

## Talking Points

### State of the County Edward Hansen Conference Center Wednesday, March 20, 2019; 11:00 a.m.

#### Introduction

- Thank you, Patrick. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Snohomish County and the progress we've made this year.
- But, before I get started, I wanted to address the horrible attacks in New Zealand last week. There is too much hatred and violence in our world, with people looking for scapegoats to justify their own twisted worldview.
- There is no room for hatred and racism in Snohomish County. We are a welcoming place for everyone, and we will continue to stand in solidarity with those who are targeted, whether here or elsewhere.
- I will be partnering with communities of faith to hold an event to show our solidarity with our Muslim friends and neighbors and ensure everyone has the ability to freely express their faith without threats of violence or bigotry. I urge everyone to join us.
- Now, I'd like to thank a few people who have made a difference this year.
- I appreciate the County Council and our continuing partnership. We are working collaboratively and in the interests of our residents. Even when we sometimes disagree, we are able to find common ground. Thank you, Chair Ryan, Vice Chair Nehring, Councilmember Wright, Councilmember Sullivan and Councilmember Low.

- I'd like to thank our hard-working county employees. Time and again, I'm impressed by their level of professionalism and commitment. They are resourceful and inspiring.
- In fact, we have witnessed true dedication and honest service over the last 45 days.
- When we were hit with a string of historically bad winter storms, our road and fleet crews kept our roads open for emergency workers and our residents. I declared an emergency before the storms hit to ensure we had maximum flexibility in obtaining and deploying resources. Because we have outstanding county staff in our road and fleet crews, as well as DEM who helped coordinate our emergency response with our local partners, we were able to keep roads passable and people moving, including first responders.
- When the Salvation Army came to us and let us know that they could no longer accommodate the number of guests requesting shelter from the freezing weather, county staff and the Health District jumped to the challenge and created a cold weather shelter in the Drewel Building. Human Services, the Salvation Army, and our other non-profit partners, along with our Facilities Department, the Sheriff's Office, and many others came together to set up a shelter for up to 75 people every night. Without the dedication and compassion of Snohomish County, some of those people would have almost certainly died in the cold.
- When we were faced with the devastation of the opioid epidemic, we used an innovative approach to develop joint objectives and improve coordination with our partners. We set up the Multi Agency Coordination Group, the MAC Group, in response.
- I want to thank Sheriff Trenary for his partnership in fighting the opioid epidemic and for his help in developing what continues to be viewed nationally as an innovative model. Please stand up, Sheriff. Let's give the Sheriff a round of applause.
- During a meeting about opioids, we decided to apply the same coordination models we do for large emergencies like earthquakes and floods. And this innovation is working.

- Together we are collecting data that allows us to maximize our resources and coordinate with other jurisdictions in ways that few have done before. The opening of the Diversion Center, Carnegie Resource Center, and expanding the embedded social worker/law enforcement teams seems to be making a difference. According to the sheriff's Office, there has been a 37% decrease in burglary cases and a 32% decrease in theft cases in Snohomish County.
- For each of these emergencies, there were dedicated public servants making sure we could meet our public safety goals, a top priority for all of us. They deserve our profound thanks.
- Finally, I'd like to offer one more thank you, well, ok, more like four. There are four exemplary public servants who deserve a word of thanks and our respect because they have almost reached the end of their term limits. The history of Snohomish County would have been very different without each of them and their service.
- Kirke Sievers is retiring at the end of his term after a long and distinguished career, most recently as the elected treasurer. He made his first run for office in 1974 and has spent 43 continuous years in office. Kirke couldn't be here today, but we thank him for his incredible commitment to Snohomish County.
- Carolyn Weikel has been our elected Auditor for over a decade, having started work in the Auditor's Office in 1990. In fact, she was named the county auditor of the year for Washington State in 2012. Carolyn has been a true partner in county government. Please, Carolyn, stand up and take a bow!
- When I was on the County Council, Brian Sullivan was a great colleague of mine, and even when I was elected as your county executive, he continued to provide wise counsel and solid leadership. Please, Brian, stand up.
- Finally, our County Clerk, Sonya Kraski, is also reaching the end of her third term in elected office. Sonya has been an important leader in our law and justice community and a good friend. The success of our court system is a direct result of her dedication and professionalism. Sonya

has held almost every job in the Clerk's Office, starting her career there in 1985. I very much appreciate her willingness to pitch in when we need her help. Please, stand up, Sonya, and be recognized.

