

INSIDE THE BUDGET #3



County Council

Council Commentary

Inside the Budget 3 Nov. 2, 2007

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Transparency and Responsible Budgeting

The county council continues to analyze the dollars and cents that define the roles and effectiveness of county government. On Monday, Nov. 5th, with the first in a series of public hearings on the 2008 county budget, the county council will launch a public process designed to engage citizens in the decision making system (hearing details follow). An open and informed public process is vital to finding solutions to the pressing concerns of our community.

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The county council has the leadership role in public participation for preparing the county's annual budget. Only after receiving public testimony will the council vote on the contents of the final budget. This public process works and offers a level of public involvement not achieved during the preparation of the recommended budget. The goal is to make the reams of information intelligible and the ultimate decisions transparent to the public.

The council's bottom line is to use taxpayers' money effectively and efficiently. At the same time, the council will be looking down the road for the financial resources to meet our fast-growing population's expectations for basic county services, ranging from public safety to traffic congestion relief.

A good government budget goes beyond the easy headlines to balance today's needs with mindful planning and saving for tomorrow. As the custodian of taxpayers' money, the council will continue to lead Snohomish County to many more years of financial stability.

All the while, we must prepare for the challenges we know are coming, including:

- Better planning for the impacts of population growth.
- Identifying financial resources for the nearly \$500 million required to meet the county's transportation needs.
- Identifying financial resources to cover the full costs of new mandatory state and national storm water management regulations.

MORE

- Saving now to avoid future property tax increases to pay for the law and justice center we know will soon be needed.
 - Identifying options for implementing the recommendations of the council's Blue Ribbon Commission on Criminal Justice.
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Budget Public Hearing Details

For the convenience of the public there are two hearing sessions on Monday, Nov. 5th. The first begins at 1:30 PM and will likely run most of the afternoon. Following a dinner break, the second session will start at 6:30 PM. The public can attend and speak at either session.

Both sessions will be held in the Jackson Board Room on the 8th floor of the Administration East building, 3000 Rockefeller Ave. in Everett.

This hearing is the public's first opportunity to speak in person about their priorities for Snohomish County government. Public testimony plays an important role in the council's deliberations on the proposed budget. Those who cannot attend are encouraged to submit testimony by letter, e-mail or use the council's budget testimony web site.

Comment on the Proposed Budget

In addition to speaking at either of the two hearings, the public may also testify on the proposed budget via the County Council's public testimony web site. Go to **www.snoco.org** and click on **Inside the Budget Update** under the **Spotlight** heading. Background information on the proposed budget is also available at this site.

Written testimony can be mailed to:
Snohomish County Council, M/S 609
3000 Rockefeller Ave.
Everett, WA 98201

Testimony may also be e-mailed to **contact.council@co.snohomish.wa.us**.

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