

PRESS RELEASE



Snohomish County

County Council

3 December 2008

Mike Cooper
Dave Gossett
John Koster
Dave Somers
Brian Sullivan

County Council Approves Funding for Expanding Mental Health & Chemical Dependency Treatment Programs

Snohomish County will join many neighboring counties in offering significantly expanded mental health and chemical dependency treatment services funded by a one-tenth of one percent (0.01%) increase in the sales tax – 1¢ on a \$10 purchase. The legislature authorized counties to impose the tax specifically for these services.

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The increase will go into effect April 1, 2009 and is expected to raise about \$11 million annually to fund doubling detoxification services, expanding residential treatment facilities, expanding drug courts for adults and juveniles, and placing drug and alcohol intervention specialists in county high schools.

Plans also call creating crisis stabilization units or triage centers for adults and youths. Currently with almost no evaluation and referral services in the county, most people with mental health and chemical dependency problems end up in police custody and costly incarceration, only to eventually be returned to the street without receiving the help they need.

“These services are essential to the health of our community,” Council Chair Dave Somers. “It’s time we get ahead of the problem.”

Over a hundred people filled the council’s meeting room and spread out into the adjacent foyer. Over the course of an hour and a half 38 people testified in support of the measure, citing a chronic lack of adequate treatment options in Snohomish County. No one spoke in opposition. The council approved the sales tax increase 3-0. Councilmembers Mike Cooper and John Koster were absent.

“This is a public safety issue,” said Councilmember Dave Gossett. “We either treat people, or just jail and release, further endangering them and the public.

“This is also a cost-efficiency issue,” he said. “For every dollar spent today on treatment, taxpayers save four dollars down the road on law and justice costs.

“Most importantly, this is a humanity issue,” said Gossett. “We need to treat these people decently. We need to treat them.”

“Consistent with my legislative record,” said Councilmember Brian Sullivan, “I have always supported mental health services, and this is an appropriate action to take.”

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