- These four leaders have given their lives to public service, and our county is better off because of them. On behalf of Snohomish County, we thank you.
- Before I get into the details today, I wanted to show you a recent film created by our Parks staff to highlight this beautiful place we call home.

### **Video: The Future We Choose**

- Wow! What a great place we live.
- The opportunities and challenges before us are clear.
- I like to tell the story of the Thundering Hooves.
- We are now in competition with counties and cities and states and countries across the globe.
- If you have an advantage, then the herd is right behind you. If you slow down, if you fail to stay ahead, if you don't innovate, then you will get beaten by those Thundering Hooves.
- We are competing for jobs and quality of life. We must recognize this fact and be ready for the competition.
- Snohomish County will continue to grow. We have too much to offer not to. Sometimes faster and sometimes slower. But growth is here to stay. We have good jobs. Our housing is more affordable than some other parts of the region. We live in the most beautiful place on the planet. All of these opportunities bring people here. Our challenge is to figure out how to grow with grace and keep this place great.
- We want to create the future we choose and not just let it happen to us.
- **I'd like to talk about how we do that by focusing on economic development, financial stewardship, and sustaining our way of life.**

## **Economic Development and Jobs**

- One of my top priorities has been doing all we can to strengthen and diversify our economy. Today our economy is very strong. But we remain laser-focused on strengthening and diversifying our economy so that the “good times” are even better and we’re more prepared to weather cyclical downturns.
- The single most important thing that we are doing to advance our economic health is the start of commercial service at Paine Field.
- Just two weeks ago, I was honored to be on the first flight out of Paine Field. Under beautiful blue skies, we lifted off from Paine Field and enjoyed stunning views of mountain ranges and the Sound and everything in between.
- In a first for our country, we successfully launched an innovative public/private partnership to build an airport. That is good for the region and the county. No taxpayer money was spent to build the new terminal. Instead it was built and is now managed by a private company, Propeller Airports. In fact, our partnership was recently given a national award for innovation.
- The new terminal aims to bring civility and quality back to air travel. And that’s a great fit with our county, where we prize innovation, civility, and quality. It’s completely appropriate, then, that Alaska Air and United Airlines are flying out of the Airport of Choice. These airlines will open Snohomish County to the world, and in turn allow the world better access to Snohomish County.
- The convenience of being able to fly from Everett is undeniable, and from a broader economic development perspective, having a commercial airport in Everett is crucial for our future.
- Companies that want to invest in Snohomish County often look at that drive to SeaTac as an obstacle to productivity.
- Now that we can fly from our own Snohomish County Paine Field Airport, we have a new gateway to the nation and world.

- We couldn't have done it without our corporate partner, Propeller Airports, and our excellent airport staff.
- I know the new terminal will make a difference because just a week before commercial service started I travelled with Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin to Silicon Valley to talk with key leaders and companies about opportunities here at home, in particular the opportunities posed by a new commercial terminal that directly connects us to each other. Silicon Valley leaders were thrilled by the prospect of a new airport in our region, and said that the closer our connection, the better potential there is for economic opportunity.
- Our new terminal just adds luster to an already bright aerospace future.
- Aerospace is central to Snohomish County's economy, and our partnership with Boeing remains as strong as ever. Last year, we signed an agreement to have them manage the Future of Flight Aviation Center, the top tourism destination in the county.
- Boeing also signed with us an option to lease additional land on the west side of the airport. We continue to value collaboration, and we work with our partners as they grow and their needs change.
- Just a few weeks ago, I joined Boeing and the U.S. Air Force for the hand-off of the first Pegasus tankers. These are impressive aircraft and a great new addition to our nation's defense.
- I am very proud that Snohomish County is the home to Boeing and the largest manufacturing plant in the world. Soon the 777X will roll out, and with it the next generation of manufacturing innovation. Boeing is a great partner in our community, not only because of their extraordinary history of achievement, but also because they understand the basics: technical innovation and being engaged in local communities are both necessary for success.
- Last year, we established an Aerospace Task Force because we want to be the best advocates possible for our community. With commercial service at Paine Field, our strong partnership with Boeing, and the support of leaders across the private and public sectors, the future of

