



**Snohomish County Council**

***NEWS RELEASE***

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**County Council takes action to preserve affordable housing for seniors**

The Snohomish County Council chambers erupted in applause Wednesday as the Council took action to save the homes of audience members.

The more than 100 residents of the Kingsbury East and Squires mobile home parks in Lynnwood were threatened with eviction when the property was recently purchased. Many are low income seniors. Mike Echelbarger, the new owner, agreed to work with residents and government to find a solution.

"This is a wonderful example of how the county can work in partnership with citizens and other agencies to save valuable low-income housing for our residents," said Council Chair Dave Gossett. "It was a very unique situation with a willing seller and some available housing funds, but it came together in a way that worked for everyone."

HASCO agreed to purchase the properties and maintain the mobile home parks, but required assistance from the state and county to complete the sale. A portion of the \$9 million purchase price will be met using \$3.5 million of federal funding from the state, and \$2.5 million of dedicated housing dollars from the County. HASCO will issue tax-exempt bonds for the remainder of the purchase price, with the County providing its credit to support the bonds. The debt will be repaid with rental income from the 93 mobile home pads located at the two parks.

"As the county grows these mobile home parks are quickly disappearing from the landscape to be replaced by homes that would likely be out of reach for many of our residents," Said Councilmember Dave Somers. "We were pleased to be able to work with HASCO to help those who might otherwise be displaced by new development."

The residents of the park had worked for months to find a solution that would protect their homes.

"The residents of Kingsbury East and Squires mobile home parks should be commended for their patience and tenacity," Said Councilman Kirke Sievers. "Hundreds of hours of staff time have been devoted to what is a very complex sale agreement, but the pay-off is that a lot of people will sleep better tonight knowing that they will be able to stay in their homes."

While the residents of Kingsbury East and Squires mobile home parks are now safe, the problem of mobile home park conversions will continue to grow. The County Council is already looking at steps to reduce the problem.

"Obviously, I'm happy with this outcome as there are few things we do as important as preserving affordable housing for our elderly citizens" said Councilmember John Koster. "Cooperative efforts such as this prove there are practical ways to address this troublesome and growing problem.

I'm working on another measure that would lower the tax burden for certain mobile home parks and have high hopes that we will see it through to fruition as well".