



Legislation Text

File #: 2025-0077, **Version:** 3

Clerk 04/03/2025

A MOTION related to a property tax levy for 2026 through 2031 for the purpose of: maintaining and operating King County's open space system; improving parks, recreation, access, and mobility in King County by acquiring lands and continuing to develop and support parks, recreation facilities, and regional trails; improving parks and trails in and acquiring lands by metropolitan parks districts, towns, and cities in King County; funding environmental education, maintenance, and conservation programs at the Woodland Park Zoo; funding environmental education, maintenance and conservation programs at the Seattle Aquarium; funding environmental and climate stewardship and education at Pacific Science Center; funding development, maintenance, and programming for Seattle's Waterfront park; funding a capital project at Memorial Stadium; and funding for capital improvements at public pools, for all King County residents.

WHEREAS, King County owns and operates a system of regional and local parks and trails that consists of thirty-two thousand acres of parklands and more than one hundred eighty-five miles of regional trails, and

WHEREAS, the county provides regional trails, regional recreational facilities, regional natural areas, regional parks, and local parks in unincorporated areas, which are parts of King County's "open space system," and

WHEREAS, a robust open space system contributes to a high quality of life, and

WHEREAS, the open space system provides: physical, social, and mental health benefits to individuals; economic opportunity through recreation and tourism; economic growth for private businesses that must attract and retain skilled workers; increased climate resilience; environmental benefits like clean water and healthy habitat; and cultural resource protection through open space conservation, and

WHEREAS, for the benefit of all King County residents, in February 2025, the executive transmitted to the council Proposed Ordinance 2025-0070, which would submit to the qualified electors of King County a property tax levy on an August 2025 special election ballot for the purpose of: maintaining and operating King County's open space system; improving parks, recreation, access, and mobility in King County by acquiring lands and continuing to develop and support parks, recreation facilities, and regional trails; improving parks and trails in and acquiring lands by metropolitan parks districts, towns, and cities in King County; funding environmental education, maintenance, and conservation programs at the Woodland Park Zoo; funding environmental education, maintenance, and conservation programs at the Seattle Aquarium; funding environmental and climate stewardship and education at Pacific Science Center; funding development, maintenance, and programming for Seattle's Waterfront park; funding a capital project at Memorial Stadium; and funding capital improvements at public owned pools;

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

A.1. It is the intent of the council that levy proceeds be used for the operations, projects, and programs, and in such allocations, as provided in Attachment A to this motion.

2. The moneys allocated to operations, projects, and programs listed in Attachment A to this motion may be modified when deemed advisable or necessary in the judgment of the council. Implementation or completion of any project or program listed in Attachment A to this motion will not be required if the council determines that it has become inadvisable or impractical. The council will make such a determination through action on appropriations ordinances.

3.a. The council requests that the department of natural resources and parks report to the council

annually by September 30 of each year, beginning in 2026, if it anticipates requesting a reallocation of moneys for projects or programs listed in Attachment A to this motion in the following year. The report should be electronically filed with the clerk of the council, who will retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, and the chief policy officer. The last report should be filed by September 30, 2031.

b. For the report to be filed by September 30, 2029, the council requests that the report also includes:

- (1) the executive's review of all capital projects listed in Attachment A to this motion; and
- (2) the executive's reallocation recommendations of funding from all capital projects that are not viable, eligible, or legal, or are not scheduled to begin construction or begin acquisition within the six-year period of the levy, to capital projects that are viable, eligible, legal, and scheduled to begin construction or begin acquisition before December 31, 2031. The recommendations should be incorporated into the executive's proposed appropriations ordinance.

4. In 2026 through 2028, the executive should include in each proposed ordinance appropriating parks levy funding for a capital project listed in Attachment A to this motion, a statement of fact that the executive finds for each capital project proposed for appropriation in the proposed ordinance, the capital project is viable, eligible, legal, and scheduled to begin construction or begin acquisition within the six-year period of the levy.

5. In delivering capital projects identified in Attachment A to this motion, whether directly or in partnership with other jurisdictions, it is the intent of the council that the county should consider using its bonding authority to finance projects. The executive should study whether and when bond financing is appropriate for use in these projects.

B. It is the intent of the council that the aquatic facilities grant program, healthy communities and parks grant program, and the ballfield access and preservation grant program be administered in accordance

with the guidelines in Attachment B to this motion.

C. It is the intent of the council that parks levy expenditures identified as "King County Open Space Acquisition/Land Conservation" in Attachment A to this motion be made in accordance with the guidelines in Attachment C to this motion, except that six million dollars from the "King County Open Space Acquisition/Land Conservation" allocation, to be used for acquisition of parks and open space in unincorporated King County, shall not be subject to the guidelines in Attachment C to this motion.

D. It is the intent of the council that the Skyway Community Center be completed and fully operational within the period of this levy.

E. The executive should perform outreach and community engagement around Preston Mill park phase three, and should submit a report to the council on that engagement no later than December 31, 2029.

F. The executive should develop a plan to allow alcohol sales in King County parks. Additionally, the executive should, by no later than May 31, 2025, begin allowing alcohol sales in the stands at the stadium in Steve Cox park, as already allowed by the existing state alcohol permit.

G. The executive should review permitting standards for vendors in parks, and should evaluate and recommend strategies to encourage food vendors to locate in parks and streamline permitting processes for vendors. The executive should submit a report with this information, as well as a proposed ordinance with recommended code changes, if any, no later than December 31, 2026.

H. The reports and proposed legislation identified in subsections E. and G. of this motion should be electronically filed with the clerk of the council, who shall retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, and the chief policy officer.

I. At the top ten most highly utilized multiuse or recreation sites in the open space system, the executive should set aside a minimum of three parking spaces for electric vehicle charging and associated equipment.

J. It is the intent of the council that at each outdoor active recreation facility in the open space system, lighting should remain on until at least ten p.m. in urban unincorporated areas.

K. In the urban unincorporated areas of King County, at each active recreation facility in the open space system that requires a reservation, the executive should develop and implement a policy to increase regularly scheduled free time for open play, for example, that reserves at least two hours a day, three days a week, for unscheduled activities on a first-come, first-served basis.

L.1. The executive should, in consultation with the Sound Cities Association, undertake a study relating to equity in distribution of parks levy funding. The study should include, but not be limited to:

- a. the geographical distribution of parks levy funding for the current and all previous parks levies;
- b. how the geographic distribution of funding has or has not correlated to the geographic distribution of equity and social justice priority populations such as: low income households; Black, indigenous, and people of color communities; people with limited English proficiency; people living in areas with high instances of negative health outcomes such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease; and lack of access to open space and recreation facilities; and
- c. strategies that the current and previous parks levies have used to address equity and social justice in their funding allocations, and the success of these strategies; and
- d. recommendations on a strategic approach for the equitable distribution of levy proceeds in any future parks levies.

2. The executive should submit a report with this information no later than December 1, 2029. The report should be electronically filed with the clerk of the council, who shall retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, all regional policy committee members, the council chief of staff, and the chief policy officer.