aerospace is firmly grounded here in Snohomish County, and I am confident we will continue to play an important role for years to come.

- One area that we are pushing hard on this year is workforce development. We have heard from many of our private and public sector partners that this is an area where we need to remain focused if we hope to sustain our economic growth.
- Today, I am launching a Workforce Development Initiative to make us the five star model for this key sector of our economy.
- We are in the process of looking at how we can adopt additional best practices from other successful workforce development programs. If we don't continue to innovate on training and re-training workers for our new economy, we will pay a price when companies come looking for a place to invest or expand.
- Our economic development plans are bearing fruit, and I am excited about where we are headed as a county and a region.

### **Financial Stewardship and Reform**

- I believe in sound financial stewardship for the county. We have limited resources, and we must ensure that every dollar is spent wisely.
- If you've been on the county campus recently or if you noticed in our video, we are making very good progress on the County Courthouse Project. While the courthouse project saves us over \$80 million from the previous project, it will also serve our growing county for decades to come.
- Our budgets for the last few years have put the county on much sounder financial footing. In fact our bond rating was upgraded last year, saving us borrowing costs.
- Because of strong sales tax receipts, we have been able to improve our financials without a general fund tax increase. However, this burst in sales tax won't last forever. We must still be cautious, or we will be in a very difficult place when the economy slows.

- Our residents have been hit with some significant tax increases over the last couple of years, and I'm glad we could keep restraint on the county's part of the bill. For those who follow these things, the county accounts for about 12% of your property tax bill [General Fund and Roads]. The rest goes to the state and local entities.
- One of my key priorities has been to implement LEAN into county government. I launched our Service Technology Excellence Program in 2016, and we are beginning to see the fruits of that effort. Our culture is changing, and we are improving our service to the public. We have trained hundreds of our employees in how to implement continuous improvement into their work. It has been met with nearly universal praise, because it provides the tools people need to do their jobs even better.
- We will continue to be good stewards of the public purse. It is one of our core responsibilities and one I take very seriously.

### **Sustaining Our Way of Life**

- We live in one of the greatest places on the planet. But it won't stay this way if we don't plan ahead. We must create the future we choose.
- We want to see our cities and towns thrive, while our rural character is protected. These are the things that make us so rich: a diversity of jobs and places and people.
- I held the first "Vision 2050" Summit last year to start the process of planning for the growth we know is coming. And tomorrow we will be holding our second summit. We are confident that with our local partners we will create a plan that works to our long-term interests
- We don't want to become a sprawling metropolitan area but instead a place where density is concentrated in urban areas. By planning ahead and making the tough decisions, we will grow wisely.
- Lynnwood Light Link Rail, a critical and long-awaited investment in our transportation system, will break ground later this year. When

completed, light rail will provide commuters, tourists, and shoppers with a reliable option that can move them along the I-5 corridor and throughout our region without the hassle of stop-and-go traffic.

