



King County Councilmember

Larry Gossett

District 2

Fall 2008

Dear Friend,

I hope you had a wonderful summer. This newsletter contains a few of the many issues that I am addressing as your representative on the King County Council.

This year I am the Chair of the Growth Management and Natural Resources Committee. By the time you receive this newsletter, the major work of this committee will have been completed with the review and passage of an updated Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is King County's leading policy document. It provides guidelines for how land can be used in the unincorporated areas of the county, and it sets county policy on major issues such as annexations, transportation, and environmental protection.

I would appreciate any feedback you may have on the issues covered in this "report to the community." Please feel free to contact my office at (206) 296 1002 or visit my website, www.kingcounty.gov/council/gossett.



Councilmember Gossett speaks at the groundbreaking for the new Neighborhood House at Highpoint in West Seattle, a portion of which will be named after him and State Senator Claudia Kauffman (left).

Townhall on transportation

In May 2008, over 75 people attended a townhall meeting I hosted at Roosevelt High School on transportation issues facing North Seattle residents.

An informative panel spoke on a variety of transportation issues that impact residents in the northern part of District 2 including the communities of Montlake, University District, Laurelhurst, Ravenna, Wallingford, Roosevelt, and Fremont. We discussed the SR520 bridge rebuild, Metro transportation, Transit NOW, the newly created King County Ferry District, and Sound Transit's Light Rail expansion.

It was extremely important to hear the suggestions and ideas of area residents. Those in attendance were very knowledgeable and were involved in transportation issues through their various community and district councils. I look forward to continuing this dialogue about our transportation problems.

King County faces dire financial times

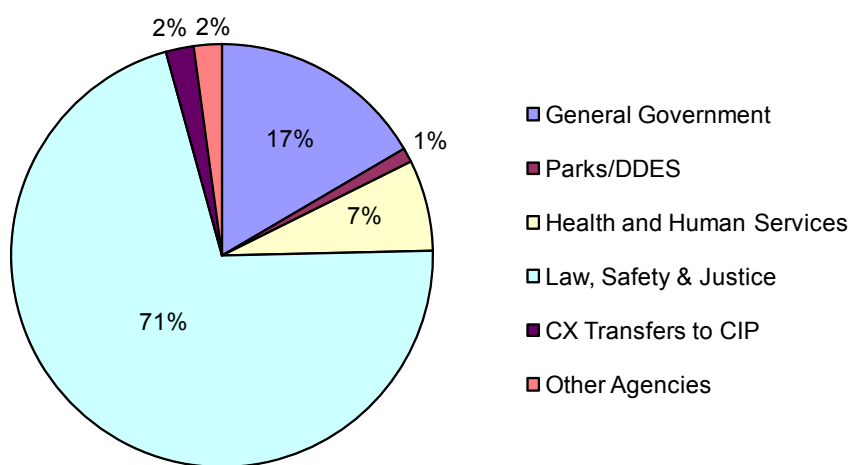
King County is not escaping the poor economic situation that is impacting every level of government. In fact, King County's Office of Management and Budget is projecting an estimated \$90 million deficit in our 2009 general revenue budget. The cause of our budgetary woes is a structural gap between our state and federally mandated responsibilities and an ever decreasing and an increasingly uncertain revenue stream. Washington counties are limited to two primary revenue sources: property taxes capped at one percent per year plus new construction and sales taxes. As a result, King County's revenues are only increasing approximately 2 to 3 percent a year while our expenses for the same level of service grows 4 to 5 percent annually.

In addition to the structural gap, the county faces another issue: the majority of the county budget (\$5 billion) is comprised of dedicated funds while the majority of services residents of King County expect the county to provide come from the general fund. Dedicated funds comprise four fifths (4/5) of the county's budget and can only be used for their specific purpose (bus fares can only be used for Metro services, government grants accepted for particular services like public health, etc.). The general fund is about 14 percent (\$650 million) of the county budget yet funds many of the services residents expect from their government – law, safety, and justice; and human services, etc. The predominant portion, 71 percent, of the general fund pays for our criminal justice system including the court system, the sheriff, and the regional jail. The remainder of the general fund pays for public health, parks, and other government services. (see pie chart).

This year, and for many years to come, the King County Council will continue to grapple with how to balance the tension between our increasing structural gap and our duty to provide essential services to the residents of the county. I intend to do this in a thoughtful manner and will look to increase efficiencies rather than simply reduce the services we provide

In October the King County Council will hold public forums to receive input as we deliberate over the 2009 budget. For more information on the budget process and the forums please check the Council's website, www.kingcounty.gov/council.

