

July 2014

by Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

Public Safety

On Monday, July 7, the Area Council held its regular monthly meeting. Topics discussed were: (1) Public Safety, (2) King County Community Service Areas, and (3) King County Roads Issues and Solutions.

Major Thompson

Major Thompson of the King County Sheriff's Office is the manager of the newly reopened Maple Valley Southeast Precinct. The Precinct again serves several cities, including Maple Valley and Covington, through contracts for police services through the King County Sheriff's Office.

The Major discussed impacts on local police coverage caused by recent budget cuts, which have resulted in reduced staffing levels. For example, there are now only two deputies south of Kent-Kangley Rd. and only two deputies between Maple Valley Highway and Kent-Kangley Rd. This represents approximately a 33% reduction from five years ago at the onset of the recession.

King County has limited budget authority for police services, as provided to it by State law, as compared to incorporated cities. This causes the Sheriff's Office to work with a perpetual shortfall, thus causing a prioritization of services which can be rendered to the public.

Community Service Areas

Alan Painter, Manager of the King County Community Service Area (CSA) Program, discussed the program, which has been in existence since 2012. CSAs offer expanded ways for King County to engage with the 250,000+ residents who live outside city boundaries. Residents are widely spread across the unincorporated area, except in the mountainous eastern third of King County. There are seven CSAs--the Area Council is part of the Greater Maple Valley/Cedar River Area CSA.

The CSA Program awards annual Grants to local organizations, including the Area Council. It also publishes a monthly Unincorporated Area Newsletter, which can be accessed from the Area Council's home page or at: <http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/newsletters/ua-news.htm>.

Mr. Painter's office also has and continues to facilitate speakers from various King County offices for Area Council monthly meetings and Committee meetings. This gives members of the public opportunities to talk directly with King County officials.

Transportation Solutions

A Task Force of the Area Council's Transportation Committee and members of the Four Creeks Unincorporated Area Council has researched key issues, developed target goals, and proposed potential solutions to four major concerns with the continued maintenance and safety of King County's road network, as well as those policies and laws that tend to hinder government officials. The four areas of concern, each of which address aspects which affect planning and funding of our transportation infrastructure, are: (1) Annexation Debt Transfer, (2) Concurrency Adequacy, (3) Usage/Funding Imbalance, and (4) Forecasting Rigor.

King County currently faces a broken transportation funding model that directly impacts economic growth, public safety, and the region's infrastructure. The Area Council believes to sustainably address these issues requires changes to State law.

King County is unique in that it possesses many unincorporated and rural roads critical to the local economy of many cities due to commute and business traffic that traverses between same. Unfortunately, that very infrastructure is at risk. For example, the 2014 King County road budget is 40% less than it was in 2008. This has caused King County to defer many maintenance projects out into the future, which adversely affects public safety on already overcrowded roads, as well as our local and regional economy.

The Area Council voted to approve the Task Force's plan and to invite those State legislators who represent King County Rural Area citizens and who also serve on either House or Senate Transportation Committees to a meeting to discuss the four areas of concern and potential solutions. That meeting, tentatively planned for mid September, will be open to the public. When finalized, a formal announcement will be posted on the Area Council's web site and in the local newspapers.

Next Area Council Meeting

The Area Council's next monthly meeting will held Monday, August 4, from 7:00 - 9:00 PM at the Fire Station at SE corner of 231st St & SR-169. Meetings are held the first non-holiday Monday of each month. A Public Comment period at the beginning of each meeting provides citizens an opportunity to voice issues of concern to Area Council members and government officials in attendance. Your Area Council serves as an all-volunteer, locally elected advisory body to King County on behalf of all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District. Please visit: www.greatermaplevalleyareacouncil.org.

*** NOTE: There currently are two positions open on the 16-member Area Council. If you live in the Tahoma School District outside the City of Maple Valley, you are eligible to apply to become a member of the Area Council. Interested Rural Area citizens can send a brief letter of interest to GMVUAC, P.O. Box 101, Maple Valley, WA 98038 or an e-mail to gmvac_chair@hotmail.com. ***