



Skagit County Board of Commissioners

Ron Wesen, First District

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Second District

Lisa Janicki, Third District

2019 Preliminary Budget

November 5, 2018

Our ten independently Elected Officials offices and fourteen Department Heads presented an expense budget request of nearly \$228 million, including over \$61 million of General Funds. After identifying the financial impact of growing demands for mandated services and reviewing competing priority requests, this preliminary budget supports a focus on community core services within our available resources. We present a total expense budget in the amount of \$223.1 million, with revenues of \$201.2 million. This includes the strategic spending of approximately \$22 million in reserves, primarily for capital projects and one-time expenses.

The General Fund expense budget of \$59.4 million reflects an increase of 4.4 percent from the 2018 budget. The revenue budget of \$54.2 million includes a one percent property tax increase (\$255,539), estimated collections from new construction (\$507,238), and a sales tax projection increasing by three percent compared to the current year (\$216,393). We are committed to maintaining the GFOA recommended two months of reserves in the General Fund. In addition, we are preparing for the forecasted economic slowdown in the near term.

We have continued to assign uncertain funding (that has not yet been authorized by the federal government) such as Payment in-Lieu of Taxes (PILT) to one-time expenses for capital facilities, deferred maintenance, and growing technology needs. This includes continued efforts to address the substantial deferred maintenance and capital program of our expanding facilities portfolio. Additionally, in order to meet the strategic objective of improving the delivery of public service using modernized technology, we will invest \$1,000,000 to upgrade and improve the Sheriff's Radio System, \$550,000 to install cameras on the Law and Justice campus and \$650,000 to purchase an upgraded Permitting Software System.

Public Safety, Legal and Judicial

Public Safety continues to be our highest priority. Under the Washington State Constitution, the civil and criminal justice system is the responsibility of the County. More than 70% of our General Fund budget is dedicated to the law and justice system. The expanded Community Justice Center has increased the number of people in the criminal justice system resulting in a significant financial impact on our budget.

- Addition of a Public Defense Attorney to comply with caseload limits (\$101,193)
- Addition of four Corrections Deputies to provide essential inmate supervision requirements related to high risk inmates and the provision of medical care (\$364,459)
- Investment in the purchase of an automated inmate tracking system (\$98,798)
- Continued funding of the Embedded Social Worker Program with law enforcement (\$60,000)
- Significant ongoing support of the law enforcement communication systems (Spillman \$323,260, Radio Infrastructure \$1,000,000) and the 911 dispatch system (\$1.2 million)
- Addition of a Probation Officer to effectively manage increased caseloads and engage in community outreach programs (\$83,865)

SKAGIT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING

1800 CONTINENTAL PLACE, SUITE 100, MOUNT VERNON, WA 98273 PHONE (360) 416-1300

- Addition of a half-time Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for representation at civil commitment hearings (dependent on NSBHO funding \$50,227)
- Funding three temporary Rule 9 Interns in the Prosecuting Attorney's Office (\$35,774)
- Providing funding for a part time Temporary Collections Assistant in the Clerk's Office as a one year pilot (revenue dependent - \$24,000)
- Maintain increased funding for part time on call staffing in the Coroner's Office (\$18,054)
- Expand Courthouse Security contract to provide additional supervision at the north entrance (\$35,000)
- Increase support of Mediation Services (\$4,931)

Personnel

Our dedicated and motivated employees continue to be our most valuable asset in delivering high level customer service. Support of employee compensation and benefit programs is our largest investment.

- Provide a 2 percent general wage adjustment for non-represented employees. We have settled the majority of the represented employees' collective bargaining agreements consistent with the philosophy of maintaining equitable compensation levels across County positions
- Continued support of the health of employees and their families by providing a health benefits package of Medical, Dental, Vision, Life/AD&D, Long-term Disability and an Employee Assistance Program with all policy premiums paid 100% by the County for employees and their dependents
- Convert the temporary HR Assistant I position to a regular full-time position to provide consistent employee payroll and benefits data management
- Contract for a Security Specialist to provide independent oversight of our technology system as recommended by the State Auditor

Public Health

We have great concern regarding the uncertainty of behavioral health services with the transfer from the Behavioral Health Organization to the managed care model. Serving only Medicaid eligible clients will leave many of our residents without mental health and substance use disorder assistance. We need to assess services supported by our Mental Health levy and BHO funding.

We are dedicating strategic efforts towards combating the opioid crisis, creating a recovery-oriented system of care and creating affordable housing in our community.

- Invest \$4 million for detailed design of stabilization campus (legislative request of \$17 million for construction)
- Provide local funding in support of housing for the homeless (\$500,000)
- Provide local funding in support of the construction of Veteran's Housing (\$500,000)
- Continued funding of a County Veterans Service Officer
- Eliminate the position of Human Services Manager as a result of decreasing BHO funding

Facilities and Public Works

During the recession several facilities systems were consciously extended beyond their normal life expectancies. Each year we prioritize the backlog of facility maintenance and improvement projects to be performed with the use of one-time funding.

- Transition the maintenance of the Public Works facilities portfolio to Facilities Management
- Re-establish the position of a Staff Assistant for ER&R in the Public Works Department
- Continued investment of design dollars towards the necessary replacement of the aging M/V Guemes, potentially with an all-electric ferry. Contracting the oversight of ferry maintenance to an independent agency.

Partnerships

Work with local, state and federal agencies leveraging partnerships to achieve common goals and objectives. Seek out state and federal grant opportunities to initiate or bolster vital community services.

- Partner with local tribes and service providers to implement strategies and construct appropriate community facilities to address the opioid crisis
- Continue our partnership with the State of Washington (DES), Port of Skagit and City of Sedro-Woolley to fully develop the Swift Center
- Continue funding of Skagit Net LLC efforts to develop the county-wide fiber plan
- Actively participate in Washington and National Association of Counties to work on important issues on a statewide and national level
- Continue to work with the City of Mount Vernon in the development of mutually beneficial community shared facilities
- Transition the delivery of EMS services to municipal fire departments and rural fire districts

We want to thank our Elected Officials and Department Heads and their staff for their diligent work in preparing and presenting their preliminary budget requests.

BOARD OF SKAGIT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS


Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Chair


Lisa Janicki, Commissioner


Ron Wesen, Commissioner