General Fund expenditures



Army apologizes for Fort Lawton injustice

"The Army is genuinely sorry. I am sorry. Sorry your family members... lost years of their freedom, and I suspect, a measure of themselves, as a result of these unfair convictions."

The Honorable Ronald James, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

In 1944, at Fort Lawton, one of the most grievous injustices ever committed in the annals of U.S. Army history was carried out against 43 African American Soldiers. Last July, seven families of these men,

Continued on reverse



Inside:

- ▶ County's budget crisis
- ▶ Preserving rails and trails
- ▶ Apology for Fort Lawton injustice
- ▶ Transportation townhall
- ▶ Councilmember's message

Selected fall events:

- Seattle Race Conference, October 11
- 20th Anniversary Celebration - Neighborhood Matching Fund, October 11
- Kinship Gathering "Families Helping Families," October 18
- LELO's Human Rights Day Event, December 13

Larry Gossett

King County Councilmember, District 2

King County Courthouse
 516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
 Seattle, WA 98104-3272
 E-mail: larry.gossett@kingcounty.gov
 Web: www.kingcounty.gov/gossett

PRSR STD
 US Postage
PAID
 Seattle, WA
 Permit No. 1788



King County



Photo by Jack Storms

The Hon. Ronald James (far left) and Councilmember Gossett with the late Samuel Snow (center) and Camille Kea (granddaughter of deceased veteran Arthur Hurks) at the tribute dinner for the Fort Lawton veterans who received an official apology from the U.S. Army after being unjustly accused and convicted sixty years ago.

including Army veteran Mr. Samuel Snow, came to Martin Luther King, Jr. County to hear the U.S. Army's apology for the dishonorable discharge and jail sentences meted out to these Black soldiers in 1944. 63 years ago, the African American soldiers were tried in the largest and longest Army court martial of U.S. soldiers during WWII. All were charged with rioting and three for the murder of Italian prisoner of war, Guglielmo Olivotto. After a five week trial, 28 of them were convicted of rioting and three for manslaughter.

Mr. Snow, at 84 years old, was one of only two veterans known to be alive among those convicted in 1944, passed away hours after holding his honorable discharge papers given to him by the Army during the events in Seattle. Mr. Snow had traveled to Seattle from Leesburg, Florida to participate in the four day historic tribute to the soldiers' families.

Due to evidence uncovered by journalists Jack and Leslie Hamann in the book, "On American Soil," that pointed to the innocence of the soldiers, the Army Board for Correction of Military Records overturned the convictions in October 2007. The Army Board determined that the 1944 trial was fundamentally unfair and caused irreparable damages to these Fort Lawton black soldiers, and directed the Army to award honorable discharges to each soldier and pay to the soldiers or their estates all back pay and allowances forfeited as a result of this wrongful conviction.

It was with great sadness that we learned that Mr. Samuel Snow passed away during that weekend. His presence at the Friday night dinner at Northwest African American Museum was an inspiration to those of us who saw first hand in his face the satisfaction he felt having had this great injustice done to him and his comrades overturned in his lifetime.

For more information on this, please visit my website, www.kingcounty.gov/gossett or www.jackhamann.com. For photos of the July events, please visit www.stormsphoto.com.

Partnership preserves rail and train options

Last spring, King County, Port of Seattle and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) signed a landmark agreement ensuring that the King County portion of the BNSF rail line will stay in public ownership and that this regional asset can be preserved for transportation and recreation purposes. Under the terms of the agreement, the Port will purchase the 42-mile BNSF Eastside Rail Corridor for \$107 million dollars and the County will pay \$1.9 million to the Port for a 26-mile easement, preserving the options for dual use of the corridor as both a rail line and as part of a county-wide trail system.

The existing railroad tracks will remain until the best use of the corridor is determined. King County and the Port agreed to a multi-agency regional process, including public participation and outreach, to study and recommend the appropriate uses of the corridor. The purchase and sale agreement is scheduled to be final by the end of the year, at which point the County and the Port will have 18 months to determine the location of the trail. King County has the right of first refusal should the Port decide to sell all or some of the parcels within the corridor and will receive its \$1.9 million investment if the County and the Port cannot mutually agree upon the size and location of the trail.

I am very excited about the possibilities and opportunities this corridor will provide to all King County. In the fall, we will seek public input to determine the future of this rail corridor. If you would like to be notified of those hearings, please call my office at (206) 296-1002.