



Whatcom County Executive's 2019 – 2020 Recommended Biennial Budget Released

For immediate release: Thursday, October 18, 2018

Whatcom County Executive Jack Louws' 2019 - 2020 proposed budget was presented today to the Whatcom County Council. The budget is the fourth submitted by Louws.

The 2019-2020 biennial budget is a reflection of the continued success of county leaders to find efficiencies and control costs. Their collective efforts have helped develop a biennial budget that builds on the successful ongoing programs and capital projects that serve the citizens of Whatcom County.

General government revenue projections through 2020 are stable with modest growth. Property tax revenue is expected to increase approximately as a result of \$520 million in new construction. Sales tax is projected to see a 5% growth in 2019 as well as 2020.

All Fund Balances will remain healthy through 2020 and into the following biennium. The proposed budget targets a sustainable approximately \$14 million ending General Fund balance, which is 15% of expenses.

Executive Louws' financial goals for this biennium include:

- Reinvesting excess fund balances into capital improvements and technology projects that leverage future opportunity.
- Continuing the highest commitment to work efficiency and cost effectiveness while providing excellent customer service.
- Continuing to manage operational costs to ensure long-term financial stability.
- Planning for the future to allow a focus on long-term solutions to our pressing infrastructure challenges.

A long-term financial concern is due to the increased operating costs as it relates to revenue. The General Fund is most affected. Between 2010 through 2020 General Fund staffing levels have dropped by 57 FTEs while overall budgeted staffing cost (wages, retirement, health) has increased by \$10.6 Million. When looked at as a percentage of revenue, between 2015 and 2020 labor increased from 65% to 69% of GF revenue. With the "structural gap" of General Fund revenue not keeping up with inflation and population growth it is becoming more difficult to fund general County government initiatives, most of which are required by State law.

To enhance online access to budget documents the 2019-2020 budget is indexed by department in its electronic format on the county website. Budget information is provided in detail for each department, division and program providing greater transparency and usability. The complete budget document can be found, as noted above, [on the website](#). The Whatcom County Council begins their review of the budget on October 30, with a proposed adoption date of November 20.

For more information contact the County Executive's Office at 360 778-5200

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