



Legislation Text

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A MOTION setting the council's 2010 budget priorities and providing direction to the executive on specific areas of council interest.

WHEREAS, under the King County charter, the county council is the policy determining body and adopts budgets for King County government, and

WHEREAS, the executive under the charter carries out policy as set by the council and presents budgets and a budget message setting forth the programs that the executive proposes for the county during the next fiscal year, and

WHEREAS, the council over the years has provided policy direction to the executive to be reflected in the proposed budget, including initiatives such as the juvenile and adult justice operational master plans, realignment of the district court system, expansion of drug and mental health courts, development of framework policies for human services, establishment of the nearshore habitat conservation initiative and creation of the cultural development authority, the property expert review task force, the citizens' election oversight committee, the office of information resource management, the county's annexation and children's health initiatives and the public health operational master plan, and

WHEREAS, the council has been a leader in promoting performance management, efficiency and effectiveness in using county revenues for service delivery in King County by adopting Motion 11561 in 2002, which encouraged the executive to broaden the use of performance measurement throughout county government as a way of enhancing management of scarce resources and demonstrating accountability, and

WHEREAS, through adoption of Ordinance 16202, in July 2008, the council created a countywide

performance and accountability system, which will increase transparency and accountability through better reporting of county performance, and

WHEREAS, over the last several budget years, the council has increased its role in the oversight and accountability of capital project management by including requirements for increased transparency in capital project reporting and through the creation of the office of capital project oversight, and

WHEREAS, the council has consistently sought citizen input in the development of its budget priorities through such efforts as public meetings, citizen boards and commissions, the countywide community forums and the citizen engagement initiative, which collected the views of hundreds of county residents on how the county should prioritize spending, and

WHEREAS, in both 2006, 2007 and 2008 the council has adopted budget priority motions, which have been forwarded to the county executive for use in formulating the executive's budget proposal, and

WHEREAS, in delivering his 2009 budget address, the executive informed the council that the county would be facing significant deficits, beginning with a ninety-three million dollars deficit in 2009 and growing in future years, and

WHEREAS, the current projected deficit for 2010 is approaching fifty million dollars, and

WHEREAS, the budget instructions for agencies to use in preparing their 2010 budgets included significant across-the-board cuts for general fund mandated services, and

WHEREAS, the growth in county revenues has been restricted by state-wide voter-approved measures, including Initiative 747 and the subsequent enactment of it by the state legislature; and

WHEREAS, this restriction, which limits the growth in the county property tax levy to one percent annually plus new construction - a rate of growth that is insufficient to meet the increasing costs of providing services due to inflation and population growth - has resulted in a structural gap whereby the structure of the tax system generates a persistent shortfall in the revenues needed to maintain public services; and

WHEREAS, other major sources of county revenues, are limited by the health of the economy, such as

sales and real estate excise taxes, and

WHEREAS, this is not the first time that the public finance system in this state has adversely affected public safety services; the council, in prior efforts to balance the budget, cut in excess of one hundred million dollars from the general fund and has made decisions including transferring swimming pools and local parks to other jurisdictions and shifting the burden for regional parks and recreation services to special levies in an effort to avoid further reductions to public safety services, and

WHEREAS, whenever possible, the county council prefers collaboration and partnerships for regional services that impact cities, and

WHEREAS, King County has implemented special revenue programs like the mental illness and drug dependency sales tax and the veterans and human services levy to address human services needs, and

WHEREAS, while these new revenues have addressed specific funding needs, they have not addressed the structural nature of public funding for basic services in Washington counties;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the council of King County:

A. The council is committed to using the resources available to county government to support a vibrant, growing King County that honors the values of its citizens and respects the provision of local and regional services.

B. The council recognizes that there are many challenges facing the county that will make decision-making in the 2010 budget difficult. There continues to be a widening structural gap between the cost of continuing current services and revenues available to support these services. At the same time, county service needs continue to increase. Given these challenges, the council intends that the adopted 2010 budget will be one that addresses the following major issues:

EFFICIENCY

1. Council-Initiated Oversight Actions: The council is committed to implementing savings identified by the ongoing transit performance audit. We are further committed to using recommendations from the capital

project oversight office to improve the county's capital budgeting processes and examine the continued feasibility of all capital projects - especially those experiencing cost overruns or schedule delays and scope additions;

2. Personnel costs: We acknowledge and respect the recent achievements of our workforce in helping to lower the county's personnel costs including the implementation of the health reform initiative, enactment of the ten-day furlough in 2009 and agreements made to increase co-payments for health insurance. Given our current budget crisis, however, the council recognizes that we all must contemplate additional sacrifice in order to avoid severe program and service reductions. The council will continue to examine creative ways of reducing the overall costs related to the county's personnel expenses. We will review the feasibility of expanding and/or continuing existing cost-saving efforts, as well as developing new cost-saving measures, as part of the development of our 2010 budget;

3. Strategic Planning Efforts: The council is committed to pursuing the results and savings from past efforts in public health and adult and juvenile justice operational master plans and looks forward to implementing savings and efficiencies realized within the ongoing roads services operational master planning efforts;

