



King County

Historic Preservation and Historical Programs Advisory Task Force

October 30, 2009

The Honorable Dow Constantine, Chair
Metropolitan King County Council
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: Interim Recommendations for the 2010 budget

Dear Chair Constantine:

As outlined in Ordinance 16579, the King County Historic Preservation & Historical Programs Advisory Task Force respectfully submits the attached interim recommendations for the 2010 Budget. We recognize the tough decisions you face as you prepare this budget. Our recommendations are given with a spirit of cooperation, and the knowledge that you value our regional assets, culture and history.

Our Task Force convened in mid-September, and appointed our full membership on October 2, 2009. Since then we have established our goals, identified possible obstacles and shared preliminary information. We are all passionate about the importance of historic preservation and historical programs in King County, and the fair distribution of funds made available through the recording fee surcharge for these important programs.

Our time table has been short to prepare this interim recommendation. We look forward to carefully considering our long term recommendations, and bringing these to you on March 1, 2010.

Thank you for assigning Simon Farretta to assist the Task Force. He has been patient and thorough in our start-up efforts. Should you have any questions regarding these recommendations or the progress of our work, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Brockman AIA, Chair
King County Historic Preservation & Historical Programs Advisory Task Force

cc: Metropolitan King County Councilmembers

*Marilyn Brockman, Chair,
Bassetti Architects*

*Richard R. Anderson,
Northwest Railway
Museum*

*Joe Follansbee,
Association of King County
Historical Organizations*

*Vicki Stiles,
Shoreline Historical
Museum*

*Marie Strong,
Seattle Landmarks
Preservation Board*

*Heather Trescases,
4Culture Heritage
Advisory Committee*

*Robert Weaver,
King County Landmarks
Commission*

*Susan White,
City of Des Moines
Councilmember*



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SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATION FOR 2010

Guiding Principles

Due to our short time line and the on-going budget deliberation process, the Task Force was able to procure only limited information regarding the allocation of funds for historic preservation and historical programs from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Without additional conversation with OMB representatives, the Task Force cannot make detailed suggestions for the proposed 2010 budget allocation.

Our recommendation, therefore, is based on two principles that we firmly believe should guide the distribution of the HB 1386 document recording fee surcharge funds:

1. Funds generated by the surcharge should supplement – not supplant – funds that historically have been provided by the County to promote historic preservation and historical programs;
2. These funds should be used to establish new programs and enhance ongoing programs managed or conducted by the King County Historic Preservation Program Office and 4Culture (The Cultural Development Authority). These skilled agencies have the qualifications necessary to equitably distribute funds to historic preservation and historical programs throughout King County.

Executive Proposed Budget

OMB has presented the Task Force with the following information for the proposed 2010 Budget, as it pertains to the use of the HB 1386 recording fee surcharge and other General Fund expenditures used to support historic preservation and historical programs:

Estimated Revenue:

Account 44136A: \$550,000 (HB 1386 revenue)

Proposed Expenditures:

Historic Preservation Program/Landmarks Commission: \$465,160

Payment to 4Culture for stewardship of the county's art collection: \$237,470

1. The Task Force supports the work of the King County Historic Preservation Program and Landmarks Commission. Due to lack of information, we cannot determine the extent of funds that would appropriately supplement the ongoing General Fund commitment to the work of this office. The level of service currently provided by this agency is essential for the economic development and vitality of our region, and critical for the maintenance of our historic resources.
2. The latter expenditure, "payment to 4Culture for stewardship of the county's art collection," does not qualify for the use of funds designated for historic preservation and historical programs. Though a valuable part of King County's cultural assets, there is no definition within any nationally recognized agency that would consider the curation and maintenance of an art collection as an activity that would qualify for funds designated for historic preservation or historical programs.
3. 4Culture's Heritage and Preservation Programs are essential to support organizations in King County that preserve and interpret local history. Our recommendation reflects this concept.

Task Force 2010 Recommendation for Surcharge Use

The estimated \$550,000 in recording fee surcharge revenue should be distributed to 4Culture Heritage & Preservation Programs and the King County Historic Preservation Program at the Council's discretion as a supplement to the funding traditionally available from the General Fund. We view the HB 1386 funding as an opportunity to expand existing programs and support new initiatives on a countywide basis.

The Task Force is sympathetic to the enormous challenges the County budget currently faces. We trust you will allocate the surcharge funds between the King County Historic Preservation Program and 4Culture Heritage & Preservation Programs with an intention to maintain the integrity of the essential offerings these programs provide throughout King County.

Next Steps

Our long term recommendation will provide clear definitions and guiding principles for distributing the surcharge funds as you requested in Ordinance 16579. We look forward to obtaining and evaluating information to help shape a more accurate picture of future needs in supporting historic preservation and historical programs throughout King County.