



Special City Council Meeting
November 6, 2017 - 3:00 PM
City Hall Council Chambers
AGENDA

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Sound Cities Association Legislative Agenda* (Coleman)

III. ADJOURNMENT

Agendas and minutes are available to the public at the City Clerk's Office, on the City website (<http://www.auburnwa.gov>), and via e-mail. Complete agenda packets are available for review at the City Clerk's Office.

*Denotes attachments included in the agenda packet.



AGENDA BILL APPROVAL FORM

Agenda Subject:

Sound Cities Association Legislative Agenda

Date:

November 1, 2017

Department:

Finance

Attachments:

[SCA Legislative Agenda](#)
[Memo and Attachments](#)

Budget Impact:

\$0

Administrative Recommendation:**Background Summary:****Reviewed by Council Committees:****Councilmember:****Staff:**

Coleman

Meeting Date: November 6, 2017

Item Number: DI.A



To provide leadership through advocacy, education, mutual support and networking to cities in King County as they act locally and partner regionally to create livable vital communities.

DRAFT SCA 2018 Legislative Agenda

Adjust the Property Tax Cap

Property taxes are the largest revenue source for Washington's cities, supporting critical services like justice, health, and safety. However, property taxes are capped at a level that creates an ever-widening gap between the cost of serving a growing population and the revenue available to pay for those services. A new property tax limit should correspond to what it actually costs local governments to continue providing services and keep up with increased public demand.

- *The Sound Cities Association urges the Legislature to give local governments the option to replace the arbitrary annual 1% cap on property tax increases with a limit tied to inflation plus population growth.*

Invest in Public Health Services

The most basic services for keeping communities safe and healthy are at risk due to declining state investment in public health—down 40% per capita since 2000 when adjusted for inflation. The Legislature made an initial investment of \$12 million in 2017 toward the roughly \$400 million statewide funding gap, but core public health needs remain unmet. For Public Health – Seattle & King County, there's a \$7 million gap in the next county budget cycle that jeopardizes the tracking, response, and prevention of disease outbreaks and other crucial services.

- *The Sound Cities Association urges the Legislature to fund the core public health services provided by local health jurisdictions.*

Address the Housing and Homelessness Crisis

Our communities face an affordable housing and homelessness crisis. More than 11,600 people experience homelessness on a given night in King County, and others, including older adults and moderate and low-wage workers of all ages, are struggling to find affordable, quality housing in our region. Partnerships between state and local governments are critical to create new units of affordable housing. To that end, a renewed state commitment to help Washingtonians transition out of homelessness is now needed, as are expanded investments to address behavioral health needs and other root causes of homelessness.

- *The Sound Cities Association urges the Legislature to partner with us to address homelessness and increase the supply of affordable housing in the following ways:*
 - *Expand and make permanent the Document Recording Fee*
 - *Invest \$200 million in the Housing Trust Fund*
 - *Allow local governments to create and preserve affordable housing through optional local tools*
- *The Sound Cities Association urges the Legislature to address other underlying causes of homelessness by making investments in our state's behavioral health system and enacting legislation to prohibit Source of Income Discrimination.*



October 11, 2017
SCA PIC Meeting

Item 7:

SCA 2018 Legislative Agenda

POTENTIAL FUTURE ACTION ITEM

SCA Staff Contact

Ellie Wilson-Jones, Senior Policy Analyst, ellie@soundcities.org, (206) 495-5238

2017-2018 SCA Legislative Committee Members

SCA President and Kenmore Mayor David Baker (Chair); Mayor Nancy Backus, Auburn; Mayor Leanne Guier, Pacific; Councilmember Amy Ockerlander, Duvall; Councilmember Ed Prince, Renton; Deputy Mayor Catherine Stanford, Lake Forest Park

Potential Future Action

To bring the following policy position back to the next PIC meeting for possible action:

The Sound Cities Association (SCA) urges the Washington State Legislature to take the following actions in 2018:

Adjust the Property Tax Cap

- *The Sound Cities Association urges the Legislature to give local governments the option to replace the arbitrary annual 1% cap on property tax increases with a limit tied to inflation plus population growth.*

