



Legislation Text

File #: 2021-0317, **Version:** 1

Clerk 08/12/2021

A MOTION requesting that the King County executive proclaim an emergency relating to the security situation at the King County Courthouse and respond to that emergency.

WHEREAS, people coming to the King County Courthouse located at 516 3rd Avenue in downtown Seattle no longer feel safe entering the courthouse to work, serve on juries, or conduct other legal business, and

WHEREAS, the county has a long history of requesting the city of Seattle to properly maintain and patrol the activities of City Hall park located next to the King County Courthouse, and

WHEREAS, over the years, the county has requested that the city of Seattle add cameras to the park, remove vegetation for better visibility and safety and increase patrols by Seattle police officers to improve response times to calls for assistance. Similarly, the county has encouraged positive activities in the park with games, recreational activities and food trucks to promote a more positive environment, and

WHEREAS, the council has appropriated \$1.34 million to provide security emphasis patrols around the perimeter of the courthouse and maintain a courthouse entrance on 4th Avenue, and

WHEREAS, the presiding judges of both the King County superior court and the King County district court have each called for greater security for at least two years, and

WHEREAS, the King County superior court conducted a survey of its employees, which memorialized the experiences of many employees being harassed, followed, grabbed and assaulted, and in one instance an employee being chased by a person brandishing a machete, and

WHEREAS, in November of 2019, an attorney was repeatedly punched in the head and a Metro bus

driver was assaulted in an unprovoked attack, prompting the closure of the 3rd Avenue courthouse entrance, and

WHEREAS, in April 2021, a man was assaulted while taking pictures of tents in City Hall park to document the plight of unsheltered residents, and

WHEREAS, in June 2021, a man was fatally stabbed at City Hall park, and

WHEREAS, on July 29, 2021, a female King County employee was attacked in the restroom of the courthouse, and

WHEREAS, the city of Seattle has reduced funding to its police department, contributing to the department's reduced ability to respond to crime as well as its difficulties in complying with the 2012 federal consent decree, and

WHEREAS, the Seattle police department lost approximately two hundred officers in 2020 and another one hundred between January and July 2021, further complicating law enforcement efforts in and around City Hall park, and

WHEREAS, on August 6, 2021, more than two hundred fifty people marched outside the King County Courthouse demanding new safety measures be employed to address the security situation within and surrounding the courthouse, and

WHEREAS, at the rally, the participants chanted "enough is enough!" and one speaker addressed the rally stating, "we are done with being told to be aware of our surroundings," and

WHEREAS, the policy for security officers to observe and report does not adequately protect the courthouse and county employees, and

WHEREAS, on November 21, 2013, Washington State Department of Labor and Industries assessed penalties of \$27,100 to King County for not providing necessary training, not establishing, supervising and enforcing its accident prevention program in a manner that was effective in practice for the county security officers, not training all county security officers in first aid, not providing annual bloodborne pathogen training

and not ensuring that county security officers were performing their duties in a two-officer team, and

WHEREAS, due to the safety concerns surrounding and within the King County Courthouse, the King County executive has requested new procedures including but not limited to making certain restrooms only available to King County employees and having county security officers escort employees to and from the building;

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

A. The council requests that King County executive proclaim the courthouse safety security situation an emergency.

B. The council further requests the executive implement new policies in courthouse security, including training and equipping county security officers to provide personal security escorts to employees and others coming to the courthouse.

C. It is the policy of the council that immediate action is necessary and requests that the executive implement the following measures:

1. Provide naloxone to each county security officer within one day of the passage of this motion;
2. Provide each county security officer with a tourniquet kit within seven days of passage of this motion;
3. Provide pepper spray to each county security officer;
4. Provide training for all county security officers on the use of handcuffs and batons. If a class is not available in the thirty days following passage of this motion, then the executive shall arrange for an instructor to travel to King County to train county security officers in these skills as soon as possible. Upon completing this training, county security officers shall be provided with a baton and a pair of handcuffs;
5. Develop a policy to maintain between three to five qualified instructors to train county security officers in the tools and skills outlined in this motion;
6. Provide taser training to county security officers within three months of passage of this motion;

7. Work with the King County sheriff to identify opportunities to conduct joint trainings with marshals, deputies and county security officers;

8. Establish and promote programs for county security officers and courthouse employees to make suggestions on desired security improvements, training and skills development, or any combination thereof, without fear of discipline or retaliation; and

9. Evaluate the hiring criteria for county security officers in light of the new duties and roles and security issues facing employees working in and around the courthouse.

D. The council also requests that the executive provide monthly briefings to the committee of the whole, or its successor, for the remainder of 2021 on the progress of the security measures requested by this motion and then every six months or upon request of the committee chair thereafter until December 31, 2024.