- The planning process for the future stations once the line is built from Lynnwood to Everett are already underway. We have held on-line and in-person open houses to hear from the community, and we will continue to focus on transit oriented development for those stations that will be in areas absorbing significant population growth.
- Building more mass transit options and creating jobs here in Snohomish County is the best approach for maintaining our quality of life.
- We also are working on neighborhood congestion relief, to ease some of those chokepoints that drive us all crazy.
- We have also started with our partners, including WSDOT, a study of the US2 trestle. We need to begin what will surely be a long process to fix this frustrating chokepoint, one I visit every day on my way to work. We know the state has many priorities all competing for resources, but we will continue to push hard to get the trestle upgraded.
- We are supporting efforts in Olympia to pass the next transportation package to address our most pressing needs. We need support from Olympia and appreciate our legislative delegation for the work they do to help us to address these key priorities.
- One area of great importance to sustaining our way of life is figuring out how to support more affordable housing across our community. With one of the hottest housing markets in the country, the Puget Sound region has been squeezing out those who cannot afford to buy a home. While we aren't as expensive as some other parts of the region, the market is still pushing some people into homelessness and holding back others who would like to own their own home.
- Today, I'd like to announce the establishment of the Snohomish County Housing Task Force.
- I will be convening a team of elected officials and community leaders to examine the state of housing in Snohomish County and provide

recommendations for filling the gaps. I will ask them to look at middle-income and affordable housing, subsidized housing, alternative housing models, and land use and redevelopment. Working in partnership with those impacted by the tight housing market, we will do what we can to help.

- Back in 2016, I launched the Puget Sound Initiative. This is the county's effort to prioritize those projects that will keep our waterways as clean as possible and protect our natural resources. We have made significant progress.
- Just this past summer we completed the Smith Island Restoration Project. This project allowed us to reclaim a significant portion of our estuary important for salmon recovery. Salmon are a key element of our entire natural system, from Orca to recreation to our food supply. As a fisheries biologist, I know these projects often seem abstract, but if we don't help our salmon recover, we will lose part of what makes us special.
- Today, I am proud to announce that Snohomish County has partnered with Forterra to launch **the Snohomish County Healthy Forest Project**.
- This new program will focus on restoring the health of county-owned forested land through a community stewardship model.
- Healthy forests provide a wide variety of ecological, environmental, and community benefits, such as reducing stormwater runoff, improving air and water quality, and providing opportunities for recreation, fishing, and tourism.
- Snohomish County recognizes that our local community presents a tremendous opportunity to help move the needle on Puget Sound health through an organized forest stewardship program.
- Let me give one example. Meadowdale Beach Park would be a great pilot site under this new program. The county, along with many community partners, have already made progress to restore the nearshore and estuary. With the help of local stewardship leaders through the new Healthy Forests Project, we can bring even more

benefits to salmon and water quality and reduce erosion by restoring forest health within the entire 108 acre park.

- As we grow in our urban areas, we must also work to protect our open spaces. With steady progress, we hope to not just preserve but improve our quality of life.
- Let me offer one final comment. Snohomish County recently received a patriot award, recognizing us for providing exemplary support to our employees who are members of the Reserves and Guard.
- I will continue to do everything we can to support all of those in our community who serve or have served in the military: active duty, Reserve and Guard, Veterans, and their families. It's the least we can do to support these heroes.
- If you haven't seen it yet, I'd urge you to visit our new Wall of Honor on campus, dedicated to our employees who have served in the armed forces and those who lost their lives. It is just outside the Auditor's Office on the first floor of Admin Building West.
- I'd like to ask Josh Dugan to stand and be recognized. Josh served a full career in the US Navy and was Command Master Chief at Naval Station Everett. Like most sailors, Josh is an exemplary problem solver. He now works in my office and is responsible for our Wall of Honor and outreach to the military and veterans community. He is an example of the great staff we have working for you, the residents of Snohomish County. Thank you, Josh.

## **Conclusion**

- There's much more I could talk about, since there are so many important issues the county touches. But my buddy Hewitt needs to take a walk here shortly.
- Please know that your county is working hard to create the future we choose for all of our residents.
- The county is in great shape!

- Thank you, again, for letting me join you today.
- I'm happy to take a few questions.