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For Immediate Release

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Snohomish County Executive Proposes Renovating Courthouse

Project Will Save Over Half of Original Cost Estimates for a New Building

EVERETT, Snohomish County—Today, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers announced a decision regarding the long-delayed and much-debated courthouse project. He will formally recommend to the County Council a renovation of the current structure. While the county had the authority to construct a new building, the cost was too high and corresponding benefits too low.

“We want to make sure we are good stewards of public funds and also ensure our courthouse is more functional and safer,” said Executive Somers. “A renovation will achieve those goals and cost less than half of the previous estimates for a new building. Not one member of the public was breaking down our doors to build an expensive new structure for our law and justice system. Moving forward on a renovation will allow us to focus on other areas important to Snohomish County, in particular the heroin epidemic, economic development, and the county’s financial challenges. We favor excellent public service and effective operations over a new building.”

On taking office in January, Executive Somers organized a committee composed of county stakeholders and the City of Everett. The committee has been meeting for the last four months, examining all available options. Every option that included constructing a new building was prohibitively expensive and could jeopardize the county’s ability to staff and operate the new building. In fact, by building a new courthouse, the county’s finances would have been placed on an even more unsustainable path.

If approved by Council, Executive Somers will direct the architects to provide a plan for the renovation as quickly as possible. They have been asked to detail preliminary cost estimates to ensure a formal plan is before Council by August 31, 2016. The County will minimize disruption to courthouse operations during construction but ask for the public’s patience while the project is being completed.

According to the county’s building experts, the remodel should cost less than half of the previously planned and budgeted courthouse project, but the exact figure won’t be known until the detailed renovation plans are drafted. Since the previous courthouse project was budgeted to cost \$162 million, the remodel should save the county at least half of that amount and possibly more. In addition, the architects will focus on making the renovated courthouse safer and more functional, primarily through seismic retrofits and the replacement of the barely functioning elevators. They are also looking at the possibility of using other existing space to reduce the need for inmate transportation.

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