Invest in Public Health Services

- *The Sound Cities Association urges the Legislature to fund the core public health services provided by local health jurisdictions.*

Address the Housing and Homelessness Crisis

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Background

During the 2016 SCA Board of Directors retreat, the Board developed a strategy to "increase SCA influence in State and County government," and adopted action items including identifying strategic legislative priorities and forming a Legislative Committee. The Board then appointed a

Legislative Committee consisting of members from each geographic caucus, which developed a recommended SCA 2017 Legislative Agenda. The PIC reviewed and recommended that proposed Legislative Agenda to the SCA Board, by which it was formally adopted. The SCA 2017 Legislative Agenda is included here as [Attachment A](#).

During each PIC meeting this year, SCA staff have reported on progress toward the priorities outlined in SCA's 2017 Legislative Agenda: adjusting the property tax cap, investing in public health services, and addressing the housing and homelessness crisis (see the January [PIC Packet](#) and [Meeting Minutes](#), February [PIC Packet](#) and [Meeting Minutes](#), March [PIC Packet](#) and [Meeting Minutes](#), May [PIC Packet](#) and [Meeting Minutes](#), June [PIC Packet](#) and [Meeting Minutes](#), and July [PIC Packet](#) and [Meeting Minutes](#)).

Finally, in September, after the conclusion of the regular legislative session and three special sessions, SCA staff reported to the PIC on the final status of SCA's legislative priorities, all of which remained largely unresolved (see the September [PIC Packet](#) and [draft Meeting Minutes](#)). In September, SCA staff also invited PIC member input into potential SCA legislative priorities for the coming 2018 session.

SCA Legislative Committee Recommendation

On September 20, 2017, the SCA Board of Directors appointed a 2017-18 SCA Legislative Committee, again made up of members from each geographic caucus. This SCA Legislative Committee met September 27, 2017 to consider progress toward SCA's 2017 legislative priorities, newly emerging issues, and the outlook for the 2018 legislative session.

Members agreed that the three priorities contained in the SCA 2017 Legislative Agenda remain unresolved after the 2017 legislative session and continue to be issues of importance to the region. Members discussed the need to maintain consistent messaging year-to-year and pursue a longer-term advocacy strategy to achieve the adopted priorities. The SCA Legislative Committee agreed to recommend to the PIC and the SCA Board of Directors that the 2017 areas of focus be continued for 2018 as follows:

- Adjusting the Property Tax Cap,
- Investing in Public Health Services, and
- Addressing the Housing and Homelessness Crisis

The SCA Legislative Committee also discussed emerging issues and weighed the benefit of including additional items on the SCA 2018 Legislative Agenda and determined that the existing areas of focus already encapsulate issues such as the heroin and opiate crisis and the need for swift passage of a 2017-19 biennial capital budget.

Members discussed the relative role of the SCA Legislative Agenda and their individual city and Association of Washington Cities (AWC) legislative strategies and concurred with last year's Legislative Committee recommendation that SCA should not duplicate the work of AWC. Rather, SCA's Legislative Agenda should focus on areas of special concern to cities in King County and the Puget Sound region. Furthermore, this year's SCA Legislative Committee concurred that SCA should again develop an agenda that is high level to allow SCA to be nimble in responding to issues as they arise during the legislative session.

Members agreed that a draft SCA 2018 Legislative Agenda ([Attachment B](#)) should be brought to the Public Issues Committee for review and potential initial action on October 11, 2017 with a potential final PIC recommendation on November 8, 2017.

Proposed SCA 2018 Legislative Priorities

As noted above, the SCA Legislative Committee has developed a recommended SCA 2018 Legislative Agenda that would carry forward previously adopted priorities, each of which remains largely unresolved after the 2017 session as described below.

