



Snohomish County Council News

Councilmember Terry Ryan

January, 2015

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Terry's January Newsletter

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Snohomish County Council



County Budget passes

It was a long and arduous process but the County Council passed the final 2015 Budget with a 5 - 0 vote.

The budget process starts with the County Executive sending a proposed budget to the County Council. The council then reviews the proposed budget with our financial analysts and makes changes if needed. As we go through the process, the council reviews each department's request and changes are made based on our priorities and greatest needs of the county.

There were several structural problems with the initial proposed budget from the executive that made it unsustainable. The most glaring deficiency included using money that was intended for the courthouse for other budget expenses. If the council had gone along with this, it would have created a \$6 million dollar hole in the 2016 budget, with no way to pay for it.

Here's why: In December 2013, the county council raised property taxes to fund the new, more expensive courthouse that the new executive recommended. These additional tax dollars would be used to pay the debt service on the bonds for the new courthouse. But the executive's proposed 2015 budget changed that by delaying the sale of the bonds and using that money for other expenses.

If we had followed this artificially propped up 2015 budget, it would have created a serious deficit for 2016 because that \$6 million dollars would not be available for the debt service on the courthouse or ongoing expenses. Using one time resources for ongoing expenses is not good business practice. The majority of the council agreed and we acted to protect the courthouse money. We held the line on this and also protected our reserves (savings).

Unfortunately the executive vetoed our budget. This veto created a serious problem which almost led to the brink of a government shutdown which would have affected every county department and all our citizens.

Our council worked for a compromise that the five of us could accept and which would avoid a shutdown. The compromise included our original requested department budget cuts; council's rolling back the 10% raises the executive had given to several exempt employees; eliminating some redundant positions; and agreeing to a modest 1% property tax increase which helped several areas including:

- \$231,793 to the Sheriff's Department to fund two new patrol deputies. I have always said Public Safety is my top priority. Response times are higher than we would like. This is a small but important first step in increasing our staffing levels for public safety.
- \$231,793 to the First Steps program through our Snohomish County Health District. Dr. Gary Goldbaum assured me he can work with this budget.

Compromise was the key and we avoided a government shutdown. Fortunately we have a good team on the County Council. All of us are good people who are working for the betterment of Snohomish County.

Looking forward

We have many challenges facing us in 2015. I am looking forward to working with the Council and Executive's office on all of these:

- Dealing with the financial aftermath of the OSO landslide.
- Reviewing our Public Safety needs- Adequate staffing levels for our Sheriff's Department, Prosecutor's Office and our County Jail. (It's all one system). This will include finding a predictable funding stream to insure continuity.
- Taking a second look at the Courthouse project. Is this still the best option given the budget realities?
- Growth management and Transportation issues and projects throughout the county.

Community Grants

The review committee is recommending the following small capital facilities grants for approval by the county council at a January 2015 meeting:

- * Mill Creek Senior Center/Parks & Recreation - \$9,864 for signage
- * Mountlake Terrace Ballinger Playfields - \$8,883 for soccer goals
- * North Bothell Little League - \$9,598 for dugouts at Tambark Creek
- * Crystal Springs Elementary School - \$21,655 for playground renovation

Thank you to Verdant Health

Veterans Support Center - Program funded: August 2014 - July 2017

Veterans make up the fastest-growing student population at Edmonds Community College, with enrollment having more than doubled from 2009 to 2013. Many veterans experience feelings of isolation and depression upon reintegration into civilian life. Couple that with enrolling in college, which can create a whole new set of challenges for veterans, like understanding transcripts, benefits and college systems. The Verdant Health Commissions' support of this program will increase veterans' access to mental health counseling and peer mentoring, serving an estimated 350 college students annually.

Employee's Community Fund of Boeing Puget Sound announces grant

A significant \$500,000 grant, one of ECF's first Strategic-level investments, was awarded to HopeWorks Social Enterprises, located in Everett. The agency's mission is to develop career pathways and economic self-sufficiency by providing job skills and employment. The ECF grant will support HopeWorks programs that are designed to help families gain skills and training for "in demand" jobs and which provide them with opportunities for living-wage careers.

HopeWorks has established three social enterprise businesses thus far - a landscaping business, irrigation business and a home décor store. Each social enterprise business provides needed internships and employment skills to help our low-income and homeless neighbors achieve self-sufficiency.

The generous ECF grant, of which \$420,970 is released at this time, will be used to complete the interior and exterior renovations of the facility where clients will be trained; purchase computers and IT equipment for classes; vehicles for the social enterprise businesses, a new HVAC system and furnishings. This new infrastructure will position HopeWorks to be a vibrant, accessible, innovative workforce center utilizing a social enterprise delivery model.

I hope everyone had a great holiday season. Here's wishing you an even better 2015!

Terry

I hope you found this eNEWSLETTER informative and useful. You can make it even more valuable by suggesting topics and issues for future newsletters. Please contact me at 425-388-3494, or e-mail Terry.Ryan@snoco.org. If you would like to share this newsletter, select the **Forward email** link below.
Sincerely,

