



SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RON WESEN, First District
KENNETH A. DAHLSTEDT, Second District
LISA JANICKI, Third District

Date: November 23, 2015

Re: 2016 Preliminary Budget

As Skagit County's central budget authority, we present a preliminary budget providing for a balance of quality essential services addressing our most critical needs while complying with increasingly complex and expensive mandates and growing regulatory requirements.

Our Elected Officials and Department Heads submitted 2016 budget requests totaling \$218,636,336, an 11.7% increase above the current budget. After considerable deliberation, we present a preliminary total expense budget in the amount of \$211,252,741. This amount includes a General Fund budget of \$53,983,412, a 5.8% increase over current year.

Highlights of the 2016 Preliminary Budget include:

- A 2% general wage adjustment for most employees as well as continuation of the current health benefit program. We are in the process of conducting a Total Cost of Compensation Study and are working with the Benefits Committee in anticipation of making changes to our employees benefit package in 2017.
- Public Safety continues to be our highest priority. Under Washington State's Constitution, the civil and criminal justice system is the County's responsibility. We continue to commit \$175,000 as match for a COPS Grant that funds two additional patrol deputies. This budget includes an increase in the Jail Budget to hire additional Corrections transition staff.
- We approved the funding of a third Judge in District Court and propose to preserve a District Court Commissioner at full time status to handle the increased caseload in the municipal court settings.
- In Planning and Development Services, the Board expects to significantly improve the level of service, consistency and timeliness of issuing building permits with the addition of an Assistant Director position.
- Our budget includes a statutorily allowable 1% increase in property taxes for the General Fund. This amounts to approximately \$233,000 and is necessary to support two additional technology positions and a County Veterans Officer position.

We propose to assign uncertain funding such as Payment in-Lieu of Taxes (PILT - that has not yet been authorized by the federal government) and allocate significant fund balance to one-time expenses for capital facilities, deferred maintenance, and overdue capital projects. This includes growing technological needs including enhanced training, expanded use of mobile devices and improved cyber security and disaster recovery.

We strive to develop a sustainable budget that provides a framework to make our organization lean and more efficient, streamline operations, and provide exceptional customer service.

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Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Chair Lisa Janicki, Commissioner Ron Wesen, Commissioner