

PRESS RELEASE



County Council

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Gossett Offers Funding Plan for Regional Justice Center Construction

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County Councilmember Dave Gossett today unveiled a funding plan for the construction of a long-planned Regional Justice Center.

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The Executive's 2008 recommended county budget recognized the need for a regional justice center, with only a voter-approved levy identified as the funding source.

"We must find existing revenues to hold down costs to taxpayers," said Gossett. "We can't go to the voters and ask them to increase their property taxes to fund the entire cost of the project. The council needs to develop a plan to fund a significant portion of the cost and only ask the voters for the difference."

The new Regional Justice Center is proposed to be a 10-story structure attached to the front or north side of the existing courthouse, with space enough to house anticipated space projections for the county's Superior and District courts, the County Clerk and Prosecutor, the Office of Public Defense, Sheriff's Office, Public Defender Association, the county law library, jury services, and campus security services. The project also includes substantially upgrading the existing courthouse and adjacent Mission Building.

Gossett's plan calls for recommitting county revenues currently dedicated to past construction projects as those bonds are paid off – almost \$700,000 in 2008 and almost \$1.9 million in 2015. His plan also dedicates "new construction" revenues for an additional \$1.3 million.

All told, his plan identifies almost \$3.9 million which would allow the county to service a debt of about \$62 million at no additional cost to taxpayers.

"Councilmember Gossett has worked very hard on this proposal and I'm impressed," said councilmember Brian Sullivan, who chairs the council's Finance Committee. "We will give it a full review in committee."

The council will consider funding options in late April or early May.

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“This is good news,” said Presiding Superior Court Judge Larry McKeeman. “The public and the county’s law and justice agencies have a clear need for a regional justice center that will provide a safe, secure and efficient environment for serving the public. We believe that the proposed new regional justice center will meet that need.”

“The County Council recognizes the urgent need to address the critically inadequate court facilities,” said Council Chair Dave Somers. We stand united with the law 7 Justice community to find a resolution so that we will be able to serve and meet the needs of the public in the future, and I will take a close look at Gossett’s proposal”.

Gossett’s proposal also calls for exploring options for holding down costs, including:

- Co-locating Everett’s Municipal Court in the new building, a possibility the city has already said it is interested in discussing.
- Leaving floors designed for future growth unfinished. The Justice Center is designed to accommodate both current needs and future growth.
- Off-campus public safety agencies (such as the Public Defense Association) could be moved to the site and the ensuing savings from rents applied to the debt service.

“Over \$62 million is a significant down payment on the Regional Justice Center,” said Gossett. “Making these dollars available involves tough choices, but I believe these are exactly the kind of choices the public has a right to expect of us before they are asked to increase their property taxes.”

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