

**King County Committee of the Whole Meeting Letter of Testimony from Kate Kruller
- July 16, 2014
Re: King Conservation District Proposal**

King County Council Committee of the Whole Vice Chair Hague, Council members and members of the Public:

I became involved in this effort as a representative of Sound Cities Association - participating on the King Conservation District (KCD) Conservation Panel and, subsequently, the KCD Advisory Committee. This, for me, has been an exciting journey toward positive change. I think you will find that many of us who joined up to usher in the transformation of the KCD model are very passionate about the process that took place and the improvements as a result.

Fundamentally, we know that there are three (3) key things that the King Conservation District provides that fulfill what thousands of constituents expect and need from their elected leaders:

1. Better access to local food
2. More healthy forests and urban trees
3. Clean water

Over a year-and-one-half of careful planning led to what is being proposed today, utilizing specialized government staff and consultants, along with representatives from all over the region - all working together in a highly transparent process. The proposal includes a carefully identified and evaluated set of six subcategories of services that will be of great benefit to those who live in jurisdictions within the King Conservation District boundaries - as well as addressing regional needs for collaboration across and between jurisdictions (this is inclusive of unincorporated King County areas). The cost of bringing these high quality services across the region asks each property owner for an increase that's equal to the price of one gallon of gas. One gallon of gas!

In order to help us be better stewards of where we live and how we live, the service our King Conservation District provides is simply not being achieved any other way. This is intended to go to those who in our region that are underserved, otherwise unable, or in great need of learning how to do things better in our communities. These services and expertise to help those who yearn to enhance their quality of living are not implemented by **performing** the work, but by **sharing what the King Conservation District knows**, using proven methods that have the highest probability for success and providing solid frameworks to follow in implementing what needs to be done. This is an irreplaceable resource to help us protect our forests, build strong and healthy farm to urban food chains, and provide ways to balance how the natural environment and urban areas are best integrated.

None of those on the KCD Conservation Panel, the Advisory Committee, and specifically myself, ever heard a single jurisdiction ever once complain of the services they **actually received** from the King Conservation District - during the entire time this proposal was being produced. Mostly, what we heard was that stakeholders wanted: (1) to see and understand how priorities are set for determining what services are made; (2) that they have a need for these vital services; and (3) that they want more of these services.

That is powerful testimony!

We're talking about examples like the need to overcome an Urban Food Desert by creating a Farmer's Market that does not even exist in places like Tukwila! This is where a population comprised of 65 different nationalities - which is the foundation for the most diverse school district in the nation - are living in our regional community today.

We're saying that it makes sense to help cities learn to use any spaces they can to build pea patches, conserve water, and preserve the tree canopy so the air we breathe is healthy for many more generations to come.

We are promoting the idea that shorelines and farmlands bordering our waterways can benefit from property owners learning how to retain their waterfronts using natural materials that will encourage wildlife to thrive and to work the land with best practices that prevent run-off that will damage the spawning grounds for our salmon!

We think it makes sense to work together regionally to coordinate and grow Community Supports Agriculture (CSA) programs so urban dwellers have ready access to healthy food - and farms can realize the demand of a sustainable market to supply. These are all possible and right before us with this proposal.

I cannot think of any other organization - private, non-profit or governmental - that can bring so much value to the public in such an efficient and effective way! No one else does this!

The King County Council asked a panel of representative electeds (including some of its own King County Council members), as well as a subsequently created Advisory Committee, to participate and oversee what and how this proposal was formulated. Thousands of hours - of specialized staff time, along with experts and consultants from a wide variety of interested stakeholders, and including contributed time by the elected officials involved - made for what is before you today.

Everywhere those of us involved went to discuss this work – for feedback while it was in progress and as it was finalized to present to the King County Council – we received remarks made in the overwhelming majority that this effort was a "Day and Night" improvement over past KCD methods and approaches. One key stakeholder organizations, representing 36 cities, has weighed in with very strong support. This is a culmination of **work performed exactly as prescribed**, when the KCD Conservation Panel and Task-force were originally assembled and asked to work out the best possible result. This is, without a doubt, a successful process. The King County Council is being asked to review and approve the proposed package presented. I encourage and urge you to support this entire package and funding proposal - as is.

With regards,



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