

Dave Somers

Snohomish County Executive

January 4, 2016

Thank you for joining me here today.

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday and a festive New Year celebration.

First, I want to thank John Lovick for his service to our county, our State, and our country. I wish him the very best in all of his future endeavors.

It is the honor of my lifetime to serve the people of Snohomish County, whether as a member of the council or now as Executive.

We have a lot of hard work to do for the people we serve.

I know the people who share that hard work of governing—county employees, the County Council, fellow elected officials, and our partners throughout the county and region—are decent, fair-minded public servants. I intend to be their **partner**.

We cannot solve our problems alone. Whether it is tackling homelessness, improving public safety, lessening traffic congestion, fostering economic development, or making growth more rational, we must forge new and stronger **partnerships** and work together. This is not merely an option. It is essential for success and a top priority for my administration.

I would like to thank Council Chair Terry Ryan, Council Vice-Chair Brian Sullivan, Councilmember Stephanie Wright, and Councilmember Ken Klein for their leadership and passion. Working together, we can make substantial progress on all the important County issues facing our constituents.

As a former councilmember myself, I understand and respect the Council's role in County governance. We may not always agree, but together we will chart a positive and productive course forward. The five members of the County Council will be my closest allies as we work to make Snohomish County stronger. With your partnership, we will succeed.

Let me share a story. As a biologist working for The Tulalip Tribes in the early 1980's, I had the privilege of joining with the Snohomish County Council and PDS staff in a multi-year process to protect our community by opposing a new and unnecessary four foot wide crude oil pipeline—the same size as the Alaskan Pipeline. This pipeline would have begun in Port Angeles, been stretched under the waters of Puget Sound, and would have come through Snohomish County, crossing more than 52 streams and rivers. It would even have travelled along the Pilchuck River, part of the water supply for our county. All this in one of the most seismically active parts of the world. Working together, the Tribes and the County prepared studies and testimony. In 1983 we were successful in blocking this ill-conceived proposal. It taught me the power of working together to common purpose.

The people who work for Snohomish County, those charged with executing the many important tasks that make our lives better on a daily basis, are one of our greatest assets.

Working together, we can overcome any challenges.

I will spend the coming months listening to you. I want to hear your thoughts about improving how we do business. Please feel free to share your ideas with me. I am more than willing to admit that I do not have all the answers; we have some very complicated issues we need to address. But one thing I do know: together we can find the best path forward.

Let me explain my vision for Snohomish County:

- I believe we can and must fix the county's finances and return us to a more stable economic base.
- I believe we must ensure the highest level of integrity in the Executive's office and every aspect of county government.
- I believe we must renew our commitment to customer service.
- I believe we must ensure our communities are safe and secure. And that we must treat vulnerable populations with dignity.
- I believe we must do all we can to strengthen our local economy, while protecting our beautiful natural environment.

Let me provide some specifics about how we will achieve this vision:

- First, we will identify a financially sound plan to replace the Courthouse, an essential cornerstone of our criminal justice system. This week I will convene a working committee consisting of representatives of my office, the Council, the Courts, and other relevant elected officials to review our options for a replacement courthouse. I will ask that the **Courthouse Working Committee** make recommendations about the best paths forward.
- Second, I will initiate a new budget process that is open and collaborative, involving the Council and other elected officials as full **partners**. I will launch this process in consultation with the County Council. We will begin planning for the 2017 budget process, as well as address the revenue shortfall we face in 2016. And we will do this together in the spirit of cooperation and humility that our constituents expect.
- Third, I will propose to our cities and towns that we create a countywide **Council of Governments** to discuss and plan joint efforts in addressing our common challenges: traffic, homelessness, crime, growth management and economic development. I will ask for a commitment from our top elected officials to this effort in order to strengthen our partnerships across the county and across jurisdictional borders. We will look for areas where we can work alone to strengthen our community, and also areas where we can partner with businesses and non-profits.
- And, finally, I propose an employee-led process to examine the services we provide to our customers—our residents and our businesses—and how we can improve the delivery of those services. Again, I do not have all of the answers, but believe that together we can improve our service to the community and improve Snohomish County as a place to work, live, and raise a family. We must earn the trust of our residents every single day and deliver services for them in an efficient, ethical, and timely manner.

Today marks the formal beginning of our new administration, and I would like to quickly introduce some of those who will be working with me.

- Marcia Isenberg, Interim Deputy Executive
- Eric Parks, Chief of Staff

- Susan Neely, Executive Director
- Kendee Yamaguchi, Trade and Economic Development Director
- Arif Ghouse, Airport Director
- Barb Mock, Interim Planning and Development Services Director
- Steve Thomsen, Public Works Director
- Tom Teigen, Parks Department Director
- Mary Jane Brell-Vuchovic, Human Services Director
- Ricardo Cruz, Interim Human Resources Director
- John Amos, Interim Finance Director
- Mark Thunberg, Facilities Director
- Daniel Selove, Medical Examiner
- Jason Biermann, Interim Emergency Management Director
- Randy Manley, Information Services Director

I am looking forward to all the opportunities ahead for the residents of Snohomish County and our region. As a former tuba player in the UW Husky Marching Band, I know people didn't come to listen just to me. Heck, they usually came to see the football game anyway. But, in a band we need everyone's talents working in harmony. Together, we will move our community forward and do something important for our families and neighbors.

Thank you for coming here today and please stay to enjoy some of the refreshments.

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