

**COUNCIL SUMMARY BACKGROUND BRIEFING:  
KING COUNTY REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER ISSUES  
*June 2022***

This briefing summarizes recent actions taken by the three regional committees formed as a result of the merger of King County and Metro. The three regional committees are the Regional Policy Committee, the Regional Water Quality Committee, and the Regional Transit Committee. Staff will also include updates on other regional issues as appropriate (e.g., King County Flood Control District, King Conservation District, Affordable Housing Committee, King County Board of Health, King County Regional Homelessness Authority). Summaries also include the work of the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC). Formed in the early 1990s to comply with the Growth Management Act requirements for collaboration of counties and their cities on Countywide Planning Policies, the GMPC meets three to four times per year to consider amendments to the Countywide Planning Policies and to monitor progress on implementation. These updates are intended to be summary briefings; staff can provide more details on any of the items below.

**REGIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (RPC)**

At its May 11 meeting, the RPC:

- Approved a motion to request that the King County Executive prepare an assessment report to inform possible renewal of the Veteran Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL). King County voters originally approved a six-year Veterans and Human Service Levy in 2005 and renewed it in 2011. Funding for seniors was added to the ballot measure in 2017 and voters approved the 2018-2023 VSHSL. It assesses a property tax levy of \$0.10 per \$1,000 assessed value, estimated to yield \$350 million over six years. The owner of a home in Bellevue assessed at \$961,000, which is the median, contributes approximately \$96 per year. Bellevue's annual contributions to the levy are approximately \$6.8 million.

Prior to adoption, the RPC amended the motion to expand the scope of the assessment report. The scope now includes assessment of gender-based violence services and services for people with behavioral health conditions. The report will include a recommendation as to whether a potential VSHSL renewal should fund the additional services.

- Received a briefing on the Mental Illness Drug Dependency (MIDD) program and the 2020 MIDD Annual Report. MIDD is funded by a 0.1 percent sales tax. In 2005, the Washington State Legislature granted counties this taxing authority to fund mental health and substance use disorder services. These services are now integrated and collectively called "behavioral health services." MIDD sales tax collection began in 2008 and the King County Council extended it twice. The latest iteration is the 2016-2025 program called "MIDD 2;" It generates approximately \$65 million per year.

In 2020, MIDD supported over 125 partners to provide services to more than 20,000 people. A

significant theme of the 2020 report is the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic's economic downturn reduced dollars available to support critical services. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated inequities in access to health services and supports, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

- Received a briefing on King County District Court (KCDC) operations. Since 2006, multiple cities, including Bellevue, have contracted with King County to provide the local court services. KCDC is responsible for processing approximately 250,000 matters per year. KCDC currently holds court and provides public access at 10 facilities located throughout King County. The facilities are linked together as one court through governance and technology. A court user can pay a ticket, clear a warrant, access court files, find out about their case, file legal papers, or research a case at any location. For services in Bellevue, KCDC uses a portion of the Bellefield Building under an Office Space Use Agreement between the City and King County. The City leases the Bellefield Building from the building owner.

At its June 8 meeting, the RPC:

- Received a briefing on Harborview Medical Center (HMC). HMC is the only Level 1 trauma center in the four-state region that includes Washington, Alaska, Idaho, and Montana. Level 1 is the highest level of comprehensive care for people with major injuries. HMC is owned by King County and operated by the University of Washington.
- Recommended King County Council approve the MIDD 2020 Annual Report, which is described above.
- Received a briefing on the Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) levy, a property tax levy that was authorized by the State of Washington in the 1970s. Counties may collect up to \$0.0625 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value to acquire open space lands in fee, acquire easements, or otherwise conserve land. In May, King County Executive Dow Constantine announced a proposal for the November 2022 ballot to restore the CFT levy to its maximum rate in 2023. If approved by voters, in 2023 the levy revenue would increase by \$27.4 million to a total of approximately \$50 million. RPC members asked King County to dedicate funding to maintain new and existing King County open space areas.

The next RPC meeting is scheduled for July 13. Councilmember John Stokes serves on the RPC.

### **REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE (RTC)**

At its June 15 meeting, the RTC:

- **Approved an ordinance revising youth transit fare to zero (\$0).** The recently adopted Move Ahead Washington transportation program includes \$3 billion in funding for transit programs and projects, including \$1.45 billion in transit support grants. However, a transit agency is only

eligible for a transit support grant if it implements a fare-free policy for youth 18 years and under for all modes and submits documentation of this zero-fare policy by October 1. The ordinance is anticipated for action by the King County Council on July 21. Metro intends to implement the zero youth fare policy by September 1, and submit the required proof of a zero youth fare policy to the state by October 1.

At its May 18 meeting, the RTC:

- **Voted to accept the *Metro Connects* Implementation Report.** *Metro Connects* is Metro's adopted long range plan and vision for the future. It outlines an expanded service network developed through an Interim Network (by the mid-2030s, to synchronize with Sound Transit expansion) and a 2050 Network. The Implementation Report describes the funding needed to implement *Metro Connects*, the funding gap, potential funding sources to fill the gap, and the Executive's strategy to work with community and regional leaders to develop a plan to fund *Metro Connects*.

The next RTC meeting is scheduled for July 13. Bellevue City Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the RTC.

#### **REGIONAL WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE (RWQC)**

At its June 1 meeting, the RWQC:

- **Received a briefing on Inflow and Infiltration (I/I).** I/I is water that enters the wastewater system through leaky sewer pipes, manhole covers and roof and storm drain pipes that are connected to the sewer system. Most I/I is from privately-owned leaky side sewer pipes. King County estimates that 75% of peak flows in the separated piped sewer system comes from I/I sources. If I/I could be reduced/eliminated, expensive projects to enlarge the regional sewer pipe network and increase treatment plant capacities could be delayed, reduced or eliminated.
- **Received a briefing on the Department of Ecology's Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit (Permit).** In January, Ecology issued the Permit to control the discharge of nutrients into Puget Sound from wastewater treatment plants. King County requested a stay of the Permit, and along with other treatment plant operators in the region, also filed an appeal. Compliance with the Permit will be costly. In anticipation of some new Permit requirements, the County added \$50 million to its six-year Capital Improvement Program.

Bellevue City Council sent a letter last August to Ecology expressing great concerns about the Permit costs and issues. Due to a recent Thurston County Superior Court ruling that invalidated key provisions of the Permit, Ecology cannot begin enforcing the Permit.

The next RWQC meeting is scheduled for July 6. Councilmember Conrad Lee serves on the RWQC.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE (AHC):**

At its May 18 meeting, the AHC:

- Received a briefing on the Community Partners Table's May 13 report. The Table supports adding more affordable housing in jurisdictions that currently have fewer affordable housing options. The Table recommends that affordable housing needs should be prioritized to support underserved communities. The Community Partners Table members are reviewing data, conducting outreach, and considering where affordable housing is needed most in King County
- Recommended to the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC), an accountability and implementation framework for equitably meeting affordable housing needs across King County by the end of 2022. The framework calls for GMPC's role in reviewing, certifying Housing Element within jurisdictions Comprehensive Plans, and monitoring progress on affordable housing targets.
- Received a briefing on subregional or jurisdictional affordable housing needs, informed by local data and the data and methodology provided by the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce).

The next AHC meeting is scheduled for July 27. Mayor Lynne Robinson serves on the AHC.