

Date: Aug. 12, 2025
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 12, 2025, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota.

Commissioners appointed to canvass boards for special elections

The Washington County Board of Commissioners made appointments to the Washington County Canvass Board Aug. 12 for the State Senate District 47 special primary election and special election.

Commissioner Stan Karwoski, District 2, and Commissioner Michelle Clasen, District 5, were appointed to the Washington County Canvass Board for the special primary election on Tuesday, Aug. 26, 2025. The canvass board meeting will be held at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2025, in the Board Room on the fifth floor of the Washington County Government Center.

Commissioner Clasen and Commissioner Karla Bigham, District 4, were appointed to the Washington County Canvass Board for the special election on Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2025. The canvass board meeting will be held at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2025, in the Board Room on the fifth floor of the Washington County Government Center.

The Washington County Canvassing Board reviews and certifies the election results. This board is made up of the county auditor, the court administrator of the district court in the county, the mayor of the most populous municipality in the county (Woodbury), and two members of the County Board.

Contact: Joanne Helm, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Deputy Director, 651-430-6195

County Board makes appointment to Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

The Washington County Board of Commissioners made an appointment to the Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District Aug. 12. The board appointed Jim Schottmuller of Forest Lake as a manager on the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District for a term beginning Sept. 24, 2025, and expiring Sept. 23, 2028.

Contact: Holly Hess, Office of Administration Administrative Assistant, 651-430-6015

County Board receives \$814,000 for family homelessness prevention, assistance

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted \$814,000 in grant funds for homelessness prevention for families and for securing housing for families experiencing homelessness Aug. 12.

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MN Housing) recently awarded Washington County \$814,000 in Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) funds for a two-year period beginning Oct. 1, 2025, and ending Sept. 30, 2027. The purpose of the FHPAP program is to provide supportive services and/or financial assistance to families, youth, and single adults who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

The county has received FHPAP grant funding since 2007. It has contracted with community providers to utilize the funds to stabilize families in their existing homes, shorten the amount of time that families spend in emergency shelters, and assist families with securing transitional or permanent affordable housing. Agencies that will receive funds to deliver FHPAP services in the 2025-2027 biennium are: Solid Ground, Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington County, Valley Outreach, and Greater Twin Cities United Way 211.

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

County Board reviews 2024 financial audit results

The Washington County Board of Commissioners reviewed the 2024 financial audit results at its Aug. 12 meeting.

The auditing firm reported a clean opinion on the county's financial reports. The audit showed that the county has a strong fund balance. Revenues exceeded expenditures and increased the fund balance of the General Fund by \$29.0 million. The county's Other Postemployment Benefits (OPEB) Trust account increased in value by \$18.6 million over the previous year. The county earned over \$3.5 million more in investment revenues over the previous year, and County Program Aid (CPA) funding increased by \$3.5 million.

Contact: Cat Piepho, Accounting and Finance Director, 651-430-6027

County earns GFOA Triple Crown award for financial reporting

The Washington County Board of Commissioners was presented with awards from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Aug. 12, representing the "Triple Crown" for financial reporting.

The awards are for:

- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR).
- Award for the 2023 Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR).
- Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 2025 budget.

The award for the 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) marks the 39th consecutive year that the county has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Award. The award is intended to recognize and encourage excellence in financial reporting by state and local governments. The county's consistent participation in the program demonstrates its commitment to quality financial management practices and open and clear communication with its residents. The award has a direct impact when rating agencies assess the county's financial practices during bond issuance.

This is the sixth consecutive year the county has received the GFOA Award for Outstanding Achievement in the 2023 Popular Annual Financial Reporting (PAFR). The PAFR is designed to be readily accessible and easily understandable to the public. It aims to reduce jargon and technical language and includes charts and graphs to assist users in understanding the financial position of the county.

The board also received the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the county's 2025 budget. The 2025 award marks the 28th consecutive year of receiving the award. To receive the award, the budget document is submitted to the GFOA and goes through peer reviews to determine if the quality of the document meets the nationally recognized standards for effective budget presentation. The county document must also meet 14 mandatory criteria on which it is rated.

The budget satisfies nationally recognized guidelines as:

- A policy document.
- A financial plan.
- An operations guide.
- A communications device.

