## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 5 | **Name:** | Terra Rose |
| **Proposed No.:** | 2021-0328 | **Date:** | October 19, 2021 |

**SUBJECT**

Proposed Ordinance 2021-0328 would update King County Code language concerning the Geographic Information Systems fund, clarifying that King County's geographic information systems serve both County agencies and external customers and that the fund is authorized to enter into service contracts.

**SUMMARY**

The King County Geographic Information System Center (KCGIS), housed in the King County Department of Information Technology, serves King County agencies and external clients with Geographic Information Services (GIS). GIS refers to a system that analyzes and displays geographically referenced data. GIS mapping and analysis is used in many County and external functions such as property appraisal, permit review, emergency services, among other functions.

The Geographic Information Systems fund (GIS fund) was established in 2001 by Ordinance 14270 to provide an accounting mechanism to track the full costs associated with operating, maintaining, and enhancing the County's GIS services "that serve both county agencies and external customers." In 2013, the Council adopted Ordinance 17527, which reorganized and standardized King County code language for existing County funds. This ordinance removed the explicit authorization for the GIS fund to serve both county agencies and external customers originally granted by Ordinance 14270, as well as removed language requiring the establishment of charges that recovered the full cost of GIS fund services and operations.

Proposed Ordinance 2021-0328 would add language to the section of King County Code concerning the GIS fund (K.C.C. 4A.200.320), clarifying that King County's geographic information systems serve both County agencies and external customers and that the fund is authorized to enter into service contracts. Executive staff confirmed that the proposed ordinance only makes changes that bring the code in line with what the GIS program is already doing and does not provide any new authority. While the requirement for full-cost recovery was removed in Ordinance 14270, Executive staff confirmed that the GIS program currently seeks 100% cost recovery from both external and internal customers and has no plans to change this in the future.

**BACKGROUND**

The King County Geographic Information System Center (KCGIS), housed in the King County Department of Information Technology, serves King County agencies and external clients with Geographic Information Services (GIS). GIS refers to a system that analyzes and displays geographically referenced data. GIS mapping and analysis is used in many County and external functions such as property appraisal, permit review, emergency services, human services delivery, wastewater facilities planning, among many other functions.

According to the available KCGIS Operations & Maintenance Plan,[[1]](#footnote-1) County agencies with embedded GIS units provide business specific GIS services in-house. For agencies without a GIS unit or when in-house agency GIS services are not feasible or practical, and for external clients, the KCGIS Center offers GIS staffing and project services on a cost reimbursable basis.

Ordinance 14270, passed by the Council in 2001, created the Geographic Information Systems fund (GIS fund), an internal services fund to provide an accounting mechanism to track the full costs associated with operating, maintaining, and enhancing the County's GIS services that serve "both county agencies and external customers." According to the transmittal letter, KCGIS systematically pursued work with outside agencies on the basis of this language and since 2002, the proportion of geographic information systems work performed for external customers has ranged from 24 percent to 47 percent of total GIS client services revenue. Ordinance 14270 also directed the establishment of charges to recover full costing for geographic information systems fund services and operations.

In 2013, the Council adopted Ordinance 17527, which reorganized and standardized King County code language for existing County funds and which was a part of a series of ordinances updating and reorganizing code language on taxes, fees, and funds into a new code title on revenue and fiscal regulation (K.C.C. Title 4A). Ordinance 17527 also removed the explicit authorization for the GIS fund to serve both county agencies and external customers originally granted by Ordinance 14270, as well as removed language requiring the establishment of charges that recovered the full cost of GIS fund services and operations. Council staff reviewed available legislative materials and consulted with County GIS staff, however, it is not clear why these changes were made. GIS staff indicate they were not aware of the change when it occurred, and they believe it may have been inadvertent.

Current code (K.C.C. 4A.200.320) designates the GIS fund as a second tier fund[[2]](#footnote-2) and internal services fund to be managed by the Director of KCIT, as well as requires that all receipts from rates charged for the fund's services to county agencies shall be deposited in the fund.

**ANALYSIS**

Proposed Ordinance 2021-0328 would update King County Code language concerning the Geographic Information Systems fund in K.C.C. 4A.200.320, clarifying that King County's geographic information systems serve both County agencies and external customers and that the fund is authorized to enter into service contracts. Under the proposed ordinance, receipts from rates charged to external customers shall be deposited into the fund.

The transmittal letter indicates that the proposed ordinance would "restore the authorization in the King County Code for King County to provide cost reimbursable services to external customers" and also "position KCGIS to pursue new opportunities that might arise out of a current regional GIS study conducted in partnership with Seattle, Bellevue, Kirkland, among other cities, as well as with tribes and utilities."[[3]](#footnote-3)

Executive staff confirmed that the proposed ordinance only makes changes to bring the code in line with what the GIS program is already doing and does not provide any new authority. Executive staff report that when they have established contracts with outside entities, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office in their review has mentioned that the GIS program does not have the explicit authority to enter into contracts despite the long history of providing such outside services and the fact that explicit authority was in the code when the fund was originally created. According to Executive staff, the language in the proposed ordinance would resolve this issue.

While the requirement for full-cost recovery was removed in Ordinance 14270, Executive staff confirmed that the GIS program currently seeks 100% cost recovery from both external and internal customers and has no plans to change this in the future.

The fiscal note indicates there are no budgetary impacts expected with the proposed ordinance.

**INVITED**

* Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget (PSB)
* Tamara Davis, IT Enterprise Manager III, King County Department of Information Technology

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Ordinance 2021-0328
2. Transmittal Letter
3. Fiscal Note
1. https://kingcounty.gov/services/gis/about/O\_M.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A "second tier fund" is not to be invested for its own benefit (K.C.C. 4A.200.010) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Sound to Summit Regional GIS Study, according to Executive staff, is to determine the best feasible way to organize and operate the geographic information services (GIS) within the region to enable enhanced use and business effectiveness from GIS, increase ROI, and decreased cost. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)