

Our Mission: Providing quality services through responsible leadership, innovation and the cooperation of dedicated people

Date: Dec. 6, 2022
Contact: Yvonne Klinnert, Senior Communications Specialist
Phone: 651-430-6026, after hours 952-807-3723
E-mail: yvonne.klinnert@co.washington.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Dec. 6, 2022, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board makes appointments to citizen advisory groups

The Washington County Board of Commissioners made two appointments to county citizen advisory groups Dec. 6.

The appointments are:

- Lydia Moua, who was appointed to a partial term on the Workforce Development Board as a Business Representative, with a term expiring Dec. 31, 2023; and
- Tara Dahlager, who was appointed to a first term on the Mental Health Advisory Committee as a child mental health professional, to a term beginning Jan. 1, 2023, and expiring Dec. 31, 2025.

Contact: Jennifer Ochocki, Coordinator to the County Administrator, 651-430-6010

County Board makes reappointments for citizen boards for 2023

The Washington County Board of Commissioners made reappointments to citizen boards and commissions for 2023 at its meeting Dec. 6.

The terms will begin at the start of 2023 and expire at the end of 2025.

The appointments are:

- James Honsvall, lay person, Audit Committee, to a fifth term;
- John Rheinberger, District 3, Board of Adjustment and Appeals, third term;

A great place to live, work and play...today and tomorrow

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
www.co.washington.mn.us

- Andrew Jackola, District 2, Community Corrections Advisory Board, fourth term;
- Katie Pape, social services – mental health, Community Corrections Advisory Board, second term;
- Daniele Szeliga, probation officer, Community Corrections Advisory Board, second term;
- Temitayo (Temmy) Olasimbo, District 5, Community Development Agency, second term;
- Steven Ryan, public assistance housing representative, Community Development Agency, third term;
- Mary Ann Newman, District 4, Historic Courthouse Advisory Committee, fourth term;
- William Sullivan, District 2, Historic Courthouse Advisory Committee, first full term;
- Mary Burke, District 1, Library Advisory Board, second term;
- Kathleen Fink, at-large, Library Advisory Board, first full term;
- David Olufson, at-large, Library Advisory Board, third term;
- Katie Pape, family support services, Mental Health Local Advisory Committee, third term;
- Michael R. Kraemer, District 2, Parks and Open Space Commission, third term;
- Gary Severson, District 2, Parks and Open Space Commission, second term;
- James E. Kelly, District 3, Parks and Open Space Commission, third term;
- Benjamin L. Meyer, District 1, Parks and Open Space Commission, fifth term;
- Kevin P. Smith, at-large, Parks and Open Space Commission, third term;
- Corcoran Wicker, District 5, Parks and Open Space Commission, third term;
- John Rheinberger, District 3, Planning Advisory Committee, second term;
- Kelly Ammerman, Washington County Board appointee (District 3 resident), Veterans Campground on Big Marine Lake, second term.

Contact: Jennifer Ochocki, Coordinator to the County Administrator, 651-430-6010

Young appointed county assessor by County Board

Lisa Young was appointed Washington County Assessor by the County Board Dec. 6.

Young will serve a term beginning Dec. 6 and ending Dec. 31, 2024.

Under state law, every county has a County Assessor appointed by the County Board of Commissioners. The assessor is selected and appointed because of knowledge and training in the field of property taxation. The County Board's appointment must be approved by the Commissioner of Revenue. Washington County Assessor Bruce Munneke retired Friday, Dec. 2. After a comprehensive interview process, Young was offered and accepted the position of Washington County Assessor. Young has been part of the Washington County Assessor's Office since 2020 as the property appraiser residential supervisor. Prior to this role, she was the city assessor for the City of St. Cloud. She also held appraiser positions at Washington County and Redwood County. Young has a Bachelor of Science degree in Real Estate and her Senior Accredited Minnesota Assessor license (SAMA).

The term of the office of the County Assessor begins every fourth year and runs from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31. When a vacancy in the office occurs, the new County Assessor fills the remainder of the current term. The current term for the Washington County Assessor expires Dec. 31, 2024, with the new term beginning Jan. 1, 2025.

Contact: Amy Stenftenagel, Property Records and Taxpayers Services Director, 651-430-6182

County purchases land for northern environmental center

The Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed Dec. 6 to pay \$699,000 for land in the southeast quadrant of Highway 61 and 202nd Street in Forest Lake to build a northern environmental center across from the Forest Lake Service Center.

The 10.5-acre site will support the county's plans for a northern household hazardous waste and yard debris environmental center.

Washington County has been planning for such a site in the northern portion of the county. The county worked with the City of Forest Lake in connection with this environmental center and the city's future public works facility. The property for purchase is adjacent to existing City of Forest Lake property and is on the market.

The County Board reviewed the listed property and recognized that the inclusion of this property would benefit the overall operations of Washington County and the City of Forest Lake. A purchase price was negotiated with the property owner.

