



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2020-0068, **Version:** 1

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Clerk 01/30/2020

A MOTION providing direction to the conservation futures advisory committee on priorities for allocating conservation futures tax levy funds.

WHEREAS, in RCW 84.34.010, the state Legislature "declares that it is in the best interest of the state to maintain, preserve, conserve and otherwise continue in existence adequate open space lands for the production of food, fiber and forest crops and to ensure the use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty for the economic and social well-being of the state and its citizens," and

WHEREAS, RCW 84.34.210 authorizes the county to acquire property rights "to protect, preserve, maintain, improve, restore, limit the future use of, or other otherwise conserve, selected open space land, farm and agricultural land, and timber land," and

WHEREAS, property rights acquired under this authorization are defined as conservation futures, and

WHEREAS, RCW 84.34.230 authorizes the use of a property tax levy to fund the acquisition of conservation futures and the maintenance and operation of acquired properties, and

WHEREAS, RCW 84.34.240 authorizes counties to establish a special conservation futures fund to which the levy proceeds are credited, and

WHEREAS, King County has established a conservation futures tax levy and fund, and

WHEREAS, King County is required to establish a process to help ensure, over time, that the distribution of the tax levy is throughout the county, and

WHEREAS, K.C.C. chapter 26.12 establishes an annual process for distribution of the tax levy to acquire open space lands, including green spaces, greenbelts, wildlife habitat and trail rights-of-way, and

WHEREAS, the process includes an advisory committee that makes project and funding allocation recommendations for each project to the executive, and

WHEREAS, the executive makes project and funding recommendations as part of the budget process, and

WHEREAS, K.C.C. 26.12.010 allows the council to adopt a motion providing direction to the conservation futures advisory committee on priorities for evaluating project applications, and

WHEREAS, K.C.C. 26.12.025 establishes criteria for conservation futures project selection, which are: "wildlife habitat or rare plant reserve; salmon habitat and aquatic resources; scenic resources; community separator; historic or cultural resources; urban passive-use natural area or greenbelt; park, open space or natural corridor addition; and passive recreation opportunity in an area with unmet needs; and projects that seek to redress historic disparities in access to or health benefits of open space in opportunity areas. Additional criteria may include: educational or interpretive opportunity; impact to open space resources; feasibility, including ownership complexity, a willing seller or sellers or community support; partnerships; if the property identified in an adopted comprehensive plan, park open space, habitat, cultural resource or community plan; transfer of development rights participation; stewardship and maintenance; regional significance; adopted financial policies; and any other criteria consistent with chapter 84.34 RCW," and Motion 15513 gives additional detail on project eligibility criteria, and

WHEREAS, farm and agricultural lands are allowed to be purchased with conservation futures tax funding, and

WHEREAS, King County first established Agricultural Production Districts ("APDs") in 1985 to protect over 41,000 acres of agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance, which are an irreplaceable natural resource, and

WHEREAS, the King County Comprehensive Plan states that uses in APDs must be conserved for productive use and that all land uses in these districts must be sited and designed to ensure compatibility with

resource management, and

WHEREAS, surveys indicate that only 25,000 out of the 41,000 acres in the APDs are being actively farmed, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan states that King County should encourage infrastructure and services that support resource management and resource-based businesses in the APDs and should employ a variety of innovative programs and incentives to help maintain and enhance resource-based industries, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan states that King County should work with other jurisdictions, agencies, and agriculture interest groups to maintain and enhance commercial farming activities, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan calls on King County to seek funding for, and purchase additional development rights to, land in the APDs and calls on the county to develop a long-term strategy for financing protection of farmland and to ensure that easements for such are well-managed in the long-term;

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

A. The council establishes as a priority for the conservation futures advisory committee's consideration during the annual project selection and funding recommendation process, one or more projects that include the purchase of property rights in Agricultural Production Districts for agricultural activities or conservation.

B. The department of natural resources and parks, water and land resources division, is requested to work with landowners and jurisdictions in which properties reflecting these priorities are located, in submitting project proposals that meet this priority, as part of the 2020 conservation futures tax levy funding selection process provided for in K.C.C. 26.12.010.