



Snohomish County

John Lovick
County Executive

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Lovick's 2016 budget one of fiscal responsibility, strong public safety, and compassion for most vulnerable

Resolving the courthouse issue, shoring up the general fund and the reserve fund, and upholding public safety are among Snohomish County Executive John Lovick's top priorities, he told county employees and the public Wednesday afternoon at his annual budget address.

"Before we can do anything we must address the courthouse," Lovick told the audience. "We must do it right. Any project approved now that fails to meet the needs of the employees and public who use it will be a disservice to our taxpayers."

Lovick proposed suspending the project and returning \$4 million to taxpayers beginning in 2016 since the second phase of the bonds won't be issued under his plan. He also recommended retiring a portion of the debt with the remaining proceeds, saving taxpayers \$59 million over the life of the bonds.

Continuing his theme of fiscal accountability, Lovick proposed contributing \$5 million to the county's reserve fund, increasing total reserves to nearly \$22 million, or 10 percent of general fund revenue.

He also proposed a one percent service-level reduction in the general fund. The reductions are not across-the-board, he explained. They'll vary by department. Many departments and offices are expected to minimize reductions through attrition, he added.

Lovick's budget leaves public safety untouched.

"A safe community is a high priority of my administration," Lovick said. "We must have an adequate number of deputies on our streets, and we must do all we can to ensure the jail is safe."

School resource officers will stay put in six county high schools, and the SKIP program (Safe Kids Improved Pathways) will see a boost in funding to support 17 new projects in 2016.

Lovick's budget also proposes \$400,000 for the Snohomish Health District's First Steps program, which helps mothers and their babies in the early years of childhood. And funding for the Rapid Recidivism Reduction Center in the Carnegie Building is secure thanks to \$1.3 million from the state Legislature and \$1 million of county funds.

“Snohomish County has much to be thankful for,” Lovick said, citing a remarkably low unemployment rate of 3.9 percent, and a diverse workforce No. 1 in the state in the concentration of manufacturing jobs. He also noted recent comments from credit rating agencies pointing to Snohomish County’s “strong economy,” “strong management” and “good financial policies and practices.”

“This budget reflects those values we hold dear,” Lovick said. “It is a solid budget – compassionate, courageous and financially sound.”

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