Washington County will use proceeds from the County Environmental Charge to pay for the purchase.

The county operates an Environmental Center at 4039 Cottage Grove Drive in Woodbury.

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

Sheriff's Office receives AEDs from University of Minnesota

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive 87 automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) from the Center of Resuscitation Medicine at the University of Minnesota, after the County Board accepted the donation Dec. 6.

The Center of Resuscitation Medicine at the University of Minnesota has been working on resuscitation efforts in Minnesota for almost a decade. The center primarily works on clinical and research projects that will improve outcomes from sudden cardiac arrest.

Starting in December, the Washington County Sheriff's Office will be working in conjunction with the center to receive 87 AEDs at no cost to the county. The project is designed to outfit every county squad car patrolling Washington County roadways with this new life-saving equipment.

Additionally, instructor training on the new devices will be provided for all of the deputies. Each AED is valued at \$3,000.

Contact: Laura Perkins, Public Information Officer, 651-430-7994

Sheriff's Office receives donation from Hugo Yellow Ribbon Network for Shop with a Cop

The Washington County Sheriff's Office will receive \$3,575 from the Hugo Yellow Ribbon Network to support the Shop with a Cop event.

The County Board accepted the donation Dec. 6.

The Sheriff's Office will work with the Hugo Yellow Ribbon Network Dec. 13 to support the annual Shop with a Cop event, which will include the Oak Parks Heights Police Department.

Deputies and Correctional Officers will be shopping with approximately 10 children whose parents are in the military, many of whom are deployed overseas. This event is the Sheriff's Office's most popular event and brings joy to the children, families, and the Sheriff's Office. It is about building positive relationships between Deputies, Correctional Officers, and children while pairing them up to shop together during the

holiday season. This ensures everyone has a gift to open for Christmas and creates a bonding experience with law enforcement and the communities the Sheriff's Office serves.

The Sheriff's Office expressed appreciation to the Hugo Yellow Ribbon Network for the donation that supports military families.

Contact: Laura Perkins, Public Information Officer, 651-430-7994

County Board conducts public budget meeting

The Washington County Board of Commissioners conducted a public budget meeting Dec. 6 to provide an overview of the proposed 2023 budget and levy for the county.

The board approved a proposed 2023 budget and preliminary levy Sept. 27.

The preliminary levies are:

- \$126.5 million for the county net levy;
- \$660,000 for the Regional Railroad Authority levy; and
- \$1.2 million for the Land and Water Legacy Program referendum levy.

The board also consented to a \$5.9 million levy for the Community Development Agency.

Under the proposed budget, the county net levy would increase 4.88% over 2022, and non-levy revenue would be \$113.2 million, a decrease of 14.9% from 2022.

As in nearly all counties, property owners in Washington County have experienced increased property values from the rise in sales prices, especially for residential properties. The median value of a home in the county went up about 20% in the past assessment year. The preliminary levy, combined with new construction and the rising valuations, results in the county's tax rate decreasing by 14.5%.

Should the proposed budget and levy be approved, the median valued home in the county, which is \$386,500, assuming that its value increased by 20% in the past year, would be taxed \$919 for 2023 by the county, a \$40 or 4.6% increase over 2022.

New revenue in the budget will pay for services and materials experiencing significant growth, such as public safety for which the county is responsible, such as deputies who patrol county communities, correctional officers who serve in the County Jail, and dispatchers who manage 9-1-1 calls in the Sheriff's Office.

Additional new funding in the budget for 2023 would pay negotiated wages and benefits for employees.

There has been an increase in applications for service and more need for the health and human services that the county provides, such as services for those with mental health needs and for homelessness prevention.

Inflationary costs are having an impact on managing the county's vehicles, such as plow trucks and deputies' vehicles. The cost of replacement machinery, fuel, salt for clearing roads, and construction and building materials has risen substantially over 2022, raising the cost of doing business for the county. Also, the county's Information Technology costs related to data management, data security, data storage, and technology infrastructure are increasing.

The proposed budget calls for 28.5 new positions countywide, which is typical in an average year. However, 31 positions have been eliminated, including 25 special project positions that are expiring with the federal emergency rental assistance program that was augmented during the pandemic. The increase in employees results in a slight decrease in the ratio of employees to residents from 2022.

The proposed budget includes Gold Line construction costs, the bus-rapid transit line that will be built from downtown St. Paul to Woodbury roughly along Interstate 94 and then south along Bielenberg Drive in Woodbury. While money for construction is part of the proposed budget, no property tax dollars will be used to build the line. It is funded through the local option transportation sales tax and federal money. The County Board will vote on a final budget and levy for 2023 at its Dec. 13 meeting.

All budget workshops that occurred during the summer may be viewed through webstreaming of the County Board meetings. See the county website at www.co.washington.mn.us./budget for more information.

Contact: Jennifer Wagenius, Deputy County Administrator, 651-430-6007, and Jan Lucke, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6003