Adjusting the Property Tax Cap

For 2017, SCA joined a coalition urging the Legislature to give local governments the option to replace the arbitrary one percent property tax cap with a new cap that takes into account inflation and population growth ([HB 1764/SB 5772](#)). This year, the Legislature exempted itself from the one percent property tax cap for purposes of new school funding but did not adjust the cap for local governments. It's not expected that the state will act to adjust the property tax cap before 2021, when its own exemption is due to sunset, but continued advocacy on this issue is anticipated. King County Executive Office staff indicate the County will continue pursuing this priority in 2018, and that the Washington State Association of Counties is also anticipated to include this as a 2018 priority.

Investing in Public Health Services

SCA urged the Legislature this year to fund core public health services through added investment in local public health jurisdictions. There was a statewide funding increase of \$12 million, with approximately \$2 million of that going to Public Health – Seattle & King County. This was far short of the \$54 million requested for local public health jurisdictions and even further short of the \$400 million projected to be needed, meaning gaps remain in disease prevention and response. Public Health – Seattle & King County staff indicate that public health jurisdictions will continue to make a push for increased investment, with a specific request of \$7 million for King County.

Addressing the Housing and Homelessness Crisis

Amidst the ongoing affordable housing and homelessness crisis, SCA supported work to expand and make permanent the document recording fee, increase investment in the housing trust fund, and add optional local tools for creating and preserving affordable housing.

This year, the document recording fee was extended at its current rate of \$40 through 2023 as part of [SB 5254](#), which also allows a portion of REET II funding to be used for homeless housing development through June 30, 2019 under certain conditions, among other changes. However, broader legislation to add optional local tools for creating and preserving affordable housing did not advance. State investment in the Housing Trust Fund has been held up by the failure to pass a biennial capital budget. Swift passage of a capital budget will be key to expanding the supply of affordable housing and addressing underlying causes of homelessness.

Many legislators remain committed to doing something to address the ongoing housing and homelessness crisis in the current biennium. Work is still underway to determine what legislation will come forward in 2018, but key proposals under discussion include a local options

bill ([HB 1797](#)), which in its most recent iteration would make the optional 0.10 percent sales tax for mental health services and affordable housing councilmanic for King County, allow for sales tax reimbursement to cities for the construction of affordable housing and accompanying infrastructure, and allow REET flexibility; and [HB 1570](#), which would expand and make permanent the document recording fee. Housing advocates also intend to proceed with advocacy on Source of Income Discrimination ([HB 1633/SB 5407](#)).

AWC and Member City Preparations for 2018

City finances and housing and human services needs will be a focus for AWC in 2018. Late last month, AWC adopted four priorities for the 2018 session as follows:

- Strengthen city tools to address housing conditions in our communities
- Direct funds to mental health, chemical dependency, and social safety net programs
- Enhance economic development tools and programs that foster business development in cities
- Preserve state-shared revenues with cities and increase law enforcement training funds

A fact sheet summarizing each of these issues is attached here as [Attachment C](#). AWC will be holding Regional Meetings to share these 2018 priorities with members. PIC members should take note that the November 8 AWC Regional Meeting in Federal Way will conflict with a PIC meeting during which the PIC may choose to act on SCA 2018 legislative priorities.

SCA member cities will also be developing 2018 legislative priorities in the coming months and members are encouraged to share their legislative priorities with SCA staff.

Next Steps

At the October 11, 2017 PIC meeting, the PIC will discuss whether to support the recommendations of the SCA Legislative Committee and to bring back to the next meeting a policy position for final action.

Attachments

- [SCA 2017 Legislative Agenda](#)
- [Draft SCA 2018 Legislative Agenda](#)
- [AWC 2018 Legislative Priorities](#)

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SCA 2017 Legislative Agenda

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- *The Sound Cities Association urges the Legislature to give local governments the option to replace the arbitrary annual 1% cap on property tax revenues with a growth limit whose maximum is inflation plus the rate of population growth.*

Invest in Public Health Services

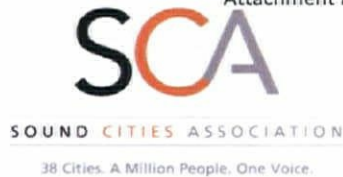
Protect our communities by investing in core public health services. The 40% per capita decrease in public health funding since 1999 is reaching crisis levels across the state. The funding shortfall has left Public Health–Seattle & King County unable to fully investigate disease outbreaks. The Washington State Department of Health is requesting \$54 million for local public health jurisdictions to fill critical gaps in disease prevention and response, and to pilot shared services to improve the efficiency of the overall system.

