District 3 Representative. The term begins Jan. 7, 2026, and expires Dec. 31, 2026.

**Contact: Megan Carlson, Office of Administration Administrative Assistant, 651-430-6001**

## **County will continue to work with Washington Conservation District**

Washington County will continue to work with the Washington Conservation District to provide technical assistance and educational services promoting and applying soil and water conservation practices throughout the county.

The County Board approved a \$314,928 contract with the agency Jan. 6 to pay for services for 2026.

Funding is for the organization's administrative activities and services in the areas of local water management, land and water treatment, and public education. The cost of the 2025 contract reflects a 4% increase over the 2025 contract amount due to inflationary costs.

**Contact: Smita Rakshit, Public Health Program Supervisor, 651-430-6661**

## **Central Service and License Center added as a dental clinic site in 2026**

The county is adding the Public Health Clinic in the Central Service and License Center as one of its dental clinic sites for 2026.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a contract Jan. 6 with Children's Dental Services (CDS) allowing them to begin providing dental services at the Central Service and License Center in Woodbury. The contract continues dental clinic services at the county's service centers in Cottage Grove, Stillwater, and Forest Lake, as in previous years.

The Department of Public Health and Environment has had a contract with CDS since 2009. CDS provides preventative and intervention dental services one day a month at county Public Health Clinics on a rotating basis.

CDS serves children from infancy to age 26, pregnant women, and family members of all ages, regardless of income. Comprehensive oral health care services are provided in the Public Health Clinic space in each location.

In addition to providing care, CDS handles all scheduling, billing, and other client care logistics. They provide all equipment, including the drop-off and pick-up of the portable dental equipment for use each month. Public Health staff help promote the services and provide the space.

Dental care provided by CDS has helped provide care to families in our community without adequate dental coverage and in need of preventative care.

**Contact: Emily Robb, Senior Public Health Program Manager of Nursing Services, 651-430-4032**

## **Therapy K9 donated to the Sheriff's Office**

The Washington County Sheriff's Office received a donation of a therapy K9 from Soldier's 6, a Minnesota-based nonprofit organization.

Soldier's 6 proudly provides therapy dogs to police and fire departments, EMS stations, and mental health professionals who work directly with members of the first responder community. These therapy dogs bring comfort, support, and emotional de-escalation to teams working in high-stress, high-trauma environments, helping them process their experiences and maintain resilience.

Detective Julia Weegman, assigned to the Coordinated Response Team, will be the handler of therapy K9 "Penny." Soldier's 6 will provide comprehensive therapy training for the new K9 team at no cost.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved the donation Jan. 6.

**Contact: Commander Kyle Schenck, Sheriff's Office Investigations Division, 651-430-7864**

## **Sheriff's Office receives donation for K9 unit**

The Washington County Sheriff's Office K9 Unit received a \$1,000 donation from county resident Jackie Marshall.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted the donation Jan. 6.

Marshall and her family have a history of training dogs. Marshall has donated in the past and is a supporter of the Sheriff's Office K9 program. This donation will be used to purchase new K9 equipment.

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

## **East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force receives victim resources donation**

The East Metro Human Trafficking Task Force (EMHTTF) received \$1,500 in in-kind donations from the FBI Minneapolis Citizen Academy Alumni Association Jan. 6.

The donation includes cell phones, cellular data cards, gift cards, blankets, hygiene items, and clothing. It enhances the EMHTTF's ability to keep victims safe, connected, and engaged with services by providing victims with necessities during their recovery.

The EMHTTF's primary jurisdiction is Washington County, but the victim-centered work frequently takes the group throughout the Twin Cities metro area. EMHTTF encounters many individuals who are experiencing homelessness, exploitation, and extreme instability, often with little to no access to essential resources.

**Contact: Commander Kyle Schenck, Sheriff's Office Investigations Division, 651-430-7864**

## **County Board approves contract for Hardwood Creek Regional Trail Extension project**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$350,520 contract Jan. 6 with Alliant Engineering for design services for the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail Extension Project.

The Hardwood Creek Regional Trail is Washington County's most visited regional trail and serves as a key north-south corridor in the county's trail system.

The project aims to extend the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail south to the county line between Hugo and White Bear Lake Township in Ramsey County. This extension will close the existing one-mile gap and create a continuous trail connection. The project is following the recommendations of the 2021 Feasibility Study completed by Alliant Engineering, which evaluated alignment options and coordination needs within the constrained corridor.

In part due to their strong technical foundation and familiarity with the corridor, stakeholders, and constraints, Alliant Engineering was selected as the consultant for the next phase. This will help maintain continuity, preserve the value of prior work, and ensure efficient progression into final design.

Alliant Engineering's scope for this phase includes:

- Project coordination
- Agency and public engagement
- Environmental documentation
- Utility coordination
- Drainage analysis and design
- ADA-compliant design

- Preparation of permit applications
- Development of construction documents
- Preparation of detailed cost estimates

The contract will be funded through state sales tax and local contributions.

**Contact: Erin Blaylock, Public Works Engineer II, 651-430-4384**

## **County Board approves contract for Valley Creek Road and Settlers Ridge Parkway Intersection Improvement project**

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a \$423,400 contract Jan. 6 with Alliant Engineering to provide preliminary and final design services for the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 16 (Valley Creek Road) and Settlers Ridge Parkway Intersection Improvement Project.

The project, located in Woodbury, anticipates to convert this intersection from an all-way stop to a roundabout. This change will address safety, mobility, and multimodal needs at this key intersection.

The updated intersection will provide ADA-compliant pedestrian and bicycle crossings and is expected to eliminate left-turn conflicts, reduce crash potential, and decrease vehicle congestion, idling, and emissions. The project will also enhance highway drainage and improve surface water management.

The county received eight proposals from qualified firms for engineering services. Alliant Engineering was selected as the most qualified consultant.

The scope of work includes:

- Project management
- Public engagement
- Utility coordination
- Geotechnical evaluation
- Environmental documentation
- Drainage and intersection design
- Permitting
- Cost estimating
- Development of a preferred alternative layout and final construction plans

The contract will be funded by Transportation Advancement Account Safety and Trails funds and local contributions from the City of Woodbury.

The county has secured \$2,384,200 in federal funding to support the construction of this project through the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program. Construction is scheduled for 2028.

**Contact: Andrew Giesen, Public Works Engineer III, 651-430-4336**