



## **King County Budget**

**by Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary**

On Monday, December 5, the Area Council held its regular monthly meeting. Topics discussed were: (1) King County Budget and (2) On-Site Septic Systems Management.

### **King County Budget**

Dwight Dively, Director of the King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget, provided details on the proposed 2017/2018 County Budget, which is designed to meet the regional needs of King County. For details see: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/budget/2017-2018.aspx>. Mr. Dively specifically addressed the Unincorporated Area Services part of the Budget, which can be accessed from the aforementioned site.

King County government is unique nationally in the range of services it provides. It is both a regional government, providing services throughout most or all of the county. It is also a local government, providing services in the unincorporated area (outside of cities). Regional services include transit, wastewater treatment, human services, elections, property assessments, public health, regional parks and trails, and the prosecution, defense, and adjudication of felonies. Local services include roads, police protection through the Sheriff's Office, and surface water management. Many other governments contract with King County to provide certain services, including police protection, courts, and jails.

Major sources of King County revenue include Taxes (~27%) concentrated in the General Fund and funds that support transit, roads, behavioral health, and several voter-approved programs such as EMS and parks and User charges (~23%) primarily from utilities (wastewater treatment, solid waste, and surface water management) and transit fares. Major areas of funding include Metro Transit (~23%), Department of Community and Human Services (~12%), and Criminal Justice (~11%).

Property taxes in the State of Washington are limited in several ways. There is a rate limit of \$5.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Revenue growth is limited to 1% per year plus the value of any new construction. While a levy lid allows this to be exceeded, it must stay within the overall rate limit. School levies and special levies are considered excess and, as such, are not included in the rate limit.

The Unincorporated Area is unique with a fairly large population (~10% of the County's) scattered over a broad, diverse, geographic area with a very limited tax base (e.g., only 3% of the County's sales activity). This creates significant financial challenges to providing services in the Unincorporated Area, which is split approximately 50/50 between the Urban Area and the Rural Area.

Mr. Dively mentioned structural revenue limitations imposed by the State mean some funding areas remain under severe financial stress. Budget cuts to the Sheriff's Office have resulted in an estimated 40% reduction in unincorporated staffing between 2008 and 2015. Mr. Dively stated the primary source of revenue for Roads Services is the Roads Levy, an unincorporated area property tax levy. The Roads Levy, already at its rate limit of \$2.25 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, will generate 72% of the Road Services Division's (RSD's) budget. Other sources of funding are state and federal grants and state gas tax revenue. No new preservation projects, except those funded by grants, have been conducted in the last six years. The six year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) focuses on addressing deterioration, rather than planned preservation and maintenance. The RSD anticipates the need to continue to focus available resources on unplanned failures and system deterioration.

The Area Council has repeatedly expressed concerns over safety and maintenance of our overcrowded roads. Mr. Dively stated the State Legislature holds most of the cards here. The Area Council remains concerned the State Legislature has yet to provide the County any tools to help alleviate these problems and will continue to develop potential solutions in conjunction with the other Rural Area Unincorporated Area Councils.

### **On-Site Septic Systems Management Plan**

To address ongoing issues with some on-site septic systems (OSS) the King County Board of Health assembled a Work Group of which the Area Council was a part. The Work Group met from March to August to update the 2007 OSS Management Plan to ensure systems are properly operated and maintained, failures are prevented, and larger areas do not become polluted, such as the Marine Recovery Area on Vashon Island and Poverty Bay in the Federal Way area.

The aim of the Plan is to be preventative by encouraging proper operation and maintenance, to spare the expense to OSS owners of fixing a failed system, as well as the expense to the general public when an area becomes polluted and has to be cleaned up.

The Plan in recognizing the limited resources available focuses on the most critical OSS issues that impact public health and the environment, such as ensuring open shellfish beds remain open and increasing the number of regular inspections by embracing continuous improvement, instituting best management practices to help homeowner's better care for their systems and reduce the number of premature failures.

The Area Council's Environment Committee reviewed the Draft Plan and prepared comprehensive Comments that address: homeowner education, inspection protocols, OSS Program funding (with no OSS Tax or Fee), and OSS Program focus on most critical areas of need. The Area Council approved a final set of Comments, which will be submitted to: Public Health - Seattle & King County (<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/wastewater/2016-oss-plan-update.aspx>). Any member of the Public may submit comments.

The Area Council believes the essential focus of an OSS management plan must be on those geographic areas where concerns are the most critical. Funding from State legislative allocations, appropriations, etc. should be used to pay for fixing such specific problem areas. King County general funds should be used for financing necessary and appropriate day to day operations.

### **Next Area Council Meeting**

Monday, January 9 (as the first Monday of the month, January 2, is a Holiday), from 7:00 - 9:00 PM, at the Fire Station located at the SE corner of SE 231st St & SR-169 intersection. All members of the Public are welcome.

Meetings are held the first non-holiday Monday of each month. A Public Comment period at the beginning of each meeting provides 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](http://www.greatermaplevalleyareacouncil.org).

**\*\*\* NOTE: Four positions are open on the 16-member Area Council. If you live in the Tahoma School District outside the City of Maple Valley (see Service Area Map on our web site), you are invited to apply to become a member by sending a letter of interest to GMVUAC, P. O. Box 111, Maple Valley, WA 98038 or attend our next monthly meeting. \*\*\***