



Snohomish County Council

NEWS RELEASE

Council Passes Budget: Emphasizes Public Safety, Parks, and Roads

For Release: November 21, 2005

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The Snohomish County Council unanimously adopted a 2006 budget with an increased emphasis on public safety and transportation. In addition, the council's budget makes key investments in parks, ball fields and trails to meet the needs of Snohomish County residents and re-establishes the county's commitment to agriculture that was proposed to be cut.

Changes made by the council include the addition of five new criminal prosecutors, technological improvements to make sheriff's deputies more effective, and new corrections officers. It requests county agencies work more closely together to maximize the use of inmate labor. It also adds a position in the office of Public Defense and it re-establishes a position in the Medical Examiner's office cut in 2005 by the Executive.

The budget creates a methamphetamine strike team for the county funded by \$393,000 in county funds and a \$250,000 grant from the state. Under the council's budget, there will be four deputies and a sergeant working on meth related crimes along with a treatment component in the state grant. This continues the county's commitment to fight the spread of methamphetamine manufacture and use as stated in its War on Meth resolution pass two years ago.

The council also re-established funding for the Snohomish Conservation District. The \$110,000 was proposed to be cut from the budget by the Executive. A detailed work program for use of the money will be presented to the county council before any of the money may be used.

Under the council's budget, some of the tax revenue from the sale of property and homes in Snohomish County will be set aside for Transportation improvements. The council will put \$2,000,000 from the Real Estate Excise Tax into the county's roads budget in each year from 2006 through 2011. This will provide needed funding for projects that improve traffic flow and safety and can possibly be used to leverage other federal, state, or regional funding sources.

In addition, the council will use \$337,000 of funding from the conservation futures tax to provide needed maintenance and safety at a number of county parks. The legislature finally authorized the use of this tax source for operations and maintenance. Two parks rangers and three maintenance workers will be

added and parks such as Lake Goodwin, Martha Lake, Mother Natures Window and others will have improved maintenance. The county also set aside \$450,000 in a fund for improvements to the Evergreen State Fairgrounds in Monroe.

The council budget includes significant funding for acquisition or development at a number of parks sites. Among the largest appropriations are Lake Goodwin (\$491,000), Cathcart/Martha's Lake (\$816,000) Martha Lake Airport (\$807,000), Marysville Arlington Community Park (\$380,000), Paine Field Community Park (\$300,000) and Willis Tucker Regional Park (\$800,000). Another \$2.26 million is authorized for projects on the Centennial Trail from Arlington to the Skagit County Line, including the "Arlington gap," and the Whitehorse Trail.

The council also had to plug an \$11 million gap in the Executive's proposed budget. The proposal submitted to the council on September 30th did not include an \$11 million obligation for the old Cathcart Landfill property. By doing this, the county will be able to use the proceeds from the future vsale of the property for basic public services.

The council did not raise the general property tax that supports county services. In fact, the tax rate will actually decline from 98 cents per thousand to 92 cents per thousand. The council did raise the property tax in unincorporated Snohomish County that supports the roads fund by 1%. It means the levy rate for the road fund will increase one penny for every thousand dollars of assessed valuation.

The county's general fund budget for 2006, which pays for basic county services, is \$198,857,030. The total budget for all funds, including capital improvement, roads, and parks projects is about \$759,000,000. The council changes to the executive's budget are funded by a combination of cuts, additions in revenue, salary savings, and charging county managers to work more efficiently within their allocated resources. The largest changes in the total budget reflect the council's increase in the roads fund tax and \$450,000 dedicated to the county fairgrounds.

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