



King County

**Metropolitan King County Council
Budget and Fiscal Management Committee**

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item:	10	Name:	Katherine Cortes
Proposed No.:	2016-0482	Date:	October 25-27, 2016

SUBJECT

This ordinance would increase from \$60 to \$70, effective January 1, 2017, the body disposition permit fee due to the medical examiner's office for a person whose remains are to be buried, cremated, or otherwise disposed of.

SUMMARY

The Medical Examiner's Office conducts body disposition reviews to determine whether the circumstances surrounding each death in King County would warrant further investigation or invocation of the Medical Examiner's jurisdiction prior to the destruction of remains. This proposal is to raise a fee established in a more limited form in 2008 from the current level of \$60 to \$70 to recover the current level of program costs.

BACKGROUND

The permit fee proposed for increase was first established in 2008 for cremation reviews, in the amount of \$50. The table below shows the ordinance history and level of this fee since its inception.

Year	Fee	Note
2008	\$50	Cremation review fee established (Ordinance 15952)
2009	\$50	
2010	\$50	
2011	\$50	Fee expanded to all body disposition (cremation & burial) (Ordinance 16973)
2012	\$50	
2013	\$50	
2014	\$60	Fee recalculated based on cost of services provided (Ordinance 17692)
2015	\$60	Technical correction implementing increase approved for 2014 (Ordinance 18103)
2016	\$60	
2017	\$70	<i>Proposed Increase</i>

According to Executive staff, the Medical Examiner's Office "reviews and processes over 13,000 Disposition Authorizations (DA) ... since inception, the DA program has caught over 1000 jurisdictional cases ranging from accident to homicide that would have gone unexamined otherwise." This translates to an average of over 125 disposition reviews per year.

ANALYSIS

Executive staff further report that each disposition authorization takes approximately 40 minutes of staff time, but that some cases (for example, cases requiring additional information from an outside physician) can take much longer. The MEO accommodates requests for expedited disposition review for religious or cultural reasons (e.g., when burial or cremation must occur within 24 hours following death) at no additional charge.

4.2 FTE staff the DA program, including 1.5 FTE Death Investigators, 1.0 FTE Pathologist, and 1.7 FTE administrative support staff. Staffing costs comprise approximately 62 percent of the 2017-2018 proposed program budget of \$1.98 million, with the remainder going towards operating supplies, information technology and other departmental and County infrastructure and administrative costs.

At the proposed \$70 level effective January 1, 2017, the body disposition fee is projected to realize \$1.88 million in revenue, assuming 13,500 disposition authorization reviews per year. This amount is \$100,000 less than the budgeted DA program expenditure level noted above; expenditure on this program in excess of the fee revenue will be borne by the General Fund.

AMENDMENT

Staff have prepared striking amendment S1 (and an accompanying title amendment T1) to correct technical errors in the ordinance. Specifically, S1 amends the proposed ordinance to remove superfluous descriptive language and reference to RCW, and to remove a superfluous and outdated fee reference from King County Code. T1 aligns the title with these changes.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Ordinance 2016-0482
2. Fiscal Note
3. S1 Striking Amendment
4. T1 Title Amendment

INVITED

1. Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget
2. Patty Hayes, Director, Public Health – Seattle and King County