



**Signature Report**

**August 4, 2008**

**Motion 12836**

**Proposed No.** 2008-0408.2

**Sponsors** Phillips, Ferguson and Lambert

1                   A MOTION setting the council's 2009 budget priorities and  
2                   providing direction to the executive on specific areas of  
3                   council interest; and declaring the council's budget theme  
4                   as Protecting Priorities: Public Safety, Health and Quality  
5                   of Life.

6  
7                   WHEREAS, under the King County charter, the county council is the policy  
8                   determining body and adopts budgets for King County government, and

9                   WHEREAS, the executive under the charter carries out policy as set by the  
10                  council and presents budgets and a budget message setting forth the programs which he  
11                  proposes for the county during the next fiscal year, and

12                 WHEREAS, the council over the years has provided policy direction to the  
13                 executive to be reflected in the proposed budget, including initiatives such as the juvenile  
14                 and adult justice operational master plans, realignment of the district court system,  
15                 expansion of drug and mental health courts, development of framework policies for  
16                 human services, establishment of the nearshore habitat conservation initiative and  
17                 creation of the cultural development authority, the property expert review task force, the

18 citizens election oversight committee, the office of information resource management, the  
19 county's annexation and children's health initiatives and the public health operational  
20 master plan, and

21 WHEREAS, the council has been a leader in promoting performance management  
22 in King County and adopted Motion 11561 in 2002 encouraging the executive to broaden  
23 the use of performance measurement throughout county government as a way of  
24 enhancing management of scarce resources and demonstrating accountability, and

25 WHEREAS, through adoption of Ordinance 16202, in July 2008, the council  
26 created a countywide performance and accountability system which will increase  
27 transparency and accountability through better reporting of county performance, and

28 WHEREAS, over the last several budget years, the council has increased its role  
29 in the oversight and accountability of capital project management by including  
30 requirements for increased transparency in capital project reporting and through the  
31 creation of the office of capital project oversight, and

32 WHEREAS, the council has consistently sought citizen input in the development  
33 of its budget priorities through such efforts as public meetings, citizen boards and  
34 commissions and the citizen engagement initiative, which collected the views of  
35 hundreds of county residents on how the county should prioritize spending, and

36 WHEREAS, in both 2006 and 2007 the council has adopted budget priority  
37 motions which have been forwarded to the county executive for use in formulating his  
38 budget proposal, and

39 WHEREAS, in delivering his 2008 budget address, the executive informed the  
40 council that the county would be facing significant deficits, beginning with a \$45 million  
41 deficit in 2009 and growing in future years, and

42 WHEREAS, early in 2008, the executive announced that the projected deficit had  
43 grown to over \$60 million, and

44 WHEREAS, the budget instructions for agencies to use in preparing their 2009  
45 budgets included 8.65 percent cuts for general fund mandated services and 33 percent  
46 cuts for general fund discretionary services, and

47 WHEREAS, at a June 5, 2008, news conference the separately elected leaders of  
48 the county's criminal justice agencies announced that the executive's \$60 million in  
49 proposed cuts would mean drastic reductions in public safety services and defined this  
50 situation as a public safety system in peril, and

51 WHEREAS, the separately elected leaders of the county's criminal justice  
52 agencies have discussed alternatives to meeting the executive's proposed cuts that involve  
53 suspension or deferment of certain current county services, with the responsibility for  
54 continuing these services, as well as the related costs falling to local cities, and

55 WHEREAS, by the June 23, 2008, labor summit, the executive announced that  
56 the deficit had grown to over \$70 million, and

57 WHEREAS, at a July 17, 2008, press conference, leaders of the King County  
58 board of health sounded the alarm on how the executive's anticipated \$10 million cut to  
59 public health services would jeopardize a variety of public health programs including  
60 disease control and direct care at public health clinics, and

61 WHEREAS, the growth in county revenues has been restricted by state-wide  
62 voter-approved measures, including Initiative 747 and the subsequent enactment of it by  
63 the state legislature; and

64 WHEREAS, this restriction, which limits the growth in the county property tax  
65 levy to 1 percent annually plus new construction - a rate of growth that is insufficient to  
66 meet the increasing costs of providing services due to inflation and population growth -  
67 has resulted in a structural gap whereby the structure of the tax system generates a  
68 persistent shortfall in the revenues needed to maintain public services; and

69 WHEREAS, recent cost trends for energy and the increasing likelihood of higher  
70 rates of inflation have exacerbated the structural gap problem, and

71 WHEREAS, other major sources of county revenues, are limited by the health of  
72 the economy, such as sales and real estate excise taxes, and

73 WHEREAS, this is not the first time that the public finance system in this state  
74 has adversely affected public safety services; the council, in prior efforts to balance the  
75 budget, cut in excess of \$100 million from the general fund and has made decisions  
76 including transferring swimming pools and local parks to other jurisdictions and shifting  
77 the burden for regional parks and recreation services to special levies in an effort to avoid  
78 further reductions to public safety services, and

79 WHEREAS, whenever possible, the county council prefers consultation and  
80 partnerships for regional services that impact cities, and

81 WHEREAS, King County has implemented special revenue programs like the  
82 mental illness and drug dependency sales tax and the veterans and human services levy to  
83 address human services needs, and

84 WHEREAS, while these new revenues have addressed specific funding needs,  
85 they have not addressed the structural nature of public funding for basic services in  
86 Washington counties;

87 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the council of King County:

88 A. The council is committed to using the resources available to county  
89 government to support a vibrant, growing King County that honors and respects the core  
90 values of its citizens, including protecting public safety, health, enhancing quality of life,  
91 earning public trust and maintaining local government services.