4. Department Savings: The council expects that all departments will submit budgets that reflect a focus on business models and practices that result in cost-savings and efficiencies. Each department shall prioritize and implement long term and sustainable reforms, while maintaining a commitment to a high level of service. Departments shall include an explanation of the reforms they have implemented when providing budget detail to the legislative branch;

PUBLIC SAFETY

5. Sheriff: The executive is encouraged to identify sufficient funding for patrol and law enforcement activities necessary to maintain public safety in the unincorporated areas and the region as a whole. The executive is further encouraged to identify sufficient funding to provide needed equipment necessary for the

sheriff's office to carry out its regional emergency services role;

6. District court: The county council will endeavor to adopt a budget that continues support for the vital mental health court that addresses legal problems for individuals whom would be more appropriately dealt with by mental health professionals than incarceration. Also, the executive is encouraged to continue implementation of the District Court Staffing Study. Finally, the executive is encourage to continue capital funding for planning needs at the Bellevue and Kent court facilities;

7. Superior court and judicial administration: The county council will strive to adopt a budget that preserves the vital drug diversion court that addresses legal problems for individuals who most appropriately are dealt with through the drug court's programming as opposed to incarceration. The executive is encouraged to identify funding to sustain Juvenile Justice Operational Master Plan programs in juvenile court services and identify capital support for the family and juvenile court facilities planning and regional justice center planning;

8. Public defense: The county council will strive to adopt a budget that identifies sufficient funding to provide effective public defender services for the near-indigent consistent with the county's adopted public defense payment model;

9. Prosecuting attorney: The executive is encouraged to identify funding sufficient to support the criminal division implementation of more efficient felony case processing and replacement of the prosecutor's management information system (PROMIS) information systems;

10. Adult and juvenile detention: The executive is encouraged to identify sufficient funds in his proposed budget to continue the programs created by the adult and juvenile justice operational master plans that have been proven to save the county money and achieving better outcomes for those individuals that come in contact with the criminal justice system. Further, the executive is encouraged to identify funding to continue the Regional Integrated Jail Project and support for housing options for youth as an alternative to secure detention;

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

11. Public health: The executive is encouraged to propose a budget that maintains public health as a core value of the county, is consistent with the policies, goals and strategies adopted in the public health operational master plan, moves towards adoption of a stable and predictable county contribution to the health care safety net and prioritizes programs that are most effective in reducing involvement in the criminal justice system. Further, where possible, fee-based regulatory services should be full cost recovery;

12. Human services: The executive is encouraged to propose a budget that maintains the core human services safety net programs that provide critical, life savings services, as demand for these services continues as economic conditions worsen. Support for programs that prevent or reduce homelessness, as homelessness is a leading factor in jail recidivism and overuse of crisis services like emergency rooms, detox and sobering centers should be pursued. Programs that assist victims of domestic violence and sexual assault should be prioritized as domestic violence and sexual assault are primary causes of homelessness and physical and mental trauma for women and children. The executive is encouraged to propose a budget that better coordinates and integrates public health and human service programs in order to maximize the public's investment;

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

13. Transportation: King County continues to hold the principal goal of improving transportation options and providing greater mobility for people, vehicles and freight as a long-term ideal. Where reductions in roads services division maintenance, operations or construction are needed, choices should be measured against impact on achieving this goal. In response to the recession-induced loss of revenue for transit, a collaborative process, including the council, executive branch, customers and stakeholders, should be undertaken to guide the difficult choices between how much transit service is delivered and how that service is delivered to the customers;

14. Solid waste management: The executive shall manage solid waste division expenditures within the adopted 2008-2010 rate structure for the utility, and shall endeavor to extend service contracts with the cities through at least 2048, while continuing the reconstruction of the Bow Lake and Factoria transfer stations

as scheduled and completing a strategic plan to add near-term disposal capacity to the regional system;

15. Water and land resources: Absent approval of new revenue authority as called for in the county's state legislative agenda, the water and land resources division should work with the council and the office of management and budget to identify policy options for addressing the loss of revenue. This approach should include:

- a. constructive budgeting exercise to identify the key components of achieving the division's mission;
- b. a review of existing revenue options available to the county;
- c. use of a transparent mechanism to communicate with stakeholders; and
- d. engagement of policymakers in the choices between reducing or eliminating these programs; and

16. Parks and recreation: Absent approval of new revenue authority as called for in the county's state legislative agenda, the parks and recreation division should work with the council and the office of management and budget to identify policy options for local parks in potential annexation areas. This approach should include:

- a. a cost benefit analysis of the cost of closure;
- b. provisions to protect the security of parks facilities while closed; and
- c. the potential conversion of certain parks facilities within potential annexation areas to regional parks;

C. The council supports a legislative agenda that urges the governor and state legislature to permanently address the structural funding gap facing all counties in Washington state by authorizing expanded types of revenues for local jurisdictions that provide for sufficient growth to meet rising annual costs and have the flexibility of helping to fund basic public services.