- *The Sound Cities Association urges the Legislature to fund basic public health by investing \$54 million in core public health services.*

Address the Housing and Homelessness Crisis

Our communities face an affordable housing and homelessness crisis. Over 4,500 people are surviving unsheltered on any given night in King County, and others, including older adults and moderate and low-wage workers of all ages, are struggling to find affordable, quality housing in our region. Partnerships between state and local governments are critical to create new units of affordable housing. Renewed state commitments to help Washingtonians transition out of homelessness are necessary, as are expanded investments to address behavioral health needs and other root causes of homelessness.

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Address the Housing and Homelessness Crisis

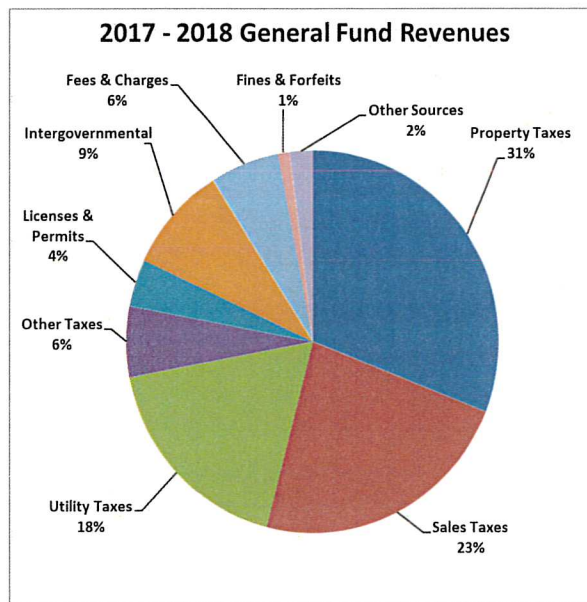
Our communities face an affordable housing and homelessness crisis. More than 11,600 people experience homelessness on a given night in King County, and others, including older adults and moderate and low-wage workers of all ages, are struggling to find affordable, quality housing in our region. Partnerships between state and local governments are critical to create new units of affordable housing. To that end, a renewed state commitment to help Washingtonians transition out of homelessness is now needed, as are expanded investments to address behavioral health needs and other root causes of homelessness.

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Auburn Finance Department

Date: October 31, 2017
To: City Council
Cc: Nancy Backus, Mayor
From: Shelley Coleman, Finance Director
Re: Adjust Property Tax Levy Cap Initiative

The City, via legislative action amending RCW 84.55.005, is limited to a 1% annual increase in property tax. In the City of Auburn, property tax accounts for 31% of the General Fund revenue budget (2017/2018 Budget, page 17).



In recent years, the City has been fortunate to fund program expansion and cost of living increases by utilizing its banked property tax levy. In 2017, the City used the remaining banked property tax and will be limited to a 1% increase in this revenue source beginning in 2018.

The region is experiencing high growth and historically low unemployment. Low unemployment has driven up wages and the City labor contracts reflect the market wage increases. Benefits have also increased at a greater percentage, often in the 8% to 12% range in recent years. High growth drives up the need for general city services. Auburn will not be able to afford these growing costs in the future with a 1% cap on one third of the General Fund revenue unless the other two thirds of the General Fund revenue grow at a substantially higher rate.

The legislative priority of SCA to adjust the property tax cap (Cap) to inflation plus growth would provide local governments with the flexibility to levy additional dollars and meet costs associated with the growing need for services. The notes provided by SCA on the Cap adjustment indicate there would most likely be no action by the legislature until 2021 but it is important to continue the advocacy and keep it in front of them.