Washington County is one of only a small number of counties in Minnesota and the U.S. to receive these three awards. The GFOA's Triple Crown recognizes governments that have received all three of these awards. The award program began in 1998 and is the only national awards program in governmental budgeting.

Contact: Cat Piepho, Accounting and Finance Director, 651-430-6027

Photo cutline: The Washington County Board of Commissioners recognized Accounting and Finance Department Staff for receiving the Government Finance Officers Association's Triple Crown Award for financial reporting.

County Board approves construction contract for Square Lake Park improvement project

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a construction contract with Winberg Companies, LLC for the Square Lake Park Improvement Project Aug. 12.

The contract totals \$1,064,028.17, and the scope of work includes repaving the parking lots and entrance road, adding an automated gate at the park entrance, improving ADA access along the beach and to the fishing pier, and stormwater improvements.

Construction is scheduled to begin in September.

In addition to the construction contract, the County Board approved a \$79,214 contract amendment with HR Green, the firm that was originally contracted to provide design services for the project. A contract amendment was needed as additional scope was added during the design phase of the project. The additional scope included the design of an automated gate system at the entrance, additional stormwater modeling and design to meet the requirements of the \$72,000 Clean Water Grant the county received in April, and a high-level design of a future decontamination station at the park.

The County Board approved a budget amendment to support the project costs.

Contact: Mike Kline, Public Works Engineer I, 651-430-4304

Sheriff Dan Starry receives 2025 D.A.R.E. Executive of the Year Award

Washington County Sheriff Dan Starry received the 2025 D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Executive of the Year Award at the Aug. 12 Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting.

The D.A.R.E. Law Enforcement Executive of the Year Award is presented annually by D.A.R.E. America to recognize individuals in law enforcement who hold executive positions, such as chiefs, sheriffs, or district attorneys, for outstanding leadership and commitment to drug prevention and enforcement.

Sheriff Starry was recognized with the award for having made a significant impact in their communities through his leadership and dedication to the D.A.R.E. program. Sheriff Starry has hosted D.A.R.E. officer training sessions at the county, resulting in the certification of numerous law enforcement officers to teach the D.A.R.E. program.

D.A.R.E., founded in 1983, is a police officer-led series of classroom lessons that teaches children from kindergarten through 12th grade how to resist peer pressure and live productive, drug and violence-free lives.

Contact: Chief Deputy Doug Anschutz, Sheriff's Office, 651-430-7846

Photo cutline: Washington County Sheriff Dan Starry (center) holding the D.A.R.E. America 2025 Executive of the Year Award. He is joined by the County Board of Commissioners, Sheriff's Office staff, and D.A.R.E. America representatives.

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. 12.

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 departments of Community Corrections, Community Services, and Public Health and Environment, as well as the recommended budget for the University of Minnesota Extension.

The Community Corrections Department provides probation and parole supervision for both adults and juveniles in the community. Key factors impacting the budget for the department are cuts to state funding to the Sentence to Service program and the Interstate Compact Offender Tracking System. The county's Sentence to Service program continues to save the county jail days by allowing non-violent offenders to work on government or non-profit projects. In 2024, offenders worked 42,976 project hours. Community Corrections' budget is also being impacted by increases to material and supply costs, client- and citizen-related support, and electronic monitoring costs. The recommended budget includes funding for transitioning electronic monitoring to a third-party vendor to manage the growing demand.

The Community Services Department provides services to those who are aging or have a disability, and supports children and families through adoption services, childcare, child support, alcohol and drug abuse services, foster care, housing, mental health, protection services, truancy, and veterans and job search services. Key factors impacting the Community Services budget are cost shifts to the county from the federal and state government,

increasing service demands, and changes to service delivery. The recommended budget includes the addition of 13 full-time-equivalent positions.

The Public Health and Environment Department provides services to protect, promote, and improve the community's health and the environment. The department anticipates increased expenditure from the operational costs of the county's yard waste/wood waste utilization sites, opioid settlement-funded projects, and supporting the Ramsey/Washington County Recycling and Energy Center joint activities. The department anticipates increased revenue from the County Environmental Charge, licenses and permits, intergovernmental revenue sources, and service fees.

The board will hear recommended budget presentations from the remaining county departments on the following dates:

- Aug. 19: Property Records and Taxpayer Services and Library/Law Library.
- Aug. 26: Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Office.

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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