

# PRESS RELEASE



County Council

4 September 2008

Mike Cooper  
Dave Gossett  
John Koster  
Dave Somers  
Brian Sullivan

## Large Turnout at First County Council Budget Forum Advocates for Public Health and Mental Health Funding

The Snohomish County Council has gone on the road to introduce local residents to the process of producing the county's budget, to highlight the serious problems facing county finances, and to ask the public for their funding priorities as the county deals with declining revenues and increasing demands for services.

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The county anticipates a \$9.6 million budget shortfall through the end of this year, with revenues continuing far below expectations into the next 2009-2010 biennium. Revenues have declined due to a much-reduced housing construction market and reduced sales tax revenue caused by shoppers cutting back.

"For the first time ever," said Councilmember John Koster, "Snohomish County will be producing a two-year, biennium budget, and one made even more complicated by declining revenues and increasing costs.

"We very much appreciate all of you showing up tonight," said Koster. "We've held budget hearings in past years and never have so many people come out to help us sort through these difficult issues."

Over 30 people attended the county's first budget forum held Wed., Sept 3 at the Stillaguamish Senior Center in Arlington. Following a short presentation on both the budget process and the financial challenges facing the county, a majority of the speakers endorsed the need to balance any possible reductions in county services across the board, rather than making sharp cuts to people-oriented services, including health, safety and senior services.

Several also urged the county council approve a one-tenth of one percent sales tax dedicated to treating mental health and addiction problems. The state legislature has authorized counties to impose this tax and many have, including Skagit and King counties.

"Public Health will be a top priority for the council," said Councilmember Brian Sullivan. "I guarantee we will do everything we can to help the Snohomish Health District overcome its deficit."

Sullivan also reaffirmed the council's commitment to continue supporting senior centers, the county's Conservation District and said "mental health is a huge issue for all of us."

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Councilmember Dave Gossett said the district's administrative committee on which he serves hasn't affirmed the district director's proposed personnel and program cuts, and that at a recent committee meeting, the director "was told in pretty uncertain terms that we will not be adopting his proposed cuts."

"We will be looking at a variety of strategies to deal with this," said Gossett, adding that if cuts prove necessary, direct service programs should be last on the list, not first in line.

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## **Two additional council budget forums are planned:**

### **Central & East County Budget Forum**

Wednesday, Sept. 10 at 6:30 PM  
Willis D. Tucker Community Park  
6705 Puget Park Drive, Snohomish

### **Southwest County Budget Forum**

Monday, Sept. 15 at 6:30 PM  
Edmonds City Council Chambers  
Public Safety Complex  
250 5th Avenue North, Edmonds

Citizens are also encouraged to contact the county council by e-mail at

**Contact.Council@snoco.org**, or by letter to Snohomish County Council, 3000 Rockefeller Ave. M/S 609, Everett, Washington 98201.

### **Web Testimony**

The council has also set up a **budget testimony web page** where comment and suggestions on the proposed budget can be submitted directly to the council. Go to [www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org) and search for "[budget testimony](#)".

### **Forum Video**

To view a video of the forum, go to the council's [Archived Media Page](#)\*\* at and search for **Arlington Budget Forum**.

\* <https://web5.co.snohomish.wa.us/council/Budgettestimony/>

\*\* [http://snohomish.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=2](http://snohomish.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=2)

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