



Legislation Text

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Clerk 04/27/2020

AN ORDINANCE instituting a hiring freeze for all nonessential county personnel through the end of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. Findings:

A. On January 21, 2020, the Washington state Department of Health confirmed the first case of the novel coronavirus ("COVID-19") in the United States in Snohomish County. COVID-19, a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death, is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is a new strain of coronavirus that had not been previously identified in humans and can easily spread from person to person.

B. On February 29, 2020, the Washington state governor proclaimed that a State of Emergency exists in all counties in the state of Washington as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. The King County executive issued a proclamation of emergency on March 1, 2020, in order to allow King County to quickly respond to the new or different demands on service in response to the emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

D. In March 2020, the state and the county instituted "stay-at-home" orders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 that: require that all persons stay home unless they need to pursue an essential activity; ban all gatherings for social, spiritual and recreational purposes; and close all businesses except defined essential businesses. The orders have resulted in a significant number of closed businesses, severely restricted travel and movement and historic unemployment. Economists have reported that these changes will most likely

result in a financial recession.

E. The director of the office of performance, strategy and budget has reported that COVID-19 closures, reductions in economic activity and the ensuing recession have already dramatically affected county revenues, especially sales tax and other economically sensitive revenues.

F. The director reports that certain county agencies will be particularly affected including the Metro transit department, the permitting division of the department of local services, agencies supported by the mental illness and drug dependency fund and agencies supported by the general fund, including all agencies involved in the justice system.

G. The actual reductions in projected revenue and potential deficits in operating budgets are not known at this time because the emergency is ongoing, and the time needed for recovery to a "normal" economy is not known and cannot be accurately projected.

H. The county's single biggest expense is the salary and benefit costs associated with employees.

I. Deferring decisions on the filling of county vacancies through a hiring freeze has the advantage of both saving money in 2020 and reducing prospective cuts for the 2021-2022 biennial budget.

J. Due to the severity of the economic impacts, combined with the lack of a known end to the effects of the pandemic, there is an immediate need for a hiring freeze to reduce the negative impacts to the county's current and future budgets.

K. Enactment of this ordinance as an emergency ordinance is necessary to ensure that restrictions on hiring established by this ordinance take effect immediately and thus preserving existing public institutions and supporting the current level of county government.

SECTION 2. The county shall institute a hiring freeze of all nonessential personnel. Positions shall not be filled except as exceptions outlined in sections 3 and 4 of this ordinance.

SECTION 3.

A. Due to the public safety and public health nature of the positions, the hiring freeze prescribed in

section 2 of this ordinance does not apply to:

1. Public health or medical professionals directly responsible for protecting the health of the public from communicable disease and other health threats and health care providers in county corrections facilities or health centers;

2. Positions in the sheriff's office;

3. Corrections officers in the department of adult and juvenile detention;

4. Temporary or seasonal workers needed to provide COVID-19 services; and

5. Positions that are fully grant funded.

B. Even though the positions covered by subsection A. of this section are exempt from the hiring freeze, the responsible department heads or separately elected officials are encouraged to implement a hiring freeze for administrative positions not directly associated with the provision of public safety or public health.

Also, section 4.B. of this ordinance applies to the exemptions in this section.

SECTION 4.

A. Positions in the executive branch beyond those listed in section 3 of this ordinance shall be filled only under the following conditions:

1. The department's director has certified in writing to the executive the need to fill the position and can document that the county would incur increased costs by continuing to hold the position vacant rather than filling the position and provide the documentation to the office of performance, strategy and budget for verification;

2. The director of the office of performance, strategy and budget has certified in writing to the executive that the requesting department has sufficient budget authority to fill the vacant position; and

3. The executive authorizes the department, in writing, to fill the vacant position.

B. By the first day of each month, the executive shall provide a report to the council summarizing all executive branch requests for hiring until the executive terminates the March 1, 2020, proclamation of

emergency in response to COVID-19. The report shall be filed in the form in the form of a paper copy and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers and the council chief of staff.

The report shall indicate:

1. All positions requested for hiring by each department;
2. The positions that were approved by the executive; and
3. The rationale for approving each position approved for hiring, either as exempt under section 3 of

this ordinance or satisfies the condition of subsection A.1. of this section.

SECTION 5. This ordinance expires when the executive terminates the March 1, 2020, proclamation of emergency in response to COVID-19.

SECTION 6. If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

SECTION 7. The council finds as a fact and declares that an emergency exists and that this ordinance is necessary for the immediate preservation of public peace, health or safety or for the support of county government and its existing public institutions.