92 B. The council recognizes that there are many challenges facing the county that  
93 will make decision-making in the 2009 budget difficult. There continues to be a  
94 widening structural gap between the cost of continuing current services and revenues  
95 available to support these services. The funding gap continues to be exacerbated by a  
96 decline in state and federal resources that the county receives. At the same time, county  
97 service needs continue to increase. Given these challenges, the council intends that the  
98 adopted 2009 budget will be one that:

99 1. Preserves and protects the most essential services provided to the citizens of  
100 King County, specifically those programs that promote and protect public safety, health  
101 and quality of life for the citizens of King County, whether it be by effective law  
102 enforcement, incarceration of dangerous felons, effective prosecutions, disease control  
103 and immunizations or enforcement of health and safety provisions of the county code.  
104 The council is committed to assuring that before reducing funding for basic public safety,  
105 health and quality of life services, all other available options will be considered.

106 Specifically, the council will seek to minimize reductions to essential services to the  
107 extent feasible, focusing first on reducing or eliminating nonessential programs;

108           2. Promotes fiscal prudence and maximizes public benefit, by incorporating  
109 principles of budget sustainability and policies that support prudent county spending;

110           3. Encourages county government to become more entrepreneurial and seek  
111 partnerships with both public and private sector partners that allow the county to leverage  
112 additional resources for funding essential services;

113           4. Utilizes a prudent portion of existing reserves to preserve essential services in  
114 the short run; and

115           5. Supports the development of strategies that look beyond departmental  
116 reductions as the primary budget balancing mechanism and focuses on policy and  
117 programmatic changes that would make a difference in the county's overall costs of doing  
118 business. Such an approach will help the county during the uncertain economic times we  
119 currently face and will support budget sustainability in the long term.

120           C. In developing the county budget for 2009, the executive should incorporate  
121 the following policy directives; for any documents requested under these directives,  
122 eleven copies should be filed with the clerk of the council for distribution to all  
123 councilmembers:

124           1. Jail Beds - State Holds. Balance the number of inmates held for the State  
125 with the needs of cities with the ultimate goal of partnerships and the best use of tax  
126 payer dollars;

127           2. Unfunded State Mandates. The state of Washington continues to shift its  
128 burden to county government through the use of unfunded mandates. Concurrent with the

129 budget proposal, the executive should provide to the council a list of all the current  
130 unfunded mandates and a cost estimate for providing the mandated services. The council  
131 will, as part of its budget review, evaluate strategies for reimbursement, reduction or  
132 elimination of unfunded mandates;

133 3. Animal Welfare. Ensure that the proposed 2009 budget conforms to the  
134 operational master plan for the provision of sustainable and timely humane animal  
135 welfare services by King County and partner agencies;

136 4. Internal Services. Develop and implement service level agreements with all  
137 agencies that reflect each agency's priorities. The council intends that all internal service  
138 charges be the result of negotiated service level agreements between internal service  
139 agencies and the county agency receiving that service;

140 5. Devolution of County Services. Identify any proposed service reductions.  
141 Where it is assumed services will be shifted to cities, include a report that discusses both  
142 the cost savings to the county and any additional costs to be borne by the city assuming  
143 responsibility for the service;

144 6. Annexations. The annexation initiative has now been in operation for four  
145 years, expending over \$2 million in operations and staffing costs. Despite this effort,  
146 only two of the largest urban unincorporated areas have successfully annexed, resulting  
147 in only minimal savings. Given its limited success, refocus the annexation initiative,  
148 targeting the remaining funds in the annexation reserves to those potential annexation  
149 areas that are actively being studied by jurisdictions for annexation. Any additional funds  
150 should be redirected to public safety and health services in the urban unincorporated  
151 areas;

152           7. Property Holdings. Evaluate all real property owned by the general fund for  
153 the feasibility of surplus and sale to address current budget issues. This evaluation  
154 should be transmitted with the proposed budget;

155           8. Business Relations and Economic Development ("BRED"). Review and  
156 report on the nonrevenue backed aspects of BRED;

157           9. Implement the Countywide Budget System. Implement the countywide  
158 budget system in April 2010 for use in preparing the 2011 capital budget in order to  
159 provide improved budget decision making tools;

160           10. Prioritize Capital Projects. Concurrent with the budget, the executive  
161 should transmit to the council a report prioritizing all county capital improvement  
162 projects. The report shall describe the project and provide a status update and an analysis  
163 of the necessity of continuing the capital project as it relates to the provision of core  
164 county services;

165           11. Fees. The executive should transmit, concurrent with the budget, a report  
166 outlining county fees. The report should contain a description and purpose of the fee, the  
167 current fee level and the statutory maximum for the fee. The executive also should  
168 highlight any fees where the statutory maximum is currently less than the cost of  
169 providing the service; and

170           12. Full Time Equivalent Positions. Concurrent with the budget, the executive  
171 should provide a report detailing the estimated number of positions that can be sustained  
172 both by each general fund agency and be each county fund, assuming a current revenue  
173 base for each. This report should include each of the years covered by the financial plans  
174 for each fund submitted with the proposed budget.




175 D. The council supports a legislative agenda that urges the governor and state  
176 legislature to permanently address the structural funding gap facing all counties in  
177 Washington state by authorizing expanded types of revenues for local jurisdictions that  
178 provide for sufficient growth to meet rising annual costs and have the flexibility of  
179 helping to fund basic public services.  
180

Motion 12836 was introduced on 7/28/2008 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 8/4/2008, by the following vote:

Yes: 9 - Ms. Patterson, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Constantine, Ms. Lambert, Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Gossett, Mr. Phillips and Ms. Hague  
No: 0  
Excused: 0

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

  
Julia Patterson, Chair

ATTEST:



Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

Attachments None