I have attached a blog by Mike Bailey that touches on the subject of the 1% limit but also on short term, or one time, revenue generated from development. The property gets added to the tax roll however ongoing revenue from the development is limited to 1% growth but the cost of serving the new development grows more than the 1% a year. This puts the government in the position of generating more growth and additional short term revenue to pay for the short fall of the last growth. I have bracketed the paragraph in the attached blog.

I currently serve on the Government Finance Officers Association's Committee on Economic Development and Capital Planning, which is referenced in the blog post.



The Economy is Better - So Why is My Budget So Hard To Balance?

December 1, 2013 by Mike Bailey
Category: Budgets and Budgeting

By Mike Bailey, Finance Director, City of Redmond

You may have seen some of the headlines recently: "*Boeing: Record 777X order placed in Dubai*"; "*Many small business owners are saying they're ready to hire*"; "*S&P 500 trades above all-time high*"; "*Construction spending up 45% over last year*"; "*Retail sales grow again*". But if you've looked at your budget forecasts, they don't seem to reflect this same economy.

What gives? - Why is my budget so hard to balance?

There are a few reasons for this and we will take a quick look at those reasons. Secondly we will take a look at what you might consider doing about it.

The **first reason** why your budgets are so difficult to balance even in a good economy is that the system is designed to make it that way. While Initiative 747 gets the credit for the 1% limitation on property taxes, it is actually found in RCW 84.55.005 after the Legislature adopted the 1% limit in a special session (most assuredly under pressure from the populous who had just passed an initiative to the same effect - even though that initiative was found unconstitutional by the state supreme court). In looking at data from the State Auditor's Office Local Government Financial Reporting System (a great tool by the way) I see that *in average city budgets property taxes are one-quarter of total revenues* (and 40% of total county revenues!). That means that one of the largest revenue sources to most all city and county budgets is limited to a growth rate well below the growing costs of doing business. Compensation costs (and especially health care costs for our employees) make up the majority of our budgets and are certainly growing faster than 1% annually. In addition, state law further limits most other revenue sources available to cities and counties for their general government budgets.

So why would the legislature intentionally make our budget balancing impossible? The answer comes in two parts (in my opinion). The logic used in support of lowering the limit on property taxes is that this would periodically force a community wide conversation about adjusting that limit (through a vote of the people) and resuming the agreed upon level of service. This isn't convenient, but many communities have done just that (see more about this later when we discuss solutions). The second part to this answer (which I find myself often repeating in my own city hall) is that it is supposed to be hard. This is "other people's money" and the power to extract that money and use it for the benefit of the community is a privilege that we take seriously. It should be an organizational struggle to make certain that we use those scarce resources as effectively as we can.

Secondly, growth does not really pay for growth. In fact, growth often camouflages the effect it is having on your revenues and costs. The new revenue from growth related activities (such as property tax on new construction, sales taxes on construction or sales of related items, fees related to development and permitting) are often much

appreciated in an era of growth. They are what make a thriving economy feel like we are finally able to manage our budgets and pay for the little extra burden those new roads, pipe systems and parks resulting from the growth impose. However, the only on-going new revenue is the property tax related to the additions to the tax base (new construction). Once that property tax gets added to the tax rolls, it gets limited as described in the first reason budgets don't balance. So the result of growth related revenues is the addition of new obligations to meet in our budgeting process and very short-term revenues to deal with these new costs. In fact, the only way out of this dilemma is for more growth to occur, bringing in more short-term revenue, to pay for the short-comings from the last growth - and on it goes. That is until the growth stops and we have to adjust to the real revenue growth rates that have occurred - often resulting in also adjusting our services to match.

