

PRESS RELEASE



County Council

10 November 2008

**Mike Cooper
Dave Gossett
John Koster
Dave Somers
Brian Sullivan**

Council Approves Moving Corrections to Sheriff's Office

Citing immediate personnel cost savings and administrative efficiencies, the county council has approved moving Snohomish County's Corrections Department out from under County Executive Aaron Reardon's oversight and into Sheriff John Lovick office as a sheriff's bureau, effective Jan. 1, 2009.

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"I think it's a good idea and it's the right time to do it," said Sheriff Lovick, who promised a seamless merger of the two departments.

Councilmember Mike Cooper, who sponsored the measure, called it a "giant step" that will save about half a million taxpayer dollars, preserve jobs, and revive the morale of the approximately 350 corrections staff. Cooper noted that "excessive sick leave use" in the current corrections department coupled with "expensive, contentious labor negotiations" was a sign of bad staff morale.

Leading up to vote, Council Chair Dave Somers expressed his belief that effective management of a corrections agency requires "special expertise." The current corrections director and deputy director have submitted their resignations effective Jan. 1, 2009.

Sheriff Lovick responded that one of the two senior positions in the new bureau will be held by a person with corrections experience. "We intend to reach down and tap the talented people [in the department]," said Lovick.

Noting that running a corrections department or a sheriff's office "is a tough business," Somers went on to say he felt there was a need to change the current culture of the corrections department and gain efficiencies in coordination that the merger will bring.

"Sheriff Lovick," he said, "has demonstrated the leadership needed to make this merger work. It's the right thing to do."

Councilmember John Koster opposed the merger, saying "it might be good idea, but we haven't seen any cost analysis or detailed planning."

"We are just leaping into this hoping for the best," said Koster.

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