



Snohomish County

John Lovick
County Executive

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Proposed hiring freeze unnecessary, even costly to county budget

Snohomish County Executive John Lovick is encouraging the county council to dismiss a proposed ordinance that would impose a hiring freeze in Snohomish County government effective to the end of the year.

“I appreciate the desire to consider options in an open and transparent format, but this ordinance does more harm than good,” Lovick said Thursday, the day after the council heard testimony from elected officials and department directors concerned about the negative impacts of the ordinance. “We don’t need another bureaucratic layer that will negatively impact priority services in Snohomish County.”

Many county government positions are funded by other dedicated revenue sources and grants not associated with the general fund. These fund balances are healthy and these positions should not be included, nor should general fund positions given that we only have three months left before year end. This council-initiated ordinance would impact those positions responsible for development review permitting and inspection activities, airport operations, emergency management, public works, long-term care and aging and energy assistance programs. Failure to fill certain grant-funded positions could result in financial sanctions that would only hurt the county’s bottom line, Lovick said. Other positions and services in elected offices – such as the county Clerk’s Office, Sheriff’s Office and Auditor’s Office – would suffer, too.

Some councilmembers have already acknowledged that the proposed hiring freeze will not save the county much money. However, it will be costly, impact development activity and prevent the timely flow of services within the county to those who need them the most. Impacts are further exacerbated by staff having to prepare the paperwork, and council having to consider each exemption on a case-by-case basis.

Council has commented about the general fund’s current fund balance; however, Exec. Lovick’s proposed 2016 budget, which will be released at the end of the month, will include a significant restoration of these funds.

“The economy is looking much brighter in Snohomish County than it has for a long time,” Lovick said.

Lovick pointed to recent high bond ratings that cite the county's "strong economy," "strong management," and "good financial policies" as just one example of the direction the county is headed. Low unemployment and a resilient economy that places Snohomish County first in the state in concentration of manufacturing jobs are also positive. And despite the tragic SR 530 Slide on March 22, 2014, the county has been very successful securing federal and state reimbursements for slide-related expenses.

Lovick's proposed budget also will include maintaining public safety, large investments in transportation, and a solution to the courthouse issue which will save county taxpayers millions of dollars."

Information regarding the time, date and location of Exec. Lovick's budget address will be released as soon as it becomes available.

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