Next we come to great ideas that didn't turn out so great. These take many forms and almost all of them have a lot of merit and are commendable (I'm not referring to any specifically that aren't commendable - but I'm sure there have been a few). I have a difficult time faulting those who took action to address a local need or spur economic development. Those are the most common types of initiatives that took or pledged resources, increased risk and eventually resulted in budget stress. Taking action to make things better is good. The problem often is that the estimates weren't sufficiently scrutinized, the risks weren't objectively evaluated or minimal protections weren't put into place to avoid the negative consequences of "bad bets". That is why the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) created its Committee on Economic Development and Capital Planning. The GFOA had seen too many examples where its members struggled to find "best practices" for guidance on how to assess these types of initiatives. In the past several years the committee has adopted twenty-eight best practices on such topics as: analyzing the benefits of economic development projects; balancing costs and benefits of economic development projects; and evaluating data and financial assumptions in development proposals. You can find these on the committee's best practices page.

So, if the problems with balancing our budgets are a result of good intentions going bad, a false sense of hope from a growth related Ponzi scheme and even structural, what should we do to make ends meet.

Along with the Economic Development and Capital Planning committee described above, the GFOA has developed deep resources on long-term financial planning. This emerging topic has risen on the radar screens of many as they seek answers to the challenges described above. The first key to a good long-term financial plan is to know what you are planning for. How do you describe success in your community? Is it realization of a vision?; status quo?; avoiding layoffs?; or keeping the tax burden low? Clarity about policy priorities is the first step, one that is often overlooked. Many times the financial plan starts with a spreadsheet comparing past year's experiences with what we think safe (read: conservative) future assumptions would suggest about the future. That's fine for context but at this point it isn't a plan. The long-term financial plan should really start with policy. The Growth Management Act really does a pretty good job of framing how this might work. The policy determines what service levels you are working to achieve and the financial plan illustrates how you might align resources to support that level of service.

This may sound like an overly simplistic way of thinking about the solution to the budget balancing dilemma however I would direct you to the GFOA's resources, additional resources on MRSC's many pages and the help available from other local associations. Failure results in draconian cuts (read sequestration), "shut-downs", kicking the can down the road, robbing Peter (or capital budgets) to pay Paul, and other gimmicks that are all too apparent in governments today.

This is an example of where the value is in the journey as you work together to determine how to achieve your policy goals, provide your agreed upon levels of service and finance the whole thing with community resources. No, it isn't easy - it's not supposed to be.



About Mike Bailey

Mike Bailey writes for MRSC as a [Finance Advisor](#).

Mike Bailey is currently the Finance Director for the city of Redmond. Previously he worked as Administrator of Finance and Information Services for the city of Renton and as the Director of Finance for the city of Lynnwood. Mr. Bailey also served as president of the Washington Finance Officers Association and is the Vice Chair of the GFOA Budget Committee. An experienced CPA and GFOA budget reviewer, Mr. Bailey co-founded the annual Budget and Fiscal Management Workshops held each summer. Mr. Bailey conducts numerous workshops and has authored various articles on local government finance, including Effective Budgeting in Washington State Cities published by the Association of Washington Cities.

The views expressed in Advisor columns represent the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of MRSC®.

[VIEW ALL POSTS BY MIKE BAILEY](#) ▶

Comments

0 comments on The Economy is Better - So Why is My Budget So Hard To Balance?

Blog post currently doesn't have any comments.

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City of Auburn

Example of Cap Increase on 2018 City Levy

Legislative Priorities

Increase Levy from 1% to CPI + Growth

2016 Average annual CPI for Seattle/Tacoma/Bremerton	2.2%
2016-2017 Population increase	2.5%
Total Increase for 2018 property Tax	4.7%

New Levy Cap

	1%	4.7%	Difference
2017 levy	\$ 20,959,519	\$ 20,959,519	\$ -
1% increase	209,595	985,097	775,502
2018 New Construction (NCI)	300,000	300,000	-
Total \$ Levied	\$ 21,469,114	\$ 22,244,616	\$ 775,502
Tax Rate per \$1,000 of AV	\$ 2.03471	\$ 2.10821	\$ 0.073

Example of Levy Impact on Home Values

Residential		City		City	
Assessed Value		Levy @ 1%		Levy @ 4.7%	
					\$ Difference
\$	300,000	\$	609	\$	631 \$ 22
	350,000		711		737 26
	400,000		813		842 29
	450,000		914		947 33
	500,000		1,016		1,052 37