




**Snohomish County
Executive Office**

Aaron Reardon
County Executive

(425) 388-3460
FAX (425) 388-3434
MS #407
3000 Rockefeller Avenue
Everett, WA 98201-4046

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: October 15, 2008
To: Dave Somers, Council Chair
From: Aaron Reardon, County Executive 
Re: 2009-2010 Budget Deliberations

I want to take this opportunity to communicate directly with you about the financial status of Snohomish County government and the path forward.

Late yesterday afternoon, you informed the media that the projected revenue shortfall for 2009 has increased to more than \$20 million. This statement and the subsequent articles in the local morning papers have led to many fearful questions from employees.

Financial mismanagement and economic uncertainties at the federal level have trickled down to make these challenging times for all of us, but it is important not to overreact or cause unintentional concern through words or actions.

Instead, I am urging you and the Council to be reasoned and thoughtful in your approach to the fiscal challenges facing this County. Our public and more than 3,000 employees deserve a realistic assessment of the difficulties ahead, but also the calm and certainty that comes with knowing their elected leadership is steady and prepared to address these challenges in a timely manner.

Specifically, I am urging that you take swift action and pass the 2009 budget before the end of October.

This is critical, as it allows Snohomish County government to proactively address the difficulties we face and establish a baseline of services for 2009 from which we can reasonably manage any future adjustments. Action on the budget cannot be frozen in fear of the financial challenges our nation is facing or delayed based on daily changes on Wall Street and in Washington, D.C.

Quick passage of the 2009 budget also allows us to assist sooner rather than later our employees who could be adversely affected by service reductions. We have a moral obligation to provide

them with timely resources they will require. The business-as-usual approach of waiting until late November to pass a budget – giving employees only a month’s notice of a potential layoff – is unacceptable.

As you know, the Human Resources Outplacement Services group stands ready to assist employees; however, some employees and elected department heads are reluctant to participate in these services without direct action on the 2009 budget.

Lastly, in reviewing the “more than \$20 million” figure cited in your press release, my staff has determined that this number represents a “worst case” scenario and does not take into consideration any of the cost-saving measures and expenditure reductions that were proposed in the 2009-2010 Executive Recommended Budget.

Moreover, it negates the annual cost savings known as “under expenditures,” which our departments save through utilizing best management practices.

As required by law, 41 days ago I presented you with a balanced budget for fiscal year 2009 that took into account more than \$9 million in needed cuts. Now, again, I ask you to move quickly and pass the budget in order to re-establish a sense of normalcy to county operations.